

THE QUR'AN AS A HOLY TEXT: RECONSTRUCTION OF REVELATION AND PROPHETIC IDENTITY

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Abstract

The relationship between revelation and Prophethood is the essence of the Qur'an studies, but this theme has yet to receive serious attention from the Qur'an and commentary studies. This article reviews the concept of revelation and prophecy from a critical perspective. As a holy book considered sacred, the Qur'an faces rational challenges that need to be responded to scientifically. This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach. The researcher collects various literature related to the research theme, then analyzes it critically. The research findings show that the attitude of faith that believes in the truth of the Qur'an without being accompanied by scientific arguments does not make the sacredness of the Qur'an properly treated because every dimension of belief requires the support of scientific argumentation in the context of an increasingly advanced civilization. As a sacred text, The Qur'an must be reviewed critically to provide a scientific dimension, especially regarding the relationship between prophecy and revelation. The existence of the Prophet as the bearer of revelation has received challenges from some communities because humanity has difficulty balancing its physical and spiritual dimensions. Humans, as physical and spiritual beings, need a scientific and rational perspective in caring for faith, especially regarding the relationship between prophecy and revelation, which is part of the Islamic discourse that has taken place throughout the history of Muslim civilization.

Keywords: *The Qur'an, revelation, Prophet, interpretation, reconstruction.*

Abstrak

Relasi kewahyuan dan Kenabian sebenarnya merupakan esensi studi Al-Qur'an, namun tema ini belum menjadi perhatian serius penstudi ilmu Al-Qur'an dan tafsir. Artikel ini bertujuan meninjau ulang konsepsi kewahyuan dan kenabian dalam perspektif kritis. Al-Qur'an sebagai kitab suci yang dipandang sakral ternyata mendapatkan tantangan rasional yang perlu direspon secara ilmiah.

Kajian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kepustakaan. Peneliti mengumpulkan berbagai literature terkait tema penelitian, kemudian menganalisis dalam perspektif kritis. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan, sikap taklid yang meyakini kebenaran Al-Qur'an tanpa disertai argumentasi ilmiah tidak membuat sakralitas Al-Qur'an dapat dirawat dengan baik karena setiap dimensi keyakinan itu memerlukan dukungan argumetasi ilmiah dalam konteks peradaban yang semakin maju. Al-Qur'an sebagai teks suci perlu ditinjau secara kritis agar memberikan dimensi ilmiah, khususnya mengenai relasi kebiaan dan kewahyuan. Eksistensi Nabi sebagai pembawa wahyu mendapatkan tantangan dari sebagian masyarakat karena umat manusia kesulitan dalam menyeimbangkan dimensi jasmani dan dimensi ruhaninya. Manusia sebagai makhluk jasmani dan makhluk ruhani memerlukan perspektif ilmiah dan rasional dalam merawat keimanan, khususnya mengenai relasi kenabian dan kewahyuan yang merupakan bagian dari diskursus keislaman yang telah berlangsung sepanjang sejarah peradaban umat Islam.

Kata kunci: *Al-Qur'an, wahyu, Nabi, tafsir, rekonstruksi.*

Introduction

The study of the science of the Qur'an has an essential problem, namely the lack of studies on the relationship between revelation and prophecy. Discourse about the relationship between signs and revelation has not received serious attention from some contemporary scholars. Although scientific studies in Islamic religion developed rapidly in the classical era, critical reflections on revelation and prophecy did not receive serious attention. This happened because, among other things, in previous times, the authority of the Qur'an was seen as a sacred text that could not be questioned. But along with the times, especially the emergence of critical studies from orientalis regarding the various dimensions of the Qur'an caused many scholars to respond to these scientific challenges. Different approaches to studying the Qur'an texts have also been widely used.

Izza Rohman has researched the various dimensions used by Muslims from the 1980s until entering the 21st century. He found that Muslims have taken many approaches to conduct the Qur'an studies, mainly as a response to critical studies conducted by orientalis in conducting the Qur'an studies.¹ Miswari and Ismail fahmi Arrauf Nasition examine the significance of multiple perspectives on Qur'anic studies, especially hermeneutics, to find new perspectives in understanding the Qur'an, such as the critical historical dimension and the contemporary axiological dimension.² By

¹ Izza Rohman, "New Approaches in Interpreting the Quran in Contemporary Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 14, no. 2 (August 31, 2007), <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika/article/view/544>.

² Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Nasution and Miswari, "Menangkap Pesan Tuhan: Urgensi Kontekstualisasi Alquran Melalui Hermeneutika," *Jurnal At-Tibyan* 3, no. 2 (2018): 223.

dialoguing the thoughts of Ar Razī and Said Nūrsī, Fauzan Saleh examines the significance of revelation brought by the Prophet as a guide for humans in life. Because if not, humans will find it difficult to find ideal principles in life.³

From several analyzes of previous studies, the author has not yet found serious research regarding the relationship between prophecy and revelation in the study of the Qur'an. The novelty of this article is the focus on an essential problem in the study of The Qur'an science and interpretation, namely the relationship between prophecy and revelation. In this case, the author argues that the study of the relationship between revelation and prophecy is an essential dimension to discovering the essence of the position of the Qur'an as a sacred text. The significance of this study, among other things, is opening up a significant study space in the study of the Qur'an, which is often overlooked.

