

The Explication of the Ways to Prove the Existence of God From the Viewpoint of Nahj al-Balāgha and its Conformity with Qur'ān

Zohreh Babaahmadi Milani^{1*}; Noşrat Nīlsāz²

1. Assistant professor, Department of Qur'ān and Hadith Sciences, Faculty of Theology, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran

2. Associate professor, Department of Qur'ān and Hadith Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran

Received: June 11, 2021 ; Revised: July 2, 2021 ; Accepted: August 11, 2021

© University of Tehran

Abstract

Of the very basically important issues in noble Qur'ān and the sayings of the Infallibles (a) is divinity. In many cases within the verses of Qur'ān and the speeches of the pure Infallibles (a), the ways of divinity are pointed out with various wordings. Of the important ways are rational-sensory and rational-philosophical ways. Since Nahj al-balāgha, after noble Qur'ān, is the most valuable book for guidance and humanization in which the repeated reflection of heavenly verses of Qur'ān is evident, the ways to prove the existence of God from the viewpoint of Nahj al-balāgha and then its conformity with the verses of Qur'ān are explicated in this study with a library method and a descriptive-analytical method in investigating the data. Results of the study show that sometimes as soon as humans pay attention to the system of the universe, they believe the existence of the sublime God, out of the innate reason. In addition, the base for the creation of beings indicates that the universe is under the control of a supernatural being. Moreover, from the rational and philosophical point of view, the existence of God can be proved with an intermediary; what is considered intermediary is a series of rational principles that proves the necessity of the sublime God's existence.

Keywords: Creation of beings, Divinity, Divine making, Qur'ān, Order, Nahj al-balāgha

Introduction

There are various ways to know the sublime God. In a general classification, Shahīd Muṭahharī has summarized these ways into three items (Muṭahharī, 2006, vol. 5: 68-74). Although Islamic scholars have stated other ways to know God, it can be said that these other ways are a subclass to these three items that are revealed in the speech of Imām 'Alī (a) and the verses of noble Qur'ān.

- 1. The way of innate disposition:** humans had knowledge about God in the past; however, due to being exposed to this mundane world and also ignorance, they have deviated from their basic nature upon which they are created.
- 2. Rational-sensory way:** it is divinity through divine makings in the world of creation wherein the existence of God can be ascertained with sensory and experiential investigation of natural, exterior facts and beings and also the observance of divine signs.
- 3. Rational-philosophical way:** it is a way in which the existence of the sublime God is proved using a series of rational and philosophical reasons.

* Corresponding Author, Email: z.babaahmady@scu.ac.ir

In sayings of the Infallibles (a), who were the interpreters and clarifiers of noble Qur'ān, monotheism has a special status. In many narration books, some chapters are assigned to monotheism and the traditions of the Infallibles (a) are mentioned under various headings. Among these, the sayings of Imām 'Alī (a) have great importance. That Imām 'Alī (a) always accompanied the revered Prophet (s) is clear to everyone. 'Alī (a) grew up in the lap of prophethood, was always next to the Prophet (s), saw the light of the Mission, and inhaled the scent of prophethood. The messenger of God (s) said to him, "You hear what I hear and you see what I see except that you are not a prophet but an assistant" (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 187). No verse was descended unless the Prophet (s) read it to 'Alī (a), and taught him its esoteric interpretation, interpretation, and its status as ambiguous or non-ambiguous (Ibn sa'd, n.d., vol. 2: 2; Şaffār, 1984: 195). Thus, to Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, monotheism, justice, and divine noble issues have been only known through the speech of 'Alī (a). The speeches of the other great Companions in no way contain divine knowledge and sciences. They were not able at all to imagine such knowledge and issues because if they had imagined, they would have uttered it (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1958, vol. 6: 346; Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 84). In probing the monotheistic issues of Nahj al-balāgha, it can be seen that Imām 'Alī (a) paid special attention to the issue of monotheism. This monotheistic knowledge in his speeches is deep in a particular way not only in wording but also in content. There are questions as to this study: What are the similarities and differences between Nahj al-balāgha and noble Qur'ān regarding their reasons for proving the existence of God? What is the opinion of noble Qur'ān and Imām 'Alī (a) for proving the existence of God through the order of the world (argument from order in nature)? Moreover, what are the various kinds of reasoning through the rational-sensory way in the speeches of Imām 'Alī (a) and noble Qur'ān?

In this study, these questions will be answered elaborately, stating that in Nahj al-balāgha and Qur'ān reasons are provided to prove the existence of God both through providing rational reasons and also pointing out the signs for divine making; however in some cases, they differ in mentioning the instances and that in rational-sensory way (argument from order in nature) in Nahj al-balāgha and noble Qur'ān the existence of God is proved using both rational reasons and sensory reasons (signs upon the horizons) and, finally, that both Qur'ān and Nahj al-balāgha –to prove the existence of God –causes humans to contemplate various forms of creation. This research was descriptive-analytical and the data were gathered using a library method. It is worth mentioning that the numbers for sermons, letters, and sayings are based on Nahj al-balāgha with the exegesis of Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh.

