

The Miraculousness Thought: Context and Evolution up to the Third Century AH

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Abstract

The I'jāz (miraculousness) thought has witnessed some stages before the fourth century AH when it achieved its pinnacle. At the first stage in the first and second centuries AH, the men of letters and orators indicated their inability to rival the Qur'ān, and the scholars and interpreters disregarded the issues tied to miraculousness without much effort and did not discuss it. At the later stage, the theological contention among various religions and within Islamic denominations posed some challenges against the Qur'ān as the evidence for the prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad (s) and Islam, and led to an emphasis on the miraculousness discussions. The efforts of scholars such as Nazām, 'Alī b. Rabban Ṭabarī, Jāhīz, Ibn Qutayba, and Wāsiṭī about I'jāz represent some of the concerns which existed at that time.

Keywords

Miraculousness of the Qur'ān, Theological contentions among religions, Theological contentions among Islamic denominations, Translation movement.

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Introduction

As the first and the most important source of religious knowledge, the Qur'ān has received great attention from Muslims from its early days of revelation. On the early days of Islam, Muslims examined this divine book from various viewpoints. They sometimes considered Qur'ān as the source of legislation, at other times discussed it with regard to its connection with the events of the lifetime of the Prophet (s), and at still other times regarded its recitation styles. These efforts gradually led to the appearance of various types of knowledge and sciences revolving around the Qur'ān. It is evident that these branches of knowledge have not appeared suddenly and abruptly; rather, like other worldly phenomena, their rise has been gradual and dependent on the existence of preliminary requirements and factors. The miraculousness of the Qur'ān, which is viewing the Qur'ān as the evidence and proof for the prophethood of the Prophet of Allāh, is one of these sciences and types of knowledge. It seems that it has found its status in the Qur'ānic literature toward the end of the third century AH, when it achieved its perfection and maturity in the works of thinkers such as Rummānī, Khaṭābī, Bāqilānī, Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār Mu'tazilī, and Jurjānī. This article aims at examining the quality of the miraculousness thought before this stage and discussing the context and factors that led to the appearance and maturity of this topic in a systematic and unified form.

A look at the texts and historical documents shows that in the first and second centuries AH, the miraculousness of the Qur'ān has not been discussed directly, and it is not clear why and how this issue has gone unnoticed. Only men of letters, orator, and cultivated people felt the miraculousness of the Qur'ān profoundly, deemed it a definite matter, and bend to it in courtesy and submission. We might name this period as the era of "the awareness of inability and the belief in the miraculousness".

After this era and in the third century AH, with the expansion of the Islamic territory, the prosperity of the Translation Movement, and the arrival of foreign thoughts and theological disputes, the Muslim thinkers had to go beyond the confession to the miraculousness of the Qur'ān based on their feeling of this reality and explore more profoundly the quality of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān as the evidence and proof of the prophethood of the Prophet (s) and the rightfulness of Islam. In the study at hand, this stage is called "the formation of the miraculousness thought." Accordingly, we will examine the evolution of the miraculousness thought up to the third century AH in the two foregoing stages.

The evolution of the miraculousness thought up to the third century AH

Stage 1: The awareness of inability and the belief in the miraculousness

The awareness of inability could be seen evidently and clearly in the texts related to the revelation time of the Qur'ān. The men of letters and orators of the revelation era such as Walīd b. Muḡhayra (Balkhī, 2002, vol. 4: 491-492; Ṭabarī, 1991, vol. 29: 98; Ḥakim Nayshābūrī, 2006, vol. 3: 339; Tha'labī Nayshābūrī, 2001, vol. 10: 72-73; Abū al-Futūḡ Rāzī, 1987, vol. 20: 27-28), Anīs b. Janāda (Qāḏī 'Ayyād, 1988, vol. 1: 266; Ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalānī, 1994, vol. 1: 284-285), 'Utba b. Rabī'a (Ibn Hushām Ḥimyarī, 1963, vol. 1: 189-191), Suwayd b. Ṣāmit (ibid., vol. 2: 290-291), etc. found the Qur'ān as a text at the height of eloquence and rhetoric which was beyond the eloquence horizon of their time and indicated their inability against and attraction to it manifestly. As narrations reveal, they used several means to understand the Qur'ān.

