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A Critique of the Rational Signification of the Miracle to Prophethood

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Abstract

The present article investigates the signification of miracle to the prophet's prophethood from the rational and logical viewpoints in the context of Islamic theology. After proving the necessity of the prophethood with the help of the 'Rule of Grace', most of the Islamic theologians consider miracle as the main reason for affirming the claim of someone who claims God has called him to prophethood. Most of theologians maintain that miracle is enough evidence for affirming such a claim, but a few of them criticize this idea. That the miracle rationally signifies the prophethood, and being called by God as a messenger can be stated in two ways. One is that the mere issuing of a miracle by the claimant to prophethood can rationally and logically affirm his prophethood. The other is that by adding some introductory items to the miracle and compiling an authentic logical deduction, one can affirm someone's claim to prophethood. It seems that both explanations are defective. The deficiency of the first explanation is that the miracle in itself has no logical signification to prophethood and affirmation of the claimant. At most, it shows the agent's power to perform extraordinary

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actions, not more. The second explanation is faced with numerous critiques such as vicious circle in argument, deficiency in attributing miracle to God, simultaneous fallacy, deficiency in being miracle as a sign of prophethood, non-homogeneity of reason and claim, the drawback of miracle's being extraordinary, criticizing the premises of the argument, and the prophethood's no need for miracle. Finally, the result of the present study is that miracle has no rational signification for prophethood, and prophethood and guiding the human beings do not necessarily require miracle.

Keywords

Miracle, rational signification, prophethood, extraordinariness.

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Introduction

The present article deals, in the context of Islamic theology and philosophy of religion, with the signification of miracle to affirmation of a claim to prophethood from the rational and logical viewpoints. In the Islamic theology, miracle – i.e. performing an extraordinary action that others are unable to do – is mentioned as the main reason for verity of the prophet's claim to prophethood (see: Razi, 1986, vol. 2, p. 97; Qasem bin Muhammad bin Ali, 1412 AH, p. 119; Abul-Hassan Halabi, 1414 AH, p. 39; Naraqi, 1369 SH, p. 101; Mu'ayyedi, 1422 AH, p. 111). By investigating the claims of the Islamic theologians to the effect that miracle is a reason for verity of someone's claim to prophethood, this article criticizes it and states the logical objections to that claim. Considering the antiquity and scope of the subject of miracle in Islamic theology, many articles have been written on that subject. However, Vahida Fakhkhar Nowghani and Sayyid Murteza Husseini Shahrudi published three articles regarding the signification of miracle to prophethood. They are as follows: "Investigation and Critique of the Rational Signification of Miracles for Verity of a Claim to Prophethood", "Investigation and Critique of the Theory of Persuasive Signification of Miracles", and "Comparative Investigation of Signification of Miracle for Verity of Claim to Prophethood from the Viewpoint of Ibn Rushd and Allameh Tabataba'i". In these articles, the views of Islamic thinkers regarding the signification of miracle is divided into two groups: rational and persuasive. The adherents of the first view believe that miracle has a rational signification to the verity of the claim to prophethood, and that one can logically find the verity of someone's claim to prophethood by observing a miracle. But the adherents of the second view believe that miracle and performing extraordinary actions have no rational and logical signification to verity of the

claim to someone's being called to prophethood by God; rather, it has just a persuasive and psychological certitude for that claim (Fakhkhar Nowghani and Husseini Shahrudi, 1394 SH, p. 136). Another article entitled "Investigating the Signification of Miracle for Prophethood" was published from Hamid Ariyan (Ariyan, 1377 SH), wherein the author – while stating various views regarding the signification of miracle – defends the rational signification and criticizes the persuasive signification. The present article has been conducted by considering these contemporary studies and the hypothesis that the author is seeking to prove is rejecting the views of the adherents of rational signification and criticizing their arguments. In this article, by the phrase "signification of miracle for prophethood", we mean signification of miracle for verity of what a claimant to prophethood claims, and the former phrase has been used to observe brevity. Thus, the subject of this article is not the theological evidence for necessity of prophethood in general such as the Rule of Grace or deficiency of human's reason in acquiring true felicity.

1. Definition of Miracle

Literally, the Arabic equivalent for 'miracle' (i.e. *muʿjiza* or *iʿjāz*) is derived from the root *ʿajz* meaning the end of something. Literally, thus, *iʿjāz* means making someone unable and creating inability in someone (Ragheb Isfahani, 1390 SH, s.v. 'jz, p. 515; Ahmad Fares bin Zakariya, 1358 SH, vol. 4, p. 234). Therefore, *muʿjiza* is the action that others are unable to do. In defining *muʿjiza,* Khaja Nasiruddin Tusi says, 'It is realization of something that is not usual, or negation of something that is usual, along with extraordinariness and in line with a claim' (Allame Hillī, 1413 AH, p. 275). The condition for *iʿjāz* is the extraordinariness of the action and its conformation with the miracle worker who claims it. That is, if he claims that he can extract water from a stone, he must do that.

He must not, for example, turn a stone to wood.

The definition offered by Islamic theologians is a single definition, and they have defined miracle – apart from trivial differences – as follows: "an extraordinary affair in conformation with the miracle worker's claim, along with a challenge that nobody can do that." (Fazel Meqdad, 1420 AH, p. 79; Taftazani, 1409 AH, vol. 5, p. 11, Suyuti, 1421 AH, pp. 3-4; Fazel Meqdad, 1420 AH, p. 151; Jamil Hamud, 1421 AH, vol. 1, p. 412; Subhani, 1412 AH, vol. 3, p. 229). 'Extraordinary' means something that is not in accordance with the normal current of life, such as turning a stick to snake, making a dead body alive, cleaving the moon apart, and bringing a tree close. The Islamic theologians explain that performing such things are impossible for ordinary people because a miracle is God's action and is performed through divine power. They maintain that people's inability in performing something like miracle is either in the action itself (such as making a dead alive), or in the properties of that action (such as the Quran's eloquence or destroying a city) (Fazel Meqdad, 1420 AH, p. 80).

