

## The Sources of the Denial of the Miraculousness of the Qur'ān

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### Abstract

After the revelation of the noble Qur'ān – the guiding book of all – by God onto the noble Prophet (s), some people accepted it while some others denied it. Then, the question that comes to mind regards the backgrounds and sources of the polytheists and opponents' denial of the qur'ānic verses. In this article, we apply a descriptive-analytical method to inspect the qur'ānic verses in order to respond the abovementioned question. The investigation of the qur'ānic verses reveals that some sources of the denial of the Qur'ān include polytheists' disbelief, their great contrariness, enmity, and arrogance, their worldly attachments and insistence on the materialist opinions, their denial of the Resurrection Day, and their erroneous values.

**Keywords:** The noble Qur'ān, Polytheists, The noble Prophet (s), Arrogance, Contrariness, Enmity.

### Introduction

God has sent the noble Qur'ān to guide all humans to free them from the darkness of misguidance and degeneration and lead them to the divine light and benevolence, so that instead of massacre, genocide, and incursion, they become brothers and live together in peace; revere the girls instead of burying them alive and stop worrying about their sustenance; maintain peace instead of blood shedding; set piety and good deeds as the criteria of superiority instead of valuing race and assets, and the black and white, Arab and non-Arab, and rich and poor live blissfully together. However, these divine blessings did not soften some people's dark hearts, and they started opposing the Qur'ān and even trying to reject it, and denied all its guiding aspects, including its miraculousness.

Since the backgrounds of the denial of the noble Qur'ān are the same as the backgrounds of the denial of its miraculousness – i.e. when the opponents deny the Qur'ān they automatically deny its miraculousness – we address the latter issue with a descriptive-analytical method using the qur'ānic verses and some existing interpretations of the respective verses.

The reflection on the qur'ānic verses indicates that some aspects of the opponents' denial of the Qur'ān are related to the Qur'ān itself and some others to Prophet Muḥammad (s). Of course, the opponents' stance ultimately leads to their denial of the noble Qur'ān and the prophethood of the Prophet (s).

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*The constant disbelief and lack of faith*

One of the backgrounds of the denial of the noble Qur'ān is that polytheists covered the truth and never converted to Islam and were always in disbelief. God presents this issue in the Qur'ān 6:7-10 as follows:

If We had sent unto thee a written (message) on parchment, so that they could touch it with their hands, the Unbelievers would have been sure to say: "This is nothing but obvious magic!" They say: "Why is not an angel sent down to him?" If we did send down an angel, the matter would be settled at once, and no respite would be granted them. If We had made it an angel, We should have sent him as a man, and We should certainly have caused them confusion in a matter which they have already covered with confusion. Mocked were (many) messengers before thee; but their scoffers were hemmed in by the thing that they mocked.

The polytheists' disbelief led them to deny the Qur'ān – while it was the cause of their life, bliss, and saving – and consider it as magic. The abovementioned verses strongly reprimand the polytheists as they did not want to accept the reality and sought false excuses.

In his interpretation of this verse, Shaykh Ṭūsī deems the polytheists' enmity and cruel hearts as the reason for their denial of the Qur'ān and accusation of it as magic:

"God says about this verse that even if the Qur'ān – i.e. its written manuscript – was revealed to His Prophet on a parchment so they could touch it with their hands and realize it with their senses [they would not convert] as they wanted the Prophet (s) to bring a book that was recited by God onto somebody they liked so they could start to have faith in Muḥammad. If this demand was met in order to make them have faith [in Islam], they would accuse the Prophet (s) of magic. Their enmity was very intense and their hearts very cruel, and their decision was to refuse having faith [in Islam]" (Ṭūsī, n.d., vol. 4: 82). That is to say, the polytheists would never convert to Islam no matter how much divine miracles they saw. Rather, they denied them because of their enmity, and it might be said that this denial was the same as denying the prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad (s). 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī says:

"The disbelievers asked for the descension of the angels only as a miracle rather than a punishment, and the qur'ānic answer here means that even if angels were sent down to them and they saw that miracle, they would not have faith due to their enmity and arrogance. Then God would treat them with His Justness and they would not be given a second chance" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 7: 25).

The more respite God grants them, their disbelief intensifies, and they consider the Qur'ān (i.e. the divine Speech) as magic because of the cruelty of their hearts and their rudeness.

"They showed such intensity in denying the right that God told His Prophet: If We reveal Our revelation onto you in the form of a text printed on the pages of a book and they both see that book with their eyes and touch it with their hands, they would say: 'This is nothing but magic!' The reason is that they are at the ultimate level of enmity, stubbornness, and cruelty" (Ṭabrisī, 1994, vol. 8: 18).