Significance of the study

Monotheism and divinity are among the very basically important issues in Nahj al-balāgha and noble Qur'ān. Perusing Nahj al-balāgha and noble Qur'ān shows clearly that this issue which is the first principle in the series of Islam's doctrinal foundations has received special attention, and Nahj al-balāgha and noble Qur'ān have explicated the "ways of proving the existence of God" thoroughly. In fact, the intellectual conditions and scientific discussions of the time might had a huge impact on the type of Imām 'Alī's (a) speeches and also the verses of noble Qur'ān. This is in a way that –regarding the type of the audience – they sometimes use the simplest way, that is, signs upon the horizons to prove the existence of God. Also at times, they state complex rational and philosophical reasons to do so.

Background of the study

About the ways of proving the existence of God, no independent book can be found from the earlier works. However, the issue of divinity can be realized within some doctrinal

discussions such as *Mutashābih al-Qur'ān* by Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *Kashf al-murād* by ‘Allāma Ḥillī, *Sharḥ asmā’ al-ḥusnā* by Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī, *Tawḥīd* by Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Al-Tawḥīd wa al-tathlīth* by ‘Allāma Balāghī, and *Tawḥīd* by Mufaḍḍal b. ‘Umar Ju‘fī. Sometimes the ways of divinity are pointed out during these discussions, and also this issue is discussed broadly in interpretive books of Qur’ān and explanations of Nahj al-balāgha. Nonetheless, from the contemporary books, some independent books have been written with the topic of divinity such as *Explicating the reasons of proving God* by Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī; *Objective exegesis of noble Qur’ān (monotheism in Qur’ān)* by Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī; *A journey in the reasons of proving the existence of God* by Muḥsin Gharawiyān; *Best ways of knowing God or Reasons of God for proving God* by Muḥammadī Rayshahrī; *God in Nahj al-balāgha* by Muḥammad ‘Alī Girāmī; *Theology in Nahj al-balāgha* by Ṣāfi Gulpāyigānī; *Manshūr Jāwīd* (second volume) by Āyatullāh Ja‘far Subḥānī; *Message of Qur’ān* (third volume) by Āyatullāh Makārim Shīrāzī; *Practical and theoretical wisdom in Nahj al-balāgha* by Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī; and *Tawḥīd in Qur’ān* by Āyatullāh Dastghayb. Moreover, there are some theses which are somehow related to the issue of “monotheism and divinity” such as *Tawḥīd in Nahj al-balāgha* by Fāṭima Baygum (university of Tehran). In this thesis, the author, first, mentions some generalities about knowing God, defining monotheism, and dividing it and, then, proves monotheism and negates polytheism. After these, she delves into the unity of the Divine Essence and the unity of Divine Attributes. This author initially states some points concisely using philosophical reasons and then mentions the sayings of Imām ‘Alī (a) in Nahj al-balāgha. *Divinity in Nahj al-balāgha* is a thesis by Ḥasan Sirājzāda in the theology faculty of the University of Tehran. This thesis is also comprised of two parts; the concept of God, God from the viewpoint of Islam and philosophers, and the attributes of God in Nahj al-balāgha are cited in the first part. The second part includes seven chapters and is about the ways of proving God (including argument from order in nature, argument of guidance and being guided, argument of creation, divinity through innate disposition and heart, and divinity through self-knowledge). However, first of all, this study is not comparative and second, it has not probed the argument from order of nature as we did with elaboration and some introductions from Qur’ān and Nahj al-balāgha. *Knowing God through heart and innate disposition* is a thesis by Zahrā Islāmī in the seminary of Khurāsān, which investigates divinity from a philosophical-theological point of view, not probing it from the view of Qur’ān and Nahj al-balāgha at all. Moreover, there are some other theses with the title of monotheism in Qur’ān or Nahj al-balāgha, which more or less discuss the degrees of monotheism (essence, attributes, and acts). To sum up, all the studies done up to now have probed some aspects of the issue, but no comparative study in particular has been done yet. Therefore, there was a need to carry out such research. In this study, it has been tried to probe the ways of proving God in Nahj al-balāgha and then discuss their conformity with those of noble Qur’ān.

The way of heart or innate disposition

The first way to know God is through heart or innate disposition. Before mentioning how “fiṭrat” (innate disposition) indicates the existence of God, it is appropriate to provide a short explanation about its meaning. The word “fiṭrat” comes from the root of “faṭara” for which lexicographers hold two meanings: first, split (Ibn Manzūr, 1994, vol. 5: 55; Qurashī, 1992, vol. 51: 193) and second, “creation, first formation without precedence” (Jawharī, 1987, vol. 2: 781; Ṭurayḥī, 1996, vol. 3: 438). Different parts of speech of this word are used in Qur’ān with both meanings: in the meaning of “split” (Qur’ān 82:1) and in the meaning of “creation, formation without precedence” (Qur’ān 14:10). The word “fiṭrat” (innate disposition) is used in Qur’ān only once and, as the men of letters say, it indicates the type and, to be precise, it

indicates a kind of creation (Ibn Athīr, 1985, vol. 3: 475; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 16: 178). Under this word, Ibn Athīr writes, "Fiṭrat means a particular state and kind of creation" (Ibn Athīr, 1985, vol. 3: 475). Nature and innate disposition of humans is connected to God in two aspects of attitudes and tendencies in a way that divinity and theism can be considered natural affairs (Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, n.d., vol. 1-3: 35-36). First, these concepts will be explicated and, then, the sayings of Imām 'Alī (a) and the verses of noble Qur'ān will be probed.