Allame Hillī says, 'miracle is an extraordinary affair along with challenging whose aim is affirming a prophet in his prophetic claim. The challenge means that agent tells others if you do not accept my words, do what I have done. And 'affair' means an extraordinary action such as cleaving the moon apart or an ordinary action that God has forbidden to be done by ordinary people, such as Arab's inability in bringing even one verse like the Quran's verses' ('Ubaydali, 1381, p. 436). The important point in a miracle's signification to verify a prophet's prophetic claim is what Allame Hillī states as a condition for miracle; that is, the miracle must be God's action or run through the channel of God's action. In other words, that action

is performed by God's direct permission, such as the story of Abraham wherein God ordered the fire to be extinguished (O Fire! Be cold and healthy for Abraham/ The Quran, Anbiyā: 69); or God has enabled his prophet to do that, such as miracles done by Moses and Jesus, or like Muhammad's Ascent to the heavens by God's permission. Indeed, God affirms his prophet through the miracle. Thus, miracle is attributed to God ('Ubaydali, 1381 SH, pp. 436-437).

In his definition of miracle, Ayatollah Khou'i refers to the miracle's signification to verity of someone's prophethood as follows: "Miracle means someone who claims a divine office (like a prophet) does something that is beyond the natural laws, others are unable to do it, and it is an attestation for verifying his claim" (Mousavi Khu'i, 1326 SH, p. 35).

In expositing Iji's[1] words in *al-Mawāqif,* as an explanation of the conditions of miracle and the fact that miracle must be God's action or on His part, Jurjani says, 'if a prophet says my miracle is to put my hand on my head while you are unable to do that, and then he does that while others cannot do it, it will be evidence for verity of his claim to prophet'. (Iji and Jurjani, 1325 AH, vol. 8, p. 223).

Therefore, the importance of miracle in Islamic theology is because it is considered as evidence for verity of a persons' claim to prophethood. Now, if there is no such logical and rational relationship between a miracle and proving the verity of a claim to prophethood, the Islamic theologians will face a big challenge in

1. 'Azududdin Iji 'Abdur-Rahman bin Ahmad, the Iranian scientist who was born in Ij, a village in Fars province. His book entitled *al-Mawāqif* is among the most detailed books common in the Sunnite theology.

proving the prophets' prophethood, and knowledge of prophethood of a claimant will be impossible.

2. Expositing the Signification of Miracle to Prophethood and Two Explanations of It

The rational signification of miracle to a claimant's claim to prophethood is one of the issues subject to disagreement among the Islamic theologians and even the western thinkers. In general, there are two views in this regard. Some have regarded signification of miracle to prophethood as a rational signification, while others have considered it as a persuasive one. The adherents of the first view believe that miracle can be considered as a logical and argumentative reason for proving the divine mission of one who claims to be a prophet if doing the miraculous action is rationally a witness for the prophethood of the miracle worker. But the adherents of the second view believe that there is no logical and rational relation between the occurrence of the miracle in the hands of one and his prophetic mission from God, and that the miracle can – at best – persuade some individuals to believe him. The persuasive signification is not found in logics under the discussion of types of significations. It means 'suspicion close to certainty', which is sometimes called certitude. But such a state is not a logical certitude, because the contrary (here that the miracle worker is not a prophet) is still rationally possible. In stating the persuasive signification, it is said that by observing the miracle in the hands of the claimant to prophethood, individuals are psychologically persuaded and accept his/ her claim (see: Fakhkhar Nowghani and Husseini Shahrudi, 1396 SH, p. 6; 1394 SH, pp. 135-136). In some sources, a view called contingent signification of miracle for prophethood. That is, miracle does not have – in itself – a definite signification for prophethood, and the mere observation of a

miracle cannot verify the claim of the person. Rather, it has a contingent signification; that is, it has the capacity to be used as evidence for prophethood by adding other evidence and preliminaries (see: Ariyan, 1377 SH). As we will mention afterwards, this view is indeed another reading of the second explanation of rational signification of the miracle for prophethood, but under another title.

We can say that the majority of the Islamic theologians are adherents of the first view, and consider the signification of miracle to prophethood as a rational signification. Just a few of the earlier and later Islamic theologians such as Juweyni, Ibn Rushd, Ghazali, Shebli Nuʿman, and Sayyid Ahmad Khan Hendi are critics of the rational signification view (see: Fakhkhar Nowghani and Husseini Shahrudi, 1396 SH, p. 6; 1394 SH, p. 135; Ariyan, 1377; Guli, 1394 SH, pp. 76-77). Of course, being a critic of the first view does not mean to be adherent of the second view.

By reflecting on the views of opponents and proponents of the miracles' signification to prophethood, I conclude that this issue has not been well explained conceptually and some of the critics of the opponents have nothing to do with the arguments offered by the proponents. Thus, because of some ambiguities in this subject, it is essential to clarify the signification of miracle from the logical viewpoint before stating the views. As we mentioned before, the meaning of 'signification of miracle to prophethood' is that miracle means an extraordinary action done by a person who claims to be a prophet as evidence for his claim to his prophetic mission from God. This is related to general prophethood in the Islamic theology, which is in contrast to the discussions on specific prophethood, i.e. the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam or a certain prophet.

