

The Drawbacks of Prophecy in Guiding Mankind: A Critique of Islamic Doctrine of Prophethood

Hossein Atrak

Associate Professor, University of Zanjan, Iran, Islamic Republic of

Email: atrak.h@znu.ac.ir

Abstract: The belief in the *prophethood* and sending prophets by God to guide mankind is one of the common beliefs of divine religions. According to Islamic theologians, divine knowledge and wisdom necessitate the sending of prophets to guide mankind. This study aims to determine the logical challenges associated with this idea, and whether such a thing is expected from God taking into account His attributes. The drawbacks and challenges of prophecy in the guidance of mankind include the logical problem of miracles' indication of prophecy, the inconsistency of miracles with the claims of prophecy, the temporal and linguistic mismatch between prophets and humans, human fallibility, the prophet's interregnum in the world, the problem of exegesis of the scriptures, and the problem of multiplicity of religions and sects. On the contrary, it appears that All-wise God could have used better, simpler, and more effective ways to guide mankind, such as spiritual and instinctive guidance, direct guidance, the sending of a single eternal prophet, and angelic guidance. As a result of the numerous logical and practical flaws in the use of prophecy to guide mankind, the author believes that it seems unlikely and unacceptable that All-wise and All-knowing God has sent prophets for human guidance, and that another justification must be sought for prophecy.

Keywords: Prophecy, Prophets, God, Miracle, Guidance

1. Introduction

The belief in the *Bi'tha* of the prophets or their selection by God to guide mankind is one of the common beliefs of monotheistic religions, and in general, divine religions. Using the rational method, this study investigates the strategy of sending prophets to guide humans in order to determine its compatibility with the divine attributes of knowledge and wisdom. The author's hypothesis is that taking into account the attributes of God in the divine religions, such as the Wise and the Omniscient, sending prophets to guide human beings is not a suitable way of guiding human beings, and God Almighty and the Omniscient does not seem to have used such a method for human guidance with so many logical and practical drawbacks. It appears that God Almighty could have used better,

simpler, and more effective ways to guide mankind. In other words, according to this study, the system of prophecy and sending a messenger is incompatible with God's attribute of absolute wisdom and knowledge.

This descriptive-critical study will first state and then analyze and criticize the Islamic theologians' argument for the divinity of the prophets' mission. It will then deal with the logical and intellectual drawbacks in sending messengers to guide human beings. Finally, it will propose some alternative methods of guiding mankind that appear to be superior to sending prophets. Although this study has a broad scope encompassing all divine religions with prophets sent by God, it focuses on the perspectives of Islamic theologians and Islam.

2. Sending Prophets to Guide Mankind

Islamic theologians unanimously believe that God has selected and sent prophets to guide mankind. There is often a section in Islamic theology books titled *The Necessity of Prophecy* in which Islamic theologians discuss the reasons for the necessity of prophecy and God's sending of prophets, as well as the benefits of prophets for mankind. For instance, consider the following phrase:

"Sending prophets for guidance. God Almighty selected righteous men to guide mankind and entrusted His mission to them all. These men are the prophets and messengers through whom the grace of guidance from the Almighty God was bestowed on the people. This blessed grace from God began when mankind was ready to use it and lasted until the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) time. We must know that the religion of each prophet was the most perfect religion and the most complete Sharia according to his time and nation, and that if this divine grace had not continued, mankind would not have achieved perfection¹."

To prove the necessity of prophecy, Islamic theologians generally emphasize several points and frequently use arguments such as the following:

1. All-wise God created man for which He had a reasonable purpose.
2. In terms of grace and mercy, God is obligated to guide man to his perfection and salvation.
3. Reason alone is insufficient for human guidance.

¹ Ja'far Subhānī, *Al-'Iqīdat-u Al-'Islāmiyya*, third edit (Qum: Daftar Tablighāt Islāmī, 1989), 115.

4. Thus, God is obligated to send prophets to guide mankind².

Islamic theologians attribute the necessity of prophecy to God's wisdom. For example, Shiite theologian, Muḥaqiq Baḥrānī says,

"The presence of a prophet is essential for the survival of mankind and the improvement of his condition in life and resurrection day, and whatever is required for this purpose is mandatory in divine wisdom; thus, the presence of a prophet is obligatory in divine wisdom³."

