



Original Research Article

The Nature of Revelation from the Perspective of Martyr Motahari and Richard Bell

Article History:

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Received: 12-05-2026

Revised: 25-05-2026

Accepted: 01-06-2026

Published: 08-06-2026

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Abstract: Revelation, in its essence, is a hidden declaration, a swift indication, or a sound devoid of composition, which is manifested through certain faculties. Although we are unaware of its exact nature, we only know the descriptions provided by the prophets regarding their own experiences. This study explores the perspectives of Richard Bell and Professor Motahari on revelation. Bell believes that the Prophet (PBUH) was truthful in his claim; however, he views the nature of revelation as the outcome of the Prophet's personal reflections on the spiritual poverty of the people of Mecca. In response to such doubts cast on the sacred realm of revelation and prophethood, Muslim scholars, particularly Professor Motahari, reject Bell's assumptions as unfounded. He considers revelation to be a divine communication received by prophets in an extraordinary manner beyond the norms and culture of their time due to their unique spiritual capacity. This divine revelation is incomparable to the Prophet's other statements. The Qur'anic revelation is not a result of genius, intuition, or religious experience; rather, it is a higher level of divine guidance, signifying God's direct speech with the Prophet, in which the Prophet's internal or external experiences play no role. Instead, he acts as a messenger and interpreter of the divine message. This study compares the nature of revelation and the description of revelatory knowledge from the viewpoints of these two thinkers using an analytical and descriptive approach, employing library research, Islamic software, and scholarly articles as sources.

Keywords: Nature, Revelation, Motahari, Richard Bell

INTRODUCTION

Revelation (Wahy) carries meanings such as indication, writing, message, communication, haste, confidential speech, secret declaration, and words or writings intended for others. The common essence among all these definitions is the rapid and concealed transmission of information to the recipient in a manner hidden from others. In all Qur'anic applications of the term, revelation fundamentally signifies hidden guidance, with two essential characteristics: swiftness in communication and secrecy. Linguistically, there is no requirement

regarding the identity of the sender of revelation; it may be God, an angel, a human, or even a jinn. Similarly, the recipient of revelation is not restricted to a specific being. However, in Islamic terminology, when revelation is attributed to God, it is specifically associated with prophets, a topic that will be explored in later discussions.

This research aims to compare the perspectives of Richard Bell, a Western scholar of the Qur'an, and Martyr Motahari, an Eastern Islamic thinker and Qur'anic scholar. Richard Bell considers the Qur'an

to be a product of the Prophet Muhammad's personal experiences and thoughts, influenced by the spiritual poverty of the people of Mecca. He interprets revelation as a form of mystical discovery (*kashf* and *shuhūd*), arguing that revelation was shaped by the cultural context of the time and that the words of the Qur'an were the Prophet's own speech. Furthermore, Bell suggests that the Prophet was not infallible in receiving and conveying revelation.

On the other hand, Martyr Motahari, a distinguished Islamic thinker, asserts that revelation is externally initiated and that the Prophet himself acknowledged that revelation was transmitted to him from an external teacher. However, he defines revelation as a divine connection received by prophets through their unique spiritual capacity in an extraordinary manner—beyond sensory perception. He regards revelation as direct divine communication, positioning the Prophet as its recipient, messenger, and implementer of divine laws within society, rather than someone influenced by the traditions and customs of his time. Historically, the teachings of the prophets often clashed with societal norms and traditions, and in many cases, their call to monotheism opposed the prevalent polytheistic practices, hindering the advancement of their mission. The prophets actively resisted the dominant superstitious and ignorant ideologies of their societies, introducing fresh, alternative beliefs to replace them.

Conceptual Analysis

1. Scientific Definition of Essence (Mahiyyah)

Linguistically, the term *mahiyyah* (essence) means "whatness" and is derived from *mā huwa* (what it is). Originally, it stemmed from *mā'iyah*, but the glottal stop (*hamza*) was replaced with "h" to avoid confusion with other derivatives of *mā* (Jurjani, 1370: 85). In technical terms, essence refers to that which answers the question concerning the reality of anything, just as quantity is what answers questions regarding the amount or measurement of something (Khatami, 1370: 199).

