

## ON THE MIRACULOUS NATURE (I'JĀZ) OF THE QUR'ĀN

From al-Baqillānī, *I'jāz al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1349 A.H. = 1930 A.D.), pp. 13, 36-38.

### *How the Qur'ān is the Evidential Miracle for Muḥammad's Prophetic Office*

What makes it necessary to pay quite particular attention to that [branch of Qur'ānic] science [known as] *I'jāz al-Qur'ān* is that the prophetic office of the Prophet—upon whom be peace—is built upon this miracle. Even though later on he was given the support of many miracles, yet those miracles all belonged to special times, special circumstances, and concerned special individuals. [The accounts about] some of these have been transmitted by many lines of tradition, testifying to knowledge of their occurrence. Others have been transmitted by a particular line of tradition, yet [that unique line] relates the evidence of a great many who testify that they witnessed [the miracle], so that were the matter other than what has been related these would deny it, or at least some would deny it, so that this group occupies essentially the position of the former, even though the original account is not from many lines of tradition. Some, however, depend on a single line of [55] tradition and happened in the presence of only a single person. [As against all this] the evidence of the Qur'ān is to a miracle of a general kind [witnessed] in common by men and jinn, and which has remained a miracle throughout the ages. . . .

### *Some Aspects of the Miraculous Nature of the Qur'ān*

Not only our own friends but others have mentioned three particular aspects of the miraculous nature (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān.

One of them is that it contains information about the unseen, and that is something beyond the powers of humans, for they have no way to attain it. One example is the promise Allah, Most High, made to His Prophet—upon whom be peace—that his religion would triumph over the [other] religions. Thus He—mighty and exalted is He—said (IX, 33): “He it is who has sent His messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, that He might make it victorious over all religion, even though the polytheists dislike it,” and this He did. Abū Bakr, the trusty one—with whom may Allah be pleased—when he sent out his troops raiding, used to remind them of Allah's promise to make His religion victorious, so that they should be hopeful of victory and feel certain of success. 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb—with whom may Allah be pleased—also vided to do likewise in his day, so that his army commanders were aware of it. So Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ—on whom may Allah have mercy—and other army leaders like him, used to remind their companions of that, urging them on by it and making them hopeful. And they used to meet with success in their ventures, such that in the latter days of 'Umar—with whom may Allah be pleased—they had captured all [the lands] as far as Balkh and to the land of India. (Then he goes on with lists of the various places they had conquered, where other monarchs had ruled and other religions had been practiced.)

Allah—mighty and majestic is He—also said (III, 12/10): “Say to those who disbelieve: ‘Ye will be overcome and will be gathered into Gehenna—how evil a bed,’” and this came true. [56] Also He

said with reference to those [who fought] at Badr,<sup>1</sup> (VIII, 7): “And when Allah was promising you one of the two parties that they should be yours,” He fulfilled to them what He had promised. It would be far too much [to set out] all the verses of the Qur'ān which contain information about the unseen. All we wanted was to draw attention to some which might stand for all.

The second aspect is that it is well known that the Prophet—upon whom be Allah's blessing and peace—was an *ummi*<sup>2</sup> who could not write, and who could not read very well. Likewise it was generally recognized that he had no knowledge whatever of the books of the earlier peoples, nor of their records, their histories, their biographies. Yet he produced summaries of what had happened [in history], told about mighty matters [of past days], and gave the important life histories from the creation of Adam—on whom be peace—up to his own mission. He makes mention in the Book, which he brought as his miracle, of the story of Adam—upon whom be peace—how he was created, what brought about his being turned out of the garden, then somewhat about his progeny and his condition, and his repentance. He also makes mention of the story of Noah—on whom be peace—what happened between him and his people, and how his affair turned out in the end. Likewise [he told] about Abraham—upon whom be peace—and about all the other prophets mentioned in the Qur'ān, and the kings and Pharaohs who lived in the days of the prophets—on whom be Allah's blessings.

Now we know for sure that he had no way to [obtain knowledge of all] this save that of being, taught, and since it is known that he had no intimacy with antiquarians or those who stored up information [about such matters], and did not [57] go frequently to get teaching from them, and that he was not one who could read, so that he might have taken this from some book that could possibly have come to him, then the conclusion is that he did not obtain this knowledge save by aid from revelation. This is what Allah—mighty and majestic is He—has said (XXIX, 48/47): “Thou wast not reciting any book before it, nor writing it with thy right hand, otherwise those who consider it worthless would have been suspicious.” He also said (VI, 105): “And thus do We change about the signs, and [We do so] that they may say: ‘Thou hast been studying.’” We have already made clear that one who was accustomed to go repeatedly to receive instruction and busy himself at becoming intimate with those who had skill [in these matters] would not have been able to hide this from the people, nor would there have been any disagreement among them as to the way he was acting. It was well known among them who [those were who] had knowledge of these matters, even though such persons were seldom to be met, and who was in the habit of going to such for instruction. It was no secret who was the man most learned in each of these matters and who was being instructed [by him] in them, so if [Muḥammad] had been among the latter this would have been no secret.

The third aspect is that [the Qur'ān] is wonderfully arranged, and marvelously composed, and so exalted in its literary elegance as to be beyond what any mere creature could attain. This is in substance the opinion expressed by the learned theologians.

<sup>1</sup> The Muslim forces moved out to Badr to attack a Meccan caravan which Abū Sufyān was bringing back from Syria. The caravan eluded them, but they met the troops the Quraish had sent out from Mecca to protect their caravan. These are the “two parties.” See Sir William Muir, *Life of Mohammed* (Edinburgh, 1912), ch. 12, and *EI*, s.v. “Badr.”

<sup>2</sup> An unlettered man.