Natural divinity and theism

One of the meanings of natural divinity is that all humans perceive God with intuitive knowledge. This means that humans deep down in their hearts have intuitive knowledge about God. Based on this knowledge, humans find God by delving into themselves and see Him with their eyes (Sa'īdīmīhr, 2019: 67-68). Accordingly, in a sermon, Imām 'Alī (a) states that hearts find God because of clear reasons (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 104). In addition, in Qur'ān, chapter 31, the sublime God says, "If thou ask them, who it is that created the heavens and the earth. They will certainly say, 'God'" (Qur'ān 31:25). This verse indicates that like all humans, pagans also are based on the nature of monotheism and that they admit it. This is an unconscious confession since if they are asked who has created the heavens and the earth, they would admit that God has created them (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 16: 231).

A series of human tendencies like desire for God and theism can also be considered as natural affairs. Various ways are mentioned for proving the existence of God that, among them, the natural tendency towards the origin of the universe, i.e. God, is the most common one (Jawādī Āmulī, 2007, vol. 2: 29).

Natural divinity and theism in the speeches of Imām 'Alī (a) and Qur'ān

In the ninth part of the first sermon, Imām 'Alī (a) says,

In course of time many people perverted Allāh's trust with them and ignored His position and took compeers along with Him... Then Allāh sent His Messengers and series of His prophets towards them to get them to fulfill the pledges of His creation, to recall to them His bounties, to exhort them by preaching.... (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 1)

In another instance, Imām also says, "... and (to believe) in the *kalimatu'l-'ikhlās* (the expression of Divine purification) for it is just nature" (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 109). Admitting God to be unique and disconnecting Him from partners and likes has mingled with the nature of humans from the beginning of creation, and the Covert is made at the primordial time with humans which is called innate disposition (Baḥrānī, 1996, vol. 3: 128). In other instances in Nahj al-balāgha, Imām 'Alī (a) has stipulated natural divinity and theism (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 68). In addition, natural divinity and theism is stipulated in many verses of Qur'ān including:

A) *The verse of innate disposition*

Qur'ān says:

So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the Faith: (establish) God's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by God: that is the standard Religion: but most among mankind understand not. (Qur'ān 30:30)

This verse shows that not only divinity but also religion and creed, generally and in all aspects, are natural (q.v. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1997, under the previously mentioned verse; Ṭabrisī,

1993) and the creation by God is based on monotheism (q.v. Ṭabrisī, 1993, under the previously mentioned verse; Ṭūsī, n.d.; Zamakhsharī, 1987).

B) The verse of Covenant

Qur'ān says:

When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): “Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?” They said: “Yea! We do testify!” (This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: “Of this we were never mindful.” (Qur’ān 7:172)

C) The verses of prayer at the time of emergency

it should be noted that monotheism is the base while polytheism is fictitious; therefore, in ordinary time often people are involved with superficial matters and are neglected to think and ascertain the essential cause. However, at the time of emergency, the superficial causes are cut off (Qur’ān 2:166) and the relationships are detached (Qur’ān 23:101). This argument, i.e. forgetting non-God at the times of hardships and crying unto the divine threshold, is the clearest argument for the principle of proving creator and monotheism. Qur’ān depicts humans’ status in a way that they resort to their nature at the time of facing hardships. Only God the Glorified is able to remove troubles and sadness (Qur’ān 10:22; 29:65; 31:32).

D) The verses of oblivion and remembrance

Qur’ān says, “And be ye not like those who forgot God; and He made them forget their own souls!” (Qur’ān 59:19). The word *nisyān* (oblivion) is from the root of *nasy* which means to forget what was in the mind due to neglect and failing to recall (Muṣṭafawī, 1981, vol. 12: 14; Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1992: 804; Ṭurayhī, 1996, vol. 1: 414). Therefore, this word is used where “there is a history of familiarity but now it has been gone from the mind” (Jawādī Āmulī, 2007: 133). This word is suitable to be used for those who have accepted the religion but then have forgotten it due to apostasy. However, if it is used for pagans (who have never had belief), it shows that, before intuitive knowledge, they were aware of monotheism on the inside and now they have neglected it (Jawādī Āmulī, 2007: 133). In some verses, noble Qur’ān also sees the mission of prophets, particularly of the revered Prophet, and the revelation of its own verses to be recalling monotheism; as to this, Qur’ān says, “Therefore do thou give admonition, for thou art one to admonish” (Qur’ān 88:21). For this meaning to be acceptable, it is necessary for one to have a history of familiarity with the sketch of the religion, particularly monotheism because “admonition” is where there had already been awareness and recalling for the second time so that it would not be forgotten; however, when something is uttered for the first time and the audience has just heard of it, such teaching is “instruction,” not admonition (Jawādī Āmulī, 2007: 132).