Dilālat (literally, 'signification') in Arabic means guidance, leading, sign, and display; and in logics, it means anything

knowledge of which necessitates knowledge of something else (Nafisi, 1355 SH, vol. 2, p. 1525; Tahanavi, 1996, vol. 1, p. 787). Here, 'anything' means any word or anything other than words. Knowledge means both idea and judgment. The first 'thing' is *dāll* (i.e. 'signifier') and the second thing is *madlūl* (i.e. 'signified'). For example, smoke signifies the existence of a fire, or a footprint signifies the existence of someone who has walked away. In the first division, signification is divided into literal and non-literal, and in the second division, each of them is divided into conventional, natural and rational. The rational signification is the one wherein the reason finds an essential tie between the signifier and signified; and accordingly, it is transferred from the idea or judgement of the signifier to the signified. The essential tie, i.e. the realization of the signifier in 'thing-itself' (*nafs al-amr*), necessitates the realization of the signified or vice versa. For instance, the existence of the fire is considered necessary in case smoke is observed or heat is sensed. This is like transition from cause to effect, or from footprint to walker, or from artifact to the artisan. The natural signification is when the reason finds a natural necessary relation between the signifier and signified, and is – thus – transferred from one to the other, just like the redness of one's figure that signifies his embarrassment. The conventional signification is the one that is merely created by a connection between two things based on a valid tie, and there is no truth for it beyond that convention; just like the signification of words to meanings in a language or signification of signposts to driving rules (Tahanavi, 1996, vol. 1, pp. 787-789; Muzaffar, 1437 AH, pp. 39-43).

Another discussion in logics is pertaining to proof and argument wherein there is some kind of transference from one thing to another. However, this transference is between propositions, not single items. Muzaffar says, 'A proof, for logicians, is compilation of

propositions from which something desired is produced. It is called *ḥujjat* (= proof) for it is argued to prove some desired idea against the opponent. It is also called *dalīl* (= reason) for it serves as a reason for a desired idea. Compilation of these propositions for signification (i.e. guidance) is called *istidlāl* (= argument/ reasoning)' (Muzaffar, 1437 AH, p. 231). Thus, arguing and reasoning is something that is done about propositions, not single items. Reasoning and argumentation is of two types: *mubāshir* (direct) and *ghayr-mubāshir* (indirect). If the premise of the argument is just one proposition and is transferred merely from one proposition to another, it is called *mubāshir.* Like when we conclude from the proposition 'all As are B' that 'some As are B'. If numerous propositions are used to conclude something, it is called *ghayr-mubāshir,* like the following ones: (1) 'all As are B', (2) 'some Bs are C' → 'some As are C' (Muzaffar, 1437 AH, pp. 192, 226). The *ghayr-mubāshir* argument is divided into three types as follows: *ghiyās* (deduction), *tamthīl* (analogy), and *istighrā'* (induction). *Ghiyās* (deduction) is defined as follows: 'a collection of some premises that, once accepted, essentially lead to acceptance of another statement'. (Muzaffar, 1437 AH, p. 234). In this definition, transference from something to something else is mentioned because of essential tie between them; this is the very definition of rational signification we mentioned before in three types of signification. As Tahanavi has asserted, the three types of signification can exist both between ideas and between judgments. Consequently, the deductive argumentation also falls under the rational signification. Although the discussion of three types of significations (rational, natural and conventional) – both because of examples mentioned by logicians and because of the status of this discussion in logics in the section of ideas under the discussion of words – seems in the first look that it is a discussion pertaining to ideas and singulars, not propositions and

judgments. It has nothing to do with deduction and indirect reasoning discussed in logics under the titles of propositions and judgments.

What is discussed in regard with miracle is shown in the following question: "what kind of relationship and signification exist between miracle and prophethood?" "Can one rationally find out the verity of someone's claim to prophethood with occurrence of a miracle?"

Firstly, there is no statement on whether this signification is natural or conventional. Secondly, since there is no relationship – of the three types of signification – between idea of miracle and idea of prophethood, the point of discussion will be the relationship between judgments of miracle and prophethood. In other words, a question is posed as follows: "Does the judgment of 'Moses performed a miracle' rationally necessitate the judgment of 'Moses is God's prophet'?"

By reflecting on the words of proponents of the rational signification of miracle to prophethood and their opponents, the writer has inferred two readings of the rational signification of miracle to prophethood. One is related to the following questions: "Can we rationally and logically reach the proposition of "X is God's prophet" from the proposition of "X has performed a miracle?" "Is the first proposition a rational signification to the second one?" The other is pertaining to the question of whether by combining the proposition of "X has performed a miracle" with some other propositions and compiling a deduction one can affirm rationally and logically the proposition that "X is God's prophet". In other words, is there any authentic deductive argument to transit us from

miracle to prophethood? It seems that most critiques of the opponents are concentrated on the first issue and the first reading of the rational signification of miracle to prophethood, while the proponents' words and their arguments pertain to the second reading. Of course, some critiques pertain well to the second reading. Thus, the present article has been organized on the basis of a separation between the two issues and the related arguments and critiques.

3. Explanation of the Muslim Theologians' Argument in Signification of Miracle to Prophethood

As mentioned before, the majority of the Islamic theologians, including both Shiites and Sunnites, have considered the occurrence of a miracle in the hands of the claimant to prophethood as evidence for proving his prophetic mission (Qasem bin Muhammad bin Ali, 1421 AH, p. 119; Halabi, 1414 AH, p. 39). In their view, miracle is the main way for knowing one's prophethood. The following statements are amply found in the sources of Islamic theology:

> It is noteworthy that one must not hear and accept the words of anyone who claims to be a prophet, because there were numerous persons who came and claimed to be prophets. Thus, a prophet just has a 'proof' and 'demonstration' that affirms his claim to prophethood (Naraqi, 1369 SH, p. 101).

> And when God calls someone to prophethood, He may not guide people to follow him except through miracles, because there is no other way to know his prophethood; otherwise, the prophethood would be nonsense (Mu'ayyedi, 1422 AH, p. 111).

