

The Reality of Miracle According to the Holy Qur'an

<"xml encoding="UTF-8?>

The Qur'àn reasserts the occurrence of miracle an unusual preternatural phenomenon, which shows the authority of metaphysical forces over the physical and material world. Miracle is not something against self-evident rational truth. Some people have tried to explain away the verses that describe various miracles; their aim was to make the Qur'àn fit the principles of modern physical sciences.

But such attempts are unacceptable, as they are a forced burden on the language and the Qur'àn. We are going to explain, under various headings, what the Qur'àn teaches us about the meaning and reality of miracle

The Qur'àn Confirms the General Rule of the Cause-and-Effect: .1

The Qur'àn says that in this natural world every thing, every effect, has a cause; that there is a system of cause-and-effect permeating through this world. It is a self-evident reality; and on this truth depend the scientific and academic researches and discussions. Man by nature believes that there must be a cause for every natural phenomenon. Likewise, academic researches try to find out relevant causes for all such happenings. What is a cause? It is such a thing, or a combination of things, that whenever it occurs, another thing - its effect - unfailingly comes into being. We try to find out by experiments the causes of various things. For example, experience has taught us that if there is any burn, it must have been caused by fire, movement, friction or some such cause. A cause must be unfailable, comprehensive and universal. In other words, whenever and wherever the cause is found, its effect must be found. This matter is clearly confirmed by the Qur'àn. It takes this principle for granted when it talks about life, death, sustenance and other heavenly or earthly phenomena - although it ultimately ascribes all the effects, and their causes too, to Allàh. The Qur'àn, therefore, confirms the general system of the cause-and-effect; whenever a cause is found (with all its necessary conditions) its effect must come into being, and whenever we see an effect, it surely and unfailingly proves the existence of its cause

The Qur'àn Affirms Miracles (Super-Natural Events):.2

The Qur'àn, nevertheless, narrates many an event that goes against the normal, natural system

of the cause-and-effect. It ascribes many super-natural miracles to various prophets, like Nùh, Hùd, Sàlih, Ibràhim, Lùt, Dàwùd, Sulaymân, Mûsà, 'Isà and Muhammad (peace of Allàh be on them all.

It should not be forgotten here that those events, although abnormal and unc customary, were not inherently impossible; they were not like an assertion that 'A positive proposition and its opposite are affirmed together and are negated together'; or like a statement that 'A thing can be separated from its own self'; or that 'One is not a half of two'.

We instinctively know that such propositions are impossible, they cannot be. But the miracles shown by the prophets were not of this category; otherwise, the minds of untold billions of religionists, since the dawn of humanity, would not have accepted them and believed in them. No man accepts an inherently impossible statement, nor does any sane person ascribe such a thing to another.

Moreover, the effects that are called miracle, are not unknown to the nature. The natural world is continuously engaged in bestowing on the matter one form after the other, turning one event into another, giving life to the dead, and death to the living, transforming the misfortune into fortune and the comfort into discomfort. All this is happening daily in the world of nature; the only difference between a natural event and a miraculous one is in the speed and steps required to reach the goal.

A natural cause brings about its effect, in special conditions, at a particular time and space, step by step in a long series of changes. The matter present in a walking-stick may one day appear in a running serpent; a disintegrating skeleton may one day become a living man - but in its natural course it will take a very long time, under certain conditions of time and space, with numerous consecutive causes which would constantly change that particular matter from one form to the other, taking it from one step to the next and then to the third and so on, until it appears in the required shape and form.

In normal way, it cannot happen without its proper causes, without its necessary conditions; nor can it be brought into being by will-power of a human being. But when it comes to a miracle, it happens just by the will of the prophet, without any material cause and without any lapse of time.

Of course, it is very difficult for a simple mind - as it is for a scientific brain - to understand such super-natural events; man is, after all, accustomed to the natural causality. On the other hand, no scientist can outright reject occurrence of super-natural phenomena even in this atomic age. Every day someone or the other demonstrates his skill bringing some super-natural events about; people see it, radios and televisions broadcast it, newspapers and

magazines publish it; and nobody says that it could not have happened as it was against the laws of nature.

Such phenomena have led many modern scholars to the theory that man, like everything else, is surrounded by unknown magnetic or electric currents; man may, through rigorous training, get control over the surrounding currents, and use them to affect other material things in abnormal and unusual ways, bringing those astonishing feats about.