Rational-sensory way (way of creation and works)

One of the other ways to know about the existence of God is rational-sensory way or the way of creation and works, which is more known as the argument from order in nature. Divinity

based on the experiential investigation of phenomena and the beings of the universe is often brought up in the form of argument of order in nature. In fact, the argument from order in nature is the very cause and the issue of creatures' system (perfect system) which can be shown using the verse 88 of chapter 27 of Qur'ān –with the name of “perfect order of things” (Fakhr Rāzī, 2000, vol. 24: 574; Jawādī Āmulī, 2009: 34, 244; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 15: 401). However, to prove the existence of God through the argument from order in nature, it is said that in nature, there is order and every order is in the control of a governor. Thus, a governor should have set this order in nature and that governor is God. The argument from order in nature is comprised of two premises. One of these premises is sensory and experiential which is the minor of this logical theorem, and the other premise is rational which is the major one (Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, 2004: 55). In Qur'ān and Nahj al-balāgha, there are reasons to prove the existence of God through the argument from order in nature (both premises), but they differ in mentioning instances. First, the first premise is probed:

Sensory premise

Using the senses, one can depict the doctrinal beliefs and precious, intellectual points in a way that they can be perceivable by the public. Imām 'Alī (a), in most of the discussions of Nahj al-balāgha, uses the sensory way to prove the existence of the sublime God (Dashtī, 2000: 176-179). These include the creation of the human, animals, the heavens, the earth, and their phenomena which will be discussed in this premise (sensory premise). Using this way, i.e. God's creation signs in the goal-oriented system of the universe, some have pointed out the “extroversive” knowledge (Jawādī Āmulī, 2009: 38). To sum up, in the speeches of Imām 'Alī (a), sometimes the entire universe as a proportional system and some other times the individual parts of this system are considered to prove the existence of God.

The entire universe as a proportional system

Careful observation of the created world reveals its proportion and unity as a system. Imām 'Alī (a) argues in two ways as to this superb and proportional system: a) parts and particles are related to other parts and particles which altogether form a systematic collection. In sermon 158, he points out the good way by which God created everything: rather, He set a certain limit to whatever He created, and gave those forms, and made their forms beautiful. Nothing can stand to disobey Him (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 158). In addition, some verses of noble Qur'ān, in a special way, talk about the beautiful creation of the human using the word “ḥasan” (beautiful) (Qur'ān 40:64; 64:3).

The word “ḥasan” is the proportion of all parts of something in relation to each other, a kind of proportion which is due to a goal away from its essence. Therefore, the beauty of the form means the proportion between the parts of the face like eyes, nose, mouth, and so on (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1997, vol. 16: 249).

In another part of his speeches, Imām 'Alī (a) states this point that systematic collections are in proportion to other systematic collections, and the entire universe is an ordered and proportional system. For example, he says,

He has made light the contrary of darkness, brightness that of gloom, dryness that of moisture and heat that of cold. He produces affection among inimical things. He fuses together diverse things, brings near remote things and separates things which are joined together. (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 181)

Some verses of noble Qur'ān point out the proportion in the collections of the universe including the verse 3 of chapter 67 where it reads, “No want of proportion wilt thou see in the Creation of (God) Most Gracious. So turn thy vision again: seest thou any flaw?” (Qur'ān

67:3). What is meant by having no disproportion in the creation is that divine order is connected like a chain and that some creatures are related to some others (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 19: 350).

Individual parts of the universe

In noble Qur'ān and Nahj al-balāgha, many verses and sermons can be found that talk about various natural phenomena, and see those as signs for God's existence and ask humans to contemplate them.

a) Sings of God in the heavens and the earth: Verses of Qur'ān and parts of Nahj al-balāgha in many cases talk about the skies and heavenly phenomena like the “creation of the moon, stars, and the sun” and also about the earth and earthly phenomena like the “creation of mountains and springs, paths, plants, and fruits.” In many sermons of Nahj al-balāgha, attention has been paid to the skies (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermons 155, 177, 206) and heavenly phenomena (ibid: sermons 1, 87, 177) including the sermon 87 in which the creation of skies, the sun, and the moon as the signs of night and day and also their exact movement for counting the years and measuring the time are pointed out, followed by recounting stars as the ornamentation of the sky (ibid: sermon 87). Also, it points out the role of stars as sings which are used for the direction of the regions of the earth (ibid: sermon 177). The speeches of Imām 'Alī (a) seem like those of the verses of Qur'ān in which measuring out the stages of the sun and the moon to know the number of years and months (Qur'ān 10:5) and passing through the broad highways made for them (Qur'ān 21:31) are mentioned. Also, the issue of guidance through stars is mentioned in verse 97 of chapter 6 of Qur'ān. In addition, the earth and earthly phenomena are frequently brought up in Qur'ān (32:27; 41:39; 16:10, 11; 14:32; 80:26-32; 15:19) and Nahj al-balāgha (sermons 1, 87, 181) which are not discussed in order to be brief here.

b) Sings of God in creating animals: in many sermons as to the creation of animals, Imām 'Alī (a) has paid a particular attention to the mysterious and complex life of animals and has asked us all to contemplate their creation. For example, about locust, he says,

If you wish you can tell about the locust (as well). Allāh gave it two red eyes, lighted for them two moon -- like pupils, made for it small ears, opened for it a suitable mouth and gave it keen sense, gave it two teeth to cut with and two sickle-like feet to grip with. (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 180)

To be brief, only the name of the animals, mentioned in Nahj al-balāgha, are provided here: creation of birds (ibid: sermon 160); peacock (ibid); bat (ibid: sermon 150); locust (ibid: sermon 180); and ant (ibid).