The inability of reason to understand some things, such as the origin and resurrection, that is, why and where it came from, and where it is going, as well as understanding the right path of life, is what Islamic theologians mean by insufficiency of the intellect. They often consider the current discrepancies of human schools and cultures in subjects such as economics, ethics, family, and other aspects of life to be the main reason for the insufficiency of intellect and its failure to solve life's problems and create human prosperity⁴. In response to those arguing that reason, rather than religion, can meet human needs and show us the way to perfection, they also argue that: (1). Human intellect and knowledge are both incapable of fully understanding man and his life path in the past and future, whereas God, as the Creator of man, has complete knowledge of His creature, including the dimensions and secrets of his existence, as well as aspects of his life. (2). Due to his self-love, man is always seeking his personal interests and is never completely capable of opposing personal or group interests. That is why human plans and laws are not comprehensive, whereas the prophets' plans are free from these flaws because they have originated from God the Omnipotent⁵.

3. Miracle: The Only Reason for the Prophet Muhammad's Prophecy

Both Shiite and Sunni Islamic theologians have presented a single reason for proving the Prophet Muhammad's prophecy: the occurrence of a miracle in

² Subḥānī, 115.

³ Ibn Miytham Muḥaqiq Baḥrānī, *Qawā'id Al-Marām Fi 'Ilm Al-Kalām*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Ḥussiyīnī, second edi (Qum: Āyatu Allah Mar'ashī Najfī's Library, 1985), 112.

⁴ Subḥānī, *Al-'Iqīdat-u Al-'Islāmiyya*, 116.

⁵ Subḥānī, 117.

his hands⁶. Miracles, they believe, are the only way to substantiate prophecy. In Islamic theological sources, expressions like the following are very common:

It should be noted that whoever claiming to be a prophet is not necessarily a prophet and his promise should not be accepted, because many people have lyingly claimed to be prophets. Therefore, a prophet must have an "argument" and "proof" to prove his prophethood⁷.

And the occurrence of a miracle in his hand is the only way to believe him [the claimant of prophecy]⁸.

When God sends a prophet, He guides people towards his prophecy only through a miracle, because there is no option other than miracles. Otherwise, prophecy will be futile⁹.

But how can a miracle in someone's hand prove his prophecy? According to Islamic theologians, a miracle can occur only through divine power and will. As a result, whenever a miracle comes about in one's hand, it indicates one's connection with God as well as God's confirmation of his claim to the miracle¹⁰.

To justify the miracle's indication of the Prophet Muhammad's prophethood, Khāji Naṣīr al-Dīn Tusī argues as follows,

"The fact that any prophecy claimant who claims to possess a miracle is reasonably a prophet because God Almighty is the mere source of a miracle

⁶ Fakhr-u al-Dīn Rāzī, *Al-'Arba'īn Fī 'Usūl Al-Dīn*, Vol. 2, first edit (Qāhira: Maktabat al-Kullīyyat al-Azhariyya, 1986); Fāḍil Miqdād, *Al-'Itimād Fī Sharḥ Wājib Al-'Itiqād*, ed. Diyā' al-Dīn Baṣrī, first edit (Mashhad: Majma' al-Būhūth al-Islāmiyya, 1991); Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī, *Al-'Asās Li'āqā'id Al-'Akyās*, third edit (Ṣa'da: Maktabt al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 2000); Abu al-Hasan Ḥalabī, *'Ishārat Al-Sabaq*, first edit (Qum: Al-Nashr al-Islami Institute, 1993); 'Allama Ḥillī, *'Anwār Al-Malakūt Fī Sharḥ Al-Yāqūt*, ed. Muḥammad Najmī Zanjānī, second edi (Qum: Al-Sharīf Raḍī, 1984); Sayf Al-Dīn 'Amidī, *Abkār Al-Afkār Fī 'Usūl Al-Dīn*, Vol. 4, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Mihdī (Qahira: Dar al-Kutub, 2002); Fāḍil Miqdād, *Al-'Anwār Al-Jalālīyya Fī Sharḥ Al-Fuṣūl Al-Naṣīriyya*, ed. 'Alī Ḥājī 'Ābādī & 'Abbās Jalālī Niyā, first edit (Mashhad: Majma' al-Būhūth al-Islāmiyya, 1999); Quṭṭbu al-Dīn Sabziwārī, *Al-Khulāṣat Fī 'Ilm Al-Kalām*, ed. Rasūl Ja'fariyyān, first edit (Qum: Āyatu Allah Mar'ashī Najfī's Library, 1994).

⁷ Mulla Mahdī Narāqī, *'Anīs Al-Muwaḥhidīn*, ed. Āyat Allah Qāḍī, second edi (Tehran: al-Zahrā, 1990), 110.

