

Fast 7

“He it is Who has revealed the Book to you (O Prophet); some of its verses are **decisive** — they are the basis of the Book — and others are **allegorical**. Then those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation. And none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those firmly rooted in knowledge. They say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord. And none are mindful except those who have understanding.” — Ch. 3, v. 7.

Notes: The rule as to the interpretation of the Quran is given in the Quran itself in the above verse. Maulana Muhammad Ali writes about this as follows:

In the first place, it is stated here that there are two kinds of verses in the Holy Quran, namely, the decisive and the allegorical — the latter being those which are capable of different interpretations. Next we are told that the decisive verses are the basis of the Book, that is, that they contain the fundamental principles of religion. Hence whatever may be the differences of interpretation, the fundamentals of religion are not affected by them, all such differences relating only to secondary matters.

The third point is that some people seek to give their own interpretation to allegorical statements and are thus misled. In other words, serious errors arise only when a wrong interpretation is placed on words which are susceptible of two meanings.

Lastly, in the concluding words, a clue is given as to the right mode of interpretation in the case of allegorical statements: “It is all from our Lord” — meaning that there is no disagreement between the various portions of the Book. The important principle to be borne in mind in the interpretation of the Quran, therefore, is that the meaning should be sought from within the Quran, and never should a passage be interpreted in such a manner that it may be at variance with any other passage, but more especially with the basic principles laid down in the decisive verses. This principle, says the Holy Quran, is followed by “those firmly rooted in knowledge.”

The Maulana’s translation contains the words:

“And none knows its interpretation *except Allah, and those firmly rooted in knowledge*. They say:...”

meaning that *those firmly rooted in knowledge* also know the interpretation of the allegorical part.

The vast majority of translators place the full-stop after “Allah” and render these words as:

“And none knows its interpretation except Allah. And those firmly rooted in knowledge say:...”

meaning that only Allah knows its interpretation. What, then, is the justification of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s translation of these words?

The very famous, classical commentary of the Quran, Tafsir Ibn Kathir, says that “scholars of Quran recitation have different opinions” about the placement of the stop: some consider it to be after “Allah”, and some hold the view that it should be placed after “those firmly rooted in knowledge”. This latter view is the one which Maulana Muhammad Ali has accepted.

Tafsir Ibn Kathir also says that those holding the latter view (i.e., the one which Maulana Muhammad Ali has accepted) say that: “the Quran does not address the people with what they cannot understand”.

Tafsir Ibn Kathir also mentions Ibn Abbas as one of those who held the latter view and it quotes him as saying: “I am among those who are firmly rooted in its interpretation”. It also mentions that the Holy Prophet prayed for Ibn Abbas in these words: “O Allah, grant him knowledge of religion and teach him the interpretation”.

(Ibn Abbas was son of the Holy Prophet’s paternal uncle Abbas and was about 13 years old at the time of the Holy Prophet’s death. He is renowned as an authority on the explanation of the Quran. From his youth he was respected for his knowledge by the much older companions of the Holy Prophet, who consulted him and valued his opinion on Quranic interpretation.)

Inspiring sayings about the Quran

Maulana Muhammad Ali said in a Friday *khutba*:

“We require the greatest strength in order to spread the Holy Quran, and we cannot find that strength without having love for God and a close connection with Him. When you are overwhelmed by love for something, you are attracted towards it unstintingly, sacrificing everything in its way. If you develop love for God then you will go on making sacrifices in His way without hesitation.” — *A Mighty Striving*, p. 243.