Many animals including the cattle, birds, insects, reptiles, and so on are mentioned in Qur'ān; however, their creation is not elaborately discussed as that of Nahj al-balāgha. In most cases, generally it asks humans to pay attention to their creation including the verse 17 of chapter 88 wherein it says about camel, “Do they not look at the Camels, how they are made?” (Qur'ān 88:17). Or, it talks about birds generally, “Do they not look at the birds, held poised in the midst of (the air and) the sky? Nothing holds them up but (the power of) God” (Qur'ān 16:79). This verse shows the secrets to the grandeur of God in the universe when it says: do not they look at the birds flying above in the sky? And since the nature of things is to be pulled towards the earth, it sees the movement of birds above the earth as possessed; that is, God has set a power in their wings and a feature in the air so that they could fly against the gravity. Then Qur'ān reads, “Nothing holds them up but (the power of) God” (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1995, vol. 11: 342).

c) Sings related to the creation of the human: in sermons of Nahj al-balāgha, creation of the human is argued to be one of the divine signs to prove the existence of the sublime God

including the first sermon wherein Imām (a) talks about the creation of the human from body and soul: Allāh collected from hard, soft, sweet and sour earth, clay (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 1). In fact, on one hand, Imām (a) points out the creation of the human from clay and, on the other hand, that clay was a mixture of all various parts of the earth (Ibn Maytham Baḥrānī, 1983, vol. 1: 335; Makārīm Shīrāzī, 1995, vol. 1: 172). Then he continues to mention another matter, i.e. water, which was mixed with clay: which He dripped in water till it got pure, and kneaded it with moisture till it became gluey. From it He carved an image... (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 1). Actually, the role of water was to blend various parts, remove the unsmooth parts, and make connection between its different, scattered parts. In the second stage, he points out the endowment of soul: Then He blew into it out of His Spirit whereupon it took the pattern of a human being with mind that governs him (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 1).

Many verses of noble Qur’ān also stipulate this point that the first creation of the human was out of water and clay. About the creation of the human, it reads, “It is He Who has created man from water (Qur’ān 25:54). Qur’ān states the creation of the human with different expressions like “sounding clay” (Qur’ān 55:14), “dust” (Qur’ān 30:20), and “clay” (Qur’ān 32:7). In another verse, after the initial stages of creation, it points out the last stage of the human creation, i.e. “breathed into him something of His spirit” (Qur’ān 32:9).

As it can be seen, noble Qur’ān points out the initial creation of the human out of clay using words like “clay,” “sounding clay,” and “dust.” However, Imām ‘Alī (a) mentions various clays about the creation of the human and, in fact, his words can be considered as an interpretation for the verses of Qur’ān. This is because the speeches of Imām ‘Alī (a), first, point out that the human is created out of clay and then, he explains more about the clay itself wherein he says, “Allāh collected from hard, soft, sweet and sour earth, clay” (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 1).

Rational premise

In the second premise of the argument from order in nature, it is claimed that the existence of every ordered phenomenon needs the existence of a cognizant and governing being that, with its awareness and knowledge, juxtaposes the internal parts of the mentioned phenomenon in a coordinated and arranged fashion to attain a particular aim (Sa’īdīmīhr, 2002:45). Generally, the approach of Imām ‘Alī (a) in probing the natural phenomena is that, after stating the amazements of the nature, he makes everybody contemplate and emphasizes that the effects of the grandeur of God is apparent in the entire creation. With a basic question in sermon 180, he makes the mind of the man contemplate his observations where he says, “Can there be any construction without a Constructor, or any offence without an offender?” (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 180). “Is the universe with such grandeur and human being, which amaze the minds, self-constructed?”

In addition to asking to contemplate the effects of the divine creation, Imām ‘Alī (a) in other sermons points out “the rational recognition and self-evidence of the existence of God (cognizant governor) through the creation of the beings,” using statements like “He has manifested Himself to our understanding through our having observed His strong control and firm decree” (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 177) and “Praise be to Allāh Who is Manifest before His creation because of themselves” (ibid: sermon 104). In many verses of noble Qur’ān, humans are generally asked to contemplate and probe the system of the universe including the verse 164 of chapter 2 which reads,

In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which God Sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith

to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they Trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth;- (Here) indeed are Signs for a people that are wise” (Qur’ān 2:164).

There are many verses like this in noble Qur’ān. *Bihār al-anwār* provides 244 verses of Qur’ān with the title of “proving the existence of creator and the argument of existence of God using the creation amazements of God the Generous” (Majlisī, 1983, vol. 3: 16, section 3).

Rational and philosophical recognition of God

The third way of knowing God is of pure, rational and philosophical type, a way that generally can be done through probing the existence and the creature. In this way, there is a kind of argument wherein the existence of God is proved with an intermediary; however, what are taken as intermediary are not signs. Rather, they are a series of rational principles by which the philosopher recounts the existence and creature in a general fashion and concludes in his endeavor that the existence of necessary being is indispensable (Muṭahharī, 1982, vol. 2: 125). This argument is named “demonstration of necessity and possibility.” It is worth mentioning that this argument is also called causal demonstration because in it the explication is based on the existence of the ultimate cause for the creatures. At first, it is needed to explain some concepts for a clearer understanding of the demonstration of necessity and possibility:

a) Cause and effect: In philosophy, cause is used in two meanings: first, cause in a general sense means the cause of existence or “mutawaqqifun alayh” (depended upon) and the effect is the existence or “mutawaqqif” (dependent) (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1997: 199) and second, there is this particular meaning of cause termed as the creating cause which is a special type of agent cause (Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, 2004: 67). It alludes to the creature which creates the other creature by the existence of which the realization and the existence of the other creature becomes necessary (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1997: 201). What is meant in this article by the cause in the causal demonstration is its particular meaning, i.e. creating, agent cause.