⁸ Khāji Naṣīr al-Dīn Tusī, *Tajrīd Al-'Itiqād*, ed. Ḥusiyānī Jalālī (Qum: Daftar Tablighāt Islāmī, 1986), 214.

⁹ Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Mu'ayyidī, *Al-'Iṣbāḥ 'ala Al-Miṣbāḥ Fī Ma'rīfat Al-Malik Al-Fattāḥ* (Ṣan'ā: al-Imām Ziyd ibn 'Alī Institute, 2001), 111.

¹⁰ 'Aḍud Al-Dīn 'Ijī; Ali ibn Muḥammad Jurjānī, *Sharḥ Al-Mawāqif*, Vol. 8, ed. Badru al-Dīn Na'sānī, first edit (UṢsit Qum: Al-Sharīf Raḍī, 1907); Rāzī, *Al-'Arba'īn Fī 'Usūl Al-Dīn*, Vol. 2; 'Abdu al-Malik Juwiyānī, *Al-'Irshād 'ilā Qawāṭi' Al-'Adillat Fī 'Awwal Al-'Itiqād*, first edit (Beyrut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1995); Ḥillī, *'Anwār Al-Malakūt Fī Sharḥ Al-Yāqūt*.

and its occurrence along with the claim of prophethood indicates God Almighty's confirmation of the Prophet Muhammad. Whoever claims to be a prophet and is confirmed by God is unquestionably a prophet¹¹.

According to some contemporary theologians, the logical connection between miracles and prophecy can be stated as follows:

There is indeed a logical connection between the miracle and the truth of the prophecy, because when the miracle worker is sincere in his claim, it is natural for him to prove his argument, but if he is a liar in claiming prophecy, the All-wise God, who seeks to guide people, does not enable the false prophecy claimant to perform a miracle¹².

According to Islamic theologians, the only reason that a miracle proves the Prophet's prophethood and his mission from God is that a miracle is an act of God; otherwise, it could not prove anyone's prophecy or mission from God¹³.

In fact, Islamic theologians argue that the miracle's indication of the Prophet Muhammad's prophethood is due to God's wisdom. Since they believe miracles to emanate from God, based on His attribute of wisdom, it is not acceptable for Him to bestow miracles upon the hands of false prophecy claimants. Thus, whoever claims to be a prophet and has a miracle performed on his hand is a God's prophet¹⁴.

Some Shiite theologians justify the Prophet's miracle as an indication of his prophethood as follows: The co-occurrence of a miracle in the hands of the claimant of prophethood with his claim of prophethood proves his truth in his claim of prophethood, because if the claimant of prophecy had lyingly claimed so, God would not have allowed him to perform the miracles and mislead people. Thus, a miracle is an indication of prophecy¹⁵.

¹¹ Khāji Naṣīr al-Dīn Tusī, *Rasā'il Khāji Naṣīr Al-Dīn Tusī*, second edi (Beyrut: Dār al-'Aḍwā', 1984), 456.

¹² Subḥānī, *Al-'Iqīdat-u Al-'Islāmīyya*, 112.

¹³ Sharīf Murtaḍā, *Al-Dhakhīra Fī 'Ilm Al-Kalām*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Ḥussaynī (Qum: al-Nashr al-Islami institute, 1990); Ibn Tīmīyyih, *Sharḥ Al-'Aqīdat Al-'Isfahanīyyah*, first edit (Beyrut: Al-Maktabat al-'Aṣṣīyyah, 2004).

¹⁴ Miqdād, *Al-'Itimād Fī Sharḥ Wājib Al-'Itiqād*, 82.

¹⁵ Bahrānī, *Qawā'id Al-Marām Fī 'Ilm Al-Kalām*, 130.

The significance of miracles in Islamic theology stems from the fact that no prophet would be able to prove divine prophecy if there were no logical way to prove that a miracle is an act of God and His will, and this can lead to prophecy denial.

4. Critique of the argument of God's sending prophets to guide mankind

4.1. Critique of the argument for the necessity of prophecy

In the first section of the paper, while mentioning Islamic theologians' views on the necessity of prophecy, an argument was made whose premises seem to have flaws. The most significant objection goes to the third premise, which states that reason alone is insufficient to guide mankind. This claim appears to be baseless. The human intellect is capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, or virtue and evil. According to the first premise, if God is All-wise, why did He not provide the human with a perfect intellect to lead him to salvation, eliminating the need to send prophets? Why did He not send prophets or prophetic animals to guide animals and plants to salvation as He did for humans? Was there only one way for All-wise God to guide mankind, and that was to send prophets, or was there another, better, and simpler way he could use?

