

215150 - He is saying to us: Why don't you worship Shakespeare because of his linguistic brilliance?

the question

I was telling someone about the linguistic miracle of the quran, but he then mentioned Shakespeare and his perfection of the English language and he then told me that the language of the quran doesnt prove the existence of the quran and he also said why don't we worship Shakespeare then. what is te refutation to this claim,

Detailed answer

We may refute his claim with a simple argument that is available to all Muslims and is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, but man's mind is weak and he is forgetful, heedless and prone to mistakes. This argument is as follows: did Shakespeare challenge other literary figures, before and after him, to produce the like of what he produced, or did Shakespeare claim to be a Prophet so that people should believe in him?

If your friend thinks that eloquence is a miracle or sign of Prophethood, then he is mistaken, because he has not paid attention to the idea that there should be a challenge in addition to there not being anything that matches it. These are important conditions with regard to belief in miracles.

Is this the way to discuss major concepts and matters that determine one's ultimate fate, such as the Prophethood of the Prophets (blessings and peace of Allah be upon them)?

Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The Qur'an is that miracle that will abide until the end of time; since it was first brought by the Messenger, the verses that challenged mankind have been recited, including the following verses (interpretation of the meaning):

“Let them then produce a recital like unto it (the Quran) if they are truthful”

[at-Toor 52:34]

“Say: Bring you then ten forged Soorah (chapters) like unto it”

[Hood 11:13]

“Say: Bring then a Soorah (chapter) like unto it”

[Yoonus 10:38]

“Say: If the mankind and the jinns were together to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they helped one another”

[al-Isra’ 17:88].

The mere fact that the Messenger told the people about this challenge from the very beginning, and these verses stated definitively that they could never do that, knowing the large numbers of mankind, is evidence in itself that the Qur’an was something extraordinary, that the two races (i.e., mankind and the jinn) would be unable to match. Such a miracle cannot be for anyone except the Prophets.

Then, with the passage of time, it was heard by people who believed in it and people who did not believe in it, Arabs and non-Arabs, and there has never been anyone among the nations who produced a book that people would read and say that it was like the Qur’an. This is something that everyone knows.

There is nothing that people uttered or wrote, even if it was of the highest level of quality in terms of words and meanings, but there were other people who came up with something equal to it or like it or close to it, whether it was poetry, oratory, words of knowledge, aphorisms, argument, exhortation, essays, or the like. Nothing of that exists, but there was something equal to it or like it or close to it.

The Qur’an, as people – Arabs and non-Arabs alike – know, is something for which no equal has ever existed, despite the keenness of the Arabs and the non-Arabs to produce something to match it. So its wording is a miracle, its composition is a miracle, its telling of the unseen is a

miracle, its commands and prohibitions are a miracle, its promises and warnings are a miracle, its majestic nature, greatness and impact on people's hearts are a miracle. If it is translated into a language other than Arabic, its meanings are a miracle. All of that is unmatched by anything in the world.

If it is said that there is nothing like the Torah, the Gospel and the Psalms either, that does not undermine our argument, because we say: Miracles performed by the Prophets cannot be performed by anyone else. If any miracle was of that nature, such as telling of the unseen, this is a miracle that was common to all of them. The same applies to raising the dead, for these types of miracles were known for more than one of the Prophets other than the Messiah, such as Moosaa (Moses) and others.

End quote from an-Nubuwwaat (1/515).

What we mean here is that linguistic eloquence is not necessarily indicative of Prophethood or proof that the message is from a divine source; rather there should be other clear conditions, namely:

1. that eloquent person should claim to be a Prophet
2. he should challenge mankind with his eloquence in a clear manner, then they fail to meet his challenge
3. he should fulfil the conditions of Prophethood and other requirements to support his message, which we will discuss below.

Moreover, this argumentative person asked: "Why don't you worship Shakespeare if the matter has to do with language?" Who told him that we worship our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)? Does any of mankind deserve worship? Didn't Shakespeare die? So how can a god die?

