



THE CONCEPT OF AL-‘AQL (THE INTELLECT)  
ACCORDING TO AL-ṬABARĪ, AL-GHAZĀLĪ, AND  
MUḤAMMAD ‘ABDUH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

BY

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\*وَلَيْسَ يُبِينُ فَضْلُ الْمَرْءِ إِلَّا  
إِذَا كَلَّفْتَهُ مَا لَا يُطِيقُ\*  
\*\*فَفَضْلُ النَّاسِ عَقْلٌ فَهُوَ شَرَفٌ  
بِهِ التَّكْلِيفُ يُوحَى أَوْ يُطَاقُ\*\*

Wa laysa yubīnu faḍlu al-mar’i illā  
Idhā kallaftahū mā lā yuṭīqu  
Fa faḍlu al-nāsi ‘aqlun fa huwa sharafun  
Bihī al-taklīfu yūḥā aw yuṭāqu

The Preference of Man can not be recognised until,  
He is Tempted with that which is above His Ability.  
And Man’s Preference is The Intellect, A Nobility,  
Upon which responsibility is commissioned or placed.

(\*It is originally from *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb min Ghuṣn al-Andalus al-Raṭīb* of Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Muqrī al-Tilmisānī, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1988), vol. 3, p. 340. It was quoted without a reference in *Tafsīr al-Manār* of Muḥammad ‘Abduh while interpreting *āyah āmana al-Rasūl*)

(\*\*This part is an addition from Mohammed Muneer’deen O.A)

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the concept of the intellect according to three Imāms (Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh), with a view to ascertain how it is perceived theologically and philosophically, mostly through their respective *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn (Kitāb al-‘Ilm)*, and *Tafsīr al-Manār*. The dissertation examines the conflicting views about the superiority of the intellect over the revelation or the revelation over the intellect, through comparatively ascertaining the Islamic conception of the right to intellect from the three Imāms’ perspectives. The dissertation ascertains that discussions around the concept of the intellect are not new, and that it will continue to be debated for a long time, most particularly its relationship and importance to the revelation and the Divine Commandments. From the study of the views of three scholars, the study reaffirms the theological, traditional, philosophical and intellectual positions of the intellect. Intellect, according to the three Imāms, is an integral tool and means in comprehending the revelation for the benefits of knowing Allāh (S.W.T.) and serving Him, and making life peaceful and worthy of living for fellow creatures. The study is based upon the primary and secondary sources and uses qualitative method for analysis and interpretation. The findings reveal that the intellect is Islamically as important as the revelation. The intellect can be seen in various ways and perceived differently, but essentially, it is the only distinctive property and characteristic of human being, which distinguishes him from all other creatures. The intellect is thus the base for al-*Taklīf* and the *karāmah*, the man is endowed with. Furthermore, the issue of using the intellect justly is the major reason why Allāh (S.W.T.) has sent down the revelation and the Prophets and Messengers; Allāh (S.W.T.) knows that man would not be able to reason properly if left alone without guidance, hence the necessity of sending the revelation to empower the intellect in its comprehension of both the written and cosmological signs of Allāh (S.W.T.). The study uses twenty-seven cognates in the Qur’an to examine the Qur’anic-Islamic concept of the intellect; how it is viewed and used, and how its usages affect the community.