The first solution they used was comparison. The eloquent Arab men of letters compared the Qur'ān with the eloquence frameworks common in their own time such as poem, rabbis' cadences, or the customary sayings. This way, they understood the miraculousness of the Qur'ān (for more information, q.v. Zarrūq, 2011, vol. 1: 30-33, 180-200). At the time of the establishment and growth of the discussions on the miraculousness of the Qur'ān, we could see that thinkers such as Bāqilānī (Bāqilānī, 1971: 36-38, 51-65, 127-154, 158-183, 219-241, 243) and 'Abd al-Qāḡir Jurjānī (Jurjānī, 1989: 8-9) have also used this means and have shown the prominence and advantageousness of the Qur'ān through it.

Another tool to understand the miraculousness of the Qur'ān in this era is "Dhawq" (taste). It is not strange for people whose culture is based on language and whose main career and concern is eloquence and poetry to have the taste for eloquence. It is because of this that they used their power in this regard to know the reality of the Qur'ān from time to time (for more information, q.v. Zarrūq, 2011, vol. 1: 205-215; ibid., 2013, vol. 1: 33-35). For instance, when Walīd b. Muḡhayra is asked about Prophet Muḡammad (s), he says, "There is no one among you more knowledgeable than me about poetry, braggadocio, ode, and poems of the jinn. By God, this speech is sweet and fresh, and its kasra is fruitful, and its fatha is like the Fountain of Youth. By God, it will always be victorious and it could not be defeated." (Ḥakim Nayshābūrī, 2006, vol. 3: 339). Since the miraculousness of the rhetoric and eloquence are superior to other aspects in the maturity era of the miraculousness discussions, the criterion of taste – which is one of the principles required for the understanding of eloquence – has considerable

presence in the works on the miraculousness of the Qur'ān (for instance, q.v. Rummānī, 1968: 26-27; Bāqilānī, 1971: 66-112).

In the qur'ānic and interpretive works of the second and even third century AH, there is no mention of the discussions on the miraculousness and expressing the various aspects of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān. Even in their interpretation of the Challenge verses, the scholars of this era either put forth nothing but the interpretation of the literal meaning of the verses or limit themselves to restricted explanations about the verses. This shows that the concept or theory of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān and the efforts to disclose its mysteries were not so prominent in the mind and heart of Muslim scholars in that era; they treated it as a definite and accepted principle (Karīmīnīā, 2013: 117-118).

Stage 2: the formation of the miraculousness thought

Emphasizing the difficulty of determining the appearance time of the words I'jāz and Mu'jiza, an Arab researchers says,

“This term is first used by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH). Such a term is not known in the first, second, and even the first half of the third century. Therefore, ‘Alī b. Rabban Ṭabarī (alive before 247 AH)¹ in his book *Al-Uslūb wa al-balāgha* uses the word *āya* instead of the word *mu'jiza* and its derivations” (Ḥimṣī, 1980, vol. 2: 7-8).

Anyway, it seems that toward the end of the third century AH, this term moves into the terminology of the qur'ānic literature and replaces the words with the same meaning. It seems that the first book title that includes this word has been *I'jāz al-Qur'ān* by Abu ‘Amru Muḥammad b. Yazīd Bāhilī Wāsiṭī (d. 306 AH) (Mahdawīrād, 2005, vol. 1: 35-36). Of course, it is clear that such a move has existed before him and as we will discuss later, one of the first people who has authored a work in this regard is the famous man of letters and theologian, Jāḥiẓ

The backgrounds of the appearance of the miraculousness discussions

The existing sources and references clearly indicate that serious discussions on theological and doctrinal issues and the exploration of the divine words were not widespread in the first and second centuries AH. The discussions on the miraculousness of the Qur'ān – as some Arab researchers have rightly mentioned (Ḥimṣī, 1980, vol. 2: 36-37; ‘Umarī, 1984: 44-45) – are mostly driven from theological discussions, either inter-religious or intra-Islamic

1. Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Rabban Ṭabarī was one of the philosophers and physicians of Ṭabaristān who left there and lived in Ray, and from there went to Sāmira and became a companion of Mutawakkil. He has written important works and the title of some of his works such as *Al-Dīn wa al-dawla* represents his significant thought.

theological discussions. In fact, in the first two centuries, the intellectual confrontation is not so apparent among religions or the Islamic denominations to lead to such discussions.