Does he not know that the Muslims worship Allah, may He be glorified and exalted? Rather they believe in Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and all the other Prophets as messengers sent by Allah, may He be glorified, to convey His message and remind people of the

necessity of faith, worshipping Allah alone, and following the laws and regulations that will protect the land and its people, in both their religious and worldly affairs.

We think that this information is basic Islamic principles that Muslim children learn before they grow up, but they are not known to some of those whose main aim is to argue and who focus on presenting specious arguments. What matters to these people is to present their specious argument, whatever it may be and no matter what its source, merely for the purpose of increasing the number of specious arguments, without respecting the intelligence of the readers or listeners.

Here we also want to ask an important question: who told this person that the evidence for the Prophethood of our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is limited to the linguistic miracle of the Holy Qur'an only?

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, supported most of the Prophets with various miracles and signs to confirm the truth of their Prophethood. For example, in the case of Moosaa (Moses), his staff turned into a fast-moving snake, the sea was parted for him, and he put his hand into his garment and it was healed of its ailment. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, said to him (interpretation of the meaning):

“ ‘And throw your stick!’ But when he saw it moving as if it were a snake, he turned in flight, and looked not back. (It was said): ‘O Moosa (Moses)! Draw near, and fear not. Verily, you are of those who are secure.’

Put your hand in your bosom, it will come forth white without a disease, and draw your hand close to your side to be free from fear (that which you suffered from the snake, and also by that your hand will return to its original state). These are two Burhan (signs, miracles, evidences, proofs) from your Lord to Firaun (Pharaoh) and his chiefs. Verily, they are the people who are Fasiqoon (rebellious, disobedient to Allah).”

[al-Qasas 28:31-32].

‘Eesaa (Jesus – peace be upon him) spoke in the cradle as an infant, and he used to heal those who had been born blind and lepers, and raise the dead by Allah’s leave, and a table from heaven were sent down to him for his people.

The Holy Qur’an was sent down to our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and he challenged all the Arabs with it to produce something like it. He spoke of unseen matters of the past and future, despite the fact that he was unlettered and there were no scholars of the previous scriptures in his land. He was known for all good values, generosity and kindness among his people. He was taken by night from Makkah to al-Masjid al-Aqsa [in Jerusalem; this event is known as the Isra’ or Night Journey] in a single night. The moon was split as a sign for his people. Water sprang from between his fingers and the pebbles in his hand glorified Allah... And there were many other signs and miracles to confirm his Prophethood and his message. All of that does not indicate anything more than the fact that he was a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds; the One Who sent him is the Creator and Provider Who is deserving of worship, to the exclusion of all others.

This argumentative person should understand that circumstantial evidence and the laws of Allah that govern His creation are among the greatest evidence to confirm the Prophethood of the Prophets, and it is not merely the matter of tangible miracles that people debate and argue about.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Prophethood includes knowledge and the deeds that a Prophet must have; it is the noblest of knowledge and the noblest of deeds. How can we be confused between a true claimant to Prophethood and a liar? How could it not be clear which of them is telling the truth and which is telling lies in many ways, especially since the world is not devoid of some prophetic legacies from the time of Adam until our own time, and the type of teachings that the Prophets and Messengers brought, and what they called people to and enjoined them to do, are well-known? There are still some of the teachings of the Messengers on earth, and people still know some of the teachings of the Messengers through which they can know what type of teachings the

Messengers brought, and on that basis they are able to differentiate between those who are messengers and those who are not.

If we assume that a man came at a time when it was still possible for Messengers to be sent, and he enjoined people to ascribe partners to Allah and worship idols, and made immorality, wrongdoing and telling lies permissible, and he did not tell people to worship Allah alone, or to believe in the Last Day, is there a need to demand a miracle from such a person? Could there be any doubt that he is lying in his claim?

Even if we assume that he performed what is thought to be a miracle, it would be known that it was merely a kind of extraordinary feat, or it was a test or trial. Therefore when the Dajjaal claims divinity, the miracles that he will perform will not constitute proof that he is telling the truth, because it is known that his claim cannot be true in and of itself, and that he is a liar.

End quote from Sharh al-‘Aqeedah al-Asfahaaniyyah (140).