b) Possible being and necessary being: generally, it can be said that due to reason, every being is necessarily needless or needy. The needless being whose being is necessary is a necessary being. And a being which is needy and is no way necessary, i.e. neither its existence nor its absence is necessary, is a possible being (Avicenna, 2007: 47; Ḥillī, 1987: 111).

c) Yardstick for the effect in need of cause: in this regard, theologians think that the effect is in need of the cause due to the “creation.”¹ Therefore, because the creature is created and that it was not present and then was made, it is deficit and is in need of a cause (Muṭahharī, 1982, vol. 2: 144). However, philosophers are two groups as to this attitude (Gharawiyān, 1998: 106). The first group holds that the need should be searched within the essence, i.e. the quiddity of the things. The yardstick, for everything to be in need, lies within the essence and quiddity of that thing; that is, the essence of one thing is indifferent per se as to existence or non-existence. These philosophers name such essence as quiddity and deem such indifference as “essential possibility.” They state that the yardstick for the effect in need of cause is the “essential possibility” (Muṭahharī, 1982, vol. 2: 145). The second group of philosophers like Ṣadr al-Muta’allihīn deem “poor and existential possibility” as the yardstick for the effect in need of cause. Every creature whose being is possessed, related, and dependent upon another creature is the effect and possibility and, due to the rule of causality, is in need of a cause to create it (Gharawiyān, 1998: 108). Thus, the principle of causality is

1. What is meant here is creation in time, namely, the being is posterior to non-existence in a particular time.

like this: every poor and dependent creature needs a cause. The opinion of Ṣadr al-Muta‘allihīn is superior to the two previous opinions (Muḥammad Ridā‘ī, 2003: 43).

In the speeches of Imām ‘Alī (a), the yardstick for the things to be in need of God is said to be their existential weakness and poverty, as he says, “Everything submits to Him and everything exists by Him. He is the satisfaction of every poor, dignity of the low, energy for the weak” (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 105).

The universe to be the effect

It became clear that existential weakness and poverty is the yardstick for the effect in need of the cause. Weakness of existential rank has signs by which it can be ascertained that a creature is an effect. To prove that the universe is the effect, the signs of effect should be found. These signs are:

a) Change: a creature that transforms from one state to another state is certainly an effect and is in need of a cause because change is considered a sign of absence and deficit.

b) Creation¹: it means that the existence is posterior to the non-existence and the existence of the created is certainly in need of a cause, creating it from the non-existence.

c) Dependence on the other: every creature that is in a way dependent upon another creature is certainly an effect (Gharawiyān, 1998: 109).

Signs for the universe to be an effect are pointed out in various sermons about monotheism in Nahj al-balāgha and in verses of noble Qur’ān. On the other hand, these signs are denied to belong to the Holy Essence of God.

Proving the signs for the universe to be an effect

a) Change: in many sermons of Nahj al-balāgha, change in the universe is pointed out including the stages of the human creation: at first it was only a drop of semen, then a clot of blood, after that a child and finally an adolescent (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 187). Also, the way of the creation of the skies (ibid: sermon 187) and the earth (ibid) is pointed out in many cases. This transformation, moreover, is mentioned in many verses of noble Qur’ān where it talks about enlivening the earth after it being dead: in the rain which God Sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead ... indeed are Signs for a people that are wise (Qur’ān 2:164; for other cases q.v. Qur’ān 16:65; 29:63; 30:19,24,50; 35:9; 45:5; 57:17). It also talks about the alternation of the night and the day (Qur’ān 2:164; 3:190; 10:6; 45:5; 23:80); the stages of human creation (Qur’ān 23:12-14; 22:5; 40:67; 75:37-38); and sending back humans to the feeblest old age after reaching the age of full strength (Qur’ān 22:5; 16:70; 40:67), all of which are signs of change.

b) Creation: the creation of the creatures is pointed out in many sermons of Nahj al-balāgha: Praise be to Allāh who is proof of His existence through His creation, of His being external through the newness of His creation, and through their mutual similarities of the fact that nothing is similar to Him (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 147; to see other cases, q.v.: sermon 180 with two cases, sermon 147). All the verses of noble Qur’ān wherein there is a talk of the creation of the creatures indicate their making (Qur’ān 2:29; 6:1; 7:54).

1. Creation in time is not only meant. It may be an eternal being but dependent. What is meant is the existential rank.

c) Dependence: everything is effect except God (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 181). Also in some of the verses of Qur’ān, there is a talk somehow about the existential dependence of creatures upon God that can be seen as inspirations for the words of Imām ‘Alī (a), which are based on the dependency of the world of possibilities on God who Himself is not dependent on any creature. As to this, Qur’ān reads, “O ye men! It is ye that have need of God: but God is the One Free of all wants, worthy of all praise” (Qur’ān 35:15).

