

EXPLORING THE QUALITIES OF THE ANGELS AS MODELS FOR THE NIGERIA POLICE FOR EFFECTIVE WAR AGAINST CORRUPTION

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Abstract

The war against corruption in Nigeria is apparently a daunting one; nevertheless, it cannot be abandoned. This is necessary not only to sustain the nation but also to guarantee her future. Much as every citizen is obligated to join the anti-corruption army, the duty is primarily that of the law-enforcement agencies with particular reference to the police. In the Islamic cosmology, the angels were created to execute divine directives without fear or favour. They are naturally loyal. They do not break the law. Even though police personnel, as human beings, have limitations, the study examines the extent to which the ideals of implicit loyalty and effectiveness of angels in carrying out divine instructions can be used to set models for the Nigeria Police. The method adopted is exploratory and correlative. The findings include the fact that bribery, corrupt practices, extrajudicial killings, indiscipline and other forms of professional misconduct are rampant among the police presumably owing to lack of any motivating ethico-spiritual ideal. These misdemeanors will drastically reduce should the police imbibe the spirit of self-discipline and absolute loyalty, a development that will enhance their professional efficiency in stemming the tide of corruption in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria Police, Corruption, Islam, Model, Loyalty

Introduction

The expose of monumental corrupt practices by the Buhari administration within the short period of its existence should be of serious concern to any person interested in the continued existence of Nigeria. The gargantuan amounts of money notwithstanding, the unimaginable negative effects in terms of loss of life and property, social dislocation, decay of social amenities and infrastructural facilities as well as opprobrium to which

the nation has been exposed at the international scene give the perpetrators away as unpatriotic cheats. There is no doubt that all citizens must key in into the war against corruption and show commitment to its success before it can yield any desired result. All-embracing and general as the task is, some people have been employed, trained, equipped and paid to uphold the rule of law and prevent, investigate and combat crimes particularly those relating to corruption in Nigeria. The change for the better should start with them. Contrary to the expectation, the police, both men and officers, are seen extorting money from commercial drivers without any qualm.

This study juxtaposes the perfect functional efficiency of Angels as exemplified in carrying out divine instructions with precision on the one hand, with the imperfect and unconscionable performance of the Nigeria Police on the other. The objective in relating the perfect ideal to the imperfect situation is to set a model and an epic ethical goal for the police to boost their morale and spur them to perfectionist loyalty and efficiency in the fight against corruption.

Apart from this introduction, this study consists of four sections. The first one discusses the impeccable loyalty and efficiency of angels while the second examines issues relating to the professional efficiency of the Nigeria police in relation to corrupt practices among them. The third one correlates the functions of angels with those of the police. It is rounded off with conclusion.

The Angels and their Impeccable Loyalty

It is pertinent to clarify the wrong notion in some quarters that the articles of faith in Islam are just to be believed without any relationship with the practical actions in the day-to-day activities of Muslims.¹ The fact is that Islam is a complete way of life with symbiotic connection and relationship among its components such as the *‘Aqīdah* (creed or doctrine), *‘Ibādah* (Worship or Rites) and *Mu‘āmalah* (Practical Life or Inter-Personal Relationship with Others). Without symmetric coordination between one’s orientation in terms of faith system and practical worship, one’s spiritual life will be chaotic without any bearing. In the light of this, it is self-evident that *‘Aqīdah* serves as the solid foundation on which the superstructure of worship, ethics and other teachings of Islam are based.

Belief in Angels, therefore, is not a passive doctrinal issue. It is to motivate perceptions and actions in line with the spiritual and moral teachings of Islam. The Qur’ān does not mince words in enunciating the

sterling qualities of the Angels in terms of overwhelming strength, nobility of character, unwavering commitment, ceaseless worship and duties assigned to them as well as implicit loyalty to Allah.² The aim is to guide Muslims to struggle to attain these spiritual and ethical models. For instance, the overwhelming and irresistible power of the Angels which conditions them to execute the biddings of Allah without let or hindrance is enough to make one heed warnings against disobeying Allah. The description of the blissful life of enjoyment and satisfaction awaiting devout Muslims in the hereafter is to motivate righteousness and dedicated worship of Allah, the Almighty.