Therefore, essence is a general concept with a universal meaning, as it defines the nature and reality of everything, independent of specific attributes. Sometimes, essence is explained using the phrase *mā bihi al-shay' huwa huwa*—meaning "that by which a thing is what it is." This definition also encompasses existence, as existence is that upon which the reality of everything depends. Without existence, no reality can be conceived (Sajjadi, 1375: 650).

2. Definition of Revelation (Wahy)

2.1. Etymology of Revelation

The word *wahy* (Revelation), equivalent to *Revelation* or *Inspiration* in English (Tahanawi, 1996: 2/1776), has multiple meanings in linguistic usage, including indication, writing, message, confidential speech,

secret declaration, and communication conveyed through words or writing (Ibn Manzur, 382: 15/379). The common denominator among all these meanings is the rapid and concealed transmission of information to the recipient in a manner hidden from others. In all Qur'anic applications of the term, *wahy* fundamentally signifies hidden guidance.

Lexicographers have also used these meanings for revelation, where two essential characteristics are recognized: the speed of communication and its secrecy. In its linguistic sense, *wahy* does not necessitate a specific sender; it can be God, an angel, a human, or even a jinn. Similarly, there is no restriction on the recipient of revelation. However, in Islamic tradition, when revelation is attributed to God, it is exclusively associated with prophets—a subject that will be explored in later discussions (Dagheem, 1998, Vol. 2, p. 1454).

2-2. Technical Definition of Revelation (Wahy)

All true prophets claimed to have a direct connection with Almighty God, perceiving realities beyond the grasp of ordinary people. They would witness the angel of revelation with their inner vision and hear divine messages. Their mission was to convey God's messages and guidance to humanity and strive to lead people towards righteousness. This unique and mysterious communication is termed *wahy* in scholarly terminology.

Numerous definitions have been provided for *wahy*, though most are merely nominal descriptions of the term rather than precise explanations, as revelation is not an ordinary form of communication that can be comprehended and defined by everyone. A more profound definition states:

"Revelation is a unique awareness and perception within the inner self of prophets, inaccessible to ordinary individuals unless they are recipients of divine favor." (Tabatabai, 1338: 2/159)

From various usages of the term, it is understood that *wahy* refers to any confidential, concealed, and hidden communication (Motahhari, 1376: 4/338).

Brief Introduction to Allama Murtaza Motahhari

Martyr Ayatollah Murtaza Motahhari was born on the 13th of Bahman, 1338 AH (approximately 1919 AD) in the village of Fariman, 75 km from the holy city of Mashhad, Iran. Coming from a noble religious family, he attended a traditional school (*maktab-khaneh*) for his early education. At the age of twelve, he entered the seminary of Mashhad to study the foundational sciences of Islam.

In 1316 SH (circa 1937 AD), he moved to the Qom Seminary to further his studies. During his fifteen-year stay in Qom, he studied:

- **Jurisprudence and principles of Islamic law** (*fiqh wa uşūl*) under Grand Ayatollah Boroujerdi,
- **Philosophy, mysticism, ethics, and principles** under Imam Khomeini for twelve years,
- **Islamic philosophy** (*Ilāhiyyāt al-Shifā* of Avicenna and other works) under Allama Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai.

One of Motahari's most significant contributions during his lifetime was presenting an authentic Islamic ideology through lectures, speeches, and writing books (A Group of Writers, 1386: 453).

A Brief Introduction to Richard Bell

Richard Bell, a Scottish scholar, studied arts and literature at the University of Edinburgh. In 1921, he began teaching at the same university as an instructor and later became an associate professor. He was eventually appointed as the chair of Arabic and Hebrew at the university and retired in 1947. Initially, Bell was interested in researching Arabic (Islamic) mathematics and studying the university's manuscripts. However, he later shifted his focus to the study of the Qur'an, translating it into English, and frequently traveled to Arab countries.

Among Richard Bell's written works are *The Translation of the Holy Qur'an*, *An Introduction to the Qur'an*, *The Style of the Qur'an*, *Ambiguous Passages in the Qur'an*, *The People of A'raf*, *Surah Al-Hashr*, *Prophet Muhammad*, *Divorce in the Qur'an*, and *The Structure of the Qur'an*. His articles include *Hadith among Muslims*, *Wa Adhdhin fi al-Nas bi al-Hajj*, and *Muhammad's Knowledge of the Old Testament*.