Accordingly, the Islamic theologians have a simple common reasoning for proving Muhammad's specific prophethood, which is

based on occurrence of miracles, especially the miracle of the Quran, in his hands (Razi, 1986, vol. 2, p. 76; Allame Hillī, 1363 SH, pp. 183-184; Amudi, 1423 AH, vol. 4, p. 68). This reasoning is as follows:

> "Belief in the prophethood of our Prophet, Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) is an obligation, because he claimed to be a prophet and the miracle was running in his hands. Thus, he was truly a prophet and both premises are definite." (Fazel Meqdad, 1412 AH, p. 79).

Therefore, for Islamic theologians, miracle is a proof and evidence for the prophets' prophetic mission. But how can a miracle, in one's hands, be evidence for his prophethood? The answer is that miracle is something that occurs just through divine will and power. As a result, everywhere a miracle is running in the hands of someone, it shows his relationship with God and affirms his claim that miracle has occurred by God. Some Islamic theologians have said:

> "Know that this is one of the great principles of religion, and that the difference between Muslims and disbelievers is in belief in the same principle. Thus, it is an obligation to take it important and prove it by offering demonstrations. There is no way to prove the prophethood of the prophets in general and the Prophet of Islamic in particular except with two premises: first, the prophet has claimed to have a prophetic mission from God to people and has brought a miracle based on his own claim in order to affirm his own words. Second, anyone whom God affirms is truthful." (Muzaffar, 1374 SH, vol. 1, p. 443).

In explaining the rational signification of miracle to prophet's claim, Khaja Nasir Tusi has argued as follows:

> "But that every claimant to prophethood who has a miracle in

> proportion to his claim is a prophet is rationally known, because miracle is not from someone other than the Exalted Allah, and its manifestation along with a claim to prophethood denotes affirmation of the prophet by the Exalted God. And anyone who claims to be a prophet and God affirms him is necessarily a prophet." (Tusi, 1390 SH, p. 456).

As Islamic theologians have asserted, the miracle's signification of the prophet's prophethood and his mission from God is just accepted if the miracle is God's action. Otherwise, miracle is no evidence for someone's prophethood and his divine mission. In expositing Iji's words, Jurjani writes: "...the first conditions is that [miracle] is God's action.... because something that is not from Allah is not affirmed by Him..." (Iji and Jurjani, 1325 AH, vol. 8, p. 223).

Sayyid Murteza maintains that signification of miracle to prophethood has three conditions: (1) miracle is from God and is His action; (2) it breaches the ordinary habits; and (3) it affirms the prophet's claim. (Sayyid Murteza, 1411 AH, p. 328).

In explaining Nowbakhti's words in *Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yaqūt,* Allame Hillī says:

> "He said, 'and the condition of miracle is that it must be God's action or the channel for it. And its aim is affirmation.' I say, '... and the condition of miracle – to be God's action or channel for it – means that it must be with God's order or along with obeying Him, because it affirms the prophet through the miracle of Almighty God. Thus, the miracle is necessarily attributed to God... and the aim of a miracle is affirmation.'" (Allame Hillī, 1363 SH, p. 184).

Fakhr Razi says:

> "Verily, the miracles, when people are unable to bring like them,

> are actions from God and created by Him to affirm His prophet's claim. And creation of miracle following the prophet's claim denotes the affirmation of the one who claims the prophetic mission." (Razi, 1986, vol. 2, p. 97).

Accordingly, for the Islamic theologians, the rational signification of the miracle to prophethood is as follows: (1) the agent of the miracle is God; and (2) simultaneity of the miracle with the prophet's claims shows the affirmation of his claim on the part of God. In his *al-Iqtiṣād fil-I'tiqād,* Ghazali has well explained the point that miracle serves as God's affirmation of the prophet:

> "The Exalted God affirms the prophets and messengers through challenging miracles so that they may affirm their claim and affirmation of a liar is impossible, for everyone to whom God says, 'you are My messenger' gets out of lying. Thus, it is impossible to reconcile God's words that says 'I affirm you are My messenger' with the prophet's being a liar. (Ghazali, 1423 AH, p. 136).

On the logical relationship between miracle and prophethood, some of the contemporary theologians have said:

> "Verily, there is a logical tie between the miracle and the affirmation of the claim to prophethood, because when the bringer of miracle is true in his claim, it is natural for him to prove his claim. And if he is false in his claim, God who is to guide His servants does not deserve to enable a liar to prove his claim by a miracle, because when people see him able to perform an extraordinary action, they will have faith in him and act accordingly. Thus, if the claimant to prophethood is a liar, that (enabling him to perform a miracle) will be misguiding people. No doubt, that is contrary to God's justice and wisdom. This is one of

the subsidiary principles of the rule of rational good and evil." (Subhani, 1386 SH, p. 122).

Here, some preliminary propositions of the argument has been stated: (3) God is Wise; (4) God attempts to guide His servants; (5) God does not enable a liar who claims he is a prophet to perform a miracle. Thus, God runs miracle just in the hands of the true claimants of prophethood. Thus, miracle reveals the position of prophethood (ideal result).

As a result, the argument of the Islamic theologians on signification of miracle to the prophet's prophethood returns to God's Wisdom. Since Islamic theologians believe that (a) God's purpose in calling the prophets to prophethood is guiding human beings, and (b) miracle is God's action, it is improper for the Wise God to run miracle in the hands of false claimants, for it will lead to people's deviation and not knowing the true prophet. (c) Thus, anyone who claims to be a prophet and has a miracle in his hands is truly God's messenger (Fazel Meqdad, 1412 AH, p. 82; Muhaqqeq Bahrani, 1406 AH, p. 130).