There is no doubt that the nature of man which makes him susceptible to the cravings of flesh and sensual passions cannot but impede his march towards the attainment of the lofty goals of spiritual and ethical perfection. He cannot avoid being true to his nature. It is in the light of this that Allah, the Ever-Forgiving, has made allowances for seeking for His forgiveness. All the same, man owes it a duty to use his natural endowments in terms of thinking faculties, senses, experiences and environment surrounding him to achieve a measure of success in the struggle to attain spiritual and ethical excellence. In fact, it is the extent to which one achieves success in that respect that will determine one's fate on the Last Day.³

It is in the light of the facts stated above that attention is drawn in this study to the ideals set by the Angels in enforcing divine commandments. The following verses of the Glorious Qur'ān guide us in identifying the sterling qualities of the Angels in this respect:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

O You who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who disobey not, (from executing) the commands they receive from Allah, but do that which they are commanded (Qur'ān 66 :6).

The verse quoted above mentions three qualities of the angels detailed to take charge of the Hell Fire. They are stern, severe and do not disobey “the commands they receive from Allah, but do that which they are commanded.” Much as the third quality listed here is the most directly relevant to the focus of this study, it is not completely out of point to dilate

briefly on each of them at this juncture. The Arabic word translated as “stern” is *ghilāz* (sing. *ghalīz*). It is a derivative of *ghaluza* or *ghaliḏa*, the trilateral root form as the verb. *Ghilḏah* or *ghilāḏah* is the verbal noun. The word, among other things, denotes being crude, rugged, harsh, ruthless, impolite and boorish.⁴ *Shidād* (sing. *shadīd*) has been translated as “severe” in the quotation. Having been derived from “*shiddah*” as the trilateral verbal noun, the word means, among other things, strong, powerful, forceful, vigorous, stern, severe, hard and vehement.⁵ The fact that the Angels do not disobey Allah and that they execute the divine commands shows that, by nature, they do not have the ability and capacity to disobey Allah. In addition, they are so strong and capable to maintain the tempo and severity of carrying out divine injunctions throughout the duration specified for them without being tired or waning in strength.

Some exegetes have identified the group of Angels mentioned in this verse being guardians over the Hell Fire as Az-Zabāniyah, nineteen in number.⁶ Awe-inspiring graphic descriptions of their physique show that they are physically and mentally enabled to execute jobs assigned to them with precision. Other groups of Angels are different in physique and disposition.⁷ All the same, they share the common nature of being ever-obedient to Allah. The exegetes are of the opinion that the attribute of *ghilāz* relates to the manner of compulsive harsh utterances with which the Angels will deal with the people to be punished by them while *shidād* is a description of the physical dealing with the people. Some others opine that the two attributes relate respectively to their awful build-up and intemperate yells at the sinners being punished in the Hell Fire. The scenario is that of showing no mercy to those condemned to the punishment of the Hell Fire. In fact, the passion for mercy or compassion is not, in the least, in the nature of those Angels.⁸

The Police and Upholding the Rule of Law

The word “police”, a derivative from the French *police* which also evolved from Latin *politeia*, is the latinisation of the Greek *polissoos* meaning “a person guarding a city.”⁹ Although the police force, as an institution, has passed through many stages of development, the definition of “guarding the city” is applicable even in the modern dispensation. This is done by preventing and investigating crimes on the one hand, and maintaining law and order, on the other.

The Nigeria Police formerly known as the Nigeria Police Force came into being in 1861 in Lagos Colony in form of Consular Guard with 30 members. Further developments took place in the North, Lagos and Calabar between 1879 and 1894. Despite the fact that the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates took place in 1914, the Northern Nigeria Police and Southern Nigeria Police were not merged until 1930 to form the Nigeria Police Force, with the headquarters in Lagos.¹⁰

The Nigeria Police today have gone through a lot of transformation. They suffer many casualties in the task of maintaining law and order. A lot of successes have been made in that respect. One of such is the arrest of dare-devil criminals who kidnapped a former Minister in Ogun State and a monarch in Lagos in 2016.¹¹ There are many other achievements of the police in Nigeria as a whole too numerous to mention here to make law-abiding citizens live comfortably and peacefully.

Despite the appreciable achievements of the Police, an average Nigerian takes them as enemies rather than friends. Some of the reasons for this negative perception are as reported by Timbee Akuul in the following quotation:

Corruption and extortion are widespread among the members of the Nigeria Police Force. This practice has greatly soiled the image of the police. Agreeing to this worrisome issue, Alemika (1999:10) argues that police corruption is a serious issue because they are expected to be morally upright as law enforcement agents. If the police which are employed to prevent and detect corruption or crime and bring culprits to judgement are themselves corrupt, then the society is at risk. Similarly, the police exercise powers that have great implications on the lives, properties and safety of citizens. Where such power is contaminated by corrupt tendencies, then the citizens are insecure. This corruption also manifests in extortion which is a form of robbery. Corruption on the part of the police explains why the public is threatened by such practices, and hence the police are not capable of living up to expectation.¹²