Bell initially presented the results of his Qur'anic research in a series of seven lectures titled *The Origins of Islam in Its Christian Environment*. Between 1937 and 1939, he published the findings in two volumes, translating them into fluent English with explanatory notes. He attempted to critically analyze and rearrange the order of the Qur'anic verses but was unable to fully present his views. As a result, he wrote another book, *An Introduction to the Qur'an*, in 1953. Montgomery Watt republished it in 1970, and later, Baha' al-Din Khorramshahi translated it into Persian in 2003, publishing it under the auspices of the Organization of Endowments and Charitable Affairs as *An Introduction to the History of the Qur'an*.

Bell is believed to have approached the Qur'an similarly to Theodor Nöldeke, viewing it primarily as a historical text comparable to *Al-Mu'allaqat* or *Shahnameh*, while overlooking its divine and sacred aspects—except when he had no choice but to discuss revelation and its nature.

The main sources Richard Bell used for his works generally fell into three categories:

1. Works of earlier Orientalists, such as Arthur Jeffery and Gustav Flügel.

2. Ancient Jewish and Christian texts, including the Torah and the Bible.
3. Islamic sources, such as *Anwar al-Tanzil*, *Tafsir al-Kashaf*, *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, and *Tafsir al-Kabir*. (*Andishe-ye Nowin-e Dini Quarterly*, Vol. 16, Winter 2020, Issue 63)

The Nature of Revelation from the Perspective of Martyr Morteza Motahari

The principle of general guidance throughout existence is an essential component of the Islamic worldview. Therefore, the principle of prophethood (the communication of revelation) is a necessity within this worldview. Almighty God, by virtue of being necessarily existent in and of Himself, is also necessarily existent in all aspects and absolutely beneficent. He bestows His grace upon every type of being to the extent that is possible and fitting for them, guiding all creatures toward their path of perfection.

This is why the Qur'an uses the term *wahy* (revelation) not only in reference to human guidance but also, in its literal sense, concerning the guidance of inanimate objects, plants, and animals. Nothing in this world remains static and unchanging; everything continuously moves forward, transitioning from one state to another toward a designated purpose. Moreover, all signs indicate that there exists a kind of "inclination" and "attraction" within each being, drawing them toward their intended destination. This mysterious force within them is what is referred to as *divine guidance* (Motahari, 1389: 47).

The term *wahy* is frequently used in the Holy Qur'an. The way this word is used and the various contexts in which it appears indicate that the Qur'an does not limit revelation to human beings but considers it to be present in all things, or at the very least, in living beings. For instance, the Qur'an refers to divine revelation in relation to bees. However, the degrees of revelation and guidance differ according to the level of evolution in beings. The highest degree of revelation is that which is granted to the prophets. This revelation is based on the necessity of divine guidance for humanity—guidance that leads mankind toward a purpose beyond the realm of sensory perception and material existence, which is an inevitable passage for human beings. Additionally, humans need divine guidance in their social lives, requiring laws that are guaranteed by divine authority (Motahari, 1376: 2/156).

Although the phenomenon of revelation lies beyond the domain of human senses and experience, like many other forces, it can be recognized through its effects. It stirs and activates the inner faculties of the recipient, causing a profound transformation within them. This transformation always aligns with the path of righteousness, growth, and the well-being of humanity, leading to pragmatic and realistic actions.

Revelation instills in its recipient an unparalleled decisiveness. History has never witnessed a level of determination comparable to that of the prophets and those who have been awakened through them.

The distinction between prophets and ordinary people lies solely in the matter of revelation and its prerequisites. Revelation does not remove prophets from the realm of humanity; rather, it makes them the epitome of a perfect human being and a model for others to follow. This is why they are sent as leaders and guides for mankind. From a collective perspective, revelation serves as guidance for humanity as a whole. Human society, as a unified entity, follows a specific path and set of laws for movement and progress, necessitating divine guidance. The prophet is like a natural receiver that instinctively perceives and conveys what is essential for humanity (Motahari, 1397, Vol. 5, p. 290).

The Nature of Revelation from Richard Bell's Perspective

Montgomery Watt, a student of Richard Bell, while rejecting the extreme views of Orientalists, also critiques and revises some of his teacher's discussions and theories regarding revelation. Upon examining the topics related to revelation, it becomes evident that Bell's theories in this regard do not significantly differ from those of other Orientalists.