If this theory is proved correct and all-inclusive, it will supercede all present theories that explain various happenings and effects in terms of motion and power; it will replace all previous causes with one all-pervasive natural cause: the magnetic currents. This is their theory. They are right in their belief that every natural phenomenon must have a natural cause if the causal relationship between them is intact.

The Qur'ân has not identified by name any all-pervasive natural cause that would explain all natural and super-natural events, as it is not within the main purposes of this divine book. But it affirms that every natural phenomenon has a natural cause by permission of Allâh. In other words, every phenomenon is totally dependent on Allâh, Who has appointed for it a certain procedure, a natural cause through which it gets its existence - the existence that is given by Allâh. Allâh says:

"and whoever fears Allâh He will make for him an outlet, and give him sustenance from whence he thinks not; and whoever trusts in Allâh, He is sufficient for him; surely Allâh attains His purpose; Allâh indeed has made a measure for every thing." (65:2-3).

Its first sentence unreservedly declares that whoever fears Allâh and has trust in Him, Allâh is sufficient for him, and He will surely manage his affairs and make him succeed, even if in the normal way it may seem impossible, even if the material causes go against him. It is supported by the following verses:

"And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then verily I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me." (2:186)

"Call upon Me, I will answer you." (40:60)

"Is not Allâh sufficient for His servant?" (39:36).

The next sentence, "surely Allâh attains His purpose", explains the reason of the first declaration. The same theme is found in the verse:

"... and Allâh is predominant over His affair, but most people do not know." (12:21)

This sentence too is all-inclusive and without any condition. Allâh has His own way to let a thing happen, if He so wills - even if the normal ways are closed, even if usual paths to it are cut off. This may possibly happen in two ways:

First, Allàh may bring that thing into being simply by His will, without resorting to any material or natural cause. Second, there may be an alternative natural cause, unknown to us, which Allàh may have appointed for that phenomenon; it may be hidden from our eyes but the Maker and Creator, Who has prescribed it, knows it and uses it to attain His purpose.

This second possibility seems more appropriate in view of the last sentence, "Allàh indeed has made a measure for every thing." This sentence shows that every effect, whether it is in accordance with the normal causality or not, has a measure appointed by Allàh, is related to other beings, has a connection with other things; Allàh may bring that effect into existence through any other related thing, even if the normal cause is absent. What should not be forgotten is the basic fact that it is Allàh Who has bestowed causality on a cause; this relation of cause and effect is not independent of Allàh.

Allàh has created causal relation between various things. He can attain His purpose through any way He wishes. No doubt, there is the system of cause-and-effect in the world; but this chain is in the hands of Allàh, He may use it in any way He wills. There is a real causal relation between a thing and the things that have preceded it but that reality is not as we know it - that is why no academic or scientific theory is capable of explaining all phenomena of the world; it is really as Allàh knows, makes and manages it.

This basic principle has been referred to in the verses of "decree" or "measure":

"And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure." (15:21)

"Surely We have created every thing according to a measure." (54:49)

"and Who created every thing, then ordain for it a measure." (25:2)

"Who created then made complete, and Who made (things) according to a measure then guided (them to their goal)." (87:2-3)

Look also at the following verses:

"No misfortune befalls on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence." (57:22)

"No affliction comes about but by Allàh's permission; and whoever believes in Allàh, He guides aright his heart; and Allàh is Cognizant of all things." (64:11)

These verses (and especially the first) show that the things take their particular identity in accordance with a measure appointed for it by Allàh; that measure gives it its individuality and defines it; and that measure and definition precedes the thing and then accompanies it. A thing can be properly delineated only if it is seen in its perspective, clearly defining its relation to all other things.

The other related things serve as a mould that gives this item its peculiar shape and particular form. Every material effect is connected with all things which precede or accompany it. All such things together serve as the cause of this effect, and this one in its turn becomes a part of the cause of other effects that come later.

Also, it may be proved from the following two verses:

"That is Allàh your Lord, the Creator of every thing ... " (40:62)

"there is no living creature but He holds it by its forelock; surely my Lord is on the straight path." (11: 56)

Add to them the fact that the Qur'àn confirms the general system of causality and - you will find the complete picture displayed before your eyes. The first verse says that every thing is created by Allàh and the second one states that creation is on a single pattern; there is no deviation in it as that would cause chaos and disturbance.