## خُلاصَةُ البَحْثِ

تُناقِشُ هَذِهِ الدِّرَاسَةُ مَفْهُومَ العَقْلِ وَفَقًّا لِثَلَاثَةِ أئِمَّةٍ (مُحَمَّدُ الطَّبْرِي، مُحَمَّدُ العَزَالِي، وَمُحَمَّدُ عَبْدِه)، بِحَدَفِ التَّأَكُّدِ مِنْ رُؤْيِيهِمْ لَهُ تَوْحِيدِيًّا، وَفَلَسَفِيًّا، وَذَلِكَ بِالرُّجُوعِ إِلَى كُتُبِهِمْ: "تَفْسِيرُ الطَّبْرِي" وَ "إِحْيَاءُ عُلُومِ الدِّينِ (كِتَابُ العِلْمِ)" وَ "تَفْسِيرُ المَنَارِ". تُرَكِّزُ الدِّرَاسَةُ عَلَى وَجْهَاتِ النِّظَرِ المُتَضَارِبَةِ عَنِ تَفْهُومِ العَقْلِ عَلَى الوَحْيِ أَوْ الوَحْيِ عَلَى العَقْلِ، وَذَلِكَ بِمُقَارِنَةِ رُؤْيِ العُلَمَاءِ الثَّلَاثَةِ حَوْلَ مَاهِيَةِ العَقْلِ فِي الإِسْلَامِ. تُؤَكِّدُ الدِّرَاسَةُ بِأَنَّ المُناقِشَاتِ حَوْلَ مَفْهُومِ العَقْلِ لَيْسَتْ جَدِيدَةً، وَبِأَنَّهَا قَطْعًا سَتَسْتَمِرُّ لِفَتْرَةٍ طَوِيلَةٍ، وَخَاصَّةً فِيمَا يَتَعَلَّقُ بِالعَقْلِ وَأَهْمِيَّتِهِ مَعَ الوَحْيِ وَالْأوامِرِ الإِلَهِيَّةِ. تُؤَكِّدُ الدِّرَاسَةُ مِنْ خِلَالِ مُقَارِنَةِ آرَاءِ الأئِمَّةِ الثَّلَاثَةِ مَكَانَةَ العَقْلِ تَوْحِيدِيًّا وَتَقْلِيدِيًّا وَفَلَسَفِيًّا وَفِكْرِيًّا. وَوَقْفًا لِآرَاءِ هؤُلَاءِ الأئِمَّةِ فَإِنَّ العَقْلَ يُعَدُّ أَهْمًا وَأَكْمَلَ آلَةٍ وَوَسِيلَةٍ لِفَهْمِ الوَحْيِ مِنْ أَجْلِ مَعْرِفَةِ اللهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى وَعِبَادَتِهِ، وَمِنْ أَجْلِ حَيَاةٍ تَعِيشُ فِيهَا الخَلَائِقُ جَمِيعًا فِي سَلَامٍ. يَعْتَمِدُ البَحْثُ عَلَى المِصَادِرِ الأَوَّلِيَّةِ وَالثَّانَوِيَّةِ، وَيَسْتَعْمِدُ الأسْلُوبَ النَّوْعِي لِتَحْلِيلِ هَذِهِ المِصَادِرِ. تَكْشِفُ نَتَائِجُ البَحْثِ بِأَنَّ أَهْمِيَّةَ العَقْلِ فِي الإِسْلَامِ هِيَ كَأَهْمِيَّةِ الوَحْيِ. فَيُمْكِنُ رُؤْيَةَ العَقْلِ بِطَرِيقٍ مُخْتَلِفَةٍ وَبِشَكْلِ مُخْتَلِفٍ، لَكِنَّ العَقْلَ هُوَ الخَاصِيَّةُ المُمَيِّزَةُ الوَحِيدَةَ لِلإِنْسَانِ، وَآلِي تُمَيِّزُهُ عَنِ سَائِرِ المَخْلُوقَاتِ الأُخْرَى. بَلْ إِنَّ العَقْلَ هُوَ قَاعِدَةُ التَّكْلِيفِ وَالْكَرَامَةِ، الَّتِي خَصَّ اللهُ بِهَا الإِنْسَانَ. إِنَّ مَسْأَلَةَ اسْتِخْدَامِ العَقْلِ بِالْعَدْلِ هُوَ السَّبَبُ الرَّئِيسِيُّ فِي انزَالِ الوَحْيِ وَإِزْسَالِ الأنبياءِ وَالمُرْسَلِينَ مِنَ اللهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى؛ ذَلِكَ لِأَنَّ اللهَ يَعْلَمُ بِأَنَّ الإِنْسَانَ لَنْ يَقْدِرَ عَلَي التَّعَقُّلِ بِشَكْلِ صَحِيحٍ وَحَدَهُ بِدُونِ تَوْحِيهِ، وَبِالتَّالِي تَأْتِي ضُرُورُهُ إِزْسَالِ الوَحْيِ لِتَمَكِينِ العَقْلِ مِنْ فَهْمِهِ لِآيَاتِ اللهِ، المَكْتُوبَةِ مِنْهَا وَالكُونِيَّةِ. وَتَسْتَعْمِدُ الدِّرَاسَةُ سَبْعَةَ وَعِشْرِينَ (٢٧) مُرَادِفًا لِكَلِمَةِ "العَقْلُ" وَرَدَّتْ فِي القُرْآنِ لِدِرَاسَةِ مَفْهُومِ العَقْلِ فِي القُرْآنِ الكَرِيمِ وَفِي الإِسْلَامِ: كَيْفَ يُنظَرُ إِلَيْهَا وَكَيْفَ تُسْتَعْمَدُ، وَكَيْفَ يُؤَثَّرُ اسْتِعْمَالُهَا عَلَي المُجْتَمَعِ.

## APPROVAL PAGE

The Dissertation of Mohammed Muneer'deen Olodo Al-Shāfi'ī has been approved by the following:

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Mohammed Muneer'deen Olodo Al-Shafi'i

Signature:.....