Therefore, it is clear that the meaning of rational signification of miracle to prophethood, for Islamic theologians, is the second reading of the two readings in the previous section. That is, offering a deductive conjunctive argument with several introductions as follows:

1. Miracle is God's action;
2. Coincidence of the occurrence of miracle with the claim of the claimant to prophethood is a sign of God's affirmation of his claim;
3. Occurrence of miracle in the hands of the false claimants leads to people's deviation;

4. Misleading people is an evil action;
5. God is Wise and does not do evil actions;
6. Thus, God does not run any miracle in the hands of the false claimants of prophethood;
7. Conclusion: anyone who performs a miracle is God's true messenger.

If the conclusion of that deduction is added as a major premise of another conjunctive argument to its minor premise – which is a sensory introduction as follows: "the miracle has been performed by the claimant X of the prophethood" – then we can logically and rationally conclude that "X is God's messenger".

4. First Reading of the Rational Signification of Miracle to Prophethood and Its Critique

By studying the critiques of the opponents of rational signification of the miracle to prophethood, it becomes clear that what they have in mind of the issue is the first reading of the rational signification of the miracle to prophethood. For instance, Abd al-Malik al-Juwayni defines rational signification as what the human's reason achieves with no presupposition by going from the signifier to the signified (like signification of any originated thing to an originator) and says, 'By observing miracles, the human's reason does not go to the verity of the claimant to prophethood. There is no necessary and logical relation between them. If something such as turning a stick to snake or dragon occurs by God spontaneously in the nature, it does not by itself denote the signified idea (i.e. verity of prophethood)' (Juveyni, 1416 AH, p. 132; Fakhkhar Nowghani and Husseini Shahrudi, 1394 SH, p. 138).

Likewise, Ibn Rushd says, 'The reason is not able, without

presuppositions such as 'miracle is God's action' and 'prophet is not a liar', cannot perceive the rational relationship between miracle and prophethood. That is, performing an extraordinary action such as making the dead alive does not by itself signify the prophethood of the miracle worker. And just through the presupposition of the prophetic mission and restricting the occurrence of miracles to prophets, it signifies prophethood of the person' (Fakhkhar Nowghani and Husseini Shahrudi, 1393 SH, p. 35; quoted from Ibn Rushd, p. 176).

The source of this error of the critics is perhaps the general and ambiguous statements of some Islamic theologians who merely used those general statements without expositing them, a statement like: "And the way to verify his claim is appearance of miracle in his hands" (Tusi, 1390 SH, p. 214). Or what Allame Hillī has written in expositing Nowbakhti's words: "For the third issue in proving Muhammad's prophethood, we must say that Muhammad was God's messenger because of the miracle in his hands, i.e. the Quran. This is because with the Quran, he challenged opponents and Arabs were unable to confront it." (Allame Hillī, 1363 SH, pp. 184-185). Seyfuddin Amudi, an Ash'arite scholar, says in proving Muhammad's prophethood:

> "And what denotes his prophethood specified by the Exalted God is that we can say, 'Verily, Muhammad was present and claimed to be God's messenger. And some miracles were running in his hands, and he challenged his opponents with them. However, no one was ready to answer him. Thus, he was the Prophet'" (Amudi, 1423 AH, vol. 4, p. 68).

Anyway, the first reading of the rational signification of miracle – whether it has adherents or not – is something that can be proposed as a hypothesis and mentioning its critiques will help clarify the issue. Thus, the first reading of the rational signification of miracle to prophethood is that from the affirmation of the single

proposition 'X has performed a miracle', we may logically and rationally arrive at the affirmation of the proposition of 'X is God's messenger'. The first proposition, by itself and without adding other premises, denotes rationally the second proposition.

4-1. The Logical Signification of Miracle

It seems axiomatic that the mere affirmation of the proposition 'Moses has performed an extraordinary action' cannot logically lead to verification of the proposition 'Moses is God's messenger'. Miracle by itself has no logical and rational signification to prophethood and verity of the claimant to it. What the miracle signifies is – at best – the power of its agent to do extraordinary action, and nothing more. Performing an extraordinary action such as cleaving the moon the sea apart or turning a stick to snake does never signify the relationship of the miracle worker with God. Miracle, however big, shows the power of its agent to influence the nature and perform strange and extraordinary actions. Many men, throughout history and in our time, perform strange and extraordinary actions that others are unable to do, but nobody claims to be related with God or be God's messenger. The critics stated by Juveyni and Ibn Rushd, previously mentioned here, are statements of this very objection.

5. The Second Reading of the Rational Signification of Miracle to Prophethood and Its Critique

The second reading of the rational signification of miracle to prophethood, which is what the Islamic theologians mean, was formerly mentioned with its six preliminary statements; but it seems that by adding all introductions, it will be a deduction like what follows:

(1) God exists. (2) God is All-Wise. (3) The All-Wise God seeks

some goal by creating His servants. (4) God is the Guide and for guiding His servants and leading them to their goal, He has called some prophets to prophethood. (5) A miracle is evidence for prophethood of the prophets. (6) Miracle is God's action. (7) The simultaneity of miracle with the claim of someone to prophethood is the sign of verity of his prophethood by God. (8) Appearance of miracle in the hands of false claimants of prophethood leads people astray. (9) Leading people astray is evil. (10) The All-Wise God does not do evil. Thus, He does not run any miracle in the hands of false claimants to prophethood. Conclusion: issuing miracle in the hands of a claimant to prophethood is evidence for his prophethood.