To prove the third premise, Islamic theologians have relied on discrepancies among societies and cultures in legislation for human salvation. In response to this argument, it should be noted that the prophets' programs have had these flaws, and no specific religion such as Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, has been accepted as a comprehensive religion by all human beings on the planet; their religious rulings and orders are also distinct from one another. Muslims, Jews, and Christians all seek their personal and group interests, which is why Jews did not accept the birth of Christianity, Christians did not accept the birth of a new religion called Islam, and Muslims will never accept the birth of another religion because they consider their religion to be the last one. Furthermore, the plans and instructions of each divine religion are specific to that particular time and contemporaneous people, essentially incapable of answering the problems that have occurred later and in our current time.

4.2. The Problem of Confirming Prophets' Claims

4.2.1. The Logical Problem of Miracles' Indication of Prophecy

Miracles have been cited by Islamic theologians as the only proof of a prophet's prophecy, but this reasoning appears to be logically incorrect, and the miracle does not prove the prophet's prophecy or sending by God. A miracle demonstrates the miracle worker's ability to perform supernatural acts. It does not, by definition, imply a relationship between the miracle worker and God.

Consider a person who claims to be a God-sent prophet and performs miracles and extraordinary acts. He may, for example, cure diseases, transform a stick into a dragon, or touch a rock and draw water out of it. Do these things indicate his relationship with God and the miracle as a result of God's will? The answer is no, because there are various possibilities for these strange acts to occur, only one of them being God's will. Consequently, one cannot necessarily understand that a miracle emanates from God's will. There are several ways for a person to justify a miracle: (1). Given the differences in human abilities and powers, one possibility is that the miracle worker has such special soul or physical temperament that it enables him to perform some extraordinary acts and can cure diseases using unknown energies. Thus, perhaps the prophets of the past possessed abilities in their bodies or souls that enabled them to do things others were incapable of doing¹⁶. (2). Another possibility is that the miracle worker had knowledge and awareness of the unknown and mysterious sciences. This is a very reasonable possibility, particularly in the past or in small and undeveloped communities. Consider how miraculous the discovery of fire in the days of early humans could be considered. (3). Another possibility is that the miracles performed by the prophets and miracle workers in the past involved magic, sorcery, witchcraft, or knowledge of the special properties of certain substances and compounds which ordinary people were unable or unaware of. This possibility is confirmed in some verses of the Holy Quran with regard to sorcerers, who are introduced as people who can sow discord between couples or reveal a dragon: "And from these two (angles) people learn that by which they cause division between man and wife" (QS. Baqara: 102); "He said: Throw! And

¹⁶ Āmidī, *Abkār Al-Afkār Fī 'Ūsūl Al-Dīn*, Vol. 4, 38.

when they threw they cast a spell upon the people's eyes, and overawed them, and produced a mighty spell" (QS. A'rāf, 116)¹⁷. (4). Another possibility is that the miracle worker had contact with supernatural or natural creatures such as angels, demons, jinns, or any other natural or supernatural creature, and that they performed these strange acts for him. (5). Another possibility is that the miracle is the result of the miracle worker's connection with the planets, celestial bodies, or unknown natural forces, or his connection with other humans in distant and close locations¹⁸. These are only a few of the possibilities that come to mind after some thought. By further reflection, it is possible to list additional possibilities for the occurrence of a miracle. Aside from these possibilities, there is also the possibility that the miracle was performed by God. Is it logical to accept one's claim to be a prophet after witnessing a miracle in his hands?

Some of these possibilities have been mentioned in books by Islamic theologians, and the said flaws have been discussed. For example, Fakhr Al-Dīn Rāzi, the great Sunni theologian, has stated that some opponents of prophecy have attributed miracles to the assistance of jinns or demons, particularly miracles such as foretelling the unseen and the future. Even in our time, some people claiming to be related to jinns and devils give news about lost objects or other things that surprise ordinaries. The answer to these flaws, however, is that the prophets invited the people to curse the devils, so how can they seek assistance from them?¹⁹ Fakhr Razi's response appears to be based on his acceptance of the prophets' prophecy; that is, he first accepts the prophets as God's messengers and then claims that the prophets are not related to demons and jinns. The purpose of these flaws, on the other hand, is to refute the argument advanced by Islamic theologians, arguing that there is only one possibility for the occurrence of a miracle, that is, it is performed by God.

To reject the third possibility, that miracles are similar to the works of sorcerers, magicians, and the like who perform extraordinary acts, it is claimed that the difference between miracles and such acts is that magic and sorcery are trainable, whereas the source of miracles is divine power²⁰. The flaw in this

¹⁷ Āmidī, 38–40.