Theological disputes among religions

In the domain of inter-religious theological discussions, the question of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān is indeed a branch of the discussions on prophethood. The presence of Christians in Jazīratul 'Arab, the appearance of various translations during Abbasid dynasty, the intellectual freedom existing in the society, and religious disputes have had significant effects on this discussion. For instance, take into account the words of 'Alī b. Rabban Ṭabarī (d. 247 AH),

“When I was a Christian, I and my uncle – who was one of the scholars and eloquent orators of our people – always believed that eloquence is not a sign of prophethood, because it is common among nations. But when I stopped imitation, distanced myself from what I had used to know, broke the ties of habits and familial nurturing, and contemplated upon the profound concepts of the Qur'ān, I understood that reality is what Muslims believe in...” (Ibn Rabban Ṭabarī, 1973, vol. 1: 98).

With the presentation of the foregoing quotation we intended to show his intellectual situation when he was a Christian and the viewpoint that his uncle – as an eloquent scholar – promoted about the Qur'ān.

The words of Ibn Qutayba (d. 273 AH) in the introduction of his valuable book *Ta'wīl Mushkil al-Qur'ān* expresses the same opinion. He states his intention for the writing of this book as follows,

“Pagans have derided the Book of Allāh, have lied about it, have talked nonsense about it, and relying on their incomplete thoughts, flawed eyes, and corrupt viewpoints, have taken its mutashābihāt (ambiguous verses) to excite disturbance and seek [wrong] interpretations. This way, they have moved the Word of Allāh from its sites and paths and then have ruled for the existence of contradiction, impossible notions, wrong ideas, chaos, and inconsistency in it. They have put forth some arguments for their claims which has caused some immature, unsteady people and inexperienced youth to go out of the right path, have injected uncertainties in the hearts, and have polluted the chests with doubts ...” (Ibn Qutayba Dīnwarī, 1982: 23).

Texts such as these show that the discussion on the miraculousness of the Qur'ān expand in the third century AH and this expansion is more than anything a result of opponent movements which intended to rival the Islamic culture. For instance, it is said that 'Abullāh b. Ismā'īl Hāshimī – one of the companions of the Abbasid caliph Ma'mūn – wrote a letter to his Christian friend 'Abd al-Masīh b. Ishāq Kindī and talked about the superiority of the

Islamic over Christianity and the miraculousness of the Qur'ān. 'Abd al-Masīḥ sent a response to that letter and challenged Hāshimī's words, especially those about the miraculousness of the Qur'ān (q.v. Hāshimī, 1880).

There are numerous suchlike examples (Sharafī, 2007, vol. 2: 139-210; BūJum'a, 2012, vol. 1: 97-104, 183-196; Bakhīṭāwī, 2013: 132-134, 252-253; Mahdawīrād, n.d.: 41; Karīmīnīā, 2013: 121-129). The Jonquil Christian 'Ammār Baṣrī (living in the first half of the third century AH) wrote a response to the Challenge and the inimitability of the Qur'ān which is responded by Abū Hudhayl 'Allāf in his treatise *Fī Kitāb 'Alā 'Ammār al-Naṣrānī fī al-radd 'alā al-Niṣarā* as reported by Ibn Nadīm (Ibn Nadīm, 1971: 204). Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Yaḥyā, also known as Ibn Munajjim (d. 275 AH) – the astronomer of Ma'mūn's throne and the companion of Mutawakkil, Mustanṣir, Mu'taṣim, Muhtazz, Muhtadī, and Mu'tamid – has a book entitled *al-Burhān* on the signs of prophethood. This book is directed to two Christians, namely Qusṭā b. Luqā Ba'albakī and Ḥunayn b. Iṣḥāq. In this book, in the response given by Qusṭā to it (which is called either as *al-jawāb* or *al-burhān*), and in the responses provided by Ḥunayn, there exist great attention to the miraculousness of the Qur'ān. Theodore Abū Qurra or the Christian Theodoros has works and responses much more than any other Christian respondent. It is narrated that he believed that the noble Prophet (s) did not have any miracle.