5-1. Vicious Circle of the Argument

The main drawback of this argument offered by the Islamic theologians is forgetting the position of the demonstration of miracle, disagreement, and taking for granted the results that all are evidence for proving the prophethood through miracle. Consider human beings who have had various worldviews throughout history. Some were polytheists and believed in many gods. Some believed in god of the Sun and the moon and some were idolaters. Among them, there were individuals who invited people to worship One Invisible God and introduced themselves as messengers of the One God. The addressees had no knowledge of and no faith in the invisible One God. For accepting the claim to prophethood and those individuals' messaging from One God, people demand evidence and proofs. The claimants to prophethood perform extraordinary actions such as turning a stick to dragon, making the dead alive, curing the sick, and the like, and consider those actions as supporting those claims. Now the question is whether, logically and rationally, people can affirm the claims of those individuals by observing those extraordinary

actions or not. Do actions such as turning a stick to dragon, making the dead alive, and curing the sick signify their prophethood from the invisible One God? Here is the point where miracle is offered as the evidence for prophethood. Thus, the addressees of the prophets were individuals who had no knowledge of God or His attributes such as Wisdom and the like. Nor did they accept the principle of prophethood and existence of prophets. The introductions Islamic theologians added to the occurrence of miracle in their arguments to make a demonstrative deduction and arrive at the desired conclusion (i.e. prophethood of the claimants) are introductions that will be proved in next stages after accepting the miracle worker's prophetic mission and having faith in him through the teachings of the prophets. Thus, the arguments offered by the Islamic theologians are based on presuppositions and introductions acceptable only for someone who believes in God and prophets. Taking presuppositions such as existence of God, God's Wisdom, and calling the prophets to prophethood serve as getting results of the arguments from the premises. Having faith in One God in Abrahamic religions, knowledge of His attributes such as Wisdom, Guidance, and sending prophets for guiding people are all affairs coming after affirmation and acceptance of Abrahamic prophets. How can the one who lacks faith in God and His Wisdom and Guidance have presuppositions of God's Wisdom, obscenity of God's deception of people by ignorance, necessity of calling prophets to prophethood, and the miracle's being divine mission and action? Thus, the argument of Islamic theologians in considering miracle as evidence for prophethood is based on taking that claim (i.e. prophethood) as a presupposition and a vicious circle as follows: proving the prophethood depends on miracle; and signification of miracle to prophethood depends on accepting the principle of prophethood. Thus, proving prophethood

is contingent upon accepting prophethood. This argument of the Islamic theologians is just acceptable for believers and those who accept the aforementioned introductions, not for all human beings. That is, for proving the claim of someone who claims to be a prophet (person X), the Islamic theologians must first prove – for their unbelieving addressees – God with some rational arguments; and then, prove God's attributes such as Guiding and Wise. They, then, must prove the principle of *bi'that* (calling to prophethood) and *nubuwwat* (prophethood). Then, they must prove his direct intervention in universe, performing miracles with God's power, and God's prevention of miracles in the hands of false claimants to prophethood. After proving all these, they will finally be able to persuade their addressees that now that a miracle is running in the hands of the claimant to prophethood (person X), he is God's messenger. Accordingly, the demonstration of miracle will be efficient just after having faith in God and principle of prophethood and just for distinguishing the true messenger from the false claimant. Someone may claim that the Islamic theologians have mentioned miracle as evidence for verity of one's claim to prophethood, with the same method and through the same stages. However, we must note that the historical evidence is contrary to that and throughout history, the prophets were not called to prophethood for guiding the individuals that had faith in God and general prophethood through reason and rational proofs and those who had problem just in discerning a certain prophet. For example, Moses' opponent was Pharaoh who believed in false gods or claimed to be a god himself.

5-2. Attributing Miracle to God

As some Islamic theologians have stressed, miracle is evidence

for prophethood because its agent in God. In stating the signification of miracle, in Allame Hillī's view and that of other theologians, we stated that they believe it is God who affirms His prophet's claim through a miracle. Thus, miracle is attributed to God ('Ubaydali, 1381 SH, pp. 436-437). Now, the most important objection facing the signification of miracle to prophethood and introduction no. 6 of the argument presented by Islamic theologians is affirmation of God's agency in miracle. If we consider the demonstration of miracle to be proving the messenger's prophethood for unbelievers, the problem arises that in such a position one cannot conclude logically from miracle that God is its agent. Thus, one cannot affirm the miracle worker's claim to prophethood. The reason why God's agency in a miracle is not affirmed is the existence of other probabilities regarding the agency of miracle. The first probability about the agent of the miracle is the miracle itself. The humans' souls are different and individual's tempers are also different. Thus, it is quite likely that the miracle man's soul or temper have certain features that enable him to perform extraordinary actions (Amudi, 1423 AH, p. 38). The second probability is that the miracles or extraordinary actions performed by the claimants to prophethood are of the type of sorcery and enchantment as well as being informed of certain features of some materials that ordinary people are not informed of or able to perform. According to the Quran's verses, the witches could do things such as creating disagreements between a couple or revealing a snake[1] (Amudi, 1423 AH, vol. 4, pp. 38-40). Discerning the difference

1. They would learn from those two that with which they would cause a split between man and his wife (the Quran, Baqara: 102)/ So when they threw, they bewitched the people's eyes and overawed them, producing a tremendous magic. (the Quran, A'rāf: 116).

between sorcery and real divine miracle was impossible for ordinary human beings addressed by the prophets. Thus, the Israelites were deceived by Samiri's calf. The third probability about the agent of the miracle is that it is performed by the non-human beings such as angels, jinns, or demons, especially miracles such as informing people of invisible world and future news. In our time, even some who claim to be related with jinns and demons inform people of lost things and other affairs that make ordinary people surprised. The fourth probability is the performance of the miracle by a human agent other than the one who claims to be prophet. That is, the claimant – after whose claim the miracle is performed before the eyes of people – is not the performer of the miracle. Rather, he is related with someone else in another place through normal or abnormal means such as telepathy and the like, and that person – far away or near – is the one who performs the miracle. This probability is imaginable in miracles such as predicting future events and informing people of invisible world. The fifth probability is that miracle (an extraordinary action) is the product of natural but unusual events and is the result of natural but rare relations and connections such as connection with celestial bodies, lunar eclipse, solar eclipse and other astronomical phenomena that happen once in a hundred years. Those events may happen accidentally in the same time when the person has claimed to be prophet (Amudi, 1423 AH, vol. 4, p. 41). In all these probabilities, an extraordinary action is performed along with a challenge that disables people. Thus, the definition of miracle applies to them. However, the agent of the miracle is not God. As a result, an ordinary person – whether a believer or an unbeliever – cannot logically and rationally observe a miracle and conclude that it has been performed by God to affirm someone's claim to prophethood.