This article uses a qualitative and literary method to find the relationship between revelation and prophecy. Literature related to the research focus is collected and verified for critical analysis. Then analyze the essential meaning of revelation and prophecy to find the relationship between revelation and prophecy.

The essence of the revelation

The Qur'an is a revelation from God and has become the belief of Muslims. People of any religion believe their holy book is a revelation from God. But when the question is forwarded, "What is revelation?" the answers will appear various. Revelation is related to something sacred, divine, and often considered untouchable by human reason.⁴ Revelation stands alone beyond reason, at the limit where humans submit without question and "silence" sincerely. Because of that, explaining what is meant by revelation and how to place the holy book amid civilization is not easy.

Revelation is the word of God, and because of that, the holy book contains values of sacredness, majesty, and even myths that are wrapped around it. Talking about scriptures requires caution, as well as honesty and courage. Because behind him stands a group of people who worship him: destroying the sacred values of a holy book is the same as hurting them. Therefore, discussing the sacred book requires sincerity, openness, and fair actions. Al-Qur'an, the holy book of Muslims, is also no exception. He is not only read and studied by his people but even worshiped by some of them. However, whatever attitude an individual or group of people takes towards their holy book is very much determined by how they interpret *the sanctity* of the sacred text.

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the word or word of God. But what is meant by the *word* and what is meant by *God*, as well as how the relationship between the

³ Fauzan Saleh, "Is Prophethood Superfluous? Conflicting Outlook on the Necessity of Prophethood between Badiuzzaman Said Nursi and Some Muslim Philosophers," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 53, no. 1 (July 2, 2015): 205, <http://aljamiah.or.id/index.php/AJIS/article/view/286>.

⁴ Mochammad Harun Rosyid, "Kajian Pemikiran Konsep Tasawuf Insan Kamil Muhammad Nafis Al-Banjari Dalam Kitab Ad-Durr an-Nafis," *Al-Widad* 1, no. 1 (December 1, 2022): 3–4, <https://www.jurnalhunafa.org/index.php/hunafa/article/view/582>.

two with humans, may vary in the conception of each individual. Some understand it literally, and some understand it more deeply and philosophically. Life experience (especially religious experience), knowledge, and the environment of civilization play a very important role in shaping these views and understandings. So, to define the Qur'an requires a more complex explanation, which cannot be decided by black-and-white conclusions, even though for Muslims in general, this is very clear: that the Qur'an is a guide for life, a guide that God reveals to save people in this world and the hereafter.

Anyone who talks about revelation or studies the Qur'an must know this condition. Scripture is part of faith and godliness itself. Although the Qur'an needs to be studied with a scientific approach, the context of the people who believe in this holy book also cannot be ignored. However, further explanation is needed. Contemporary studies have given birth to new interpretations and criticized old perspectives on the scriptures. The truth of exploring the essence of a holy book – even for anything – apparently does not solely depend on the beliefs of those who believe in it. Faith is not infallible. What is thought today may change tomorrow. An idea can be sued, re-dialogue, and enriched.⁵

In various Islamic literature, the Qur'an is often defined as the word of God, which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad as a guide for humans, and reading it is worship. In *al-Wāḍih fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'ān*, it is stated that "The Qur'an is an expression in Arabic which contains miracles, which was revealed to Muhammad S.A.W. through Gabriel. It is narrated *mutawatir*, written in mushaf, and reading it is worship. Starting with the letter al-Fāṭihah and ending with the letter al-Nās."⁶

Many definitions have been given regarding the Qur'an. Still, the most important element in this definition is that the Qur'an is a *revelation* from God.⁷ "*It (the Qur'an) is nothing but a revealed revelation.*"⁸ The Qur'an is *kalām*, not the words of men; he was a miracle to the Prophet Muhammad because he weakened or defeated anyone who matched him. The Qur'an⁹ challenges those who deny it and asserts that their works will never be able to check the verses of the Qur'an, even if all humans and jinn allies. Likewise, in another poem,¹⁰ the Qur'an refutes the accusations of some people who say that someone taught Muhammad to Muhammad – even though, as the Qur'an explains, that person was an *ajam*. At the same time, the Qur'an was revealed in clear Arabic. Here, by referring to the superiority and uniqueness of its content and

⁵ Shabbir Akhtar, *A Faith for All Seasons: Islam and the Challenge of the Modern World* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publishc, 1991), 253.

⁶ Mustafā al-Bighā Dīb and Muhyi al-Dīn Dīb Mastū, *Al-Wāḍih Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'Ān* (Damaskus: Dār al-Kalim al-Tayyib, 1996), 15.

⁷ Dīb and Mastū, *Al-Wāḍih Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'Ān*, 16.

⁸ QS al-Najm: 4.

⁹ QS al-Baqarah: 23-24, Yūnus: 38, Hūd: 13, al-Isrā': 88.