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I sincerely dedicate this dissertation to my paternal and maternal grandfathers Kasumu Bamikefa (d. 1978) and Salami Adebisi (d. 2011) respectively; my paternal step-grandmother Mariama Kasumu (d. 1986), my paternal grandmother Sabitiyu Ajiun Adunni Kasumu (d. 2002), my step-uncles Saliu Kasumu (d. 1977) and Latifu Kasumu (d. 1996), my step-brother Kasali Oladimeji and my step-sister Morufat Oladimeji (d. 2007), and a role model Shaykh ‘Ustādh (Dr.) ‘Uthmān al-Muḥammadī (d. 2013). May Allah SWT forgive all of them and make *al-Jannah al-Firdaws* their final return and abode, neighbouring Prophet Muḥammad SAW. *al-Fātiḥah!*



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## TRANSLITERATION TABLE

أ	‘	ج	<b>J/j</b>	ز	<b>Z/z</b>	ظ	<b>Ẓ/ẓ</b>	ل	<b>L/l</b>
أ	’	ح	<b>Ḥ/h</b>	س	<b>S/s</b>	ع	‘	م	<b>M/m</b>
أ	’	خ	<b>Kh/kh</b>	ش	<b>Sh/sh</b>	غ	<b>Gh/gh</b>	ن	<b>N/n</b>
ب	<b>B/b</b>	د	<b>D/d</b>	ص	<b>Ṣ/ṣ</b>	ف	<b>F/f</b>	هه	<b>H/h</b>
ت	<b>T/t</b>	ذ	<b>Dh/dh</b>	ض	<b>Ḍ/ḍ</b>	ق	<b>Q/q</b>	و	<b>W/w</b>
ث	<b>Th/th</b>	ر	<b>R/r</b>	ط	<b>Ṭ/ṭ</b>	ك	<b>K/k</b>	ي	<b>Y/y</b>

Short Vowels		Long Vowels	
أ	<b>A/a</b>	أ + ا	<b>Ā/ā</b>
إ	<b>I/i</b>	إ + ي	<b>Ī/ī</b>
أ	<b>U/u</b>	أ + و	<b>Ū/ū</b>

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Read as</b>
(S.W.T.) =	<i>Subhānahū Wa Ta‘ālā</i>
(Ṣ.‘A.W.) =	<i>Ṣallā Allāhu ‘Alayhi Wa Sallama</i>
(‘A.S.) =	<i>‘Alayhi al-Salām</i>
(K.W.) =	<i>Karrama Allāhu Wajhahu</i>
(R.‘A.) =	<i>Raḍiya Allāhu ‘Anhu</i>

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Everything has a pillar. The pillar of any given community, society or group of people is education. The pillars of this education are serious intellectuals/scholars who strive day and night to put things in their right places and orders. The pillar that supports the activities of these intellectuals is a vital tool that governs human life in all its spheres. This vital tool is *al-‘aql* (the Intellect) that is invisible but undoubtedly noble and an integral part of every human being. It is a quality that differentiates man from other living creatures. The importance of *al-‘aql* in Islam is no less than the importance of other obligations such as prayers and purification. For example, *al-ṣalāt* (the daily obligatory prayer) is the pillar of Islamic religion; whoever observes it observes the pillar of his *al-dīn* and whoever ignores it destroys the pillar of his *al-dīn*. Similarly, *al-wuḍū‘* (obligatory purification) is the pillar of *al-ṣalāt*; the means with which one engages in communication with one’s Lord. Based on *fiqh* maxim, all means such as *al-wuḍū‘* needed for observing an obligation become in themselves obligations. So, *al-‘aql* is one such important means for understanding what is obligatory, legal, prohibited, allowed, disallowed, liked, disliked, necessary, unnecessary and so on. Hence, intellect as suggested and affirmed by Maḥmūd ‘Abbās al-‘Aqqād in his *al-‘aql Farīdah Islāmiyyah* is an Islamic obligation. The importance of the intellect is self-evident throughout the theological, philosophical, logical, historical and intellectual discussions in Islamic thought.



*Al-‘aql* and all its cognates are so vast that they cannot be addressed adequately in just a single volume in the form of the present study. The study discusses the concept of *al-‘aql* according to Imām al-Ṭabarī, Imām al-Ghazālī and Imām ‘Abduh.