Bell believes that the Prophet (PBUH) was sincere in his claim; however, he considers the nature of revelation, from an existential perspective, to be a secret message and a form of mystical intuition. He regards the Prophet's revelation as the result of his personal reflections on the spiritual poverty of the people of Mecca, which, according to Bell, arose as a consequence of their economic growth (Bell, 13:12).

From Bell's perspective, the Prophet's revelation is of a mystical and intuitive nature, and the Qur'an does not have a spoken or verbal nature. Sometimes, revelation consists of specific instructions or practices that the Prophet was obligated to follow (practical revelation), while at other times, it involved the communication of profound meanings to him—not in verbal form but through rapid inspiration and spiritual intuition, which the Prophet then clothed in words. Therefore, Bell argues that the nature of revelation was more auditory than visual, and the words revealed to the Prophet were not the exact words of the divine message (Qanbarpour, 1399: No. 63/32).

Bell's views on the nature of revelation are influenced by Christian theology. His intellectual background is rooted in the works of previous Orientalists such as Arthur Jeffery and Gustav Flügel, as well as in ancient Jewish and Christian texts, including the altered versions of the Torah and the Gospel, alongside Islamic sources such as *Anwar al-Tanzil*, *Tafsir al-*

Kashaf, *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, and *Tafsir al-Kabir*. According to Bell, revelation is not necessarily identical to the exact words of God. His perspective suffers from serious shortcomings in its assumptions and significant weaknesses in the literary analysis of the Qur'anic text.

Based on the aforementioned points, Richard Bell's views on the nature of revelation can be critiqued on the following three grounds:

1. The mystical and intuitive nature of revelation.
2. The influence of societal norms and culture on revelation.
3. The non-verbal nature of the Qur'anic words (Bell, 1382: 48).

The Mystical Nature of Revelation

Richard Bell argues that Quranic revelation has a mystical nature and constitutes the Prophet's religious experience. To support this claim, he provides reasons, including the Prophet's initial uncertainty about the sender of revelation at the beginning of his mission. Bell's perspective on the nature of revelation is influenced by Christian theology, which does not necessarily consider revelation to be the direct speech of God. He believes that while the core message originates from God, its form is not divine; rather, its words and expressions are shaped by human factors (Neckmischel, 1381: 27).

Critique and Evaluation of This View

Quranic revelation is fundamentally the speech of God to the Prophet, and the Prophet's internal or external experiences play no role in it. He is merely a transmitter and conveyor of the divine message.

1. **Revelation is not a product of genius, mystical intuition, or religious experience.** Genius refers to an extraordinary intellectual ability through which a person perceives truths without following conventional scientific methods. However, the kind of truths attained through genius are accessible to human reason and emerge through new perspectives on understanding. People with genius have strong intuition and quickly grasp what others struggle to comprehend. However, revelation is different. Prophets, in addition to possessing strong perception, have other divine capabilities that enable them to attain truths beyond human reach (Motahari, 1402: 75).
2. **Mystical intuition is often acquired through self-discipline and ascetic practices.** When a person withdraws attention from the external world and turns inward, undergoing spiritual struggles, they may attain certain truths inaccessible to others. In such a state, knowledge is not received externally but rather drawn from within (Qanbarpour, 1399: 63).
3. **There is a significant difference between revelation and religious experience.** Revelation

is a divine act that reaches a perfect human, whereas religious experience is accessible to all. Sometimes religious experiences arise due to personal beliefs and do not necessarily reflect external realities. In contrast, revelation conveys objective truths. The certainty derived from revelation is logical, whereas the certainty from religious experience is psychological and personal. Revelation is infallible and cannot be erroneous, while religious experiences can be mistaken, or at least their interpretations can be flawed (Khosrowpanah, 129).