The polytheists opposed the Qur'ān due their deep disbelief and contrariness, and made new pretexts every day and asked the Prophet (s) for new miracles. According to the Qur'ān, they would never have faith in Islam and they did not want the truth.

In his interpretation of the foregoing verse, Āyatullāh Makārim Shīrāzī deems arrogance and contrariness as the cause of this issue and says:

"One of the causes of their deviation is arrogance and contrariness, which is pointed out in this verse, because the arrogant people usually have contrariness. The reason is that their arrogance does not allow them to submit to the right. This makes them to act stubbornly and deny any clear reason and evident argumentation in any way they can, even if it leads to the rejection of self-evident

premises. This manner is what we frequently see in the manners of the arrogant and selfish people.

The scope of their contrariness is so wide that they deny the clearest tangible phenomena, i.e. what is perceived by touching, and rely on the ‘magic’ pretext to refuse submitting to it, while they suffice to one tenth of such signs to corroborate realities in their daily lives and introduce them as definitive and absolute! The reason for this is nothing but the extreme arrogance, selfishness, and contrariness that have overshadowed their souls” (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1996, vol. 5: 158).

The opponents of the Prophet’s (s) prophethood used any pretext to deny the Qur’ān due to their arrogance and selfishness as well as the fact that they saw that the content of the Qur’ān opposes their materialistic beliefs and fights against the ideals and values that they have got used to for many years (Ibn ‘Āshūr, n.d., vol. 6: 24).

The words of the exegetes as well as the Qur’ānic verses indicate that the polytheists’ enmity and disbelief led them to deny the miraculousness of the Qur’ān. Moreover, other Qur’ānic verses point out that they considered showing miracles and being a prophet as a superhuman quality, and they did not expect the Prophet of Islam (s) – as a human similar to them – to become a prophet and apostle. Of course, this is another evidence of the miraculousness of the Qur’ān and the correctness of Prophet Muḥammad’s (s) prophethood. Those who seek the right accept it with the simplest hints at these points, while the opponents always remain in misguidance and disbelief and never start having faith in the right.

Another background for the denial of the miraculousness of the noble Qur’ān is that the polytheists never wanted to accept the truth and move into the Right Path due to their contrariness and enmity. Their contrariness, enmity, and opposition to the Right Path got so intense that they called the Qur’ānic verses as the tales of the ancients. It seems that by doing so, they intended to lower the validity of the Qur’ānic content so that they could deny it, as the rigid polytheists never got the true faith in the Qur’ān and the prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad (s).

To describe them, God says:

“Of them there are some who (pretend to) listen to thee; but We have thrown veils on their hearts, So they understand it not, and deafness in their ears; if they saw every one of the signs, not they will believe in them; in so much that when they come to thee, they (but) dispute with thee; the Unbelievers say: ‘These are nothing but tales of the ancients’” (Qur’ān 6:25).

When the polytheists did not want guidance and blissfulness for themselves, God set a cover on their hearts. It is mentioned in the *Shining lights* commentary:

“Although [the idolaters] always hear the miraculous verses of the Qur’ān from you, they will never have faith because of their enmity, and if they come to you and hear instructive words from you, they will show contrariness and will say that these are useless words and are myths and stories” (Ḥusaynī Hamidānī, 1984, vol. 5: 279).

Therefore, from his viewpoint, the polytheists’ contrariness prevents them from accepting the truth and having faith. No matter what miracle they see or how much the truth gets clear to them, they do not want to accept it. They give in a new pretext every day and do not accept to be guided. In fact, their enmity causes them to deny the miraculousness of the noble Qur’ān. As Shaykh Ṭūṣī puts it, “Even if they see all signs, they will not have faith; that is, if all signs and miracles that confirm the prophethood of the Prophet (s) are presented to them, they will not have faith due to their enmity” (Ṭūṣī, n.d., vol. 4: 104). They reject all miracles due to their enmity and it is because of this enmity that God puts a cover on their heart; then, they feel powerless and accuse the Qur’ānic verses of being the tales of the ancients:

“The disbelievers insist on their denial and God’s veiling of their hearts is due to their very enmity and stubbornness: ‘Even if they see all the signs, they will not believe in them’

(Qur'ān 7:146). Contrariness is an untreatable disorder that – just like an opaque mirror – shows even the prettiest faces as ugly.

The disbelievers did not have any sound and logical way to contradict the Prophet of Islam (s) (the use of dispute and accusation was a sign of their weakness of reasoning)” (Qirā'atī, 2005, vol. 3: 331).