In the history of Islamic thought, thinkers, theologians, ideologists, rationalists and philosophers such as al-Ṭabarī (224–310 A.H./838–923 C.E.) who lived in the ninth and early part of the tenth centuries (third and the early part of the fourth centuries Hijrah), Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (c.870-950), Ibn Sīna (370?-428 A.H./980?-1037 C.E.), al-Ghazālī (450-505 A.H./1058–1111 C.E.), Ibn Rushd (520-595 A.H./1126-1198 C.E.), Ibn Khaldūn (732-808 A.H./1332-1406 C.E.), Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-1897 C.E.), and Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1265-1323 A.H./1849-1905 C.E.), to mention but a few, all applied intellect, in accordance with revelation, to deal with religious and intellectual issues of their age.

Historically, the main arguments regarding the intellect and revelation is basically about which one of them supersedes the other and which one is more superior. Although revelation is considered more superior to the intellect because it includes intellectuality in reality, the intellect as Allah’s creation preceded Divine scriptures. This is so because the intellect is the foundation for the comprehension of Divine revelations (*wahy*) in the Books and the Universe. Revelation came to guide the intellect, which had been divinely prepared to comprehend the message. The *‘aql* had been pre-informed of the arrival of revelation, hence it readily accepted without any objection what was brought by Divine revelation.

There are arguments and debates among scholars, scientists and philosophers, both ancient and modern, about the concept of *al-‘aql*. The arguments and debates are mainly about the reality of the term *al-‘aql* and its meanings. Is *al-‘aql* (used here as the intellect) to be seen and interpreted as *al-‘ilm* (knowledge/science) or it is to be

seen as *al-qalb* (the heart)? Is it a physical or metaphysical object? Alternatively, is it the same as *al-lubb* (inner/central part of the brain), *al-ḥikmah* (wisdom), *al-fahm* (understanding) and *al-fikr* (thought)? In *Lisān al-‘Arab*<sup>1</sup>, *al-‘aql* (intellect, knowledge, reason, judgement, sense, mind, memory, prudence, wisdom, understanding, and genius<sup>2</sup> is referred to as *al-ḥijr*<sup>3</sup> *wa al-nuhā*<sup>4</sup> (intelligence, prudence<sup>5</sup>, intelligence, understanding, reason, mind and intellect<sup>6</sup>), and its opposite is *al-ḥumq* (stupidity, dullness, foolishness, senselessness<sup>7</sup>, stupidity, silliness, foolishness, fatuosity, dumbity, idiotic and folly<sup>8</sup>). The intellect is also referred to as that maintaining stability and accuracy in matters relating to worldly and eternal affairs (*wa al-‘aql al-tathabbut fī al-umūr*)<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, it is said that the intellect is the heart and the heart is the intellect (*al-‘aql: al-qalb, al-qalb: al-‘aql*)<sup>10</sup>. They are two cognate words used interchangeably. *Al-‘aql* also denotes to forbid from being led into destructions.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab* (softcopy), (Cairo–Egypt: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, new edition, n.d), Vol. 5, part 34, pp. 3046-3050.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Catafago. *An Arabic and English Literary Dictionary, in two parts, Arabic and English, and English and Arabic*, (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition), p. 245

<sup>3</sup> The study has thus far not found a dictionary, literary, linguistic, or otherwise, that translates and interprets *al-ḥijr* as reason, intellect, mind, soul, or brain. What most famous dictionaries, such as Hans Wehr’s *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, H. Anthony Salmone’s *An Advanced Learner’s Arabic-English Dictionary*, and Joseph Catafago’s *An Arabic and English Literary Dictionary*, have in common, in this regard, is the definition of *al-ḥijr* as restriction, limitation, curtailing, interdiction, preclusion, compartment, confinement, revocation... and so on. Although these meanings are some of the literal translations of *al-‘aql*, they do not reflect the meaning of *al-ḥijr* as the intellect. In Arabic language there are several references relating the word as *al-‘aql*. This may be so, basically because the Quran (Sūrah al-Fajr: 5) mentions it, and most exegetes interpret it thus. By this the conception here is to round up the meaning to ‘restricting oneself to do good and forbidding it from doing the vice’.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-nuhā* is a noun form of *nahw* meaning intelligence and prudence, they are both *mu‘tal al-ākhir*, and otherwise it also means prohibition and interdiction.

<sup>5</sup> Ḥabīb Anthony Salmon. *An Advanced Learner’s Arabic-English Dictionary: Including an English Index*, (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, New Impression, 1978), p. 1115. See also *An Arabic and English Literary Dictionary*, p. 442.

<sup>6</sup> Hans Wehr. *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan, (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, and London: Macdonald & Evans Ltd., 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1980), p. 1005. It should be noted here that Hans Wehr directly translated *al-nuhā* as the intellect which is cognatus to *al-‘aql*.