¹⁰ QS al-Nahl: 103.

language, the Qur'an wants to prove that it is not the work of humans (Muhammad) but that it comes from the Almighty.¹¹

The Qur'an is a revelation (*revelation*). This means that, in a popular sense, the Qur'an is an inspiration that came from outside the Prophet Muhammad, that is, from God, not the creation of the Prophet. The Prophet was only a medium to reveal the will of the Most Unseen God and convey His messages to all humanity. The Prophet never composed the Koran. God has put these verses into the heart of the Prophet, directly or through angels. The verses came and plunged into the heart of the Prophet through a process that was so fast and secret. Because of that, it is called *revelation*, a communication or delivery of messages that occur very quickly and confidentially. However, how the process of the arrival of the revelation and how it relates to the Prophet himself has become the subject of discussion that has caused a lot of controversies.¹²

The Prophet Muhammad as Recipient of Revelation

Many theories have been advanced about revelation, both classical and modern, by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Muslim scholars rely more on literal hadiths and tend to ignore historical and rational aspects.¹³ Meanwhile, non-Muslim scholars are generally more influenced by their preconceptions based on the Judeo-Christian tradition. However, they tend to be more rational and emphasize the importance of historical aspects. However, the problem is whether these theories have a sufficient foundation to be accounted for. Of course, all scientific discussions about the Qur'an cannot be separated from historical and rational bases because these two bases can best explain the nature and position of the Qur'an as a holy book or revelation in the context of human life as creatures of civilization. However, historical actors' ideological and ethical-moral aspects also cannot be ruled out. For this reason, the relationship between revelation and the Prophet is very significant.

There is no doubt that the Prophet Muhammad conveyed his teachings with a firm belief that he was a messenger of God and that what he had recited to his followers, namely the Qur'an, was a revelation from God. This unshakable belief can be seen from the attitude, behavior, and character of the struggle the Prophet drove from the beginning until he died. This fact is very important to note because various arguments about the revelation of the Holy Qur'an are based on the Prophet Muhammad's belief that he (the revelation) was sent down from God. If the Prophet Muhammad had even the slightest doubt about the revelation he received, then all

¹¹ Aksin Wijaya, "Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an: Memburu Pesan Manusiawi Dalam Al-Qur'an," *Ulumuna* 15, no. 2 (December 31, 2011): 205, <http://ulumuna.or.id/index.php/ujis/article/view/93>.

¹² Kerwanto Kerwanto, "Epistemologi Tafsir Mulla Sadra," *Jurnal THEOLOGIA* 30, no. 1 (June 10, 2019): 23, <http://journal.walisongo.ac.id/index.php/teologia/article/view/3238>.

¹³ Mohammad Jailani, Jannatul Husna, and Nur Kholis, "Membedah Hermeneutika Perspektif Ilmuan Muslim Modern: Korelasinya Dalam Studi Ilmu Hadits," *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Hadis* 6, no. 1 (March 8, 2022): 72, <http://journal.iaincurup.ac.id/index.php/alquds/article/view/3028>.

other arguments about the characteristics of the message he brought to ruin and the struggle he initiated would have foundered.

Regarding the interpretation that can be given to his life history, Prophet Muhammad never showed an ambition for power or a high position among his people. He also never aspired to carry out a revolution, social change, or build a civilization that aimed to make his name proud. Muhammad did appear to pay attention and care for the disturbing condition of society and had hoped for a change, but this did not mean that this could be interpreted as an ambitious, worldly ideal. There is no clear evidence that the Prophet had drawn up a concrete program or strategy of struggle to control the city of Mecca. The facts show otherwise. The Prophet Muhammad was even worried about the event known as the reception of the first revelation. The messenger who came into Muhammad's vision thrilled him, and he thought that a bad address had befallen his wife (Khadījah), who reassured him and said that evil spirits could not visit him while he was someone who always did good and was honest. "How could God harm you: You always maintain brotherhood, bear the burden of the weak, help the poor, respect guests, and always defend the truth," said Khadījah.¹⁴

The statement put forward by Khadījah above was a general characteristic of the views of Arab society at that time. Honor and noble morals in the Arab tradition since before Islam is the essence of the spirit and strength of this society. It was in the context of traditional civilizations like this that Muhammad was born, raised, and grew up to become a figure known to be very polite, honest, and noble. This fact was also a source of strength for Muhammad and his followers in holding that he was a messenger of Allah.¹⁵

The Qur'an unequivocally describes Muhammad's personality as a person with a very noble character.¹⁶ Besides, the Qur'an indicates that Muhammad was only a messenger from God. He had no personal interest in any of his prophetic activities. Muhammad did not need to be tested with various extraordinary abilities. He doesn't have it. If one would only believe that Muhammad could demonstrate the absurd, then Muhammad could do nothing about it. So, could you not ask him about Doomsday? If Muhammad had known the occult, he would have easily been able to amass wealth and avoid various dangers.