The Qur'àn confirms the general system of causality for all material things. It follows that every material thing and effect is invariably always created by a cause – a cause that precedes it and brings it into being. It makes no difference whether it is a normal and usual cause, or a supernatural one. There must always be a cause.

Many usual causes which sometimes fail to bring about the expected effects are not the real causes. The real causes are those which never fail to create the expected effects. An example may be given of various diseases and their causes; influenza was Previously thought to be caused by cold; but cold did not always create it, now it has been discovered that it is caused .by a virus. The same is true about many supernatural feats

Whatever is Caused by Natural Causes is Really Caused by Allàh: .3

The Qur'àn, while affirming the causal relation between a cause and its effect, ascribes every effect to Allàh. The inference is that these normal and usual causes are not independent in creating their effects; the real cause, in the true sense of this word, is only Allàh. Allàh says:

"surely His is the creation and the command." (7:54)

"What is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allàh's." (2:284)

"His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth." (57:5)

"Say: "All is from Allàh"" (4:78)

There are numerous such verses showing that everything belongs exclusively to Allàh; He may deal with it in any way He likes; no one else can handle it at all except by permission of Allàh; He allows whomsoever He wishes to manage, influence and effect it to a certain extent. But this divine permission, establishing the relation of causality, does not make that cause

independent of Allàh; it is just a permission given by the real owner to use his property. The man having this permission cannot transgress the limits imposed by the owner. Allàh says: "Say: "O Allàh, Master of kingdom! Thou givest the kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and takest away the kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest." (3:26)

"Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal)." (2: 50)
"... whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission?" (2:255)
" ... and He is firmly established on 'Arsh, regulating the affair; there is no intercessor except after His permission." (10: 3)

The causes do have the causality because Allàh has given it to them. They have got it, but are not independent of Allàh. It is this factor that has been described in above verses as "intercession" and "permission". Permission means that there was an impediment which, but for this permission would have hindered the now-authorized agent from interfering in this affair.

In short, every cause has been given the power to create the relevant effects; but the real authority is yet in the hands of Allàh

The Souls of the Prophets do have Influence Over the Super-Natural Events: .4

Allàh says:

" ... and it was not meet for an apostle that he should bring a sign except with Allàh's permission; but when the command of Allàh came, judgement was given with truth, and those who treated (it) as a lie were lost." (40:78).

The verse shows that it was the apostle who brought the sign - by permission of Allàh. The souls of the prophets were given a special power to cause the miracle; and that causal power, like all other causes, created its effect with permission of Allàh. Again Allàh says: "And they followed what the Satans chant (of sorcery) against the kingdom of Sulaymàn; and not that Sulaymàn disbelieved, but (it was) the Satans that disbelieved, they taught men sorcery and what was sent down to the two angels at Babylon, Hârût and Mârût, Yet these two taught no one until they had said, "Surely we are only a trials therefore do not be a disbeliever. Even then men learned from these two that by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allàh 's permission." (2:102).

This verse proves two things: magic has some reality; and it, not unlike miracle, is caused by a psychical factor of the magician, by permission of Allàh.

Take a miracle, a magic, a mysterious wonder of a saint, or a spellbringing skill acquired through rigorous practice - all these extra-ordinary or super-natural deeds emanate from their agents' psychical factors - or will-power - as the above-mentioned verses have shown. But Allàh has made it clear that the psychical cause found in His apostles, prophets and believers is predominant, has the mastery, over all other causes, in all imaginable conditions; it can never be overpowered. Allàh says:

"And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles: Most surely they shall be the assisted ones, and most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones." (37:171-173)

"Allàh has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostle..." (58:21)

"Most surely We help Our apostles and those who believe, in this world 's life and on the day when the witnesses shall stand." (40:).

As you see, these verses do not put any condition or restriction on the promised victory; the apostles and the believers shall be victorious over their adversaries in all conditions and situations. It may be inferred from it that this divine source is something metaphysical, preternatural. Material things are, in their nature, measured and limited; they get the worst of it if they are faced by another thing which is superior in power.