The disbelievers accused the Qur'ān as being the tales of the ancients, because they could not fight against it and the disbelief and misguidance had been deeply rooted in them.

Mullā Fathullāh Kāshānī deems the polytheists' disbelief and enmity along with their insistence on imitating their ancestors as the sources of their denial of the noble Qur'ān (Kāshānī, 2002, vol. 2: 375).

Therefore, one of the other sources of the polytheists' denial of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān is their contrariness and enmity. They opposed the right, fought against it, and accused its verses as being the tales of the ancients. Following their disbelief and misguidance, God sealed their hearts, due to which they would never have faith and would always remain in disbelief and darkness.

### *Denial and lack of belief in the Resurrection*

Another background for the denial of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān was the disbelievers' denial of the Resurrection Day. Accordingly, since the Qur'ān talked about the Resurrection, the examination of the deeds, etc., they denied the Qur'ān. God says in this regard:

“And when Our clear revelations are recited unto them, they who look not for the meeting with Us say: ‘Bring a Lecture other than this, or change it’. Say (O Muhammad): ‘It is not for me to change it of my accord. I only follow that which is inspired in me. Lo! If I disobey my Lord I fear the retribution of an awful Day’” (Qur'ān 10:15).

In this verse, the Qur'ān states that the reason polytheists denied it was their denial and lack of belief in the Resurrection and that the polytheists (when it was presented to them) asked for another Qur'ān or the conversion of the existing Qur'ān to something else. It seems that they were deeply biased and never wanted to have faith. If they accepted this Qur'ān, there was no need to any other thing. In fact, it was not guaranteed that if another Qur'ān were revealed, they would accept it and would submit to its verses. Moreover, the revelation of the Qur'ān was not controlled by the Prophet (s), so he could not reveal multiple Qur'āns or change the way it was revealed.

“The Holy Qur'ān is the great miracle of the Prophet of Islam (s), a miracle that originates from the Divine Act, and is a sign of God that is delivered by the Prophet's (s) words and acts. The Prophet (s) cannot bring [such verses] whenever he wants by his own volition, because he is a human and this act is out of the human power. The disbelievers and polytheists made excuses and pretexts to refuse accepting [the Qur'ān], including the time ‘... when Our clear revelations are recited unto them...’ The noble verses of the Holy Qur'ān that show the path to blissfulness with clear expressions, evident arguments, and decisive ritual orders and warn against what brings about unblestness state that ‘they who look not for the meeting with Us say’ that they do not believe in the Resurrection at all. As a pretext, they say ‘Bring a Lecture other than this’ because this Qur'ān reprimands our gods, reveals our moral vices, and rebukes our acts” (Ṭayyib, 2000, vol. 6: 359).

Therefore, they simply did not believe in the Qur'ān, the Resurrection Day, and the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam (s), and made a new excuse every day to justify their wrong acts and maintain their presumed dignity. As a result, “This verse introduces the denial of the Resurrection Day as the basis of objection to the Qur'ānic knowledge and the rejection of its verses. That is to say, those who do not believe in the Resurrection Day and deny it will

not accept and understand the qur'ānic knowledge and will not express gratitude for the blessing of creation. They will not stop selfishness, and will set their own beliefs and wants as the basis of the revelation of the qur'ānic verses and the invitation made by the noble Prophet of Islam (s). Since the invitation to monotheism is not congruent with their wants and beliefs, they reject it and ask for other verses" (Ḥusaynī Hamidānī, 1984, vol. 8; 177).

As it was mentioned earlier, the polytheists had got used to the wrong etiquette and culture of the Ignorance Days for a long time and the desire to amass riches and power along with the viewpoint revolving around selfishness and arrogance was deep-rooted in them. Therefore, when the qur'ānic verses with their prominent themes were revealed and weakened the pillars of the polytheists' imaginary and false wishes, they intensely opposed it. Moreover, the Qur'ān talked about the appraisal of all human deeds in the Resurrection Day when even the smallest acts will not be ignored. As a result, they intensely opposed the Qur'ān and denied it, while God is omniscient and omnipotent.

"Since the verses of this Qur'ān involve an invitation that opposes their carnal desires, when they say in response to the reciter of the Qur'ān [i.e. the Prophet (s)]: 'Bring a Lecture other than this,' we understand that they want a Qur'ān that does not involve what is included in the existing Qur'ān. Their assertion implies that they want a Qur'ān that does not prohibit polytheism and does not invite to the abandonment of lewdness and sins. When they continue: 'or change it,' they intend to ask the Prophet (s) to change those verses that do not agree with their beliefs so they could accept them, just like the listeners of a poet or narrator who ask him to say another poem or story when they do not like the one he is presenting, or to say it via a better expression, in a way that they can enjoy listening to it. Therefore, in this verse, those who say these words liken the noble Qur'ān to the cheapest statements and deem it a book that is composed only to entertain. They imagine that those who listen to the Qur'ān only enjoy doing so and they do not receive any practical benefits from it. These listeners do not like it and tell [the Prophet (s)] to abandon the existing Qur'ān and bring a new one, or if he wants to stick to it, they expect him to change its words and say them ones that they like.