¹⁸ Āmidī, 41.

¹⁹ Rāzī, *Al-'Arba'īn Fī 'Usūl Al-Dīn*, Vol. 2, 98–99.

²⁰ Abu al-Ḥasan Māwirdī, *'Ālām Al-Nubuwwa*, first edit (Beyrut: Maktabatu al-Hilāl, 1988), 38.

answer, as in the previous one, is that it is based on the assumption of prophecy. Consider the following scenario: an unknown person claims to be a prophet and performs a supernatural act. How will the witnesses be convinced that this miracle emanates from divine power rather than magic and sorcery? There is no way. The only way forward is for God to begin speaking and testifying about the sending of a prophet. If God answered our questions, there would be no need for prophets, and He would guide us directly.

Some Islamic theologians believe that a miracle does not require a condition and that it can occur without a cause and sometimes as a result of a natural cause, such as rain, or as a result of the Prophet's prayer.

It should be noted that lacking a natural cause is not a condition for a miracle; it may have or lack a natural cause. For example, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) cursed one of his opponents so that God would make a dog rule over him and [after a while] a lion ate him on a journey. Another example would be a prophet's curse of famine, hunger, drought, cholera, and calamity, and the earth splitting in half and swallowing someone, or lightning striking from the sky and killing someone. However, if these calamities coincide with the Prophet's curse and the people realize the Prophet's curse had an effect on it, it is a miracle, and if it is not due to natural causes, such as raising the dead or growing a tree within a few minutes and making it bear fruit, it has a clear indication²¹.

The point is that if the miracle is caused by natural causes, such as a person being killed by a lion or rain, it will be difficult to attribute the act to God, in which case the opponent may claim that killing a person by a lion was a natural accident, and dozens of people die every year as a result of a lion attack, and rain is a natural phenomenon occurring on a regular basis. The coincidence of the Prophet's prayer and these events is purely coincidental. The causality and efficacy of the Prophet's prayer and will cannot be proven here. If such events always occurred concurrently with the Prophet's prayer, a causal relationship could be deduced between them.

Some Islamic theologians have raised the issue of recognizing a prophet in conjunction with the occurrence of a miracle in relation to the coincidence:

²¹ Abu al-Ḥasan Sha'rānī, *Sharḥ Fārsī Tajrīd Al-'Itiqād* (Tehran: Intishārāt Islāmīyah, n.d.), 488–89.

We should understand that the supernatural is connected to the Prophet's prayer brought by God to confirm him, rather than its accidental coincidence with his claim²².

According to the author, the occurrence of a miracle does not essentially confirm the prophecy and its fulfillment by God, whether it coincides with the prophet's claim or not, because even in the case of coincidence, there are some possibilities for its occurrence other than its conduction by God or by His power.

4.2.2. Lack of Consistency between Reason and Claim

Assuming that the first claim of Islamic theologians to attribute a miracle to God is accepted, another issue is that the occurrence of an extraordinary act by someone after his claim of prophethood does not logically confirm his claim; there is no connection between the two. For example, if someone claims the ownership of a piece of land and is wanted to provide evidence, but he does something unusual and cures a patient, can this cure prove their ownership of the land? The answer is definitely no. How can we consider Jesus' healing of the sick the reason for his prophecy?! The reason given by a prophecy claimant to prove his claim must be related to his claim, such as presenting a piece of writing from God or a voice is raised in heaven and God Himself testifies to his prophecy. The claim of divine prophecy is analogous to an ambassador and messenger going to the king of country B and claiming that the king of country A sent a message for him. To prove his claim, the messenger must present as evidence a letter sealed by the king of country A, a seal unique to the king, or another special emblem, such as the king's personal ring or sword. A prophet must also have a special sign from God; however, what can be God's special and unique sign? Since no one knows the nature of God or what type of being He is, and because the Holy Quran says, "Naught is as His likeness," any sign specific to God claimed for prophecy will be rejected by other humans.

4.2.3. The Problem of Temporal and Linguistic Inconsistency

Another problem with the use of a miracle to prove prophecy is that it occurs within a limited time for its contemporaneous people. How can future

²² Sha'rānī, 489.

generations be expected to believe in a miracle that they have not witnessed? Is it reasonable for All-wise God to use a logically flawed method to guide people and reveal religion? If God wanted to send a religion to guide people and convince them that the bringer of that religion is His prophet, He could have come up with better solutions and sent with him a sign that could be accepted at all times. How can one believe in the miracles performed by Jesus or Muhammad over 1400 or 2000 years ago? Why should we follow the religion of prophets we have never seen or heard of? Why should we adhere to a religion dating back to 2000 or 1400 years ago? If God wishes to guide human beings, He must send a prophet to people in their own language at their specific time. How can an English-speaking person understand and adhere to an Arabic-speaking prophet's message of guidance and salvation? Having a different language is psychologically the most difficult barrier to guidance and listening to someone. Two people with different languages can never befriend or sympathize.

