

Programme Four; Belief in the Divine Scriptures.

4.0 The Divine Scriptures- Introduction.

It is an essential part of our faith to believe that Allāh Almighty sent down divine scriptures to mankind for the sake of guidance. The Qur'ān states:

'Say (O people): We believe in Allāh and that which has been revealed to us...' (2: 136)

We must believe that each book is the word of Allāh. From the Qur'ān and Sunna, we know a handful of the names of these divine scriptures and which messenger they were given to. The exact number of divine scriptures and their names is in the knowledge of Allāh, but we must believe in all of them.

4.1. The main, Divine Scriptures.

There are four main, divine books. They are:

1. The Qur'ān, revealed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).
2. The Injīl, revealed to Isā (peace be upon him).
3. The Torāh, revealed to Mūsā (peace be upon him).
4. The Zabūr, revealed to Dāūd (peace be upon him).

Smaller works were given to certain messengers such as Ibrāhīm and Ādam (peace be upon them). These works are referred to as *Sahifas*.¹

4.2. The protection and preservation of the divine scriptures.

We have been informed by Allāh that the previous scriptures suffered from changes and alterations. The Qur'ān states that:

'Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, "This is from Allāh" in order to purchase it with a little price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for that they have earned.' (2: 79).

'From the Jews are those who altered the words from their [correct] places...' (4:46).

The previous divine scriptures suffered from alteration and change for two reasons:

- a. With the previous scriptures, Allāh left the responsibility to preserve them in the hands of the corresponding messengers and their followers.

¹ p. 146. *al-Aqida al-Hasana (al-Mar'uf bi) Aqa'id al-Islam*. Hazrat Shah Wali Allāh Muhaddith. Delhvi. Edited by Moulana Mufti Muhammad Khalil Khan, Farid Book Stall, Lahore, 1400 A.H.

b. Secondly, the messengers and their followers did not always memorise the texts they were given.

The Qur'ān is immune from such changes and alterations. Because the Qur'ān was revealed as the last word of Allāh to mankind, and because it was meant to be a source of guidance until the Day of Judgement, Allāh himself took on the responsibility to preserve it. The Qur'ān states:

'Verily we revealed the Remembrance (i.e. the Qur'ān) and verily We are its protectors.' (15:9)

Secondly, the Qur'ān was made easy to memorise; for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and his subsequent followers. Allāh says:

'Rather it is clear signs in the chests of those who have been given knowledge' (29:49).

Also, this means that the Qur'ān – because it is the final word of Allāh – has abrogated all previous scriptures.

4.3. The names of the Qur'ān.

Principally, the Qur'ān is known by four other names:

- i. *al-Kitāb* (The Book).
- ii. *al-Furqān* (The Standard).
- iii. *al-Zikr* (The Remembrance).
- iv. *al-Tanzīl* (The Revelation).

There are countless other descriptive names of the Qur'ān too.²

4.4. The gathering of the Qur'ān.

Muslims believe that the gathering and compilation in reality was the work of Allāh:

'Indeed it is upon us to gather it and recite it' (75:17).

Through the Prophet's (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) authority and guidance, it is possible to identify three key stages in the gathering of the Qur'ān.

4.4.1 Stage One: During the Prophet's lifetime.

Over a period of twenty three years, the Qur'ān was revealed part by part, according to need and circumstances. Secure steps were taken to ensure it was memorised and recorded accurately. For example;

- When a verse was revealed, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) himself would memorise it and then instruct his Companions to memorise it too.

² Muhammad Rafiq Choudary lists the descriptive names of the Qur'ān (in *An interview with the Qur'ān*, Markazi Maktaba Islami, Delhi, 1980) which include *Rahma, Hikma, Huda, Mubin, Karim, Kalam, Burhan, Nur, Shifa, Maw'iza, Mubarak, Hakim, Musaddiq, Ahsan al-Hadith, Ilm, Haqq, Tazkira, Bushra, Azeem, Nazir* and *Balagh*.