Therefore, it is clear that if after hearing the recitation of the Qur'ān they say: 'Bring a Lecture other than this,' they intend to ask the Prophet of Allāh (s) to bring a Qur'ān that is void of the knowledge entailed in the current Qur'ān. They expect him to abandon this Qur'ān altogether and bring a new one. Moreover, if after their suggestion they say: 'or change it,' they mean that the existing Qur'ān can remain, but the Prophet of Allāh (s) should remove those verses of it that are against their carnal desires and replace them with verses that agree with their passions" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 10: 34).

In fact, as this verse confirms, the polytheists denied the existing Qur'ān in order to ask for another one. However, the infallibility of the noble Prophet (s) is proved and he did not do anything by his own volition without the Divine Command. Moreover, if they wanted to accept the Qur'ān and the Prophet's (s) miracle, there was no need to the Qur'ān and other miracles. They should have accepted the truths when they saw them; however, they would never want to have faith. It seems that the origin of all these denials and oppositions was the arrogance and selfishness of the polytheists and their lack of belief in the Resurrection Day.

"When the polytheists knew about the content of the Qur'ān through its recitation by the Prophet (s), and when they heard that the Qur'ān has challenged them [that is, it had said that if they doubted whether the Qur'ān was the Speech of the Sublime God and if they thought it might be the words of a human, all humans were challenged to gather and make one similar to it], they were still in doubt if the Qur'ān was the Divine Speech or the words of the Prophet (s) himself. The reason was that in their opinion, the Prophet (s) was not among the eloquent orators, or at least was not above the famous orators in eloquence, rhetoric, and knowledge. Then, they thought, how could he bring a speech that outmatched the ability of the Arab orators in bringing one similar to it while he was lower than their eloquent orators and

lecturers? Consequently, as their last effort, they tried to test the Prophet (s) with this suggestion. If he accepted it and changed the existing Qur'ān with another one or changed some of its verses to some new ones, they could question him that why he said it was the Divine Speech, could reveal that he was not a prophet and his words were not divine revelation, and could claim that his maximum difference with others was a kind of expression that emanated from a certain type of soul and spirituality in him that they were not aware of, but they could know it through the foregoing test, as the ordinary people are not aware of the secrets and means of magic.

‘And when Our clear revelations are recited unto them, they who look not for the meeting with Us say: Bring a Lecture other than this, or change it.’

These miserable unaware people did not want the Prophet (s) as their leader, but rather, they invited him to follow their superstitions. They wanted a Qur'ān from him that followed their deviations, not one that corrected their society. They not only did not believe in the Resurrection and did not feel responsible for their deeds, their suchlike statements indicated that they did not understand the concept of ‘prophethood’ at all or liked to toy with it!

The Qur'ān clearly reminds them about their big mistake, and orders the Prophet (s) to tell them: ‘It is not for me to change it of my accord.’

It then adds: ‘I only follow that which is inspired in me.’ Not only I cannot make any change in this divine revelation, but also ‘if I disobey my Lord, I fear the retribution of an awful Day’ (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1996, vol. 8: 246).”

According to Āyatullāh Makārim Shīrāzī, the polytheists pursued their own deviated beliefs and wanted to change everything based on their own desire. Due to their denial of the Resurrection Day, they denied the prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad (s) as well as the noble Qur'ān. These all originated from their contrariness and lack of faith.

“This verse talks about the maleficence of the polytheists and disbelievers. It says that when its miraculous verses – that are clear and are evidently miraculous – were recited to those who did not believe in achieving God’s benevolence and the Resurrection Day, they could not cast any doubt on them. Since they knew that the Qur'ānic verses were beyond their understanding level, they told the noble Prophet (s): ‘Bring a Lecture other than this, or change it.’

They might wanted to reprimand the Prophet (s) by saying that if he can make those verses himself, he might bring another Qur'ān like the existing one or to change its verses to another ones. Those who said suchlike things are said to be polytheists and idolaters who had improper deeds that opposed the Qur'ānic verses. Their intention was that if the Prophet (s) brought other verses that did not oppose their deeds, they would have faith in them (Banūyi Iṣfahānī, 1983, vol. 6: 142).”