4.3. Human Fallibility

Another problem with prophecy as a means of guiding mankind is the possibility of prophetic mistake. Any human being is liable to mistakes. A mistake can occur while receiving and communicating revelation, exegesis of scripture, expressing divine commandments, or judging people. Consequently, prophecy is not a confident way to guide mankind. To address this issue, some Islamic theologians have proposed the concept of prophetic infallibility, but this concept has several flaws, both in explanation and justification. First, this idea contradicts Islam's scripture (the Quran), and Islamic theologians have devised a variety of solutions to justify these verses,²³ none of which appears convincing.

²³About Adam's sin in disobeying God's command, Muslim theologians have given these justifications: (1) His act was *tark-i awlā*. It means God's command to Adam was an advisory, not a necessary and obligatory command (Fāḍil Miqdād, 2001: 247-8; Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1871: 9). (2) The true meaning of the verse "Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray" (Quran, TĀHĀ/121) is not that Adam himself disobeyed God, but it means that Adam's children and his generation disobeyed God during the history of this world (Tusī 1984:373). (3) Adam disobeyed God in the heaven, and there is no sin (See: Makārim Shirāzī 2000,4: 600; Musawī 2005:36). 4) He was not a prophet when he committed that sin (Rāzī 1999, 3:459; Ījī & Jurjānī 1907, 8:269; Tusī 1984:373). 5) Adam Was Misled by Satan's oath God (See Rāzī 1999, 3:460; Rāzī Hanafī 2001:277). Some justifications about Moses's sin in killing someone are: 1) that murder was before the time Moses became a prophet (See Rāzī 1999, 24:460). 2) That man was deserved to be killed and Moses killed him according to God's command (Fāḍil Miqdād 2001:259). 3) That sin was out of mistake (Ījī & Jurjānī 1907, 8: 2; Taftāzānī 1988, 5:55). About Josef's sin in forgetting God and asking someone else to release him from the jail,

Second, the arguments advanced to support the idea of prophetic infallibility are unconvincing²⁴. Third, regarding the explanation, there is the issue of how infallibility is compatible with the Prophet's authority. When the history of the concept of infallibility in Islamic theology is studied, the early theologians attribute various things to God to ensure the prophets' infallibility, and claim that God protects the prophets from error in receiving and communicating revelation. However, when confronted with the predestination of infallibility and the worthlessness of involuntary action, they attempt to reconcile and harmonize these two elements of infallibility and free will in the prophets and attribute infallibility to infallibility principles such as Prophetic knowledge, communication with God, and receiving revelation. However, they are unaware that they will lose the certainty of the infallibility and the Prophet's infallibility if they attribute infallibility to the Prophet's free will, and intellectually, there will be a possibility of error in the Prophet. A full discussion of infallibility would necessitate another opportunity, which the author has addressed in numerous articles, but it can be posed here as a challenge to the discussion of prophecy as a means to guide people.

4.4. The Problem of Prophet's Interregnum

Another issue is a historical one. If God truly decided on the system of prophecy and the sending of a prophet to guide human beings, a prophet must be sent to any nation and society at any time. Nonetheless, according to historical evidence and Abrahamic religions, the prophets were not present at any time or place. The term "*Fatrat*" (prophet's interregnum) is used by Islamic theologians

one of the justification is that it was tark-i awlā (Qāḍī Ayāḍ 1986, 2:389). About Yunus's sin which this verse refers to: "And [mention] Dhu'n-Nun, when he went off in anger and deemed that We had no power over him, but he cried out in the darkness, saying: There is no Allah save Thee. Be Thou Glorified! Lo! I have been a wrong-doer" (Quran, Al-Anbiya, 87), some Muslim theologians have justified that Yunus did not deem that God have no power over him but other people thought (Sunhānī, 6:78; 2002, 3:301).