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ لَا سَتَكُنْتُ
 مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسْنِيَ السُّوءُ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

Translation: "Say: For myself, I have no power to benefit, nor power to hurt, save that which Allah willeth. Had I known the Unseen, I should have had abundant

¹⁴ Al-Bukhār, *Sahīh Al-Bukhārī*, Vol. 1, 4: (Beirut: Dār Ibn Katsīr, nd).

¹⁵ Quraish Shihab, *Membaca Sirah Nabi Muhammad Saw Dalam Sorotan Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis-Hadis Shahih*, IV. (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2014), 446.

¹⁶ QS al-Qalam: 4.

wealth, and adversity would not touch me. I am a warner and a bearer of good tidings unto folk who believe". (Q.S. Al-A'raf [7]: 188).

Careful attention will reveal that this verse expresses the humanity of the Prophet Muhammad by showing that he was a person who moved within a normal human frame. The Prophet did not know about occult matters, with the evidence that he would easily achieve all his desires if he had this ability. However, there is a problem: didn't the Qur'an recited by the Prophet, as he believed, come from the Most Unseen? An explanation for this can be found in verse itself. At the end of the verse mentioned above, *"I am nothing but a warner, and a bearer of glad tidings for those who believe,"* it appears emphatically that the Prophet Muhammad was ordered to establish himself as nothing more than a *paraclete*, a warner and glad tidings for them. Who believes? The information at the end of this verse conveys the meaning that it is not a matter of whether the Prophet Muhammad knew or not about the occult issues that were at the heart of the conversation, but what exactly was the purpose of the preaching that he did and why he did it. The statement, *"If I knew the unseen, of course, I would increase the goodness (wealth), and I will not be overwritten by harm,"* historically, nothing but indicates the outbreak of the phenomenon at that time that authority, power, and abilities such as fortune-telling and seeing things normally invisible are always directed towards attaining worldly desires and repelling all misfortunes.¹⁷

It is clear that his opponents accused the Prophet Muhammad of being power-hungry and that what he did was nothing but engineering to fulfill his ambitions. Even though this verse, as shown by the previous verse, is an answer to the question of when the Day of Judgment will come, the development of the answer given is, of course, directed toward efforts to challenge the meaning contained like the question, which is deliberately put forward to corner. It was as if the Prophet was ordered to answer: "I am not a soothsayer or *kāhina*., If this were so, I would have become rich and protected from all dangers and troubles, as you think. In fact, I live a simple life and lead a normal everyday life."

This is what made the opponents of the Prophet in Mecca wonder: Why is a Prophet sent by God the same as other humans; why should a Prophet eat and drink and go to the market. The Qur'an clearly expressed the strangeness that the Meccan infidels felt.

وَقَالُوا مَالِ هَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ
مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا

¹⁷ Ahmad Rofi' Usmani, *Muhammad Sang Kekasih: 1000 Hikmah Di Balik Sejarah Hidup Nabi* (Bandung: Mizania, 2009), 197.

أَوْ يُلْقَىٰ إِلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ أَوْ تَكُونُ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ يَأْكُلُ مِنْهَا وَقَالَ الظَّالِمُونَ إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ
إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا ﴿٨﴾

Translation: "And they say: What aileth this messenger (of Allah) that he eateth food and walketh in the markets? Why is not an angel sent down unto him, to be a warner with him (7). Or (why is not) treasure thrown down unto him, or why hath he not a paradise from whence to eat? And the evil-doers say: Ye are but following a man bewitched (8)". (Q.S. Al-Furqan [25]: 7-8).¹⁸

On the other hand, as can be seen in QS Hūd: 12¹⁹, the Prophet Muhammad was anxious and found it difficult to accept and convey God's message.

فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ بَعْضَ مَا يُوحَىٰ ۖ إِلَيْكَ وَضَائِقٌ بِهِ ۚ صَدْرُكَ أَن يَقُولُوا لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ
أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ مَلَكٌ ۚ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ نَذِيرٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٢﴾

Translation: "A likely thing, that thou wouldst forsake aught of that which hath been revealed unto thee, and that thy breast should be straitened for it because they say: Why hath not a treasure been sent down for him, or an angel come with him? Thou art but a warner, and Allah is in charge of everything". (Q.S. Hud [11]: 12)

In this verse, we can see again how the Prophet's da'wah activities were perceived by his opponents as an attempt to seek material gain. Furthermore, they think that being God's messenger is as if they are God or "God's child" because they gain power over everything: life becomes easy, and everything is possible because God helps. However, the Prophet Muhammad himself experienced just the opposite, and it is a challenge to explain this to those who don't want to understand.

From the first time, the Prophet wanted to run away and distance himself from this supernatural experience, but then he felt that he could accept it because of the enthusiasm given by Khadijah, his wife, and because of the information provided by Waraqah ibn Nawfal, a kind Christian priest. And also cousin Khadijah. This verse is among the most clearly indicating the position and relation of the Prophet Muhammad to the Qur'an or revelation. God chose him to become "Hermes" in Greek mythology, a communicator who spoke on behalf of God but with the fluent language of his community.²⁰

¹⁸QS al-Furqān: 7-8.

¹⁹QS Hūd: 12.

