

The Holy Quran as “Criterion” (*Furqān*) and “Guidance”

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After reciting the preliminaries, I now read the following verse of the Holy Quran:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَنْ شَهِدَ
مِّنْكُمْ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۗ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ
الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ ۗ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

“The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was revealed, a guidance to people and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion. So whoever of you is present in the month, he shall fast in it, and whoever is sick or on a journey, (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days. Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you, and (He desires) that you should complete the number and that you should exalt the greatness of Allah for having guided you and that you may give thanks.” (2:185)

This is one of the verses in the Quran in the section on fasting. It tells us that the month of Ramadan was selected for fasting because it is the anniversary of the start of the revelation of the Quran to the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Quran is recited in it by Muslims specially. Just as the revelation of its words to the Holy Prophet began in this month, when we recite and study it in this month its understanding should be inspired into our hearts. According to Hadith, in every Ramadan the angel Gabriel used to come to the Holy Prophet and recite the Quran with him, that is to say, as much of the Quran as had been revealed up to that time (Bukhari, hadith 6). In the last Ramadan of the Holy Prophet’s life, Gabriel recited the Quran with him twice (Bukhari, hadith 4998).

The Quran is described in this verse as a guidance for people, that is to say, for all mankind. In addition to being a guidance, it provides proofs of the truth of that guidance, and is the *Furqān*, the Criterion or the standard that enables us to

distinguish truth from falsehood, right from wrong. To remind Muslims about this true status and position of the Quran, which they lose sight of at various times in history, Allah instituted the sending of *mujaddids*. It has been stated by a great, world-renowned scholar and philosopher of Islam, who lived three hundred years ago, Shah Waliullah of Delhi, that *mujaddids* arise in Islam in accordance with the promise of Allah in the Quran: “Surely We have revealed the Reminder, and surely We are its Guardian” (15:9). Their primary purpose is to safeguard the position of the Quran.

In modern times Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, substantiated his claim to be *Mujaddid* by his service of the Quran. He showed how the Quran was “a guidance to people and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion”. At the beginning of his first major book, *Barahin Ahmadiyya*, he wrote:

“Let it also be made clear to everyone that all the arguments I have given in this book about the truth of the Holy Quran, and the evidences for the truthfulness of the Holy Prophet’s claim to be the Messenger of Allah, and the excellences and beauties of the Holy Quran, and the clear signs of it being revealed by God, have been taken and deduced from this Sacred Scripture itself. This also applies to any claim I have made about the Quran. That is to say, any such claim I have made is exactly what this scripture has claimed about itself, and any argument I have presented in this regard is what this holy Book has indicated. There is neither any claim nor any argument which is merely of my own making.”

He said that this was a unique feature of the Quran, that it sets forth its own claims and the arguments to prove them. He asked whether representatives and exponents of other faiths would be able to put forward their religious beliefs by drawing *only* upon their holy scriptures, and not the later writings of their interpreters. He also showed, in connection with various questions of religion, how to treat the Quran as the *Furqān*, the criterion and standard for determining what is right and what is wrong.

Now if the Quran is the guide for all people (*hud-an li-n-nās*), containing arguments upon that guidance (*bayyināt-in min-al-hudā*), and is the criterion, then it is *only* the Quran and the person to whom it was revealed, the Holy Prophet

Muhammad, that can decide whether any verse in it only applied *temporarily* and was later overtaken or superseded by some other verse. Neither the Quran nor the Holy Prophet ever said this about any verse of the Quran, that it only applied earlier and ceased to apply from a certain time onwards.

There are verses of the Quran which teach Muslims tolerance towards people of other faiths and to have harmonious relations with non-Muslims. There are verses which teach Muslims that when confronted by abuse and insult towards their religion, they show patience and not resort to retaliation, and certainly not react with violence. There are also verses which show Islam to be a peaceful religion.

Some Muslims believe that these teachings only applied in the earlier part of the Holy Prophet's mission and that in the later part of his mission Muslims were directed to wage war against people of other religions. They claim that it is these later teachings that are permanent, while the earlier ones were temporary and later suspended. This standpoint is then exploited by the critics of Islam to present it as a violent and intolerant religion. It is the duty of defenders of Islam, such as the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement and his followers, to correct such misconceptions, *not only* that Islam is not a religion of violence and intolerance, but also that its Holy Book does not give inconsistent and contradictory teachings.

The verses mentioning tolerance and harmony between Muslims and people of other faiths *do not become inapplicable* just because, later on, a situation arose in which Muslims had to fight in battle against non-Muslims. When the Muslims fought the battle of Badr, they still exercised forgiveness and tolerance towards their enemies after taking many of them as prisoners. When the Holy Prophet Muhammad conquered Makkah, he was no doubt fighting his enemies, but he showed unparalleled forgiveness towards them after his victory.