Therefore, the reason for the denial of the Qur'ān is the denial of its content, one of its most essential themes being the Resurrection Day and the appraisal of the people’s deeds. Since the polytheists limited life to the worldly attachments and never wanted to abandon this world and appreciate the Resurrection Day during which all deeds would be appraised, they denied the Qur'ān and sought a pretext to shun away from their responsibility. As a result, they asked for another Qur'ān, although they never meant to submit to it. In addition, they did not want to confess their inability against the magnificent knowledge and truth that lied in the Qur'ān. They believed that the Prophet (s) had made the verses himself and was attributing them to God. Zamakhsharī, too, raises these points in his interpretation of this verse (Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 2: 334).

Therefore, another background for the denial of the Qur'ān was the rejection of the Resurrection Day by the polytheists. That is to say, since they deemed the content of the Qur'ānic verses against their worldly desires and wishes, they showed contrariness and arrogance and did not accept the right, and asked the Prophet (s) to bring another Qur'ān, one

which they thought might be congruent with their deeds and beliefs. But alas! Anyone who seeks the right and wants to accept it will do so with the smallest of hints. However, the polytheists never sought the right and so they denied the Qur'ān. Consequently, they denied the prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad (s) as well.

### *Ignorance and lack of information*

One of the other reasons for the denial of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān was that the polytheists did not have enough knowledge about the Qur'ān and so, they denied it. After challenging them to bring a chapter similar to those of the Qur'ān, God says:

“And this Qur'an is not such as could ever be invented in despite of Allāh; but it is a confirmation of that which was before it and an exposition of that which is decreed for mankind - Therein is no doubt - from the Lord of the Worlds. Or say they: He hath invented it? Say: Then bring a surah like unto it, and call (for help) on all ye can besides Allāh, if ye are truthful. Nay, but they denied that, the knowledge whereof they could not compass, and whereof the interpretation (in events) hath not yet come unto them. Even so did those before them deny. Then see what the consequence was for the wrong-doers!” (Qur'ān 10:37-39).

The polytheists believed that the Prophet (s) had forged the Qur'ān himself and was attributing it to God. In the foregoing verses, God challenges them to bring a chapter similar to those of the Qur'ān, and says that as they did not have the knowledge, they deemed the Qur'ān as a lie and wrongly accused the Qur'ān and the Prophet (s). It was due to their inability that they maintained a claim, but could not prove it and support their claim with logical reasons. As a result, they used everything to achieve their egotistical and false goals, even if it meant using sword.

Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlullāh introduces the reason for their denial of the Qur'ān to be their inability to bring a text like that of the Qur'ān, while the revealed Qur'ān entailed a sublime content that could guide its audience to goodness and grace and wipe out their groundless wishes and mundane attachments. He says:

“God asks them to bring a reason that the Qur'ān is not from God and is a lie made up by Muḥammad (s). Their claim is that the Qur'ān is a human artifact, and so, there is no doubt that others could bring a text like it, because it is not a miracle. However, their inability to bring a text like the Qur'ān is a reason for the falsity of their claim and is another reason that the existing Qur'ān is from God. Isn't this a sign that they do not respect their own intellect and do not regard thinking and truth seeking? They do not accept the responsibility of the way they have taken, do not step in the right path, reject it baselessly, and deny it without any evident reason” (Faḍlullāh, 1998, vol. 11: 312).

Considering other verses and the linguistic context of these verses, ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī introduces the polytheists' reason for the denial of the Qur'ān as their lack of knowledge about the themes of the Qur'ān, which results in their rejection of its truths. This will naturally make their fate the same as the oppressors of the previous nations:

“These polytheists' accusation of the Qur'ān as something made up by the non-God but falsely attributed to God is like the accusations of the polytheists and disbelievers of the previous nations who faced issues that derived from the knowledge and orders of the religious invitations that were out of their knowledge scope. Therefore, they could not ascertain and confirm their truth. This lack of knowledge moved them to deny suchlike issues. However, on a day when the esoteric meaning of those issues is revealed and their truth gets evident, they have to confess and confirm these issues. That day is the Resurrection Day when the covers of ignorance are removed from the truths and the truths are fully realized. On that they, those

members of this nation who denied the invitation of Islam and committed oppression will be in the same conditions as those members of the previous nations: ‘Then see what the consequence was for the wrong-doers!’ Based on this sentence, you can guess the fate of these oppressors” (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1996, vol. 10: 96).