Theological disputes among Islamic denominations

The Mu'tazila intellectual concerns should be added to the inter-religious disputes in the second and third centuries. One of the concerns regards the coherence of the Qur'ān. The most important question that engaged the Mu'tazila theologians in the second and third centuries was that which attribute distinguishes the Divine Word from the works of eloquent orators and lecturers. In response to this question, the Baṣra Mu'tazila circle considered the miracle to be in the essence of the language of the Qur'ān and its coherence, and the first generation of Baghdad Mu'tazila circle such as Naẓām looked for it not in the essence and the coherence of the Qur'ān, but rather in an external factor. This has come to be known as the "Ṣarfa theory". These opinions were later examined and criticized in the theological disputes between Mu'tazila and Ashā'ira scholars, and some found more complete and consolidated forms (Mahdawīrād, n.d.: 41; Karīmīnīā, 2013: 130-137; Jundī, 1969: 5-10; Sulṭān, 1986, vol. 3: 47-96; Zarrūq, 2013, vol. 1: 42-47).

Translation Movement

The severe clashes at the time the power was transmitting from Umayyad dynasty to Abbasid dynasty brought about massive chaos and disorder in the Islamic society. It seemed that despite Umayyads who thought the robustness of the state resulted from the constriction of opinions and the prevention of the expansion of thoughts, Abbasids sought the same goal via the expansion of ideas, the openness of the intellectual space, and the permission to the introduction of imported thoughts. As a result, the volume of translation from Persian, Greek, and Indian works into Arabic increased and a great movement was actually born which should be called the "Translation Movement". The introduction of these thoughts – which starts from the reign of Abū Ja‘far Maṣū‘r Dawānīqī, grows in the reign of Hārūn, and expands and develops during the reign of Ma‘mūn – has had the greatest effect on these theological discussions and disputes. It is in this era that some people have been accused of objection to the Qur’ān, such as ‘Abdullāh b. Muqaffa‘ (d. 140 AH) (q.v. ‘Abd al-Bāqī, 1991, vol. 1: 267 onward; Jamīlī, n.d.; Muḥaqqiq: 1987).

The evolution of miraculousness thought in this stage

In such conditions, the scholars and thinkers tried both to defend the sacred domain of the Qur’ān and answer the doubts posed by disbelievers and the religious open-minded and to point out the magnificence of the Qur’ān, present its beauties and sublimities, and demonstrate its miraculousness.

As we noted in the previous lines, there is no evident discussion of the miraculousness of the Qur’ān at first. Due to the conditions of that stage and the assertions of the opponents, the efforts of authors at this stage was to show the structure of the Qur’ān, prove its freedom from disagreement and contradiction, and promote the beauties of Qur’ānic analogies. Some researchers have taken suchlike works to be in essence a defense of the Arabism and eloquence of the Qur’ān, the demonstration of the unwiredness of its concepts, and in fact the elucidation of some aspects of the miraculousness of the Divine Book (Jundī, 1969: 6; Mullā Ḥawīsh, 1972: 224; ‘Umurī, 1984: 46). One of the scholars who have undertaken such a task was Yahyā b. Ziyād Farrā’ (d. 207 AH) in his noble work *Ma‘ānī al-Qur’ān*. Nonetheless, the efforts of Abū ‘Ubayda Mu‘mar b. Muthannā (d. 209 or 210 AH) in his book *Majāz al-Qur’ān* are beyond those of Farrā’. It should be noted that the word "majāz" in this book does not mean *majāz* as the opposite term to *ḥaqīqat* (truth), as discussed in the rhetoric science. In this work, he is to show the rhetorical style of the Qur’ān and to demonstrate the rhetorical techniques and conceptual beauties as well as to remove the doubts about the rhetorical beauties of the Qur’ān (for more information, q.v.

Mullā Ḥawīsh, 1972: 114-140; ‘Umurāī, 1984: 45-46; Mahdawīrād, 2005, vol. 1: 27-30).

In this very era, Naẓām – the great Mu‘tazilī theologian – comes into the scene and serious theological discussion about the miraculousness of the Qur’ān appear. Therefore, we start the miraculousness thought with his ideas.

Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Sayyār Naẓām (D. 220 AH or 231 AH)

He was one of the outstanding figures of Mu‘tazila and the teacher of Jāḥiẓ, the famous man of letters. He believed that the inimitability of the Qur’ān is not because others do not have the ability to challenge it; rather, it is because God has deprived them of such an action. Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 AH) (Jāḥiẓ, 2002: 166) and Khayyāṭ Mu‘tazilī (d. 200 AH) (Khayyāṭ Mu‘tazilī, 1992, vol. 2: 27) say that Naẓām believed that the coherence and sequencing of the Qur’ānic text is not in itself a reason and proof for the prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad (s), and ordinary people can also make a book like that.