In his *al-Qistās al-Mustaqīm,* Ghazali writes:

> "On proving prophethood through miracle, 'This method does not assure one about someone's claim to prophethood, because there is a probability of using tricks, sleight of hand, amulet, and the like in performing things such as turning a stick to snake. Even if turning the stick to snake is real, this proves nothing more than doing a strange thing by its agent" (Ghazali, 1413 AH, pp. 57-58).

In rejecting the third probability, Fakhr Razi says, 'The prophets have invited people to curse the demons. Now, how could they seek help from them?' (Razi, 1986, vol. 2, pp. 98-99). In answering Fakhr Razi, we must say, 'This objection means the rejection of the argument offered by the Islamic theologians, not accusing prophets of having ties with jinns and demons.' In other words, this is stating the logical objection to the argument offered by the Islamic theologians. That is, from the introduction of issuing a miracle in the hands of the claimant to prophethood, we cannot logically conclude that the miracle man is a divine prophet, and that God was indeed the agent of the miracle to affirm the claim of his messenger. This is because it is probable that the miracle has occurred due to other factors such as ties with jinns and demons. As a result, the theologians' argument gets invalid because of other probabilities: "when comes a probability, the argument gets invalid."

5-3. Simultaneous Fallacy

Another objection to considering miracle as evidence for prophethood is that occurrence of miracle following one's claim to prophethood is logically neither evidence for its realization from God, nor is it affirming the claim to prophethood. The argument of

the Islamic theologians is an instance of fallacy of 'simultaneous' or 'considering a simultaneous event as cause' in logics. One of the well-known fallacies is that whenever two events occur concurrently, one is considered – without any logical justification – a cause for the other. This fallacy is originated from a mistake in understanding or discerning the cause. Many times two events occur simultaneously, but there is no cause-effect relationship between them, or they are both causes together for another effect that we do not know. Besides, a single event or an effect (here, a miracle) may have numerous causes. Thus, without a persuasive justification, we cannot regard it as belonging to a certain cause (i.e. God) (Amudi, 1423 AH, vol. 4, p. 43). Occurrence of a miracle following a prophet's claim may be accidental or – as mentioned before – originated from a power other than God or the power of the messenger himself. It is not possible for people to discern whether a miracle is revealed from God for affirming His messenger or is an extraordinary natural and rare event or originated from other causes and factors. Even if tens of miracles occur concurrent with a messenger's claim to prophethood, no one can logically conclude that these miracles have been from God for affirming the truth of His messenger's claim. This objection is stated for introductions 6 and 7 of the theologians' argument.

5-4. The Drawback of Miracle as the Sign for Divine Mission

Another objection goes to the introduction 5 in the argument offered by the Islamic theologians; that is, the claim that miracle is evidence for prophethood, assigned by God. The question is how we human beings, as addressees of the claimants to prophethood, can know that God has assigned a miracle as a sign of His mission. Any emissary needs a sign of the great person from whom he receives a

mission, a sign that is familiar for the people of that nation. Now the question is how the people who do not know God as the King of the Universe and His special sign can accept a miracle as a sign from Him to affirm a person's claim to prophethood. Another question is why the All-Wise God must assign a miracle, and nothing else, as evidence for His prophetic mission.

Perhaps the answer is that the claimant to prophethood must present a miracle that no one except God is able to perform. In other words, the miracle of the claimant to prophethood must be a divine work and specific to God, like cleaving the moon apart and returning the Sun that has already set and the like. The objection to this answer is that the human beings must know God and His specific works. But how can the infidel person who believes in false gods and does not know the true God affirm that the miracle is a divine action, not a satanic one or something originated from a power in the upper level other than God? This objection returns to the second objection that considers other factors – other than God – as the agent of the miracle.

By proposing this objection, Ibn Rushd says, 'How can we know that emergence of miracles in the hands of some human beings are the special signs of the divine messengers? Knowing this is either through religious code (*Shar'*) or through reason. Proving this through *Shar'* is not possible because *Shar'* will be proved after the prophethood is proved. Thus, the only way is the human reason. But it is impossible for the reason to judge that the miracle is the special sign of a prophetic mission unless it has seen frequently the miracles in the hands of those who claim to be prophets and has not seen in the hands of others. Thus, proving the prophetic mission of the claimant to prophethood is based on two premises: (1) this claimant is a person in whose hands the miracle has appeared;

(2) everyone in whose hands a miracle appears is a prophet. Proving the first premise requires sensory observation of the miracle in the hands of the claimant, but proving the second premise is not possible except after acknowledging the existence of prophets and occurrence of miracles in their hands' (Ibn Rushd, 1998, pp. 174-175). Indeed, Ibn Rushd wants to say that the claim of the Islamic theologians on the basis of the idea that the miracle is evidence for prophethood requires presupposing the main claim, i.e. the principle of prophethood and existence of prophets.