But this preternatural spiritual source, which is assisted by the will of Allàh, is never defeated by any factor; whenever it is faced by any material adversary, it is given by Allàh a far more .superior power to achieve victory with flying colours

Whatever is Caused by Psychical Power Depends on a Command from Allàh: .5

Read again the last sentence of the verse 40:78, mentioned at the beginning of the preceding chapter: "but when the command of Allàh came, judgement was given with truth, and those who treated (it) as a lie were lost". You will see that the supernatural event caused by the psychical power of the agent depends on a command from Allàh - in addition to His permission. That command may coincide with the said permission, or may be one with it. The command of Allàh is His creation, described by the word 'Be' in the verse:

"His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, "Be", and it is." (36:82)

Also Allàh says:

"Surely this is a reminder, so whoever wishes takes to his Lord a way. And you do not wish except that Allàh wishes; surely Allah is Knowing, Wise." (76:29-30)

"It is naught but a reminder for the worlds, for him among you who wishes to go straight. And you do not wish except that Allàh wishes, the Lord of the worlds." (81:27-29)

These verses show that the affairs which are within the sphere of the man's will, and under his control and authority, are still dependent on the divine will for their existence. What these verses say is this: The intentional actions of a man are done by his will; but that will itself depends on the will of Allàh.

The verses do not say that whatever is wished by man is wished by Allàh. Had it been the case, no human wish would have remained unfulfilled - because it would have become the will of Allàh! Also, many verses refute this idea:

"And if We had wished We would certainly have given to every soul its guidance ..." (32:13)

"And if your Lord had wished surely all those who are in the earth would have believed." (10:99)
Our will depends on the divine will; our action depends on our will, and also they depend - indirectly, through our will on the will of Allàh. And both our will and action depend on the command of Allàh - on His word, "Be".

Things, affairs and events may be either natural or supernatural; and the super-natural may be either on the side of good, like miracle, or on that of evil, like magic and sooth saying. But all of them come into being through natural causes, and at the same time they depend on the will of

Allàh. In other words, they cannot come into being unless the natural cause coincides, or becomes one, with the permission and command of Allàh. All things are equal in this respect; but when a prophet brings about a miracle, or a good servant of Allàh prays to Him for a thing, an additional factor, that is, the decisive command of Allàh, is added thereto; and the desired effect or event unfailingly comes into being. Allàh says:

"Allàh has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostles." (58:21)

"I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me ..." (2:186)

.See also other such verses quoted in the preceding chapter

The Qur'àn Attributes the Miracle to an Invincible Cause: .6

The preceding chapters have made it clear that miracle, like other natural and super-natural things, needs a natural cause; and that all causes depend on some metaphysical causes. All these events and effects may, thus, be divided into four categories: The normal events: They come into being by normal apparent causes which are accompanied by real causes - in most cases those real causes are material ones; and those causes depend on the divine will and command. The extra-ordinary events of evil nature, like sorcery and so saying: They are caused by natural but unusual and abnormal causes, which are accompanied by the real causes; and those causes depend on the divine permission and will.

The extra-ordinary events of good nature, like a prayer answered by Allàh: They are caused by

the natural and real cause, with permission and will of Allàh - but such events do not contain any element of challenge, that is, they do not purport to prove the truth of any call or claim. The miracles: The extra-ordinary, super-natural events of good character, which are brought about as a challenge, to prove the truth of the call or claim.

They too are caused by the natural and real causes with permission and will of Allàh. The third and fourth categories have an extra quality in them: Their cause is fortified by an invincible factor; it can never be overpowered, as it is always accompanied by the decisive command of Allàh. Question: It is strange to say that miracle is caused by a natural cause.

Suppose, we discover the real natural cause of a miracle; will it not then be possible for us to create that miracle? If yes, then miraculousness would be a relative matter; any action would be a miracle in the eyes of those who are unaware of its cause, but quite an ordinary thing for those who know. In the same way, an event that was believed to be a miracle in dark ages would not be so impressive in this age of science and knowledge.

If scientific research round out the real natural causes of the miracles, there would be no miracle at all - and no miracle could be used to prove the truth of the prophet's claim. What all this leads to is this: A miracle is not a proof except against him who is ignorant of its natural cause; therefore, it cannot be put as an evidence of the truth of the prophet's claim.

Answer: Miraculousness of a miracle does not depend on unknowability of its cause; nor is it a miracle because it emanates from an extraordinary or mysterious cause. It is a miracle because it is brought about by such an extraordinary cause which is invincible, which cannot be overcome, cannot be defeated.

Let us look at the case of a seriously sick person, who, all of a sudden, is cured by the prayers of a believer. It is called a miraculous event, because it emanates from an invincible cause. We know that patient could be cured by medical treatment, and it would have been a normal process; but this cause, that is, the medical treatment, could be foiled by other more powerful factors; and that is why it is not called a miracle.