- 4.
5. **In the phenomenon of revelation, prophets are merely recipients of the message.** They encounter an external entity that speaks to them and teaches them objective realities. This prevents revelation from being mixed with human-made ideas and ensures its divine authenticity. The Quran explicitly states that the Prophet is only a conveyer of revelation. The phrase "Say" (قل) appears 290 times in the Quran, emphasizing that the Prophet (PBUH) is merely transmitting divine words. Even though the Prophet was infallible regarding forgetfulness, he would immediately deliver the revelation as it was received (Subhani, 1382: 2/337).
6. **God reassures the Prophet about the accuracy and delivery of revelation.** The Quran states: *"Do not hasten with the Quran before its revelation is completed to you, and say: 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge.'"* (Taha, 114) This confirms that the divine revelation, with its exact words and meanings, was preserved and transmitted without alteration.
7. **The Quran affirms that what the Prophet conveys is the exact revelation.** It explicitly warns: *"Had he fabricated some statements about Us, We would have seized him by the right hand and cut off his aorta, and none of you could have prevented it."* (Al-Haqqah, 48)

Thus, prophets were often individuals without scholarly recognition and, at times, even illiterate, ensuring that their message was not mistaken for their own intellectual or mystical insights. This serves as evidence that revelation is not a product of personal discovery or mystical experience but a divine transmission from God.

The Influence of Revelation by the Culture of the Time

According to Richard Bell, part of the revelation is influenced by the personal thoughts of the Prophet regarding the moral, spiritual issues, and the social conditions of the people of Mecca. With the descent of the Qur'an, the Prophet sought to reform them. The reality is that the teachings and commands given by the Prophet as revelation were compatible and

consistent with the customs and culture of the time (Bell, 2003: 36).

The main flaw in Richard Bell's view is that he confuses the process of social reform with the prophetic mission and attempts to mix part of the revelation with the personal beliefs and convictions of the Prophet during the time of revelation.

Critique and Analysis of this View:

Firstly: All prophets, especially our Prophet, have resisted and fought against the prevalent superstitions and erroneous ideas in their societies. Establishing justice and fairness has been one of the fundamental purposes behind the sending of prophets. According to the Qur'an, the Prophet's audience was not limited to a specific region but included all people, generations, and eras. Associating the Qur'an with the social culture of Mecca or any other place leads to the idea of God being passive, which contradicts the divine essence that is free from any passivity. The audience of the Qur'an encompasses all people across all times and generations, and the universality of the Prophet's mission is not confined to exclusivity.

Secondly: The Qur'an contains many terms that reflect its universal message and the mission of Muhammad (PBUH), such as the verse "It is nothing but a reminder for the worlds" (Al-An'am: 90) and the verse "Blessed is He who sent down the Furqan upon His servant, to be a warning to the worlds" (Al-Furqan: 1), along with expressions such as "children of Adam," "the worlds," "people," and "the people of the Book." These all point to the universality and global nature of the revelation and the Prophet's mission. The position and sanctity of the Qur'an transcend the limitations of ethnic, linguistic, historical, and geographical disputes.

Thirdly: It is remarkable that the beauty of the Qur'an transcends time and place. Many beautiful words are specific to a particular era and may not resonate with the tastes of another era or, at least, with the aesthetic preferences of a specific nation with its own culture. However, the beauty of the Qur'an recognizes no time, race, or specific culture. All people who have become familiar with the language of the Qur'an find it suitable to their taste. As time passes and more nations become acquainted with the Qur'an, they are increasingly captivated by its beauty (Motahari, 1997: 2/214).

Fourthly: The secret of the success of the prophets in the social sphere lies in their reliance on the divine source of revelation and their reception of societal interests based on revelation. The Prophet (PBUH) delivered the revelation precisely as it was revealed to him, without any alteration. God assures in the Qur'an that what was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the exact revelation, delivered to the people without any addition or

omission. The following verse refers to this: "Say, 'I only follow what is revealed to me. I fear the punishment of a great day if I disobey my Lord.'" (Yunus: 15).

In another verse, it reminds us that all the messages of the prophets are truthful, and if any prophet were to fabricate false messages about God, he would be immediately punished, as it says: "And if he had fabricated some of the sayings about Us, We would have certainly seized him by the right hand and then We would have certainly cut off his life artery." (Al-Haqqah: 44-46).

Careful examination of the sacred scriptures and the Qur'an proves that revelation has a broader meaning and refers to the messages that are heard and written, which are given to the prophets under specific conditions. The possibility of any alteration by the prophet's mind is incompatible with their infallibility. This infallibility, agreed upon by all Muslims, is crucial in receiving, preserving, and delivering the message. The Qur'an emphasizes the infallibility of the prophets in this context, as it states: "He is the Knower of the unseen, and He does not disclose His unseen to anyone except whom He has chosen of Messengers. Then He appoints guards before and behind him" (Al-Jinn: 26-27). This verse shows that to protect the revelation from any alteration, God appoints angels to safeguard the divine message from the stage of reception to its delivery (Sobhani, 2003: 2/339).