5-5. Non-Homogeneity of the Evidence and the Claim

Another objection to the introduction no. 5 of the argument is that occurrence of an extraordinary action by someone after his claim to prophethood does not logically affirm his claim to prophethood, because there is no homogeneity between these two, i.e. verity of the claim to prophethood and performing the extraordinary action. To clarify this drawback, it is necessary to mention an example. Suppose someone has a claim to own a piece of land. When the judge wants him to present evidence for his claim, he performs an extraordinary action and cures a sick person. Is this evidence for verity of his claim to ownership of the lands? Definitely not. Now, how can we regard Jesus' cure of the sick as evidence for his prophetic mission from God? From the rational viewpoint, the evidence presented by the claimant to prophethood for confirming his claim must be related to his claim and homogenous with it. For example, God Himself must attest to the messenger's prophetic mission, he must present a written letter from God wherein this claim is affirmed, or he must present a revelational word from God in regard with his prophetic mission. As a result, this objection is not applicable to the Last Prophet, Muhammad, whose miracle is the

Quran and the revelational word. But it applies to the miracles of other prophets such as turning the stick to dragon or making the dead bodies alive or curing the sick.

5-6. The Drawback of Extraordinariness of the Miracle

Miracle, according to the definition offered by Islamic theologians, is an extraordinary action that others are unable to do. Now, the question arises as follows: 'how can one be sure of the extraordinariness of an action performed by a claimant to prophethood to affirm his claim?' Extraordinariness is an ambiguous criterion, for ordinariness is a relative idea dependent on the time and place. Many rare natural phenomena, such as lunar and solar eclipses, thunderbolts and horrible storms, were – for people in previous times – unnatural and extraordinary affairs. The philosophers and scientists, due to their information of features of materials, their effect and laws of physics and chemistry, are now able to do actions that are extraordinary for ordinary people. This is while all of those actions are natural phenomena. How can an ordinary human being distinguish the prophets' miracles from such natural phenomena and special knowledge of features of matters? Someone like Abd al-Malik al-Juwayni may say, "Evidently, we know that making the dead alive, turning a stick to dragon, curing the blotch and cleaving the moon apart are things that no man can do. Thus, if someone does such actions and claims to be a prophet and those actions are from God, they are signs for the truth of his claim" (Juwayni, 1416 AH, pp. 127-128). We answer him as follows: "Some of the miracles of the prophets that were previously considered as extraordinary actions are no longer extraordinary today. Today, physicians cure blotch and many other diseases. There are many sick persons who lack any vital signs and are considered dead, but they

are enlivened by physicians' efforts. We may cleave a sea apart with a calculated controlled atomic explosion, or make a fracture on the moon. Turning a stick to a dragon is similar to what witches, magicians, jugglers and filmmakers do.

5-7. The Critique on the Introduction of Wisdom and Guidance

The tenth introduction of the argument presented by the Islamic theologians says God does not permit, out of His Wisdom, that miracle be in the hands of the false claimants to prophethood, because that would deceive people and is an evil act that God does not do. Now, we must ask how many similar events you know throughout history wherein some individuals caused others to go astray but God did not interfere to reveal the liars. How many deviated religious and theological sects did exist that were followed by many people for many years and lived accordingly without being informed by God of their mistake or being prevented to create those sects? When God has nothing to prevent formation of false religions and deviation of their followers, why do you think He will do something regarding the false claimants to prophethood? Did Samiri not deceive Israelites by making a sculpture in the form of a calf that would make a sound?

If, according to the Islamic theologians, the divine Wisdom and Guidance prevent the false claimants to prophethood from performing miracles, it necessitates that God prevent individuals from doing any trickery, sleight of hand, magic, sorcery, rare natural events and anything similar to miracles that the false claimant can use to claim they are prophets and deceive people thereby. In answering this objection, the Islamic theologians have attempted to mention two criteria of 'invincibility' and 'unteachablity' for distinguishing miracle from sleight of hand, witchery and the like in

order not to consider preventing them as an obligation for God (Mavardi, 1409 AH, p. 38; Fakhkhar Nowghani and Husseini Shahrudi, 1396 SH, p. 9).

As some researchers (Vahida Fakhkhar Nowghani and Sayyid Murteza Husseini Shahrudi, 1396 SH, p. 9) have stated, discerning the realization of these two conditions is difficult for the ordinary people. How do they find out whether the action performed by the claimant to prophethood is unbeatable and unteachable or not?

Conclusion

The goal in this study is investigation of the rational signification of miracle to the prophethood of the person who claims to be a prophet. This can be proposed in two forms. First is the following question: "can one affirm the claim of a claimant to prophethood by merely observing the miracle in his hands?" Second, which is what most Islamic theologians mean, is the following question: "can one compile an authentic deduction to arrive at affirmation of the claim of a claimant to prophethood by observing his miracle?" Not distinguishing these two forms sometimes leads to misunderstanding and improper critique of the proponents of rational signification of miracle to prophethood. It seems that most Islamic theologians who are defendants of this signification have meant the second reading of the issue. In this article, both readings of the rational signification of miracle to prophethood were investigated and, while mentioning the views of opponents and proponents, the author has concluded that the miracle does not – by itself – logically denote the prophethood and verity of its claimant (first form). Besides, he concludes that the argument offered by Islamic theologians – who have attempted to combine some premises to explain the rational signification of miracle to prophethood – suffers numerous drawbacks. Thus, the result of this study is that, in both forms,

miracle does not rationally denote prophethood of a person. It must be, thus, investigated in another study whether miracle persuasively signifies prophethood or not. That is, the prophets' miracles must be seen not as rational evidence for their prophethood, but as evidence that persuades ordinary people to accept their claim to prophethood. Another result of the study is that we must pay more attention, in proving the prophets' prophetic mission, to other ways for proving the prophethood mentioned in theological sources.

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