²⁴ Hossein Atrak, "A Study and Critique of the «Tark-i Awlā» Approach in Justifying Prophets' Lapses," *The Journal of Philosophical -Theological Research (JPTR)* 20 (2), no. 76 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.22091/PFK.2018.2061.1641>; Hossein Atrak, "Philosophy of Religion Research" 18 (1), no. 35 (2020); Hossein Atrak, "A Critical Studying of Implying the Verse 'Aṭṭū' on Infallibility," *Hekmat e Mo'Āser* 11, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.30465/cw.2020.5333>; Hossein Atrak, "A Critical Survey of the Implication of the Verse 'Lā Yanāl' on the Prophets' Infallibility," *Philosophical Meditations* 11 (1), no. 26 (2021).

to describe the time intervals between prophets; times when there was no prophet on Earth²⁵. There was a 600-year gap between Jesus and Muhammad. There was a gap of several hundred years between Moses and Jesus. Furthermore, the presence of prophets on Earth was extremely limited, and prophets were all sent in the Middle East. There are bigger issues with claiming Islam as the last revealed religion. The Prophet of Islam was sent 1400 years ago, and no prophet has been sent to guide the people ever since. If, according to Muslims and other monotheistic religions, the guidance of people necessitates the sending of a prophet, then God must send a prophet at all times, which has never happened. Having a scripture to guide future generations is not an excuse for the prophets not to be present at all times due to the problems discussed in the following.

4.5. The problem of sending scriptures

Another issue with the prophetic system is guiding people through the scriptures that God sent alongside the prophets. Scriptures are silent rather than interactive texts. Every text must be understood. A text cannot be followed or used unless it is understood. When it comes to these scriptures, one of the most difficult problems is determining the narrator's (God, presumably) main purpose. The majority of the verses in the scriptures are ambiguous. Every ambiguous verse must be explained, interpreted, and clarified. As long as the prophets are alive and present among people, it is not a problem for the people to interpret the scriptures. However, when the prophets die, who should interpret the scriptures and God's true purpose? This is where all divine religions face a major problem for which they frequently lack a convincing solution. Whether it is Judaism, Christianity, or Islam, the interpretation of the scripture is left to a class called priests and clergy, some ordinary people who have studied in religious schools, but no one, not even the followers of these religions, has claimed their innocence and infallibility. Now the question is, what should be done if this class interprets the scripture incorrectly and fails to express the divine commandments? Who should lead the people to the divine

²⁵ Ibrāhīm Bājūrī, *Hāshiyat-u Al-'Imām Biyūrī 'Alā Juharihi Al-Tuḥīd* (Qahira: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2010); Faḍl ibn Ḥasan Ṭabarsī, *Majma' Al-Bayān, Vol. 3* (Biyūrūt: Dār al-Ma'rifat, 1987); Ḥasan ibn 'Alī Saqqāf, *Sharḥ Al-'Aqīdat-u Al-Ṭahāwīyya* (Biyūrūt: Dār al-'Imām al-Rawās, 2007); Muḥammad Ḥussiyūn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tafsīr Al-Mizān, Vol 16* (Qum: Daftar Intishārāt Islāmī, 1999).

rulings? Is it reasonable for All-wise God to send a prophet to guide the people and make him infallible, and then leave his religion to ordinary people known as priests and clerics, people whose moral corruption has been repeatedly substantiated in all religions? No religious sect was created and no religion was deviated except by the same class of clerics claiming to understand religion.

If these objections are accepted, the question that arises is: why did God not send an internal being to guide the people; that is, a prophet who lives for good, speaks to the people at any time and place, and answers their questions?

4.6. The problem of the multiplicity of religions and sects

Historical experience has now revealed to us humans of the twenty-first century that sending prophets to guide mankind has been entirely ineffective. The divisions, discrepancies, and conflicts among religions over thousands of years demonstrate the failure of this solution in the real world. There are many religions in the world whose adherents oppose one another. Christians regard Judaism as God's obsolete religion, Islam as a false religion, and Muslims as misled. Moreover, Muslims argue that Judaism and Christianity have been historically distorted and rendered obsolete by God. The Crusades between Muslims and Christians provide the best historical evidence for the futility of sending prophets to guide mankind. Any wise being with knowledge and wisdom and absolute knowledge of the future would know with a little reflection that the sending of different prophets would lead to the emergence of different religions and followers, resulting in disputes and conflicts among their followers. Thus, it would be better if All-wise God had not sent prophets at all, or had sent only one eternal prophet, instead of many prophets, for the entire human race, with long life being the best miracle and proof of his righteousness.