The low rating of the performance of the police is mostly not viewed in relation to the serious challenges before it as an institution. Lacking regular and appropriate training, the men and officers behave in many cases according to their caprices and whims. They lack necessary equipment to prevent, combat and investigate crimes. Communication gadgets, vehicles and decent offices with furniture items are lacking. Some police stations have no regular supplies of electricity and serviceable generators. Weapons

in the hands of criminals are more sophisticated and outnumber those available to the police in some cases. Poor motivation in terms of regular promotions, living wages, decent accommodation at duty posts and welfare of dependants tend to dampen the spirit of the police to give their best. People do not have confidence in the police; hence the refusal to volunteer information that may forestall crimes or apprehend criminals almost immediately after their nefarious acts.

Modeling the Imperfect to Aspire to Perfection

From the analysis given above, it is evident that the Angels perfectly enforcing the divine will cannot be compared with the officers and men of the police force who are mortal, imperfect and grossly limited in power and capacity. Nevertheless, this study is informed by the fact that the noble exemplary qualities and characters possessed by the angels should serve as models that the police can aspire to attain. Even though the Nigeria Police cannot in reality achieve this, the attempt will go a long way to motivate and inspire them to improve on their present dismal performance. This is akin to the divine attributes which belong to Allah in their perfect form but, at the same time, serve as models for believers to pattern their lives.¹³ Among other things, the angels and the police are dissimilar in the following aspects:

- i. **Nature:** The angels are special creatures with no free will to exercise discretion to choose either to obey or disobey Allah. The police are susceptible to the cravings of the flesh and evil machinations of Satan.
- ii. **Power:** Allah endowed the angels with such power that no creature can contend with not to talk of subduing. They face no threat of being maimed or killed. The police are human beings with emotions and sentiments. They are overpowered at times by criminals.¹⁴
- iii. **Enablement:** The angels have the ability to carry out divine instructions without let or hindrance. They have the speed, mobility and the wherewithal to move mountains, rain firestorms and cause deluge. The police, more often than not, are ill-equipped. Even when the Government adequately funds the police force, there will be a limit to what can be procured. This accounts for the fact that criminals, in some instances, kill policemen not only in Nigeria but also in advanced countries.

- iv. **Authority:** To Allah belongs the dominion over the whole universe. He exercises unquestionable authority over all creatures. With such authority, He sets the angels to execute His will which will come to pass. The same thing cannot be said of the police. There are many insurrections that prove insurmountable to the police. In fact, they even suffer heavy casualties in the process of quelling such revolts.
- v. **Mission:** The angels are mobilised for just causes to make the word of Allah prevail over base desires and satanic trappings. Many a time, the police are set against innocent people for selfish political ends. Since Allah does not take side with evil-doers, officers and men such mobilized are haunted by their conscience, a situation that may negatively affect their performance.

The facts adumbrated above show that it is impossible to compare the angels with any human law-enforcement agency especially the police. Despite that, it should be understood that Islam, being a complete way of life, establishes links among its various components to present comprehensive guidance for humanity so as to facilitate a successful life in this world and blissful sojourn in *Al-Jannah* in the hereafter.¹⁵ Just like other articles of Faith, belief in Angels is to guide and guard to the way of Allah in all aspects of life. It is to teach lessons in the spiritual, moral, ethical, social and other aspects of life.

With particular reference to the issue of policing, it is evident that the Nigeria police have a long way to go in the areas of training, equipment and motivation. Cashing in on the situation, many men and officers of the police exploit the citizens they are paid to protect. They sometimes go to the extent of aiding and abetting corruption and heinous crimes just to make money. In summary, Adebayo and Ojo assert:

Without doubt, the Nigeria police is really enmeshed in corruption like several other state institutions. But the degree of corrupt practices in the police appears too deep into the “marrows” of the organization. If personnel of other institutions engage in corruption at all, they do it perhaps with caution while that of the police is done more in the full glare of the public. This manifestation of corrupt practices in the Nigerian (sic) police has really gone too far to mar the image of the police in the eyes of the public. If anything, the Nigeria police is an institution that no Nigerian loves to come in contact with despite the fact that it is supposed to be a friend of the society.¹⁶

There is no doubt that much has to be done by the Government, the police themselves and the citizens generally to make the police more proficient, efficient, and effective in discharging their statutory duties to Nigeria. This is a task that must be done to transform Nigeria to one of the leading countries of the world where peace and tranquility reign supreme. Incidentally, the position of the country as the most populous and largest economy in Africa, the onus is on Nigeria to play the stabilizing role not only in the West African sub-region but also in Africa as a whole.

