

Fast 8: “No doubt” in the Quran

- We continue with the passage from the Quran:

“This Book, in which there is no doubt, ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ is a guide to those who keep their duty...” — ch. 2, v. 2

Regrettably, for Muslims generally, the Quran is *literally* “that Book”. To honour it, it is placed on a high shelf, and it has become remote and distant from them. But in fact it should be kept high *in the heart and mind*, so that its teachings have the highest priority for us. It should also be “that Book” in the sense that we are ever trying to reach it, to acquire greater understanding of it, to act upon it more and more, but it always remains ahead of us, calling on us to come towards it more and more.

- The Quran is called a Book. When this verse was revealed, no human could have known or foreseen that the Quran would even become a book, let alone that it would become an honoured book. At that time, the Quran was not complete, nor was it available as a book to read. Because of this historical fact, Muhammad Asad, in his well-known English translation of the Quran, considers that wherever the Quran calls itself a *kitab* (as here), it should not be translated as “book” because:

“when the Quran was being revealed (and we must not forget that this process took twenty-three years), those who listened to its recitation did not conceive of it as a ‘book’ — since it was compiled into one only some decades after the Prophet’s death”.

Asad has therefore translated it as “Divine writ” or “revelation”. But Maulana Muhammad Ali’s view is that the Quran is called a “book” because it was meant to become a book eventually. So the statement calling the Quran a “book” became truer and truer as time passed. It was a prophecy made at a time when there was little prospect of it being fulfilled, but it was fulfilled just a few years later.

- The statement next, that there is “no doubt” in this Book, can have a number of meanings. We list some of these below, and then expand upon them.
 1. It speaks with perfect certainty, and not doubtfully, in all that it says;
 2. There is no doubt that what we are reading in it is the same Quran that was originally revealed;
 3. There is no doubt that it is a revelation from God.
- Regarding point (1), if a person himself has some inner doubts about the views he is expressing, he will have difficulty in convincing other people to accept them. But the

Author of the Quran speaks with absolute certainty and full knowledge. Dr Steingass, whom we quoted in Study 7, writes about the Quran:

If it spoke so powerfully and convincingly to the hearts of his hearers as to weld hitherto centrifugal and antagonistic elements into one compact and well-organised body, animated by ideas far beyond those which had until now ruled the Arabian mind, then its eloquence was perfect,

This image is from p. 528, column 1, of the book quoted in Study 7. The Quran could speak convincingly because its Author had no doubt about what He was saying.

- As to point (2), even the most hostile critics of Islam have acknowledged that the Quran that Muslims now possess is exactly what was left by the Prophet Muhammad as the scripture revealed to him. There is a well-known, quite voluminous biography of the Holy Prophet by one such critic, Sir William Muir, entitled *The Life of Mohammad*, first published in 1861 in Britain, and a revised edition was produced in 1912. It was a standard work used by Christian missionaries working in Muslim countries, to prove that the Holy Prophet Muhammad was not a true prophet. In his introduction, Muir deals with the compilation of the Quran in book form and says:
 - “The recension of Uthman has been handed down to us unaltered.” (p. xxii). He is referring to the copies produced in the time of the third Khalifa Hazrat Uthman.
 - “So carefully, indeed, has it been preserved, that there are no variations of importance — we might almost say no variations at all — to be found in the innumerable copies scattered throughout the vast bounds of the empire of Islam.” (p. xxii).
 - He adds that from the time Uthman was murdered the Muslim world began to be divided into factions bitterly opposed to each other:

“yet but ONE KORAN has been current amongst them”. (p. xxii)

Muir has himself placed the words “ONE KORAN” in capital letters here.
 - “There is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text.” (p. xxii–xxiii).Muir says “twelve centuries” because he was writing in around 1860.
- In his conclusion about the Quran, Muir writes:
 - “The Koran becomes the groundwork and the test of all inquiries into the origin of Islam and the character of its Founder. Here we have a storehouse of *Mohammad’s own words recorded during his life*, extending over the whole

course of his public career, and illustrating his religious views, his public acts, and his domestic character. And so true a mirror is the Koran of Mohammad's character, that the saying became proverbial among the early Muslims, *His character is the Koran.*" (p. xxviii)

- All the quotations from Muir's book that I have given above, I have taken directly by reading a copy of his book. His book is full of uncomplimentary, derogatory and disparaging remarks about the Holy Prophet Muhammad and Islam. So I have made sure that the above extracts are not being taken out of their context.
- Even a person like Sir William Muir, who does not accept the Quran as being a revelation from God, but considers it to be "Mohammad's word" (as Muir calls it), admits that the Quran is, *without doubt*, what the Prophet Muhammad left as the record his revelations.
- Shown below is the image of the text from pages xxii–xxiii of Muir's book, from which some parts have been quoted on page 2 of this Study.

Which remains unaltered to the present day	<p>The recension of 'Othmān has been handed down to us unaltered. So carefully, indeed, has it been preserved, that there are no variations of importance—we might almost say no variations at all—to be found in the innumerable copies scattered throughout the vast bounds of the empire of Islām. Contending and embittered factions, taking their rise in the murder of 'Othmān himself within a quarter of a century from the death of Moḥammad have ever since rent the Moḥammadan world. Yet but ONE K̄OR'ĀN has been current amongst them; and the consentaneous use by all of the same Scripture in every age to the present day is an irrefragable proof that we have now before us the very text prepared by command of the unfortunate Caliph.² There is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text. The various readings are wonderfully few in number, chiefly confined indeed to differences in the vowel points and diacritical signs. But these, invented at a later date, can hardly be said to affect the text of 'Othmān.¹</p>
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