Religious Pluralism seeks to explore and comment on the messengers and their messages in the realms of belief and practice, without engaging in dialogue with them or listening to their words. It presents the source of religion as "the witnessing of absolute truth," and considers their messages as different interpretations of a singular, ultimate, and mysterious divine truth. However, it never attempts to discuss this with the messengers themselves, nor does it attend to their words. This is not purely a philosophical issue that can be debated behind closed doors, without consulting the words of the messengers and their protectors. Rather, one must carefully listen to their words and then pass judgment. What Richard Double and his contemporaries argue in their assessments are mere speculations, lacking historical evidence or religious testimony. Today, guesswork, or even daydreaming, has replaced proof, reasoning, and scientific experience, so that the vast movement of the prophets and their sacred texts are interpreted without the slightest evidence as religious experiences (witnessing of the absolute) and their teachings as different understandings of this truth (Neyrizi, 2007: 455).

The Non-Verbal Nature of the Qur'an

Richard Bell does not consider revelation to be verbal. He believes that the concepts conveyed to the Prophet

in the form of a message were expressed by him in his own words. He supports this view with evidence, suggesting that even if the Prophet were the direct recipient of revelation, the Qur'anic text was not revealed in verbal form but rather as specific actions or instructions the Prophet was obligated to follow. He argues that meanings are revealed by God, and the Prophet presents those meanings in his own chosen words (Bell, 2003: 49-50).

Critique of this Viewpoint

Firstly: The issuance of the words and phrases of the Qur'an from Almighty God is an agreed-upon matter among Muslims. The specific meanings within the specific words are what the Qur'an refers to, and the words and phrases of the Qur'an are considered real and ontological matters, although their indications of specific meanings are conventionally and contractually determined (Khosropanah, 2002: 156).

Secondly: If the words and sentence structures of the Qur'an were fabricated by the Prophet's mind, how could they be regarded as miraculous? One might argue that even though the words come from the Prophet, they are formed in such a way that no one can replicate them. Indeed, the ability to imitate them is one of the features and miracles of the Qur'an, not the speech of human beings (Amini, 2008: 71).

Thirdly: The truths in the Qur'an, including its words and phrases, were revealed by God and stem from a source that is infallible, namely divine knowledge. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is also infallible in his reception, preservation, and delivery of the revelation, free from error, forgetfulness, and mistakes.

Fourthly: The style and manner of the Qur'an have no predecessor or successor. That is, no one has spoken in this style before, and no one will be able to compete with the Qur'an's miraculous nature forever, as the Qur'an states: "Say, 'If mankind and jinn gathered to bring the like of this Qur'an, they could not bring the like of it, even if they helped one another.'" (Al-Isra: 88) (Mottahari, 1997: 2/216).

Fifthly: The difference in style, tone, and composition between the Qur'an and the Prophet's speeches implies that the Qur'an and the Prophet's thoughts originate from two separate sources. So, what explanation could there be for this noticeable difference other than that the words of revelation are God's words, not the Prophet's speech? Those who equate the speech of God with that of the Prophet have failed to explain this obvious difference (Sadeghi, 2017: 248).

Sixthly: The Prophet cannot be the author of the Qur'an, as God explicitly states that if the Prophet were to fabricate lies about Him, he would be

immediately punished, as He says: "And if he had fabricated against Us some of the sayings, We would have seized him by the right hand. Then We would have certainly cut from him the aorta" (Al-Haqqah: 44-46). If the messages of the Prophet were fabricated by his mind and had no connection to the divine, there would be no possibility of lies in his messages, and thus God would not have warned him in this manner. How could the Prophet engage in such a dangerous act? A closer examination of divine books and the Qur'an confirms that revelation has a broader meaning, referring to the messages (heard or written) given to the prophets under specific circumstances (Subhani, 2003: 2/338).

Additionally, the possibility of the prophets altering the Qur'an's words contradicts their infallibility. The infallibility of the Prophet is universally accepted in Islam, especially regarding receiving, preserving, and delivering the divine message (Ali Rad, 2009: 72).