The Qur'àn Counts Miracle as a Proof of the Truth of the Claim of Prophethood: .7

Question: What is the connection between miracle and veracity of the claim of prophethood? Reason fails to see any binding relation between the two. But the Qur'àn time and again asserts this concomitance, as may be seen in the stories of various prophets, for example, Hùd, Sàlih, Mùsà, 'Isà and Muhammad (peace of Allàh be on all of them. The Qur'àn narrates that no sooner did they announce their claim than they were asked by their people to bring some miracle to prove the truth of their claim; and they responded to it by showing the miracle.

Not only that. Some of them were given their miracle even before their nations had asked them for it. Allàh told Mûsà (a. s.) at the start of his mission:

"Go you and your brother with My signs and be not remiss in remembering Me." (20:42)

And He says about 'Isà (a.s.):

"And (will make him) an apostle to the children of Israel: "That I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I create for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allàh's permission and I heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead to life with Allàh's permission and I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your house; most surely there is a sign in this for you, if you are believers." (3:49)

The same is the position of the Qur'àn which was given to the Prophright at the start of his mission. Reason does not see any connection whatsoever between the truth of the message of an apostle or a prophet on one hand and his ability to show a super-natural sign on the other. Moreover, the beauty of the principles expounded by the apostles and the prophets, strengthened as it is by irrefutable proofs, dispenses with the need of any miracle - for an intelligent and knowledgeable person. That is why it is said that miracles are needed for convincing the simple-minded people, because they cannot understand a learned discourse; but knowledgeable persons do not need them.

Answer: The prophets had not brought the miracles to prove any principle of religion, like belief in Oneness of God and the Day of Resurrection etc. - the truth of which could be realized by intellect and reason. They always proved such things with reasoning and logical arguments.

For example, Allàh says regarding the existence of the Creator:

"Their apostles said: "Is there doubt about Allàh, the Master of the heavens and the earth?" (14:10)

and He says about resurrection:

"And We did not create the heaven and the earth and what is between them in vain; that is the opinion of those who disbelieve; then woe to those who disbelieve on account of the fire. Shall We treat those who believe and do good like the mischief-makers in the earth? Or shall We make those who guard (against evil) like the wicked?" (38:27-28)

Why were, then, the apostles asked to show miracle, and why did they bring it about? It was to prove that they were in fact sent by Allàh; it was meant to authenticate their claim. The prophets claimed that they were sent by Allàh, that He had revealed His message to them - either directly or through an angel. It was an assertion of a super-natural event; a claim of a reality beyond the physical senses and mental cognition of their people; a fact above the level of man's perception.

If that claim was right, it would be a special metaphysical disposition reserved for the prophets only. The difficulty was that the prophets were like any other human being in their humanity and in its characteristics. How could they be favoured for this especial relationship with the world beyond nature?

The disbelievers, therefore, resorted to two methods to disprove the prophets' claim:

First Method: They tried to refute it through such "arguments" as the following:

a) They said: "You are nothing but human being like us; you wish to turn us away from what our fathers used to worship" (14:10). The apostles were like all other men; and other men do not receive such divine revelation as was claimed by the apostles. If they could be given revelation from God, why could not others get it as well? Were not all of them alike in their humanity? The apostles replied to it in these words: Their apostles said to them: "We are nothing but human beings like yourselves, but Allàh bestows (His) favours on whom He pleases of His servants..." (14:11). They accepted that they were like all men in their humanity, but showed that apostleship was a very especial favour of Allàh, and He bestows it on whom He pleases. It is not difficult to see that being alike does not preclude some of them from being reserved for some especial favours. Of course, if Allàh had pleased, He could have bestowed it on anyone among them, but He chose for this favour whom He pleased. The same was the thrust of their protest against the Prophet: "Has the reminder been revealed to him from among us?" (38:8)

b) Of the same nature, but with added sarcasm, were the following remarks of the polytheists of Mecca: And they say: "Why was not this Qur'àn revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?" (43:31) And they say: "What sort of apostle is this that he eats food and goes about in the marts; why has not an angel been sent down to him so that he be a warner with him? Or a treasure be thrown down to him, or be for him a garden from which he may eat!" (25:7-8)

What they wanted to say was this: If the Apostle (of Islam) really has been chosen by God to receive divine revelation, then he must be someone above all the mortals. Then why does he require food to eat, and why is he obliged to go about in the markets to earn his livelihood? If he is truly a representative of God, he should have been accompanied by an angel to assist him in his work, or he should have been given a treasure to save him the trouble of earning his livelihood in the markets, or a garden should have been bestowed on him, so that he would not need a food like ours.