²⁰ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 153.

Many verses of the Qur'an²¹ hint at the characteristics of the Prophet as an ordinary human being; he is only a messenger of God whose job is to deliver treatises, calling for goodness and reminding people of God's punishment if they deny it. Prophet Muhammad was not ordered to do strange things like magicians or go beyond the boundaries of normalcy. The Qur'an repeatedly ordered the Prophet to reply, "I am only an ordinary human being."

The Prophet Muhammad and the Dimension of Revelation

The statements mentioned above are clear arguments that the Qur'an was not born out of a programmed personal ambition or aspiration but is an *irādah*. *The divinity* comes from "outside" and is inspired by Godin, the Prophet Muhammad. However, the Qur'an does not need to be called a work that transcends the boundaries of humanity and cannot be separated from the awareness and noble desires of the Prophet himself. The verses of the Qur'an did not come apart from the creative will and human intuition of the Prophet Muhammad; everything is so integrated with his attitude, passion, and personality. Even though the Qur'an is called the word of God, it does not mean it is detached from human relativity.²²

It is not easy for a statement like this to be accepted by traditional societies. However, it must be explained. Any understanding put forward to a community that already considers itself to be established and "perfect," hates innovative intellectual creativity, and is afraid of change, will face obstacles. But reasoning against God's word is like diving into a vast ocean. Without imagination and courage means failure.

Is it possible for a human being, with his tongue, which is completely bound by "earth," to utter the divine words - sublime, completely unreachable - from "sky"? Or is God present in human civilization? How can the words of Muhammad be equated with the words of Allah, the Most Holy? All of this is very much determined by one's perspective and concept of God and man and the relationship between the two. Of course, the Prophet Muhammad was not the incarnation of God on earth, nor did he want to damage the sanctity of God's words by mixing them with human speech. To understand this issue, a more philosophical explanation of revelation is needed.

The Qur'an as revelation is not the work of the Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet never had the intention to create and compose it.²³ The Prophet also never considered compiling it so that the verses attributed to him were born. This is important because the Meccan disbelievers accused the Prophet of being a poet, usually associated with their activities aimed at material interests. The Prophet was completely different from them and the composition of the verses of the Qur'an that were recited. The Prophet was completely clean of worldly ambitions.²⁴ But the Qur'an is the utterances of the

²¹Misalnya QS Āli 'Imrān: 144; al-An'ām: 50 dan al-Kahf: 110.

²²Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1979).

²³Nasution and Miswari, "Menangkap Pesan Tuhan: Urgensi Kontekstualisasi Alquran Melalui Hermeneutika," 23.

²⁴Lihat misalnya QS al-Anbiyā': 5; Yāsīn: 69; dan al-Hāqqah: 41.

Prophet Muhammad in the sense that he brought these readings out of his deepest inner consciousness. The Word of God organically blended into the Prophet's, and he read it as an answer to his deep anxiety about the deplorable condition of society. The vibrations of his holy soul and his unceasing desire to change things brought him together with the "Spirit" or spirit of revelation, and the Qur'an became the way to solve all the problems he faced. Due to this understanding, Fazlur Rahman rejected the existence of an *agent* (personal intermediary), Jibril, who served as a messenger of revelation. The general view of the externality of the angel Gabriel and his revelations regarded Rahman as intellectually immature and contradicted the Qur'an itself, which states, "...*al-Rūh al-Amīn* descends to bring it into your heart so that you become one of them among those who gave warnings..."²⁵

Although Rahman's statement can be questioned again, some things should be observed. Gabriel may not be the same as the agent of revelation. But these angels, called "trusted spirits," have become mediums who actualize the spiritual vision of the Prophet. Although the revelation was conveyed "straight into the heart" of the Prophet, it cannot be denied that Jibril had played his role as an "intermediary," which made the revelation more actual and more "readable" by the Prophet.

However, in general, classical Islamic literature or in Islamic theological doctrine, revelation is understood as the word of God, which was revealed to His apostles through the angel Gabriel word for word as it has been since the azalī era because the word of God is not a created being, but already exists as it has been. The existence of the Supreme Qadim Self or Substance of God.²⁶ The books of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, both classical and modern, are nothing more than repeating two monumental medieval works, namely – *al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* by al-Zarkasyī (d. 795 H.)²⁷ and *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* by al-Suyūtī (d. 911 H./1505 M.). These two books have become references for commentators from classical times to the present.²⁸

In both books, revelation is described as a message "has come" from God that Gabriel brought to this world, and Muhammad is nothing more than a *speaker*, the "mouthpiece" of God, on earth. This is a traditional picture of revelation found in the religions in Arabia then, especially Judaism and Christianity. In the Bible, angels are often described as coming down to earth, meeting, and talking with the Apostles.²⁹ This kind of description is also not difficult to find in the Qur'an with a simple reading because – it is not surprising – the terms used in the Qur'an refer to traditions,

²⁵ QS al-Syu'arā': 193-194

²⁶ Syafieh Syafieh, "Islamic Renewal Project: Hassan Hanafi and Indonesian Intellectual Muslims," *al-Lubb: Journal of Islamic Thought and Muslim Culture (JITMC)* 2, no. 2 (December 30, 2020): 115, <http://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/lubb/article/view/8596>.