There is a verse in the Quran:

“Many of the people of the Book wish that they could turn you back into disbelievers after you have believed, out of envy from themselves, after truth has become clear to them. **But pardon and forgive**, till Allah bring about His command. Surely Allah is Powerful over all things.” (2:109)

It is claimed by some Muslims that the forgiveness mentioned in this verse no longer applies because ch. 9, v. 29 allows or requires Muslim to fight against the

People of the Book. But the two verses are referring to two different kinds of attack. Ch. 2, v. 109, quoted above, mentions the desires and efforts of the People of the Book to turn Muslims back into unbelievers *through their objections against Islam even after they realise that Islam is true*. The response to that stubbornness and obstinacy of theirs is for Muslims to pardon and forgive them for the irritations, annoyances and offence that they cause to Muslims, and of course at the same time Muslims must refute their objections. Ch. 9, v. 29 was revealed when the Eastern Roman empire was reported to be preparing to attack Arabia with the help of Christian tribes living near the border of Arabia. The requirement to fight them applied in those conditions. So the Holy Prophet led a Muslim army northwards to a place called Tabuk, but as the Roman attack did not materialize he returned without fighting, after concluding peace treaties with various Christian tribes in the area. In no way does verse 29 of ch. 9 go against the verse 109 of ch. 2 about forgiving the People of the Book.

Then there is the following verse:

“Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.” (2:62)

This verse shows Islam’s attitude of tolerance towards other faiths, and a common purpose with them. It is claimed that this teaching does not apply any more because there is a verse, in chapter 3, saying:

“And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers.” (3:85)

But what is stated in 2:62 is repeated in chapter 5 in its verse 69. And that was revealed long after chapter 3. This repetition shows that the teaching given in 2:62, shortly after the *hijra* to Madinah and before Muslims had fought any wars, was still applicable after Muslims had been fighting battles, at the time when chapter 5 was revealed.

But the question remains: Why is 3:85, on the face of it, contrary to 2:62 and 5:69? The answer is that the verses 2:62 and 5:69 speak of the *right and correct beliefs* held by the Jews and the Christians: Belief in Allah and the Last Day and the

doing of good. These verses say that this is the basis of religion and whoever follows this basis will find salvation in the hereafter. The verse 3:85 refers to a certain *wrong* doctrine held by the Jews and the Christians. The verse before it, 3:84, says that Muslims believe in God and in His revelation to all prophets, and make no distinction between any of the prophets. Regrettably, the Jews and the Christians do make distinctions between the prophets. The Jewish belief is that prophets only arose among the Israelites; anyone not belonging to that nation cannot be a true prophet. The Christian doctrine is that Jesus was much more than a mortal prophet, but that he was uniquely sinless and son of God. What verse 3:85, in its words “whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him”, says is that these beliefs are not acceptable to God. God is fair and just to all nations, raising prophets in all of them, and all prophets were equal in being sinless and equal in being mortal.

There is a hostile critic and detractor of Islam, Lord Pearson, a member of the UK Parliament’s upper chamber, the House of Lords. In a debate in this House, on 7 December 2017, he mentioned it as a belief of Muslims, and I quote him:

“that the later verses in the Koran cancel the earlier peaceful verses — the verses of the sword cancel the verses of peace. So, for example, the much-quoted early verse, “Let there be no compulsion in religion”, is nullified many times in later verses.”

Whoever holds such a belief is wrong, whether it is Lord Pearson or any Muslim. The Quran itself says:

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۗ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

“Will they not then ponder on the Quran? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy (or contradiction).”

(4:82)

It is, therefore, the duty of all Muslims, in particular their scholars, to resolve any such alleged contradictions in the Quran.

Hazrat Maulana Nur-ud-Din, who later became the first Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement after the Founder’s death, wrote in a book published during the lifetime of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as follows:

“I know of no verse in the Quran containing a command which permits something, or which makes something compulsory, and then it is stated about the same command that what it permitted or ordered is now forbidden. No, no, certainly not. ... Our guide, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him, has never said: Such and such a command of the Quran is now cancelled.” (Book *Nur-ud-Din*, published 1904, p. 231–232)

So, turning back to the verse I recited at the beginning, the very verse which ordains fasting on the month of Ramadan calls the Quran as “*a guidance to people and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion*”. The pioneers of the Ahmadiyya Movement presented this true and rightful status of the Quran to the world.

Eid Mubarak to you all!

بَارَكَ اللهُ لَنَا وَتَكْرَمَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِالآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ،
إِنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ مَلِكٌ بَرٌّ رَوْفٌ رَحِيمٌ-

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