In line with the interpretation of these verses, *Tafsīr nimūna* points out that the denial of the Qur’ān by the polytheists is due their lack of knowledge:

“They did not deny the Qur’ān because of its faults and shortcomings; rather, their denial and rejection was because they did not know about its content: ‘but they denied that, the knowledge whereof they could not compass.’ In fact, the reason for their denial was their lack of knowledge and ignorance” (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1996, vol. 8: 294).

The lesson we can get from this verse is that we should not definitively judge and deny something about which we do not have enough knowledge, because that issue might be true and our hurried and uninformed judgment about it bring about an unfavorable fate for us. This is what the polytheists did about the Qur’ān. It is mentioned in the interpretation of the Qur’ān 10:39 in *Tafsīr hidāyat*:

“Of the carnal factors that oppose faith in suchlike people is their lack of knowledge, narrow-mindedness, and scantiness of abilities. Therefore, you can see that they deny whatever they don’t know or cannot understand fully, while it is not appropriate to deny something whose essence one does not know: ‘but they denied that, the knowledge whereof they could not compass’” (Mudarrisī, 1999, vol. 4: 323).

Therefore, when the polytheists could not do anything against the sublime content of the Qur’ānic verses, they accused the Prophet (s) of fabricating the Qur’ān and falsely attributing it to God! Thus, God challenged them to bring a Qur’ān like the existing one, but they could not. As a result, the Qur’ān 10:39 considers the main reason for the polytheists’ denial of the Qur’ān to be their lack of knowledge about its content and goals. This is one of the worst qualities of ignorance that still prevents the human from advancement.

### *Misidentification of values and norms*

“And they say: ‘O thou unto whom the Reminder is revealed, lo! Thou art indeed a madman!’” (Qur’ān 15:6).

One of the other sources of the denial of the noble Qur’ān by the polytheists was their false attribution of madness to the Prophet (s). If we pay attention to the Qur’ānic verses related to this issue, we can observe that some sources and reasons for the denial of the Qur’ān are about the Qur’ān itself, while others are about the Prophet (s). The main reason for such attributions to the noble Prophet (s) (e.g. accusing him of madness) could be the polytheists’ assessment of everything by material and mundane criteria.

This point has been addressed in *Aṭyab al-bayān* as follows:

“Since disbelievers and polytheists did not believe that the human can connect with the divine revelation and the immaterial world, their objection to the prophets – as narrated by many Qur’ānic verses – has been that the prophets are also humans [like them] and the angels should come down and meet them, too, as stipulated in the next verse. Therefore, if a human had the claim of prophethood, they did not accept it and told him: ‘O’ you that claim the Reminder (i.e. the Qur’ān) is revealed to you’ rather than really believing that the Qur’ān had been revealed to him ... Their reason was that a sane person does not make such a claim, because it is an impossible one, and the claim for an impossible issue is a sign of madness” (Ṭayyib, 2000, vol. 8: 8).

In fact, they compared the content of the Qur’ān with their incorrect and material logic and measures, and so, they accused the Prophet (s) of madness.



*Tafsīr nimūna* interprets the verse as follows and introduces the polytheists' extreme contrariness and prejudice as the reason for suchlike accusations:

“When the stubborn and shallow people face a great, unique intellect, one of their first accusations against him is madness, because they set their small and incapable intellect as their criterion and label anything that does not agree with this criterion as unintellectualness and madness! Suchlike people have certain prejudice against the issues that exist around them, even if they lead to misguidance and darkness. Therefore, they fight against any novel invitation as an unintellectual invitation, fear innovations, and deeply adhere to false customs. Moreover, the mammonists measure everything with material criteria; if they come to a person who is ready to lose all his material interests – and even his life – for the attainment of a spiritual goal, they do not believe that he is sane, because intellect in their view is the provision of more assets, a more beautiful wife, a life with more welfare, and a higher mundane position! It is evident that with such a stance, if they see someone who is offered the best assets, women, and positions, but still says: ‘If you put the sun in one of my hands and the moon in the other, and offer me to rule the whole solar system instead of your limited territory, I will not abandon my invitation,’ they could do nothing but to call him mad.”

What is even weirder is that these unwise people attribute contradictory accusations to the divine leaders. They sometimes call them mad and sometimes magician, while the latter is one who should have certain shrewdness and is completely opposite to a mad person” (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1996, vol. 11: 14).

This assessment of issues with material criteria is one of the other sources for the denial of the Qur’ān. According to the Qur’ānic verses, the holders of this view even considered prophetic mission as exclusive to the well-off class who were well known for their notable richness, power, and lineage, and could not and did not want to allow the noble Prophet (s) guide everyone in all eras.