²⁷ Al-Zarkasyī, *Al-Burhān Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'Ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifāt, nd).

²⁸ Al-Suyūtī, *Al-Itqān Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'Ān* (Kairo: Mustafā al-Bābī al-Halabī, nd).

²⁹ Lihat misalnya kisah Ibrahim dalam *Genesis*, kisah Musa dalam *Exodus* dan kisah Joshua dalam *Judges*.

civilizations, and languages that the people widely knew of that era.³⁰ However, it should be remembered that the term revelation used in the Qur'an does not only refer to the verses recited by Muhammad alone. The Qur'an also uses the term revelation for other matters which, comparatively speaking, have significant implications. For example, God is said to have revealed his command to the bees,³¹ and on another occasion, the revelation is mentioned to the mother of Moses.³² Even the whispers of Satan are sometimes called revelations.³³

The Qur'an unequivocally calls itself nothing other than a revealed revelation.³⁴ But are the revelations of the Qur'an the same as those shown to bees or the mother of Moses? The book's *ulūm Al-Qur'an* has answered this problem by dividing revelation into three types: revelation in the word of God, which was revealed to the Prophets, revelation in the sense of *āmilh* (inspiration), and revelation in the sense of *instinct*.³⁵ Thus, based on this concept, God's revelations to bees or Mother Moses, for example, are different from the revelations received by the Prophet Muhammad. If you look at the contents, they are very different, but what about the process and its basic characteristics? There is no single conclusive evidence that they differ substantially. The classic answer given to this problem, by dividing revelation into three types, is more of an attempt to maintain the old preconceptions that have characterized the classical view that revelation is an "extraordinary" (not normal) phenomenon. If it is not so, then it is considered to have lost its miracle.

Revelation is a natural term in Arabic and has been used since Islam. Pre-Islamic poetry indicates the meaning of revelation as a communication that is full of signals, secret, and very limited. Communication between two dissimilar entities, such as a camel and its clutches, is often called revelation. This is shown, for example, by the poem 'Alqamah, as quoted by Daniel A. Madigan:

He communicated (*yūḥi*) with them in squeaking sounds and clattering voices, just like the Greeks in their palaces talking to each other in an unintelligible language.³⁶

This fact leads one to believe that revelation, in its most basic sense, has a very complex and complicated meaning. Revelation is so united with the recipient of the revelation. God's revelation to bees is the natural character of the bees themselves. Likewise, the revelation conveyed to Ms. Musa was part of a mother's instinct when

³⁰ Nurhayati Abd Rasyid, "The Concept Of Al-Wihdatul Wujud Ibnu Arabi (A Sufistic Philosophical Study)," *HUNafa: Jurnal Studia Islamika* 17, no. 1 (June 18, 2020): 72, <https://www.jurnalhunafa.org/index.php/hunafa/article/view/582>.

³¹ QS al-Nahl: 68.

³² QS al-Qasas: 7.

³³ QS al-An'ām: 112 dan 121.

³⁴ QS al-Najm: 4.

³⁵ Subhī Al-Sālih, *Mabāhith Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1977), 23–24.

³⁶ Daniel A. Madigan, *Membuka Rahasia Alquran* (Jakarta: Intimedia Ciptanusantara, 2001), 33; Nasr Hāmid Abū Zayd, *Maḥmūd Al-Nass: Dirāsah Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'ān* (al-Dār al-Baydā: al-Markaz al-Tsaqāfī al-'Arab, 2000), 32.

facing a difficult situation to save her child. The revelation that the Prophet Muhammad received was the culmination of his moral anxiety, which grew from his deep sense of humanity and then was spoken and flowed through his mouth in fluent Arabic. Then, the revelation became a text, which was recorded (both in writing and in the memory of those who memorized it) and read as part of human civilization.

Reconstruction of Revelation and Prophethood

The author does not deny the possibility that the Prophet had received what is called a *spiritual vision* (such as seeing an angel) or the Prophet has transcended his physical reality and entered another world (the world of divinity or the spiritual world) at the time of receiving the revelation, but what I want to underline is that what the Prophet got from his inner experience, in the form of revelation, is not an Absolute Reality and not a *command* or absolute authority, so that it is completely detached from human relativity. The Prophet's absorption of all his spiritual experiences was a human vision. The Prophet is a person who speaks the truth because he does not lie. His teachings are a guide for humanity. All orders and prohibitions aim to uphold justice and save humankind from moral destruction. However, this cannot be understood as knowledge and experience alien to normal human values. Therefore, the Qur'an presents itself as someone very *familiar* with the community (its first target). The Qur'an does not speak of an outside world that is inaccessible to them, which is alien to their civilization; never found in the Qur'an mentioned, for example, about China and Indonesia, Orpheus and Hermes, or about Taoism and Hinduism. This is because the Qur'an is historical, according to a certain civilizational background; it does not reveal itself as the Supreme Absolute, detailed, magical, solving all the problems in this world completely. In Kenneth Cragg's language, everything is *beyond its [the Qur'an's] purpose and foreign to its nature*.