Abū al-Ḥasan Ash‘arī (d. 330 AH) also quotes his viewpoint. According to him, Naẓām believed that, “The miraculousness of the Qur’ān is in its reports on the invisible world and if God has not blocked and made unable the people, it was possible for them to author and coherently order [a book like] the Qur’ān” (Ash‘arī, 1980, vol. 3: 225).

In his report on Naẓām’s beliefs, Shahristānī (d. 548 AH) writes,

“Naẓām believed that the miraculousness of the Qur’ān has two aspects: first, it reports on the previous issues and foretells the future ones, and second, it blocks the motivation of people to challenge it and in fact has forced the Arab to refrain from challenging it; otherwise, if they were free and uninterrupted, they could bring a chapter which was like the Qur’ān in rhetoric, eloquence, and coherence” (Shahristānī, 1985, vol. 3: 70-71).

Similarly, Fakhr Rāzī (d. 606 AH) talks about the attitude of Naẓām as follows,

“God did not reveal the Qur’ān as the proof of the prophethood [of Prophet Muḥammad]; rather, similar to other revealed books, the Qur’ān aims at expressing the divine prescriptions and at clarifying the licit and the illicit. The Arabs did not rise to challenge it simply because God stopped from opposition and deprived them of their knowledge to make a similar book [like the Qur’ān] ...” (Fakhr Rāzī, 1985: 26).

The “Ṣarfa” concept – which derives from Naẓām’s viewpoint – has had followers after him, and as we will see in the following lines, it is Jāḥiẓ who first opposes his viewpoint.

‘Alī b. Rabban Ṭabarī (alive before 247 AH)

We said earlier that he has had a book named *Al-Uslūb wa al-balāgha*. As this book does not exist today, we do not clearly know how he has discussed this issue in that book. We already quoted the assertion of an Arab researcher who said that Ṭabarī had written that book about the rhetorical style of the Qur’ān, and has used the word “āya” instead of the word “mu’jiza” in various parts of the book (Ḥimṣī, 1980, vol. 2: 7-8). However, we do not know if he has seen the book or has written these assertions based on the narrations by other people. However, in his book *Al-Dīn wa al-dawla*, which Ibn Rabban has written to prove the prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad (s), there are some references to the miraculousness of the Qur’ān. As we noted earlier, Ṭabarī says that when he was a Christian, he did not consider the eloquence of the Qur’ān as a miracle; however, after conversion to Islam and contemplation on the Qur’ān, he figured out the rightness of the Muslims’ claims about their Divine Book, because,

“From the first day of the world, I have not found anyone among Arabs or non-Arab Indians or Romans who has collected the Divine Unity, the praise to the Creator, the approval of the prophets, the invitation to eternally good deeds, the promotion of good and prevention of evil, the invitation to Paradise and Warning against the fire of Hell at the same level of the Qur’ān. If anyone can author a book with such qualities that has the same greatness and amiability of the Qur’ān in the hearts and is accompanied by victory, fortune, and dominance like the Qur’ān, and is delivered by an illiterate man who never learned writing and eloquence, then such a book will be certainly one of the signs and miracles of a prophet” (Ibn Rabban Ṭabarī, 1973, vol. 1: 98-99).

This way, ‘Alī b. Rabban Ṭabarī considers the aspects of the miraculousness of the Qur’ān to be the corrective goals of the Qur’ān, the fulfillment of those goals, orders, prohibitions, and reports, as well as its beautiful and desirable style. He also emphasizes that all these cannot be issued by an illiterate man, and so, they have another origin.

Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr b. Baḥr Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 AH)

Jāḥiẓ was a skillful man of letters and a potent theologian. He definitely has had a book on the miraculousness of the Qur’ān which has been unfortunately lost. In the introduction of the book *al-Ḥayawān*, he mentions his works, among which is a book entitled *al-Iḥtijāj li-nazm al-Qur’ān wa gharīb ta’līfah wa badī’ tarkībah* (Jāḥiẓ, 1964, vol. 1: 9). In another place he stipulates that he has written his book on the coherence of the Qur’ān in order to respond to people such as Naẓām who do not take the coherence and sequence of the Qur’ān as a proof for the prophethood of Prophet

Muḥammad (s) (ibid., 2002: 166). In yet another place he says, “In one of my works I have collected some verses of the Qur’ān and have shown their miraculousness”; this might be a reference to the content of the aforementioned book (ibid., 1964, vol. 3: 86). Similarly, in his list of the works on the Qur’ān, Ibn Nadīm mentions the Jāḥiẓ’s *Naẓm al-Qur’ān* (Ibn Nadīm, 1971: 41).