“The disbelievers shun away from being reminded and guided. They feared that they might lose their transient blessing, and although they confessed that the deliverer of the message wanted to sharpen their wisdom and purify their hearts, they accused him of madness. What else could they accuse him of other than madness? Their culture was purely materialistic and they interpreted intellect as achieving the maximum material benefits; therefore, the one who delivered the message that sacrificed their goal for no essential benefit for them should have been mad [in their view]” (Mudarrisī, 1999, vol. 5: 360).

“And they started using mockery in their words: ‘O’ the one onto whom the Reminder [the Qur’ān] is revealed’ ... Therefore, they denied the divine revelation and prophetic mission, and insulted the Prophet (s) with what they said. They started to impolitely describe the Trustworthy Prophet, and called him mad” (Sayyid Quṭb, 1991, vol. 4: 2127).

When the polytheists could not oppose the sublime and spiritual knowledge of the Qur’ān, they measured its content with their worldly criteria and so found it against their materialistic intellectual stances. Therefore, they deemed it a lie and accused the Prophet (s) of being mad. It seems that they always wanted to find a way to run away from truth and they did whatever they could to refuse submitting to the heavenly, eternal, and divine religion named Islam. However, they did not know that by doing so, they set the grounds for their aberration, misguidance, and deviation.

Of course, it should be noted that the word Reminder might not necessarily mean the Qur’ān, and it might have other meanings, too.

Another verse that is related to this discussion is the Qur’ān 38:8:

"Has the reminder been revealed to him from among us? Nay! They are in doubt as to My reminder. Nay! They have not yet tasted My chastisement [so they talk so rudely]!"

The polytheists doubted the essence of the Qur’ānic revelation, and the reason for this was their worldly attachments and its assessment with materialistic beliefs and criteria.

“For instance, the Meccan idolaters say out of envy and enmity: ‘How come that only Muḥammad is receiving the revealed qur’ānic verses and none of the notables of Quraysh has any share of this, while Muḥammad has no advantage over them in age, dignity, or appearance.’ However, this comparison is wrong, because they think that dignity is derived from the volume of assets and the number of companions. The sentence ‘They are in doubt as to My reminder’ presents the idolaters’ words and viewpoint as they doubt the revelation of the qur’ānic verses and do not want to reflect upon the qur’ānic verses. The sentence ‘They have not yet tasted My chastisement [so they talk so rudely]!’ suggests that the polytheists’ doubt is not because there is a caveat or shortcoming in the implications of the qur’ānic verses that prevents them from having faith and belief in its truth. Rather, it derives from their internal interest in the wrong, lineage, mundane attachment, and selfishness; and these prevent them from a fair judgment. If they reflect upon any of the verses, they will certainly confirm that every verse is miraculous. However, these people will never confirm this due to their contrariness but at the time of affliction with the chastisement” (Ḥusaynī Hamidānī, 1984, vol. 14: 96-97).

The Qur’ān intensely fights against their beliefs and criteria, and asserts that they should not doubt the truths due the foregoing reason as well as their contrariness, arrogance, and baseless prejudices, and should not set the grounds for their punishment.

‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī deems the polytheists’ disobedience, arrogance, worldly attachments, and blind imitation as the reason for their denial of the Qur’ān and says:

“The question ‘Has the reminder been revealed to him from among us?’ is a rhetorical question uttered to connote denial. The polytheists wanted to say: ‘Muḥammad has no advantage over us that can make him superior to us and can set him (and not us) as the receiver of the Qur’ān.’ Therefore, the denial of the advantageousness [of the Prophet (s)] in this verse is like that of the sentence ‘Thou art but a mortal like us’ (Qur’ān 26:154) that expresses the disbelievers’ denial of the exclusivity of the prophetic mission to the Prophet (s). The sentence ‘They are in doubt as to My reminder. Nay! They have not yet tasted My chastisement [so they talk so rudely]!’ is the result of the polytheists’ assertions. The Qur’ān says: ‘What they said was not derived from their true belief; rather, they were in doubt about the Reminder (i.e. the Qur’ān) and thought it might be true.’

If they are not convinced about the rightfulness of the Qur’ān, it is not because the Qur’ān has kept things hidden about the rightfulness of the Prophet’s (s) prophethood and the role of the Qur’ān as its sign or that it cannot convey this meaning and bring about certainty and belief for people. Rather, it is so because their hearts are bound to the false belief and they insist on blind imitation; this prevents them from looking at and thinking about the affirmation of the prophethood by the divine verses and the Prophet’s (s) miracle. Therefore, they are in doubt about this sign, i.e. the Qur’ān, while the Qur’ān itself is a miraculous sign.