With regard to our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), all circumstantial evidence of that nature is available to confirm that he was truly a Prophet:

Firstly: the promise of Allah to support the Messengers was fulfilled for him, and the promise to cause the truth he brought to prevail was also fulfilled, as was the case for Moosaa (Moses), ‘Eesaa (Jesus) and Muhammad; their followers filled the world and Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, wrought vengeance upon their enemies and caused the word of truth with which they were sent to prevail.

Secondly: he also fulfilled the condition of evidence having to do with the quality and content of the message he brought. His message (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was of the same nature as previous messages. It enjoins affirmation of the Oneness of Allah and prohibits the ascription of partners to Him; it enjoins values and virtues, and prohibits shameful and evil deeds.

Thirdly: he also fulfilled the condition of personal character, which refers to the manners and attitudes that the Prophets had and their absolute honesty, for which they were known among

their people, and similar signs.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The first criterion is the quality and content of the message, which is what the Negus (ruler of Ethiopia) regarded as proof for his Prophethood, because when he asked the Muslims about what the Prophet told people, and asked them to recite Qur'an for him, and they did so, he said: "This and what Moosa brought came from the same source."

Before him, Waraqah ibn Nawfal said the same thing, when the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) told him about what he had seen. Waraqah had become a Christian, and he used to write the Gospel in Hebrew. He said: "This is the Namooos (i.e., Jibreel (Gabriel)) that used to come to Moosaa."

The second criterion is personal character, which Heraclius, the Byzantine ruler, referred to when the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) wrote a letter to him, inviting him to Islam. Heraclius asked who of the Arabs was there, and Abu Sufyaan had come with a group of Quraysh to do trade in Gaza. He summoned them and asked them for information about the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). He directed his questions to Abu Sufyaan, and he instructed the others, if he lied, to say that he was lying. But he found that they agreed with everything he said. He asked them: Was there any king among his forefathers? They said: No. He asked them: Did anyone say such things before him? They said: No. He asked them: Does he have good lineage among you? They said: Yes. He asked them: Did you ever accuse him of lying before he said what he said? They said: No, we have never known him to tell a lie. He asked them: Do the lowly people follow him or the nobles? And they said that the lowly followed him. He asked them: Are they increasing in number or decreasing? And they said that they were increasing. He asked them: Have any of them turned away from his religion after entering it, out of dissatisfaction? They said: No. He asked: Have you fought him? They said: Yes. He asked them about the (outcome of) fighting between them and him, and they said: Sometimes he prevails over us and sometimes we prevail over him. He asked whether he acted treacherously, and they said that he never acted treacherously. He asked: What does he instruct you to do? They said: He instructs us to worship Allah alone, and not to associate anything with Him; he forbids us to

worship that which our fathers worshipped; he instructs us to pray, give charity, remain chaste and uphold ties of kinship.

These are more than ten issues that the Byzantine ruler asked about. Then it became clear to them what there was in these issues of indications. He asked them whether there were any reasons for him to lie or any signs of lying, and he saw that there were no signs of lying. He asked them about signs of honesty and truthfulness, and he found them there.

End quote from Sharh al-'Aqeedah al-Asfahaaniyyah (p. 142)

Look at how Khadeejah (may Allah be pleased with her), Waraqah ibn Nawfal, the Negus and Heraclius reached the conclusion that the Prophethood of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was real by enquiring about the content of his message and his character, with no need for tangible miracles, and even before hearing the Qur'an and before the challenge to match it was issued.

This argumentative person should realise that it is not objective or fair to focus on one particular proof and limit the conclusion to that. The ways of knowing about the message of the Messengers are many and varied. If we learn on the basis of certain knowledge about the lives and character of the Prophets and about their followers and enemies, we will reach the conclusion, by many means, that they were sincere and were followers of truth, as it says in Sharh al-Asfahaaniyyah (155)

If this person claims that all these ways are valid in the case of Shakespeare, then he is arrogant and it is not worth debating and arguing with him. If they were really available, you would see him having followers who would be called "the cult of Shakespeare". If he claims that such a thing does exist, then give yourself a break and do not continue debating with him. Guard your time and sanity, for not everything that is said in this world is worth paying attention to.

And Allah knows best.