The remaining works of Jāḥiẓ scattered throughout his treatises and books indicate that he deemed the miraculousness of the Qur’ān to be because of its coherence and its rhetorical style. Some researchers (‘Umurī, 1984: 49; Lāshīn, n.d.: 436; Ḥimṣī, 1980, vol. 2: 56)¹ have said in this regard, “It is not clear if this inimitability of the Qur’ān is in its coherence and essential style or because God has disabled other people in this regard”. However, the examination of the words show that he considers the inimitability a result of the quality of the Qur’ānic text,

“He asked the eloquent speakers, orators, and poets to put forth [a work with] the coherence and sequence of the Qur’ānic text ...” (Jāḥiẓ, 2002: 141).

In one instance, he has introduced the coherence of the Qur’ān as the biggest reason,

“We should state ... how the Qur’ān is different from all poetry and prose and although it is a piece of prose, it resembles poetry and rhymed prose, but without rime. Moreover, we should note that how the coherence and sequence of the Qur’ānic text has become its biggest proof” (ibid., 2003, vol. 1: 383).

In another place, he introduces the coherence of the Qur’ān as a sign of its truthfulness and rightness,

“The sign for the truthfulness and rightness of our Revealed Book is its rhetorical coherence, which cannot be offered by Servants” (Ibid., 1964, vol. 4: 90).

Moreover, in yet another place, he expands his stance toward the miraculousness of the Qur’ān and says,

“... If an Arab recited a short or long chapter of the Qur’ān to an Arab eloquent speaker or orator, the latter would immediately find his inability due to the process of the statement and its conclusion as well as its appearance and nature, and if the most eloquent Arab was called to challenge that chapter, his inability to rival the Qur’ān would be clear. Of course, this lack of ability is not at the level of few letters or words, since every person

1. Their evidence is a sentence by Jāḥiẓ in the treatise *Ḥujaj al-nubuwwa* (Jāḥiẓ, 2002: 153-154). Moreover, Jāḥiẓ says in the book *Al-Ḥayawān*, “After the Prophet of Allāh challenged people to bring a text like the Qur’ān, God blocked them from opposition to the Qur’ān” (Ibid., 1964, vol. 4: 89).

can be seen to have the short phrases such as ‘alḥamdu lillāh’, ‘innā lillāh’, ‘‘alā Allāh tawakkalnā’, ‘rabbunallāh’, and ‘ḥasbunallāh wa ni‘im al-wakīl’ in his mind and use them in his speaking, and all these words sporadically – rather than in one place – exist in the Qur’ān; however, if the most eloquent person wanted to use suchlike words to make a long or short chapter which was identical to Qur’ānic chapters in coherence, nature, sequencing, and conclusion, he could not, even if he joined powers with Qaḥṭān and Ma‘add b. ‘Andān” (ibid., 2002: 130-131).

This assertion implies that the coherence of the Qur’ān from the viewpoint of Jāḥiẓ exists in all its principles and elements; it is in fact formed through the interaction of all its interrelated elements and demonstrates a coherent and harmonious appearance. However, the coherence that can be seen in only one sentence or word cannot be a sign of the supremacy and authority of the Qur’ān.

Jāḥiẓ’s view to the coherence and rhetorical style of the Qur’ān is the basis and essence of the later stances in this regard. His theory of the miraculousness of the Qur’ān can be discussed and examined more, but space limitation does not allow the article at hand to undertake this discussion (for more information, q.v.: Khatīb, 1975, vol. 2: 157-178; Lāshīn, n.d.: 427-429; Zaghlūl Salām, 1952, vol. 1: 72-100; Sultān, 1986, vol. 3: 56-63; ‘Arfa, 1984: 151-212; Jundī, 1960: 23; ibid., 1969: 7-8).

Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh b. Muslim b. Qutayba (d. 276 AH)

Ibn Qutayba is one of the outstanding scholars, Ḥadīth transmitters, men of letters, and historians of the third century AH. His works in various domains of Islamic culture – which fortunately have been persevered so far – are among the best works remaining from the earlier scholars. In the introduction of his valuable book *Ta’wīl mushkil al-Qur’ān*, he presents his viewpoint about the miraculousness of the Qur’ān by a skillful opening,

“Via miraculous sequencing, God disappointed the fictionists about the Qur’ān and through its wonderful coherence put it out of the reach of the deceivers. Although He has covered the Qur’ān with many attractive stories, the extended recitation of it does not bring about boredom, and although He has introduced it as worthy of listening, it does not bother the ears; He has made it so fresh that multiplicity of its repetition does not wear the audience out. He has made it so wonderful that its wonders never end, and has founded it on such bases that its benefits can never be interrupted ... and He has fitted its numerous meanings within its handful words” (Ibn Qutayba Dīnwarī, 1982: 11).

In this assertion, Ibn Qutayba has gently referred to the robust sequence, precise coherence, desirable rhythm of words, the expansiveness of the

content, the profoundness of the meaning, and the conciseness of the qur'ānic text, and has considered all these as aspects of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān.

He has then given in some great instances of the qur'ānic language and has compared them with other words. This way, he has demonstrated the greatness and importance of the eloquence and rhetoric in Arabic language. Then, he has retold the inability of the Arab eloquent speakers in bringing a text like that of the Qur'ān, and has stipulated that the contemporaries of the Qur'ān understood this height of eloquence, rhetoric, and content and got aware of its uniqueness via their sound taste and amazing literary ability (ibid.: 11-17). This book of Ibn Qutayba is extremely readable and pleasant; it is also very effective in showing the various aspects of the eloquence of the Qur'ān (for more information, q.v. 'Arfa, 1984: 213-263).

Muḥammad b. Yazīd Wāsiṭī (d. 306 AH)

It was noted in the previous lines that the first work entitled *I'jāz al-Qur'ān* is the book by Muḥammad b. Yazīd Wāsiṭī. This book does not exist now, and only references to it remain in other sources. Rāfi'ī says, “‘Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī has written a big interpretation entitled *Al-Mu'taḍid* as well as a small one on Wāsiṭī's book” (Rāfi'ī, 2000, vol. 1: 107). In Rāfi'ī's opinion, Wāsiṭī is the follower of a path initiated by Jāḥiz, and ‘Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī's words in *Dalā'il al-I'jāz* are also based on Wāsiṭī's thoughts (ibid.). The basis of this assertion of Rāfi'ī is not clear. Has he had access to a sign of Wāsiṭī's book or has talked based on possibilities? However, since his book has been in the hands of ‘Abd al-Qāhir, he has been affected by it.

It is after this time that the main and essential works about the miraculousness of the Qur'ān come into existence by great scholars such as Rummānī, Khaṭābī, Bāqilānī, Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār Hamidānī, and ‘Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī; this way, I'jāz science appears as a separate branch of knowledge with specialized books.

Conclusion

The miraculousness thought up to the third century can be traced in two stages. In the first stage, there is no mention of the miraculousness and the examination of its aspects; what is observed in this era is either the confession to the inability against the Qur'ān or the avoidance to discuss the issues related to the miraculousness of the Qur'ān as a definite and accepted principle. Of course, from the texts related to this stage, sometimes the means for the comprehension of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān – which were used by the scholars who were concerned about the miraculousness of the Qur'ān – could be grasped. In the second stage, several factors set the

ground for the serious discussion of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān. The first factor regards the theological debates among Islam and other religions, especially Christianity, on the issues and reasons of the prophethood. Another factor concerns the theological disputes on the coherence of the Qur'ān and the thoughts of the Mu'tazila, which got more serious in the later confrontations and quarrels among Mu'tazila themselves or between Mu'tazila and Ashā'ira. The third factor is the Translation Movement. When the previous grounds were set, the miraculousness of the Qur'ān was manifested in a more serious form in the thoughts of scholars such as Nazām, 'Alī b. Rabban Ṭabarī, Jāḥiẓ, Ibn Qutayba, and Wāsiṭī. After this stage, this branch of knowledge soars and the most important works in the domain of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān are written.

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