The chastisement in the sentence ‘Nay! They have not yet tasted My chastisement [so they talk so rudely]!’ is an accidental chastisement that results from the previous accident, and means that the denial of the Qur’ān by the polytheists and their lack of faith in its truthfulness does not derive from their doubt about it. Rather, it derives from their disobedience and arrogance spirit. This spirit has caused them not to confess to the rightfulness of the Qur’ān, although they are certain about it. They continue this disobedience up until they taste the chastisement. At that time, they are forced to confess, like other peoples that had similar opinions and came to confess after chastisement. Moreover, the phrase ‘... they have not yet tasted My chastisement’ is in fact a forewarning about a punishment that will happen” (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1996, vol. 17: 280).

The polytheists believed that the prophethood position should be claimed by one who is superior in terms of age, assets, lineage, and suchlike factors. As Ayatullāh Makārim Shīrāzī says, their criterion for the identification of values was wrong and they never wanted to submit to God due to their arrogance and selfishness. Therefore, the Qur'ān states that they will taste the divine punishment.

“When the Meccan polytheists felt their illegitimate interests were in danger and the fire of hatred and envy started to flame in their hearts, they used various weak argumentations to seduce people and convince themselves to oppose the Prophet (s). For instance, they said with surprise and denial: ‘Is the Qur'ān revealed only to Muḥammad (s) from among us all? Among all these aged elderly men, all these rich people, and all these famous ones, wasn't there one onto whom God could reveal His Qur'ān other than the orphaned, poor Muḥammad?’ This logic was not limited to that era. In our age, too, when an important position is given to someone, the fire of envy starts to flame in others' hearts, their eyes and ears sharpen, and their nags and fault findings start, and they say ‘Wasn't there anyone else that this job is given to this person who is from an unknown, poor family?’

It is evident that these surprises and denials that resulted from envy and love of the worldly life as well as the mistakes in identification of values could not be logical criteria for judgment. The human dignity does not derive from his fame for richness, position, or age. The divine grace is not distributed based on suchlike measures. Therefore, the rest of the verse suggests that the real reason behind their denials is something else: “They are in doubt as to My reminder.”

The accusation of the Prophet (s) is nothing but an excuse, and this doubt casting is not because the holy Qur'ān is ambiguous; rather, it derives from the whims of soul, the love of the worldly life, and envy.

Finally, the Qur'ān warns them with the assertion that their bold opposition to the Messenger of God is because they have not tasted the divine chastisement, and they have started to fight against the divine revelation with their baseless assertions” (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1996, vol. 19: 223-224).

We might say based on this verse that one of the sources for the denial of the Qur'ān was that the polytheists deemed their trivial and arbitrary power the same as the infinite divine power, and so, they doubted the Qur'ān. Moreover, they set wrong criteria for their worldly deeds and compared the revelation of the Qur'ān with those criteria, and so they got wrong results. That is, one of the grounds for the denial of the Qur'ān is the denial of its deliverer whom they thought should have a lot of assets and a high position. Therefore, the disbelievers did not deny the prophethood position, but were wrong in determining who should be the prophet based on what criteria; they assessed him with their own criteria.

The Qur'ān rejects all false accusations attributed to the Prophet (s) in the Qur'ān 69:40-43; 56:77-82, and 52:33-34, and says that the Qur'ān is from God and the Prophet (s) is only responsible for preaching it, and that he does not forge anything himself and does not falsely attribute anything to God. The polytheists denied the Qur'ān due to their contrariness, prejudice, envy, lack of knowledge, and following of the carnal desires. They would never have faith, and this way, they set the grounds for their own misguidance and punishment.

## Conclusion

With the examination of these verses as a sample of the verses that discuss the denial of the Qur'ān by the polytheists and the opponents of the Prophet (s), the following results could be achieved:

- A) It seems that the bases for the denial of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān are the same principles used to deny the Qur'ān. When the polytheists and the opponents of the Qur'ān deny the Qur'ān, they would certainly reject its miraculousness, too.

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- B) Some sources of the polytheists' denial of the Qur'ān are related to the Qur'ān and some others to the Prophet (s).
  - C) The majority of these denials are related to the early years of the appointment of the Prophet (s).
  - D) The principles of the denial of the Qur'ān include the polytheists and opponents' intense contrariness and enmity toward the Qur'ān, their eternal disbelief and lack of faith, their denial and lack of belief in the Resurrection, their blind imitations and the extreme following of the carnal desires, their ignorance and lack of knowledge, their mistakes in the identification of the values and criteria, their worldly attachments, and their false beliefs.
  - E) The polytheists accused the Qur'ān of being the tales of the ancient and a lie, and casted doubts on it, while they accused the Prophet (s) of being mad, a poet, a fortune-teller, a magician, etc.

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