Negation of the signs for sublime God’s being an effect in Qur’ān and Nahj al-balāgha

a) Negation of transformation: in some expressions, Imām ‘Alī (a) takes away some attributes from God from which it can be concluded that other than God others possess such attributes, attributes that are the signs for others’ being the effect. Some of the attributes that Imām ‘Alī (a) takes away from God are: **1. Change:** He is that which does not change or vanish. The process of setting does not behoove Him (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 181). **2. To give birth and to be born:** He has not begotten any one lest He be regarded as having been born. He has not been begotten otherwise He would be contained within limits (ibid). From these expressions, it can be concluded that a creature with these attributes such as having limitations of space, changing the state, having likes, and being born and giving birth is an effect; all the creatures of the world are seen as having these attributes and as a result, all of them are the effect. Also in some verses of Qur’ān, it is negated for God to possess attributes exclusive to the body like the verse 255 of chapter 2 where it reads, “No slumber can seize Him nor sleep” (Qur’ān 2:255) or the verse 3 of chapter 112 where it reads, “He begetteth not, nor is He begotten” (Qur’ān 112:3). Of course, the latter verse appears in the speech of Imām ‘Alī (a) with a little change.

b) Negation of creation: in one of his sermons, Imām ‘Alī (a) says, It cannot be said that He came into being after He had not been in existence because in that case the attributes of the created things would be assigned to Him and there would remain no difference between them and Him. (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 181).

About God not to be created, noble Qur’ān says, “He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things” (Qur’ān 57:3). Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī, under this verse, writes,

Sublime God’s being First and the Last and also being the Evident and the Immanent is not in time and in place. It is not like that He is the first or the last in time receptacle, otherwise God Himself should not precede time and should be limited by being in time and in place. This is while He is away from these because He is the creator of time and place and encompasses all creatures. Rather, what is meant by God to be the first and the last and also the evident and the immanent is that He encompasses everything, in whatever form the thing is deemed. (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1996, vol. 19: 145)

a) Negation of dependence: about the independence of God from others, Imām ‘Alī (a) says that He has been self-existent from the pre-time and has always existed (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 86). In Qur’ān, the independence of God in many verses is mentioned with the attribute of “free of all wants” indicating the needlessness of God and His independence from the others (Qur’ān 2:263,267; 3:97; ...).

Proving the necessary being

After proving the universe to be an effect and its need of a cause and also knowing this point that the creatures of the world are possible beings or necessary beings, we say that if the creature is a necessary being, then our claim that the universe is not void of the necessary being would be proved. And if the creature is a possible being, then there should be a necessary being so that the possible being could be created. This is because the possible being supposedly does not necessitate its own existence or non-existence based on its own essence. So its being existent or non-existent depends upon a cause away from itself. It becomes existent with the existence of that cause and vanishes with its absence. Therefore, that cause will be investigated and these two assumptions will be applied to it because that cause is either a necessary being or a possible being. If it is a necessary being, then our claim will be proved. However, if it is a possible being, then it needs another cause and again another cause, finally reaching the necessary being. This is because if it does not reach the necessary being, then the chaining of infinite causes would be formed, whereas the chaining of the causes is impossible (Muṭahharī, 1982, vol. 2: 128-129). In his speeches, Imām ‘Alī (a) has expressed some statements which indicate that the chaining of causes ends up in God and there is nothing precedent to God, and the perfection and strength of every creature belongs to Him. He says, “He is such First that there is no extremity for Him so that He be contained within it” (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 90). Like the statement of Imām (a), Qur’ān reads, “He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things” (Qur’ān 57:3).

Phenomena like the creation of the skies and the earth, the creation of the human, growth of the plants, rainfall, and fire making are mentioned in many verses of noble Qur’ān to prove the necessary being. On one hand, the necessity of the existence of a cause for various effects is proved and, on the other hand, it is stipulated that God is the cause of all these phenomena. For instance, the verse 35 of chapter 52 stipulates the point that creatures cannot be without a cause, but rather a cause has made them. Qur’ān reads, “Were they created of nothing, or were they themselves the creators?” (Qur’ān 52:35). In some other verses this point is mentioned that the cause of all creatures is the sublime God, including the verses 63 and 64 of chapter 56 where Qur’ān reads, “See ye the seed that ye sow in the ground? *Is it ye that cause it to grow, or are We the Cause?” (Qur’ān 56:63&64). Namely, without doubt the skies, the earth, the human, trees, and so on are all created because they are always changing, and what changes cannot be a creator. Therefore, there comes the creator of the skies and the earth. Are they their own creator? Do they have no creator at all and are made automatically? Or are humans their creator? Since the answer to all these questions is negative, it becomes clear that they have a creator who is not created, but rather eternal and ever-lasting (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1995, vol. 3: 64-65).

Conclusion

The most ostensible result, after analyzing the monotheistic sermons of Nahj al-balāgha and their comparison with the verses of noble Qur’ān, is that Nahj al-balāgha is affected by noble Qur’ān in many aspects. The similarities between Qur’ān and Nahj al-balāgha are extremely obvious; however, they differ, not in a real sense, in instances:

- On innate disposition, it was said that natural divinity is mentioned in many verses including the verses of innate disposition, covenant, warning, oblivion, and prayer at the time of emergency. In addition to many sermons pointing to the divinity to be natural, Imām ‘Alī (a), in one of his sermons (first sermon), using statements from noble Qur’ān, mentions all the cases from Qur’ān which indicate the natural divinity.