In specific terms, the modeling of the Nigeria police should be comprehensive. It should focus particularly on the following areas:

- i. **Numerical strength:** It is mentioned in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth that angels are far more than human beings in number at any given time. They take the records of the deeds of each human being.¹⁷ They populate the heavens and the earth.¹⁸ Allah alone knows their numerical strength.¹⁹ Seven thousand angels enter Al-Bait al-Mu^cmūr, a replica of the Ka^cbah in the heaven, at a time, and will not have the opportunity again throughout life. Conversely, Nigeria has about 300,000 (three hundred thousand) police personnel to take care of a population of more than 200,000,000 (two hundred million) citizens. This is below the United Nations' recommendation of 1 policeman to 400 citizens.²⁰ In the light of this, the lesson is clear that it is imperative to increase the number of the policemen.
- ii. **Equipment:** It is asserted in the Qur'ān that Allah created the angels with two, three, four or more wings.²¹ Each of the wings is such that will enable the angels to execute the biddings of Allah with immediate alacrity and precision. The situation of the police in Nigeria is the direct opposite of this. They lack the equipment to prevent or detect crimes. Starting from roadworthy vehicles, communication equipment and office requirements including furniture, computer units and writing materials, each police station lacks the minimum provisions to effectively ensure security of life and property.
- iii. **Training:** The fact that Allah has created the angels in such a way that they cannot disobey Him and refuse to carry out duties assigned to them shows that they have been oriented towards loyalty, efficiency and effectiveness. There is no doubt that man cannot attain that perfection, still, regular training at home and abroad especially in exposing the police to the state-of-the-earth devices and technological know-how in the field of detecting, preventing and fighting crimes will

go a long way to improve their professional efficiency. It will also make them proud of their profession, a development that may lead to reduction in corrupt practices among them.

- iv. **Welfare:** Worrisome news items are carried by mass media in Nigeria relating to the salaries, emoluments and general welfare of the police and savings for pension and gratuity.²² Many are posted on special duties with no provision for accommodation, feeding and other special allowances. Many a time, they are paid less than what has been stipulated as their allowances. There is no doubt that all these forms of nonchalant attitude to the well-being of the police will impact negatively on their psyche and morale. The angels of Allah are described as the servants of Allah “raised to honour”. “*Mukramūn*” the Arabic word used in the Qur’ān has been translated as “raised to honour” in English. Among other things, it means “noble, esteemed, dignified, respected, honoured, revered”, etc.²³ In other words, the angels enjoy a pride of place and position before Allah with special recognition. Respect, people say, begets respect. The way the welfare of the police is taken with levity leaves much to be desired. The issue whether the police also deserve an image better than they are given as a result of their disappointing performance is another case entirely.

With the steps listed above taken, there is every hope that the performance of the police as a law-enforcement agency will appreciably change for the better in Nigeria. Of course, there are bound to be bad eggs among the police as a group of human beings with natural imperfections. The fact is that the situation will be far different from the present one in which corruption appears to have been institutionalized. The few miscreants identified then will be made to face the music as appropriate.

Conclusion

This study is a critical examination of the performance of the Nigeria police which is of serious concern to right-thinking citizens of this great nation. As a way of improving the professional effectiveness of the police and helping them to get over the inadequacies identified with them, this study challenges them to emulate the ideal standard set by the angels, as ever-obedient messengers of Allah who enforce His ordinances unfailingly. Although what man does will always be deficient in comparison with Allah’s will, the ideals of angels can be used to inspire and motivate the Nigeria police to be up and doing. They will thereby become more

proficient and efficient in policing the nation by ensuring security of life and property. On the other hand, they will be able to shun bribery and corruption, being the main reasons why people lose confidence and exercise serious circumspection in divulging information to them.

To ensure the attainment of the objective mentioned above, it is here recommended that the Federal Government should increase the numerical strength of the police, equip and motivate them by taking good care of their welfare. There is a need for regular training to update their knowledge and professional efficiency and operational effectiveness. If only to practically demonstrate the fight against corruption, the Federal Government should forthwith stop the police from extorting motorists in the full glare of the public. This brazen act of intolerable corruption among the police creates doubt in the mind of the Nigerians about the seriousness of the Government to stamp out corruption in public life in Nigeria. The police should devise an in-house mechanism to better instill discipline in its personnel.

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