Allàh answered them in these words: See how they coin comparisons for thee! So they have gone astray, therefore they shall not be able to find a way . . . And We did not send before thee

any messengers but they most surely ate food and went about in the markets; and We have made some of you a trial for others; will you bear patiently? And your Lord is Ever-seeing (25:9.20). And in reply to their demand for sending down an angel, it was said in another chapter: And if We had made him angel, We would certainly have made him a man, and We would certainly have made confused to them what they make confused (6:9).

c) Going further, they raised their demands even higher: And those who do not hope for Our meeting, Say: "Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or (why) do we not see our Lord?"

Now certainly they are too proud of themselves and have revolted a great revolt (25:21). According to their thinking, there was no difference between them and the Prophet; all were human beings. Then why should he be reserved for this office of apostleship? They too should be visited by angels; or, even better, they should see the Lord. Allàh replied to them: On the day when they shall see the angels, there shall be no joy on that day for the guilty, and they shall say: "It is a forbidden thing totally prohibited" (25:22). It means that if they persist in their disbelief, they shall not see the angels except at the time of death, and then they shall not find any joy in it.

The same thing has been mentioned in another verse: And they say: "O you to whom the Reminder has been revealed! you are most surely insane. Why do you not bring to us the angels if you are of the truthful ones?" We do not send the angels but with truth, and then they would not be respited (15:6-8).

d) This last verse shows us one more twist of their "arguments". The Prophet, according to their thinking, was truthful in his claim of revelation, but he was insane; whatever news he brought was a product of his unstable mind and was, therefore, not correct. The same "argument" was put against Nùh (a.s.), as the Qur'àn says: ... and they called (Nùh) mad, and he was driven away (54:9).

These were the variations of their "arguments" against the claims of the Prophet, the arguments which were based on similarity of the prophets and their people in their humanity.

Second Method: It was to reject outright the claim of the prophets, and demand from them proof of their veracity, asking them to bring some signs to show that they were in fact representatives of Allàh and recipients of His revelation.

The apostles and the prophets claimed a distinction which was intangible and unknowable to their people. They claimed that they were given apostleship and/or prophethood; that they were spoken to by Allàh - either directly or through angels. Now, such a claim could not be verified by any test or experiment. It could be objected against in two ways:

(i) There was no proof that such a claim was true; (ii) there was proof that it was not true.

Revelation, divine speech, (and the resulting shari'ah and religions discipline) could not be experienced by anyone other than the claimant; the normal system of cause and effect was against it.

If such a claim were true, it would mean that the Prophet was in direct contact with the world beyond nature; he was tuned to the divine power – the power that can change the course of nature, can make the effect appear without their usual causes. In that case, he should be able to produce some another tangible super-natural effect; after all one super-natural event is like any other super-natuevent so far as the divine authority iconcerned.

If Allàh spoke to the Prophet – a super-natural effect He should show on his hands some other tangible super-natural effects in order to prove the truth of his former claim, that is, the claim that he receives revelation from God. If God wanted to guide the people aright by means of a super-natural thing, that is, revelation, then let Him prove the truth of His Prophet by means of another super-natural, that is, miracle. That was why the people asked for miracles whenever a prophet was sent to them.

They wanted miracles to verify his claim of prophethood, and not to ensure the truth of his teachings. Suppose a man is sent by a ruler to his subjects with his commands and laws. He reaches his destination and they ask him for his credentials. Will they be satisfied if, at this juncture, he starts explaining the wisdom underlying each rule and regulation? Certainly not. They will say: All that you have said, just shows that these rules are based on wisdom and meant for our good; but it does not prove in any way that they are from our ruler, nor that you are his deputy authorized to manage our affairs on his behalf. We shall believe in your claim only when you show us a credential to this effect, for example, an appointment letter duly signed by the ruler and having his official seal. It is as the polytheists had said to the Prophet:

("... until you bring down to us a book which we may read" (17:93

From the above explanation, two things become abundantly clear:

Miracle has an inseparable connection with the truth of the claim of prophethood. Learned and ignorant, elite and common, all men need miracle in order to be able to accept the truth of a prophet's claim.