From Surah Al-Fatiha to Surah An-Nas, all the words are only the words of God. Neither Gabriel nor Muhammad (PBUH) were involved in the creation or arrangement of the words. It is God who arranged and expressed the Qur'an's words according to their intrinsic nature, just as we organize our verbal speech according to our inner expression. In any case, speech is attributed to the one who first organizes it within themselves and speaks it accordingly. Therefore, it is inappropriate to attribute the revelation to Gabriel or the Prophet Muhammad; rather, their task is to narrate and convey the words (Amini, 2008: 72).

Thus, when comparing the revelation with the Prophet's other words, a significant difference is felt. Remarkably, even though the Prophet recited the Qur'an, his own words are entirely distinct from it. Numerous speeches, prayers, sayings, and hadiths of the Prophet, full of eloquence, remain, yet they never resemble the Qur'an in tone or structure (Mottahari, 1994: 3/332).

The Prophet's Innocence in the Perception of Revelation

Richard Double believes that the Prophet made mistakes in conveying the revelation. He argues that the question arises as to why Gabriel is only mentioned twice in the Qur'an, and only in the Medinan Surahs. According to him, verse 97 of Surah Al-Baqarah ("Say, 'Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel – it is he who has brought it down upon your heart by God's permission, confirming that which came before it and as guidance and good tidings for the believers.'") does not refer to the physical vision of Gabriel by the Prophet, and it contradicts the beginning verses of Surah Al-Najm, which speak about the Prophet's mystical experiences with God. The term "servant" in this verse refers to God's connection with His servant. Initially, the Muslims believed that the Prophet had

seen God, but later, it became clear that it was a mystical experience involving Gabriel. In this context, he mentions the story of Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh: when the Prophet dictated the first verse of Surah Al-Mu'minin to Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh, after the phrase "Then We created another creation," he paused for a moment. At this point, Ibn Abi Sarh, without thinking, exclaimed, "Blessed be Allah, the best of creators." The Prophet accepted this sentence immediately as part of the revelation and ordered it to be included in the Qur'an.

Critique of This View

From the perspective of Muslim scholars, especially Martyr Muttahari, all Prophets are infallible in perceiving, preserving, and conveying the revelation, and the possibility of error in the minds of the Prophets is incompatible with their infallibility. The Prophet would never allow himself to alter the Qur'an, and the Qur'an itself assures everyone of this: "And if he had invented against Us some false sayings, We would have certainly seized him by the right hand. Then We would have certainly cut his life-source. And none of you would have been able to prevent [Us] from him." (Al-Haaqqa, 69:44). There is unanimous agreement among all Muslims about the infallibility in receiving, preserving, and conveying the revelation.

Regarding Double's view on the Prophet's non-infallibility in the perception of revelation and the mention of Gabriel in the Qur'an, the following reasons demonstrate that his view is not correct:

1. Although the name of Gabriel is explicitly mentioned three times in the Qur'an in verses 97 and 98 of Surah Al-Baqarah and Surah Al-Tahreem, as well as in the Medinan surahs, according to numerous authentic Shiite and Sunni traditions, Gabriel was the first to bring the Qur'anic verses to the Prophet in the cave of Hira. His continuous relationship with the Prophet since the beginning of his mission reflects his high status in delivering the revelation.
2. In the Qur'an, the name of Gabriel is mentioned in various forms, such as "the trustworthy spirit" in verse 193 of Surah Ash-Shu'ara, "the noble messenger" in verses 4 of Surah Al-Haaqqa and 19 of Surah At-Takwir, "strong in power" in verse 5 of Surah Al-Najm, "powerful" in verse 20 of Surah At-Takwir, "obedient" in verse 21 of Surah At-Takwir, and "the holy spirit" in verses 97 of Surah Al-Baqarah and 102 of Surah An-Nahl. All of these terms refer to Gabriel and demonstrate his continuous relationship with the Prophet.
3. There is a difference of opinion among the commentators regarding the meaning of "strong in power" in verse 5 of Surah Al-Najm; some interpret it as referring to God, while others believe it refers to Gabriel. As Allama Tabatabai states in his interpretation of Surah At-Takwir, the fact that the "speech" is attributed to Gabriel

as a messenger indicates that the speech belongs to God, and Gabriel is only the messenger who delivers it. In this context, Gabriel is described with six qualities.