- When pointing to the creation of animals like peacock, bat, locust, and so on, Imām ‘Alī (a) discusses the creation amazements of each of them broadly. Although various species of animals are mentioned in noble Qur’ān to prove monotheism, the amazements of each of them are not discussed elaborately.
- In some cases, the signs related to human are probed including the main matter of human creation. The first creation of the human from clay is pointed out in noble Qur’ān using words such as “clay,” “sounding clay,” and “dust”; however, about human creation, Imām ‘Alī (a) points to various kinds of clay. In fact, the words of Imām (A) can be deemed as an interpretation of the verses of Qur’ān. This is because the words of Imām (a), first, state that the human is created from clay and then, more explanation is provided about the clay where he says, “Allāh collected from hard, soft, sweet and sour earth, clay” (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993: sermon 1).

References

The noble Qur'ān

Nahj al-balāgha (1993), Beirut, Dār al-Hijra.

‘Abduh, M. (n.d.), Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha. Cairo, Maṭba‘a al-Istiḳāma.

Avicenna, Ḥ. (2007), Ishārāt wa tanbīhāt. Edited by Ḥ. Ḥasanzāda Āmulī, Qom, Maṭbu‘āt Dīnī.

Bahrānī, H. (1996), Al-Burhān fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān. Tehran, Bi‘that Foundation.

Dashṭī, M. (2000), Educational plans of Nahj al-balāgha. Qom, Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (a) Research Institute.

Fakhr Rāzī, M. (2000), Mafātīḥ al-ghayb. Beirut, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī.

Gharawiyān, M. (1998), A survey of the arguments for the existence of God. Qom, Islamic Preaching Office.

Ḥillī, J. (1987), Kashf al-murād fī sharḥ tajrīd al-i‘tiqād. Edited by Ḥ. Ḥasanzāda Āmulī, Qom, Mu‘assisa al-Nashr al-Islāmī.

Jawādī Āmulī, A. (2009), A commentary on the theistic arguments. Qom, Isrā’.

Id. (2007), Thematic exegesis of the Qur’ān: Tawhīd in the Qur’ān. Qom, Isrā’.

Jawharī, A. (1987.), Al-Ṣiḥāḥ (Tāj al-lughā wa ṣiḥāḥ al-‘Arabiyya). Edited by A. A. Al-‘Aṭār, Beirut, Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malā’īn.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, A. (1958), Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah. Qom, Āyatullāh Mar‘ashī Najafī Public Library.

Ibn Athīr, M. (1985), Al-Nihāyah fī gharīb al-Ḥadīth. Qom: Ismā‘īliyyān Institute.

Ibn Manzūr, M. (1994), Lisān al-‘Arab, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir.

Ibn Maytham Bahrānī, M. (1983), Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha. N.p., Al-Kitāb Publication Office.

Ibn Sa‘d, M. (n.d.), Al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā. Beirut, Maṭba‘a Dār Ṣādir.

Majlisī, M. B. (1983), Biḥār al-anwār. Beirut, Mu‘assisa al-Wafā’.

Makārim Shīrāzī, N. (1995), Tafsīr nimūna. Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya.

Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, M. T. (2004), Teaching beliefs. N.p., International Publication Company.

Id. (n.d.), Qur’ānic knowledge. Qom, Dar Rāh Ḥaqq Publications.

Muḥammad Riḍā’ī, M. (2003), “Teleological argument from the viewpoint of Imām ‘Alī (a).” Journal of Kalām Islāmī, no. 45, 56-74.

Muṣṭafawī, Ḥ. (1981), Al-Taḥqīq fī kalimāt al-Qur’ān al-Karīm. Tehran, Book Translation and Publication Center.

Muṭahharī, M. (2006), Principles of philosophy and method of realism. Tehran, Ṣadrā.

Id. (1982), Sharḥ Manzūma. Tehran, Ḥikmat.

Qurashī, A. A. (1992), Qāmūs Qur’ān. Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya.

Rāghib Iṣfahānī, Ḥ. (1992), Al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qur’ān. Beirut, Al-Dār al-‘Ilm.

Ṣaffār, M. (1984), Baṣā’ir al-darajāt. Edited by Ḥ. Khucha Bāghī, Tehran, A‘lamī.

Sa‘īdīmīhr, M. (2002), Islamic theology (vol. 1: theism). Qom, Sipih Publications.

Id. (2019), Theology (vol. 1). Tehran, SAMT.

Ṭabāṭabā’ī, M. Ḥ. (1996), Al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān. Qom, Office of Islamic Publications.

Id. (1997), Nahāya al-ḥikma. Edited by A. A. Zāri‘ī, Qom, Mu‘assisa al-Nashr al-Islāmī.

Ṭabrisī, F. (1993), Majma‘ al-bayān li-‘ulūm al-Qur’ān. Tehran, Nāṣir Khusru.

Ṭurayḥī, F. (1996), Majma‘ al-baḥrayn. Tehran, Murtaḍawī Bookstore.

Ṭūsī, A. (n.d.), Al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān. Beirut, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī.

Zamakhsharī, M. (1987), Al-Kashshāf ‘an ḥaqā’iq ghawāmiḥ al-tanzīl. Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabī.