

The Quran's real status restored by the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement

Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 2 October 2020

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَاشْتَرَوْا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۖ فَبِئْسَ مَا يَشْتَرُونَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

“And when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Book: You shall explain it to people and shall not hide it. But they threw it behind their backs and took a small price for it. And evil is what they buy.” — ch. 3, v. 187

It is stated here that a promise was taken by God from the nations to whom He sent His revelation, which was: “You shall explain it to people and shall not hide it.” The word for “explain” is based on the word *bayān*. It doesn't say you shall “read it” or “recite it” to people, but *explain* it to them. So its meaning must be conveyed to them.

“Those who were given the Book” are not only the followers of earlier religions who were given the book *before* the Quran and required to explain their book to the people, but include also those who have been given the Quran, i.e., the Muslims. Thus from Muslims also a promise was taken by Allah about the Quran, that they would “explain it to people”. The taking of “a small price for it” means “not to value it”.

Gradually, over the centuries, Muslims became greatly neglectful of this duty. To learn about the Quran, they did not turn to the Quran but to its commentaries that had been written in the earlier history of Islam. It was believed that these contained all the knowledge that could be obtained from the Quran. To learn about Islam and the practical duties of a Muslim, they turned to the books of Islamic law or books of *Fiqh* written a century or two after the beginning of Islam by Muslim scholars of the time. These books reigned supreme for a long time but later on, in the 1800s, some Muslims began to prefer following books of Hadith (saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad) rather than the decrees of the books of *Fiqh*. But still, hardly anyone thought of seeking guidance directly from the Quran.

The Quran itself was revered and kept in homes in decorative covers, placed for respect on high shelves. It was recited in Arabic for its blessings, especially on special occasions of happiness, or at times of mourning to send blessings on the deceased.

It was considered unnecessary to translate it into other languages for the benefit of the large numbers of non-Arab Muslims or to bring its message to non-Muslims. In fact, it was deemed unlawful to translate the Quran. Till the beginning of the 1900s (i.e., the 20th century), the only English translations of the Quran were by Christians and these translators, as they themselves declared, wanted to show that the Quran was just an imperfect and faulty copy of the Jewish and Christian scriptures. If you were a Muslim who had received modern, Western-style education in his own country, such as India, in a college or university, and wanted to read the Quran in English, you could only turn to these misleading translations.

Such was the situation when Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad appeared as a *mujaddid* of the Muslims. In performance of his mission he wrote in a book, published in 1891: “I have been asked what should be done to spread the teachings of Islam in America and Europe ... It is undoubtedly true that Europe and America have a large collection of objections against Islam. ... If my people help me heart and soul, I wish to prepare a commentary of the Quran which should be sent to them after it has been rendered into the English language. I cannot refrain from stating clearly that this is my work, and that definitely no one else can do it as I can, or as he can who is an offshoot of mine and thus is included in me.” (*Izala Auham*, p. 771–773)

His statement here that “this is my work, and that definitely no one else can do it as I can, or as he can who is an offshoot of mine and thus is included in me” was not an empty boast and it did not remain merely a claim. It was proved by actual events. I can’t go into those details in this *khutba*, but will deal with them in future.

In these words, “if my people help me heart and soul”, he appealed to the Muslim community to join in helping him with their resources to do this work. He writes in the same section of this book that in this age so many doubts about religious truths

have been created in people's hearts, and there is such a great flood of objections against Islam, that this crisis is unprecedented in history. No danger on this scale ever arose in the past history of Islam. But then he mentions the great hope that exists. Allah had reserved *for our times* the great work of answering these objections and showing the truth of Islam *by means of the Quran*. The all-wise God had kept away from human view certain arguments and proofs that are contained in the Quran because these weren't required in previous ages. He writes:

“... the knowledge and the truths contained in the Quran are unlimited, and are disclosed in every age according to the needs of that age. ... The wonders of the Holy Quran can never come to an end, just as the wonders of nature did not come to an end in some previous age, but ever newer ones are constantly appearing. ... In this age, these needs arose to the full. Humans made great advances in such knowledge as makes them oppose Islam. There is no doubt that, if at this critical time, the knowledge concealed in the Quran does not become manifest, the present-day *Ulama* by their adherence to simplistic and superficial religious teachings, can never face the opponents.”

His mission was to bring that light out from the Quran and give it to the world. He adds:

“So God Almighty has sent a man into the world with this light. Who is he? He is the one who is addressing you. In this critical time, a man has been raised up by God and he desires to show the beautiful face of Islam to the whole world and open its ways to Western countries. But the people have withheld their hands from helping him and because of their suspicion of him and their worship of the material world they have cut off connection with him and are sitting unresponsive.”

The weapons for the work of the defence and the propagation of Islam, whose dire need he is stressing, is the knowledge that is contained in the Quran. Therefore, his mission was to restore the Quran to the proper place which it should occupy in the

thinking and the lives of the Muslims. This was a time when, for centuries, the Quran had become a closed book to the Muslims. As a result of this neglect they were facing the worst internal and external crisis of their whole history. The great moral qualities taught by the Quran were unknown to them, or if they knew them there was no urge in their hearts to acquire them. What was uppermost in the minds of most Muslims was that they should look *in appearance* like Muslims and that they comply with, and participate in, the various social customs and practices prevailing in Muslim society regardless of whether these practices conflict with the Quran and the Holy Prophet's practice or not. This was the internal crisis. The external crisis was that they were unconcerned with answering the attacks upon the teachings of Islam, and as a result the innocent, uninformed public was being misled about Islam, and the Muslims themselves were suffering loss of faith in their own religion.

A well-known verse in the Quran is as follows:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ كَافٍ حَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾

“Surely We have revealed the Reminder [meaning the Quran] and We are ever its Guardian” (15:9). It is generally thought that this verse contains the promise that God will guard the *text* of the Quran against any change, loss or corruption. But this promise is not limited to guarding the text of the Quran; it is in fact all-comprehensive. The true meanings, purpose and function of the Quran are also Divinely-guarded. Some eminent Muslim thinkers and religious leaders prior to the time of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had also written that, in this verse, the coming of *mujaddids* is promised who will come to safeguard the real teachings of the Quran from distortion and corruption.

If a person arising among Muslims is seen:

- to carry out extraordinary service of the Quran,
- to bring out points of deep knowledge from it in support of the truth of Islam,
- to exhort Muslims to study the Quran,
- to urge his followers to take its message to the world at large,

and he claims to be *mujaddid* of the time, then this work done by him is a strong evidence that his claim is true. This is what Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad did, and it proved him to be a *mujaddid*.

Hazrat Mirza sahib urged his own followers as follows:

“An essential teaching for you is that you must not leave the Quran neglected because your very life lies in it. Those who honour the Quran shall receive honour in heaven. Those who give precedence to the Quran over every hadith report and every other saying, they shall be given precedence in heaven. There is now no book for the guidance of mankind on earth except the Quran.”

(Kishti-i Nuh, p. 13)

“You must read the Quran with understanding, and love it very greatly. Love it as you have not loved anything else because, as God has informed me, all types of good is in the Quran. This is true. Pity be on those people who give precedence to something else over it. The source of all your success and salvation lies in the Quran. There is no spiritual need of yours which is not provided in the Quran. ... God has done you an immense favour by giving you a book like the Quran, ... So value the blessing given to you.” *(Ibid., p. 24)*

How that blessing is to be valued in our practical lives is what Hazrat Mirza sahib showed by his teaching. And the elders of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement followed his example in continuing the same work.