<sup>7</sup> *An Advanced Learner’s Arabic-English Dictionary*, p. 157. See also *An Arabic and English Literary Dictionary*, p. 131 (here it is translated only as stupidity, folly and hastiness).

<sup>8</sup> *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, p. 206.

<sup>9</sup> *Lisān al-‘Arab* (softcopy), vol. 5, p. 3046.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## 1.2 AL-ṬABARĪ'S, AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S, AND 'ABDUH'S GENERAL CONCEPTION OF *AL-'AQL*

This study focuses on the concept of *al-'aql* in the works of al-Ṭabarī, al-Ghazālī and 'Abduh comparatively. A thorough study of the works and writings of these scholars reveal that they all value *al-'aql* as an instrument for understanding and comprehending Divine rules in nature. In other words, none of them have ever played down the importance of the intellect, although they may have been misconstrued and misinterpreted its true nature. Of these three scholars it is only al-Ṭabarī who stands clear of being in any way influenced by the other two who came after him. Al-Ghazālī must have read and studied al-Ṭabarī's works. While we cannot deny the influences of both al-Ṭabarī and al-Ghazālī on 'Abduh's thought it should be borne in mind that the era in which 'Abduh lived was more complex than the eras of the other two. 'Abduh lived in a period when religious intellectual understanding of the Western civilization was highly needed. Whilst al-Ṭabarī's thought echoes the traditional Islamic views of the intellect, al-Ghazālī's revives the Islamic intellectual activities from being diminished.

According to al-Ṭabarī, the purpose of Allah's endowing the intellect to mankind, particularly the Prophets and the Messengers of Allah (S.W.T.), giving them the proof, evidence and trust (*hujjah*) of everything, is to serve as a concise evidence against them in the Day of Reckoning. A clear proof that there can be no further excuse whatsoever for not doing what is right and for not forbidding that which is wrong after the Messengers were sent, and also that those who are mindful among men would remember and act justly. The Prophets and Messengers, as ambassadors between God and men, must be blessed with extraordinary mind and intellect in order that no one will say "*this is not but a man like you who eats from that which you*

eat and drinks from that which you drink. If thou follow then a man like you, you are then of those who are lost".<sup>12</sup> According to *al-Şābūnī*, the unbelievers regret for remaining dwellers of hell-fire as they did not have a beneficial intellect or did not make proper and positive use of it. This is clear in the interpretation of verse ten of *Sūrah al-Mulk*: "*law kānat lanā 'uqūl nantafi' bihā...*"<sup>13</sup> ("if we had beneficial intellects..." we would not have been condemned to the hell-fire,) whereas *al-Şāwī* says a reflecting intellect (*'aqlun tufakkir*)<sup>14</sup> properly leads to the right path. Compared to *al-Ghazālī*'s understanding of the interpretation of the glorious Qur'an<sup>15</sup> and 'Abduh's

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<sup>12</sup>Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, (Beirut-Lebanon: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1400 A.H./1980 C.E.), vol. 1, pp. 2-4.

<sup>13</sup>Muḥammad 'Alī al-Şābūnī. *Şafwah al-Tafsīr*, (Midyat-Hukümet: M. Nuri Nas Islami Kitaplar Nasiri, 1980), vol. 3, p. 417.

<sup>14</sup>Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Şāwī. *Hāshiyah al-Şāwī 'alā Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām Shāhīn, (Beirut-Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1415 A.H./1995 C.E.), vol. 6, p. 143.

<sup>15</sup> Sunnis rely on following basic sources for the interpretation of the Qur'an: the Qur'an itself, the Prophetic traditions, the Companions' independent opinions and those of the early scholars' (*'ulamā'*). Some also refer to Judeo-Christian traditions when occasion demands that. In any case, the main source for interpreting the Qur'an is clearly the Qur'an itself. Qur'an should be comprehended using the Qur'an itself because its verses constitute a completely united integral whole, a coherent unified structure. Thus if we single out a verse from the Qur'an and try to comprehend it in isolation from the rest of the book, we comprehend it, but not in a complete or a profound sense. This is because certain verses of the Qur'an explain other verses, or as the saying goes: *al-Qur'an yufassiru ba'duhā ba'dā*. This method is affirmed by all great commentators of the Qur'an. There are many occasions in the Qur'an whereby if a single verse is studied without placing it in its proper context, it gives quite a different meaning than when it is seen in the light of the verses dealing with a similar subject. In addition, when scholars interpret the Qur'an, they give the Qur'anic opinion of the verse, the prophetic explanation, and the Companions' comprehension of the verse. When there is no further Qur'anic and Prophetic interpretations for a verse, the scholars opt for *ijtihād*, whereby they give the companions' interpretations and substantiate it with their own intellectual and scholastic views. See, for instances, Fārūqī, I. H. Azad, *The Tarjuman al-Qur'an: A Critical Analysis of Maulana Abu al-Kalām Azad's Approach to the Understanding of the Qur'an*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1982), pp. 5-7; 'Alī al-'Awsī, *al-Ṭabātabā'ī wa Manhajuhū fī Tafsīrih al-Mizān*, (Tehran: Mu'awiniyyah al-Riyāsah li al-'alāqāt al-Duwalīyyah, 1985), p. 125; Andrew Rippin, 'Tafsīr' in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Ed. Mircea Eliade, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), vol. 14, pp. 236-244; Husain Dhahabi, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Ḥadīth, 1961), Vol. 1., quoted in. I. H. Azad Faruqī, *The Tarjuman al-Qur'an*. 1982. p. 2; al-Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr, *Muqaddimāt fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī li al-Qur'ān*, (Beirut: Dār al-Tawjīh al-Islāmī, 1980), pp. 10-30; Calder, Norman, 'Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr' in *Approaches to the Qur'an*, ed. G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef, pp. 101-140. (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 105; Sayyed Muhammad Husayn Ṭabātabā'ī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, (Beirut: Mu'assisāt al-'Alamī, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1972), p. 1; Muhammad Baqir Sadr, 'Thematic Approach to Qur'anic Exegesis' *Al-Tawhīd* (1988-89), pp. 17- 28; and Murtaḍā Muṭahhari, "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an," *al-Tawhīd* (1987), pp. 9-25.

modern interpretation of his time, al-Ṭabarī's interpretation is purely traditional<sup>16</sup> since the challenges faced by his era was not as severe as in the later periods.

Generally, al-Ghazālī is in no way opposed to the power of *al-ʿaql*. All he is saying is that *al-ʿaql* cannot be the sole arbiter in mortals' affairs, and cannot be wholly reliable, for it is also dependent on revelation which in turn has its precedence linked to the Divine root. To al-Ghazālī, *al-ʿaql* is not but an instrument to properly understand and act upon orders given in revelation, and when properly employed it does not contradict that which is revealed. In his magnum opus '*Iḥyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn*' he calls it *nūr* (light) with reference to it in āyat al-Nūr in the Qur'an. On the importance of the intellect, he cites the Prophet as saying:

يا أيها الناس اعقلوا عن ربكم وتواصوا بالعقل تعرفوا ما أمرتم به وما نهيتم عنه واعلموا أنه ينجدكم عند ربكم واعلموا أن العاقل من أطاع الله وإن كان دميم المنظر حقير الخطر دينه المنزلة رث الهيئة وأن الجاهل من عصى الله تعالى وإن كان جميل المنظر عظيم الخطر شريف المنزلة حسن الهيئة فصيحاً نطوقاً فالقردة والخنازير أعقل عند الله تعالى ممن عصاه ولا تغتر بتعظيم أهل الدنيا إياهم فإنهم من الخاسرين... أول ما خلق الله العقل فقال له أقبل فأقبل ثم قال له أدبر فأدبر ثم قال الله عز وجل وعزّي وجلالي ما خلقت خلقاً أكرم على منك بك آخذ بك أعطي وبك أثيب وبك أعاقب<sup>17</sup>

O ye men! Know Allah and be ruled by [the] intellect, then ye will know what ye have been enjoined and ye have been forbidden. Know ye that [the] intellect is your glory before Allah. He who obeyeth Allah,

<sup>16</sup> The Qur'anic interpretation of al-Ṭabarī is regarded as traditional because it is based on the interpretation of certain Qur'anic verses with other verses of the Qur'an, with the Prophetic traditions and the guided opinions of the four rightly guided *khulafā'* (R. 'A) of the Prophet (S. 'A.W). (See Fārūqī, I. H. Azad, *The Tarjuman al-Qur'an: A Critical Analysis of Maulana Abu al-Kalām Azad's Approach to the Understanding of the Qur'an*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1982), pp. 5-7; 'Ali al-'Awsī, *al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī wa Manhajuhū fī Tafṣīrih al-Mīzān*, (Tehran: Mu'awiniyyah al-Riyāsah li al-'alāqāt al-Duwalīyyah, 1985), p. 125; and Murtaḍā Muṭahhari, "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an," *al-Tawhīd* (1987), pp. 17.). Al-Ghazālī is a traditional scholar, but since this study is not related to his supposed interpretation of the glorious Qur'an, he is not regarded as one; he is more preferred as a philosopher and *mutakallim* through the study of his other works that the present study has accessed. 'Abduh's approach is clear as he is studied through his modern Qur'anic interpretation.

<sup>17</sup> Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī al-Ḥusaynī, *Iḥāf al-sādah al-muttaqīn bi sharḥ Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*, (Beirut-Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 748-753. ((يا أيها الناس) حديث: ((اعقلوا عن ربكم وتواصوا بالعقل... الحديث)) أخرجه داود بن المغيرة أحد الضعفاء في كتاب العقل من حديث أبي هريرة وهو في مسند الخارث بن أبي أسامة عن حديث: ((أول ما خلق الله العقل قال له أقبل فأقبل... الحديث)) أخرجه الطبراني في الأوسط من حديث أبي أمامة وأبو نعيم من حديث عائشة بإسنادين (داود). (ضعيفين).

although his looks may be ugly, his rank lowly, his station modest, and his appearance shabby, is intelligent; but he who disobeyeth Allah, although his looks may be good, his rank exalted, his station noble, his appearance fair, and his power of speech sharp and fluent, the same is ignorant. For the apes and the pigs are, in the sight of God, saner than he who disobeyeth. Therefore be not deceived by the honour which the men of this world receive: verily they are of those who are doomed... The first thing which Allah created was the intellect. On creating it Allah ordered it saying, 'Come forth', and it came forth. He then ordered it saying, 'Return', and it returned. Thereupon Allah said, 'By My power and glory I have created nothing more reverent towards Me than thee. Through thee I take through thee I give, through thee I reward and through thee I punish.'<sup>18</sup>

Although it may be a popular claim that the *ḥadīth* quoted by al-Ghazālī for proof are considered weak by *ḥadīth* scholars, it is undeniable that the meaning of the *ḥadīth* is in harmony with Islamic teachings.<sup>19</sup> For instance, the Qur'an itself does not overlook the role and importance of the intellect in properly comprehending the messages contained in it. Similarly, the Prophet (Ṣ.ʿA.W) encourages us to employ our wisdom, a deep and profound process of insightful intellectual activities, in religious rulings where there exists neither a direct Qur'anic nor Prophetic references. In this regard again, al-Ghazālī quotes the Prophet as saying:

لكلّ شيء آلة وعدة وإنّ آلة المؤمن العقل ولكلّ شيء مطيّة ومطيّة المرء العقل ولكلّ شيء دعامة ودعامة الدّين العقل ولكلّ قوم غاية وغاية العباد العقل ولكلّ قوم داع وداعى العابدين العقل ولكلّ تاجر بضاعة وبضاعة المجتهدين العقل ولكلّ أهل بيت قيم وقيم بيوت الصّديقين العقل ولكلّ خراب عمارة وعمارة الآخرة العقل ولكلّ امرئ عقب ينسب إليه ويذكر به وعقب الصّديقين الذي ينسبون إليه ويذكرون به العقل ولكلّ سفر فسطاط وفسطاط المؤمنين العقل.<sup>20</sup>

For everything there is an instrument and a tool, and the instrument of the believer is his intellect: for everything there is a mainstay, and the

<sup>18</sup> Al-Ghazālī. *Kitāb al-ʿilm* (trans. Nabih Amin Faris as 'The Book of Knowledge'), (Lahore-Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1<sup>st</sup> published 1962), p. 222. (The word 'God' in the original translation is here replaced with the word 'Allah', and intellect is preceded with definite article 'the').

<sup>19</sup> An idea maintained by Prof. Mohd Kamal Hassan during one of his lectures the author attended at ISTAC-IIUM KL Campus on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2012. To be specific, the author noted him as quoting that "the *ḥadīth* cited by al-Ghazālī is *daʿīf* [weak], but it is in harmony with the concept..."

<sup>20</sup> See *Ithāf al-sādah al-muttaqīn...*, vol. 1, p. 758. (( لكل شيء آلة وعدة وإن آلة المؤمن العقل... الحديث ))  
(أخرجه ابن الخبير وعنه الحارث)

mainstay of man is his intellect; for everything there is a support, and the support of religion is the intellect; for every group of men there is a goal, and the goal of the worshippers is the intellect; for every people there is a missionary (who calls them to true faith), and the missionary of the devout is the intellect; for every merchant there are goods and merchandise, and the merchandise of the scholars is the intellect; for every house there is a keeper, and the keeper of the houses of the saints is the intellect; for every ruin there is rehabilitation, and the rehabilitation of ruin is the intellect; for every man there is an offspring who bears his name and perpetuates his memory, and the offsprings of the saints, who bear their names, and perpetuate their memory, are their intellects; and finally for every journey there is a shelter, and the shelter of the believers is the intellect.<sup>21</sup>

The importance of this part of quotation, as will be detailed later, is to render the intellect its importance as a tangible instrument and tool without which the purpose of revelation is lost and remains ambiguous. Furthermore, al-Ghazālī, while placing the burden of responsibility on the intellect, is sure that there will be no contradiction between what is properly reasoned and what is revealed.<sup>22</sup> The failure of man to use his intellect in a right way is not a defect of the intellect but that of a man, hence the reason why “*the Qur’an reprimands human failure to use the God-given [Divinely gifted] intellect to strengthen true religious faith*”<sup>23</sup>.

To understand ‘Abduh’s views on the intellect, there is also a need to understand what he has undergone in his lifetime. The society was in confusion as to what to do to make Islamic studies comprehensible with the Western trend that stood to endanger its existence. ‘Abduh was one of the modern architects of Egypt and one of

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<sup>21</sup> *The Book of Knowledge*, p. 225.

<sup>22</sup> Mohammad Kamal Hassan. ‘*Diseases of the Spiritual Heart as Root Causes of Moral Decay and Corruption of Justice based on Imam al-Ghazali’s Analysis*’ in *Journal of Applied Sciences Research*, 7(13):2286-2291, 2011, p. 2287. See also Karim Douglas Crow’s ‘*The Intellect in Islamic Thought: Mind and Heart*’, pp. 2-4, in *KATHA – The Official Journal of the Centre for Civilizational Dialogue*, vol. 2, 2006. Also consulted in this regard is Isham Pawan Ahmad’s ‘*As Far as you are able, Join Faith to Reason: Medieval Attempt at Reconciling Faith to Reason in Islam and Christianity*’ page 148 onward.

<sup>23</sup> Mohd Kamal Hassan. ‘*The Human Intellect, Divine Revelation and Knowledge based on Al-Qaradāwī’s Work: al-‘Aql wa al-‘ilm fī al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*’ in *Revelation and Science*, vol. 01, No.03 (1433H/2011) 1-12, p. 1. See also Mohd. Shuhaimi bin Haji Ishak’s ‘*The Role of Intellect (Al-‘Aql) in the Discourse of Harun Nasution*’ page 112 onward, in *Journal of Usuluddin*, Rejab 1430H Julai 2009 – Zulhijjah 1430H Disember 2009 (111-131).

the founders of the contemporary Islamic thought. In order to fully comprehend his religious thought there is a need to understand his personality.<sup>24</sup> ‘Abduh’s general opinion and views in interpreting Qur’an practically to the public beyond the scope of the theologians is that: “*on the Last Day God will not question us on the opinions of all the commentators and on how they understood the Qur’an, but He will question us on His book which He sent down to guide and instruct us*”<sup>25</sup>. In other words, ‘Abduh’s argument here is that the way Qur’an was traditionally interpreted might not meet the modern requirement. He declares to us, laymen and theologians alike, the importance of realizing “*the limited relevance of the traditional commentaries that do not contribute to the solutions of the urgent problems of the day*”<sup>26</sup>. He, like al-Ghazālī, forbids blind acceptance of Qur’anic interpretation which does not conform to the current issues and affairs. For the Qur’an to be universal and remain current it must be able to address all issues at all times and places. The Qur’an must be able to ‘*speak for itself unobscured by subtle explanations and glosses*’<sup>27</sup>. We may understand the importance he attaches to human intellect from his apparent treatment and interpretation of the word *furqān*<sup>28</sup> unconventionally as the intellect –that which distinguishes the truth from falsehood. ‘Abduh is not alone in interpreting the word as such, modern and contemporary scholars such as Ahmad Zaki also interprets it as “*the Criterion of the way of truth*”<sup>29</sup>. Thus, interpreting the Qur’an without taking into consideration its modern intellectual discourse may be problematic.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Charles C. Adams. *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muḥammad ‘Abduh*, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), pp. 1-3.

<sup>25</sup>J.J.G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), p. 19.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān (Quran 3): 4

<sup>29</sup>Aḥmad Zaki Ḥammad, *The Gracious Quran: A Modern-Phrased Interpretation in English; Arabic-English Parallel Edition* (USA: Lucent International, LLC, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2008), p. 83.

<sup>30</sup>On the methodology of ‘Abduh’s Qur’anic interpretation, some works have been done. ‘Abd al-Ghaffār, for example, has written a comprehensive book titled *Al-imām Muḥammad ‘Abduh wa*