"If he [a reader] asks how Athens, Rome or Alexandria, the philosophers and the imperialists of the classic world, or the disciples of Zoroaster, might have seemed to them [the first Qur'ān-reciters], the text affords him little or no clue."³⁷

Indeed, some Muslims try to show the miracles of the Qur'an by displaying several facts which they consider odd so that the Qur'an looks *miraculous* and thus means that it is divine and is the perfect word of Allah. This holy book is superior to other holy books on this earth.³⁸ Furthermore, they also point out the weaknesses of other sacred texts to emphasize that apart from the Al-Qur'an, it is not a holy book that came from God, or at least, the words of God that have been mixed with human terms. Such actions are more of an attitude of intellectual immaturity and can even backfire. All holders of scriptures can point out such peculiarities in their scriptures. Christians, for example, have similar reasons to prove the superiority of their

³⁷ Kenneth Cragg, *The Event of the Qur'an: Islam in Its Scripture* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1994), 167 ,

³⁸ Quraish Shihab, *Miracles of the Qur'an* (Jakarta: Mizan, 1998), 212.

scriptures. Likewise, Hindus or Buddhists are not inferior in showing extraordinary things or miracles performed by their figures, such as immunity and the ability to communicate with the spiritual world during ritual ceremonies. Each civilization keeps its mysteries, and each culture has advantages and disadvantages. Meanwhile, as a result of the provocative actions of some Muslims, some Christians have also emerged who seek and point out the weaknesses of the Qur'an using the same approach. Many writings and articles written by Muslims in the form of attacks on the Bible and Christianity are exposed. The episode is especially directed at the claim that there are many contradictions in the Christian holy book. This is not new, but this polemic has given rise to even greater slander. Christians have responded with a different mental attitude. Unhealthy opposition like this does nothing to develop any party's religious understanding. Both sides did not try to understand each other but departed from hatred. This is not scientifically mature work; from an academic point of view, such a battle of prowess is pointless. Everyone involved in a polemic like this is always trying to find a means of justification to solidify the argument, no longer looking for truth but justification.

Revelation and Community Attitudes

A glance at the *milieu* of the first recipients of the Qur'an can provide a clearer explanation of the relationship between the Prophet and revelation. The Prophet was not without challenges from his people when he tried to convey the verses of the Qur'an received from God. Why are they against it? How did they perceive Muhammad's revelations? However, some accepted it sincerely and were even willing to give up their bodies and souls for the sake of the Prophet's da'wah. Why?

As Fazlur Rahman said,³⁹ chronologically, the earliest doctrine instilled in the Qur'an, after its teachings on monotheism and social justice, is the belief in the hereafter: that humans will be held accountable for all their actions before God's court after the Doomsday. Every soul will be resurrected, and all deeds, good or bad, will be rewarded. Of course, this refers to humans being disobedient, unjust, and stupid.⁴⁰ Humans must be given a warning, and moral retribution must be asserted in the hope that humans will become aware. That's why the preaching of the Prophet had to deal with fierce opposition in Mecca. The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad have not only shaken the traditional religion of the polytheists of Mecca. Still, they have even shattered the structure of that society with all its elite interests. This is what made the leaders of the city of Mecca panic, and their hostility towards the Prophet intensified.⁴¹

This phenomenon illustrates the social inequality that is already very sad in Meccan society. This can also be seen from the attitude of the Prophet, who was very concerned and wanted a change towards a better life by inviting people to stay away

³⁹ Rahman, *Islam*, 15–16.

⁴⁰ QS al-Ahzāb: 72.

⁴¹ Rahman, *Islam*, 15–16.

from all evil and immoral acts and to follow God's instructions again. The Qur'an emphasizes this social concern as a very important form of teaching to build a just and prosperous society. However, the opponents, especially the elites of society, intensified their attacks on the Prophet and his followers, even to the extent of unfair treatment and persecution. They accused the Prophet of being a person affected by magic, insane, and unfit to be a Prophet. Those who followed the Prophet were ridiculed and hurt in inhumane ways. The story of Bilāl Ibn Rābah, an enslaved person from Ethiopia, is one of the most famous in the history of the struggle for Islamic da'wah. He was persecuted to half to death, but his determination to remain faithful to the teachings conveyed by the Prophet never wavered. Bilāl later became a legend and is used as a symbol of the struggle of the weak against tyranny to this day, just like in America. What is most evident in the history of the Prophet's work, especially during the early days in Mecca, is not the drawing of a dividing line between Islam and other religions but his insistence on moral and social justice based on the Oneness of God and retribution in the hereafter – even though technically those opposed to Mecca were said to have had their religion, that is, the pagan religion.⁴²

From a socio-cultural point of view, this fact shows that those who opposed the Prophet did not pay attention to the concept of revelation. The phenomenon of revelation is not the problem; they are against the content of the revelation and perhaps the person delivering it, as Nasr Hāmid Abū Zayd said,⁴³ that the Arabs, long before Islam, had known the phenomenon of human communication with the unseen world. The practice of shamanism and the composition of jinn-inspired poetry are activities that the desert dwellers of Arabia no longer find strange. The connection between the human world and the unseen world, especially the realm of the jinn, has become part of their cultural concept and represents a segment of pre-Islamic Arabic creativity and reason. From that, according to Abū Zayd, it can be said that their belief in the possibility of a model of communication between two different worlds becomes "the cultural basis for the phenomenon of religious revelation itself."⁴⁴ Their acceptance and rejection of the revelations conveyed by the Prophet did not depart from their understanding of the concept of revelation but rather based on hostility and socio-economic sentiments. Those who did not have hatred for the lawsuit against the new religion because they came from the weak and were even exploited by those in power became staunch defenders of the Prophet. However, to maintain its position, the opposing group developed an argument with a skewed formulation. They still do not reject the phenomenon of revelation but divert it to another assumption: that the inspiration that Muhammad received did not come from God but from the jinn. They say Muhammad was a liar, a sorcerer, or a victim of witchcraft.

⁴² Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1996), 34.

⁴³ Zayd, *Maḥūm Al-Nass: Dirāsah Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'Ān*, 33.

⁴⁴ Zayd, *Maḥūm Al-Nass: Dirāsah Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'Ān* 34.

The attachment of the Qur'an to the character of Arab civilization and the personality of the Prophet Muhammad. The Word of God is His embodiment in the wisdom that pours out through human conscience and speech as He radiates His light in the majesty of the universe. God's words are part of His verses to meditate on and to make people more enlightened. God's verses were not sent down to kill creativity and reason, which are the basic potentials of human consciousness.

The study of the Qur'an cannot be separated from the study of Arab history and civilization. The verses of the Qur'an must be understood in the context desired by the civilization of that time. Arab civilization itself, according to Abū Zayd, is a "text civilization." It is the text that is the heart of the civilization of the Arab people, and it is the text that has moved them so that they can cross the barren peninsula to various parts of the world. However, it is necessary to emphasize that what builds civilization is not texts, but human beings, through their interactions with reality on the one hand and dialogue with readers on the other. Because of this, the text has a central position amidst the struggles of society to develop itself, and interpretation (tafsir or ta'wīl) is one of the most important mechanisms of civilization in producing knowledge.⁴⁵ Interpretation has begun to grow since the time of revelation. The Prophet is the most authoritative interpreter of revelation. The Prophet's companions also interpreted the Koran; Ibn Abbās is their most famous and is called *Abū al-Tafsīr*.⁴⁶ In the early period until the time of al-Tabarī (d. 923 AD), the books of exegesis were excerpts from the words of the Prophet and the views of his companions on the meaning of the verses of the Koran. With the development of language and literature, an interpretation developed further; Tafsir becomes the science of explaining the verses of the Qur'an from the point of view of language and the reality of the text.⁴⁷ Interpretation has not stopped developing and has given birth to a very rich body of Islamic scholarship. When text becomes the core of civilization, interpretation is the most formidable tool in giving birth to knowledge.

The relationship between revelation and text is now clear. Revelation is a logical consequence of a process of interaction of human will, desire, and imagination with the reality of the life he lives. The text was born because the revelation – can't help but – must be expressed. Revelation is referred to as "inspiration" that comes from God, that is, from "outside" human beings, because it did not previously exist in the historical world of humans, then it was born; he is a gift of God through His chosen servant. Civilization is a human creation. Civilization will never exist without humans. The question is, would revelation also not exist if humans did not live? Of course: "Yes, nothing." But that is absurd because it contradicts reality and is impossible to presume. The most crucial here is that revelation, people, and civilization cannot be

⁴⁵ Zayd, *ūm Al-Nass: Dirāsah Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur 'Ān*, 9.

⁴⁶ ' Alī al-Riḍā'ī Al-Aṣḥānī, *Manāhij Al-Tafsīr Wa Al-Ittijātuhū: Dirāsah Muqārcalm Fī Manāhij Tafsīr Al-Qurān* (Beirut: Markaz al-Ḥaḍārah li Tanmiyah al-Fikr al-Islāmī, 2011), 23.

⁴⁷ Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah* (Cairo: al-Matba'ah al- Azhariyyah, 1930), 368–369.

separated. Revelation is not born from a void without the *cradle* of civilization, and civilization never existed without the humans who gave birth to it.

Conclusion

The characteristics of the Qur'an as revelation and text, as divine speech, and as a legacy of civilization are reflections of the unity of *God's ideals*. And human ideals When a holy man (Prophet) reaches the culmination point of achieving his human ideals, he will enter the lowest point of the Divine realm. So the sacred book can be said as a manifestation of God's light at the lowest point in human civilization. On the other hand, it is an expression of the highest point of achieving humanities and moral ideals. The presence of the Prophet in society is meant as an effort to remind humans of something sublime within them, namely spiritual power. Humans often forget this dimension due to their preoccupation with material size. The presence of the Prophet is to balance the Divine dimension and the human dimension.

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