- First, the term "messenger" indicates that Gabriel conveys the Qur'an to the Messenger of God (PBUH) (At-Takwir: 19).
- Second, the term "noble" signifies that Gabriel has honor and respect in the sight of Almighty God, and due to His exaltation, he has become revered (Al-Haaqqa: 4).
- Third, the term "powerful" implies that Gabriel has immense strength and power in delivering the revelation (At-Takwir: 20).
- Fourth, the term "possessor of the throne" refers to the fact that Gabriel holds a high rank and status with God (At-Takwir: 20).
- Fifth, the phrase "obedient" in the verse indicates that Gabriel, in the presence of God, is a commander whose orders are obeyed by those beneath him (At-Takwir: 21).
- Sixth, the term "trustworthy" means that Gabriel is trustworthy in the commands given by God, in delivering the revelation, and in his message, being free from deceit and alteration. Therefore, Gabriel (PBUH) played a significant role in conveying God's revelation to humankind (At-Takwir: 21).

From the perspective of historical evidence, Richard Bell's view on the story of Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh is unfounded. This is because verses 12 and 13 of Surah Al-Mu'minun are Meccan verses, and they do not align with the story of Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh, who was the scribe of the Prophet (PBUH) in Medina. Furthermore, the content of verse 92 of Surah Al-An'am ("And who is more unjust than one who invents a lie against God, or says, 'It has been revealed to me,' while nothing has been revealed to him?") does not apply to the situation of Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh, since the Prophet (PBUH) took a strong stance against him and declared his blood to be lawful to shed. Even if this story were true, it would not affect the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, because there is no objection to the possibility that such a phrase might occur in someone's heart by chance. However, ibn Abi Sarh made this error because of his jealousy toward the Prophet's (PBUH) mission and his inner disbelief, as he harbored hatred towards the position of the Prophethood (Qanbarpour, 1399: 63/42).

Thus, based on the arguments presented, the Prophet (PBUH) was divinely protected from all sins and errors, especially in regard to altering the eternal words of God. He was safeguarded in his life and in the transmission and interpretation of the revelation, and he conveyed the sacred message of God in the best possible manner.

CONCLUSION

From the collection of scholarly investigations conducted in this study, it has been concluded that revelation is essentially a hidden announcement or a quick indication, often conveyed in a symbolic manner or as a sound that is pure of composition, received through certain senses or writing. We are unaware of the details of its nature, and the choice of revelation lies solely with God. We only know the descriptions of it that the prophets have shared about their experiences. Richard Bell, a Western scholar, interprets revelation as a message similar to other heavenly scriptures, expressed in words and phrases of the Prophet, considering it a religious experience. He also views revelation as being influenced by the social conditions of the people of Mecca, but according to martyr Motahhari's perspective, Bell's views are rejected for several reasons.

1. **Martyr Motahhari's View:** Motahhari considers revelation to be a divine communication received by the prophets through extraordinary means, due to their special capacity. This revelation, in terms of agency, is an external matter, and the Prophet himself indicates that the revelation comes to him from an external teacher. Richard Bell, however, attempts to reduce revelation to personal reflections of the Prophet, a means of solving economic issues in Mecca, interpreting it as a form of mystical intuition and religious experience.
2. **Martyr Motahhari's Argument Against Richard Bell's Views:** Motahhari argues that the teachings and instructions that the prophets convey as revelation to the people are entirely beyond the norms and culture of their time. Prophets rejected the prevalent foolish and superstitious thoughts of society, confronting them with new revelations. Essentially, Motahhari seeks to discredit Richard Bell's theory that blends parts of the revelation with the Prophet's personal beliefs and ideas during the era of revelation.
3. **Comparison of Revelation with Other Words of the Prophet:** Motahhari does not consider revelation to be comparable to other words of the Prophet, whereas the Qur'an, although expressed by the Prophet, is entirely distinct. Richard Bell, however, does not view revelation as literal. He argues that the concepts conveyed to the Prophet were inspired by God, but the words were the Prophet's own, fabricated by him.

Motahhari's View on the Nature of Qur'anic Revelation: Motahhari does not regard Qur'anic revelation as a form of genius, mystical intuition, or religious experience, but rather as an extraordinary mental ability through which a person gains insight into truths without the need for conventional scientific processes. In contrast, Richard Bell describes the

nature of Qur'anic revelation as a form of mystical revelation, asserting that the Prophet initially made mistakes about the sender of the revelation.

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