What the prophet receives and perceives of the revelation is entirely different from those things which we feel by senses or comprehend by intellect. In plain words, revelation is not a function of mind; it is a reality totally separate from "right thinking". This fact is brilliantly clear from the Book of Allàh; and no one, having an iota of common sense, can entertain any doubt about it. But in recent times some "scholars" have closed their eyes from this reality, and tried to

reinterpret the spiritual facts and divine knowledge in the light of the natural sciences. They have, accordingly, based their explanations on materialistic theory. They believe that human perception and comprehension is a characteristic of matter, emanating from the brain. They are of the opinion that all real merits and perfections – whether of an individual or of a group – are developments of matter only. Based on these premises, they have explained prophethood and all related spiritual factors on the following materialistic lines: Prophethood is a sort of a sharp mental power, an intellectual genius.

The genius who is called prophet, looks at the social conditions of his nation; analyses what they have inherited of the beliefs, ideas, customs and superstitions; and then changes them to conform with the needs of his time and place, in the most suitable manner. In that light, he frames for them the basic social principles and ordains practical rules and regulations – in order to raise their standard of life, to elevate their morality and ethics, to make them better members of society. Basing on this hypothesis, they have declared that:

Prophet is an intellectual genius, who calls his people to the good of their social life.

Revelation is the good thought which comes into his mind.

Divine book is the collection of those good thoughts and ideas, inasmuch as they are free from personal desires and selfish motives. Angels who, the prophet says, come to him, are only the natural material forces which keep the world going. Or, they are psychological traits which lead the man to his perfection.

The Holy Ghost is a higher development of those material forces, which rains those pure ideas on the prophet's mind. Satan is a retrogression of the same material forces, which poisons the minds with evil thoughts and incites the people to anti-social deeds. In the same vein they have explained away all the realities which the prophets have told us about – like the Tablet, the Pen, the Throne, the Chair, the Book, the Reckoning, the Garden, and the Fire.

Religions are products of times; they change with the times. The miracles, attributed to the prophets, are nothing more than myths and fictions; which were forged in the interest of religion, to strengthen the belief of common people; or to enhance the prestige of religious leaders in the eyes of their followers.

This in short is their explanation. But prophethood, in this meaning, should rather be called a political device than a divine reality. It is not possible here to throw light on its various facets. What the readers, however, should not overlook is that this interpretation has no resemblance whatsoever to what has been described in the Books of Allâh and the traditions of the prophets. What led these "scholars" to such interpretations was their total submission to materialistic theories; that was why they rejected every metaphysical reality, and tried to bring it

down to the level of lifeless matter.

Such peoples are academic descendants of an earlier group: Many early theologians interpreted every religious reality the Throne, the Chair, the Tablet, the Pen, the Angels etc. in material terms, adding, at the same time, that those things existed beyond the grasp of our senses. Needless to say that that interpretation was not based on any actual experiment or sensual perception.

Now that the area of physical sciences has expanded so much, and every thing is being analysed, tested and experimented on, this later generation was obliged to reject the idea of physical existence of those religious realities, because, as mentioned above, their existence could not be proved by any test or experiment. Therefore, they had to invent other meanings for those realities, well within the area of sensual perception.

They thought that they were serving the cause of religion in this way - because their interpretation would bring those realities within the sensual and physical recognition, and thus save them from being totally rejected by modern scholars. Both groups have strayed from the right path. The ancient theologians correctly understood the meanings of these words, without resorting to any allegorical interpretation.

But they erred when they thought that those were material things although beyond the purview of sensual perception, not subjected to the laws of matter. The modern scholars took the wrong way from the very start; they gave these words wrong meanings in their eagerness to make them conform with material realities; in their attempt to pull these sublime truths down to the level of physical experience.

The correct way is to explain these words according to the dictates of the language and the usage; then shall come the stage of identifying what, how and where, for example, the Pen is. This should be done with the help of other relevant verses. After the Pen is identified, it may be compared with current scientific ideas to check whether it goes against them.

If that examination reveals that the identified entity was beyond the domain of matter, then it should not be proved, or disproved, by the principles of physical sciences. The science is concerned with material and physical things. What authority has it got to judge metaphysical or spiritual things?

Can we allow a linguist to prove, or disprove, a proposition of astronomy by the rules of grammar? If not, then why should the rules of physical sciences be applied to prove, disprove ?or interpret metaphysical realities