5. Alternative solutions

If, as claimed in Islamic theology, All-wise God has sent prophets to guide mankind, then sending human prophets for this purpose does not seem to be a good solution in this regard, because it faces many logical problems, and its inefficiency has been revealed in practice. Therefore, the All-wise and Omniscient God is unlikely to resort to such a solution. To clarify the issue, the author mentions some other ways in which God could guide mankind, which are

believed by the author to lead to better results than sending prophets. Readers may come up with other solutions in this regard.

5.1. Spiritual and Instinctive Guidance

Animals, like humans, have free will, intellect, and creativity, and it has been shown that they can use tools. How does God guide animals in achieving their desired happiness? It is commonly stated that God guides them based on instincts. It appears that God could have used the same means to guide human beings, without depriving them of their free will and liberty. He could have created humans in terms of existential structure in such a way that they could be led to God like animals with no desire for evil. Such an assumption does not contradict human perfection and freedom, and in response, it must be stated that God used prophecy as a means of guiding human beings based on their free will.

Another assumption is that God, like angels, guides humans toward himself. Angels, like humans, are intelligent and self-sufficient beings. However, some theologians claim that angels lack the ability to sin and oppose divine commands, although it appears that having a true identity does not conflict with free will. Angels only lack physical bodies.

Another assumption is that God created in man a stronger intellect with a better understanding of the universe and Him, allowing him to recognize His existence and the path to happiness more easily and rapidly. Another possibility is that He provided man with a special guiding force for understanding and direct communication with Him, known as divine intuition. That force coexists with the powers of lust, anger, and reason, and is tasked with understanding God and communicating with Him via signs or a direct connection. This is a force similar to that said to exist in prophets.

5.2. Direct Guidance of People

According to Islamic theologians and other religions that believe in the prophethood of the prophets, God created and sent the prophets to guide mankind, then spoke to them and constantly watched over them so that they could not sin. The Quranic verse (Surah Al-Jinn, Verse 28) states that God watches over His prophets to ensure that they do not make mistakes. God

Himself guides and speaks directly to His prophets, as He did to Moses and Muhammad (PBUH). The question that now arises is, why does God not communicate with each of His creatures one by one directly? Why does He not speak to and send inspiration and revelation to everyone?! Why does God keep His prophets from deviating and committing sin, but ignores His other creatures?!

5.3. Sending a Single Prophet and Religion for All Times

Even if we disregard the drawbacks of the idea of God's sending prophets for human guidance and suppose it to be correct, it appears that the idea of guiding human beings by a single eternal prophet would be preferable to that of sending multiple prophets with short lives. The advantage of the former idea is that it avoids the problem of multiple religions, peoples, nations, and conflicts among them. Furthermore, an eternal prophet would allow people to speak directly with God's representative at any time and ask him new questions, rather than resorting to false and lying clerics and being misled and divided into various sects.

The problem with this idea is that it may be against natural laws, and a human being cannot have eternal life. The answer is that the prophets' miracles themselves violate natural laws. Instead of sending dozens of prophets and assigning miracles to persuade people and violating natural laws dozens of times, God could have performed an eternal miracle and sent an eternal prophet, or at least one living until the end of human life, to be a clear proof for people of all times.

5.4. Guidance by Angels

Another alternative for guiding mankind would be to send angels. Just as God made Gabriel the messenger of revelation and guidance to the prophets, He could make Gabriel the guiding angel of all human beings, appearing on each human being and showing them right and wrong and guiding them toward God, or He could use countless angels to make the task easier for Gabriel. According to Islamic narrations, God has placed two angels on the right and left shoulders of each human being, one of which records their good deeds and the other their

evil acts. He could have given these two angels the speaking ability in order to invite people to virtues and prevent them from evil-doing.

6. Conclusion

In this study, the author criticized the idea of God's sending prophets to guide mankind and listed its challenges and drawbacks. These were the problems that came to the author's mind, but there may be other drawbacks which the readers may come up with. If these arguments are accepted and the readers agree with the author, the author concludes that the idea of sending prophets for human guidance, which has so many logical and practical drawbacks, is unlikely and erroneous because God is All-wise and Omniscient (according to divine religions). Consequently, God has not sent prophets to guide mankind, and theologians must find another justification for prophecy. There are several explanations for this, which should be discussed in another article, but a few hypotheses can be put forward: 1. Prophet and Messenger were titles that people chose for people who invited them to God, whether the God of the Abrahamic religions or the God of other religions. 2. Another possibility is that these individuals introduced themselves as God's messengers. As they approached the people and began inviting them, they said, "We are messengers sent by God, and we invite you to Him". 3. Another possibility is that they were in circumstances in which they believed they were inspired by God and that they had a responsibility to convey this message to the people and guide them. As a result, they called themselves the divine messengers.

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