He would inform them which Surah the verses belonged to.³ Zaid ibn Thābit was one of the regular scribes in Madinah because he was situated near the Prophet's mosque. Once the revelation was recorded the scribe would read it back to the Prophet, who would then certify it. Other famous Companions who were entrusted with learning the Qur'ān include Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd, Ubay Ibn Ka'b, Mu'āz ibn Jabal, Āisha, Hafsa and Umme Salma (may Allāh be pleased with them).

- He would recite the verses in Salāh as well as during his speeches.
- He would highlight the superior reward for learning, memorising and teaching the Holy Qur'ān. In one Hadīth, he said:

'The best of you is the one who learns the Qur'ān and then teaches others.'⁴

- Jibrā'īl (peace be upon him) would appear every Ramadhān to listen and recite the Qur'ān with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). In his last Ramadhān on earth, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) went through the Qur'ān with him twice.⁵
- The Qur'ān was written on papers, parchments, the shoulder blades of sheep and camels, sheets of stone, leather and palm branches stripped of their leaves.⁶
- Imam Muslim narrates in his *Sahīh* that the Prophet did not order his own sayings to be recorded on paper for a short period of time.⁷ This meant that the Muslims were not allowed to record the revelations of the Qur'ān and the Hadīth of the Prophet in the same place.
- One important fact to remember is that the ordering of the verses and chapters actually took place in his time, contrary to the belief of certain Western Qur'ān scholars such as Goddard.⁸

4.4.2. Stage Two; The Caliphate of Abū Bakr.

The Qur'ān in written form was present in the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) on scattered papers but was not in one, formal document. One reason why this did not happen is because the revelation was a continual process, lasting twenty-three years. The task to gather it as such fell on Abū Bakr (may Allāh be pleased with him).

After the Battle of Yamāma (in the eleventh year of Hijrah), many Huffāz were martyred. Umar petitioned Abū Bakr to commission the gathering of the Qur'ān into a

³ p. 152. *al-Aqida al-Hasana (al-Mar'uf bi) Aqa'id al-Islam*. Hazrat Shah Wali Allāh Muhaddith. Delhvi. Edited by Moulana Mufti Muhammad Khalil Khan, Farid Book Stall, Lahore, 1400 A.H.

⁴ *Sahīh al-Bukhari*. Book; the Superiority of the Qur'ān. Chapter, 'the best of you is the one who learns the Qur'ān and then teaches others.' Hadith no. 4639.

⁵ *Sahīh al-Bukhari*, (Vol VI, no: 518-520), translated by Dr. Mohsin Khan, Kazi Publications, Pakistan, 1986.

⁶ Introduction to *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*. p. 37. Vol. I. Dar al-Kutub a-Ilmiyya, Beirut, Lebanon, 2004.

⁷ *Sahīh Muslim*. Book of Zuhd wa Raqa'iq. Chapter, Authenticity in reporting and the principle of writing the Hadith. Hadith no. 5326.

⁸ Goddard, H (1995). *Christians and Muslims from Double Standards to Mutual Understanding*. Surrey, Curzon Press. p. 37.

single book to preserve it from being lost. After initial reservations, Abū Bakr instructed Zaid ibn Thābit to gather the Qur'ān.⁹ Zaid ibn Thābit (may Allāh be pleased with him) obliged and set about accomplishing this great task. He began by contacting the people who had portions of the Qur'ān. He was also ordered along with Umar to sit on the door step of the Mosque and collect the Qur'ān from those people who came to them with two witnesses to prove the validity of their claim. This task lasted almost a year and when it was completed the Companions expressed their admiration and appreciation. Each Surah was written separately on an individual paper.

The final work remained in the hands of Abū Bakr, and was then passed on to Umar and then Hafsa bint al-Fārūq (may Allāh be pleased with her).¹⁰ However, at this moment in time, a copy was not distributed to the Muslim lands.

4.4.3. Stage Three; The Caliphate of Uthmān.

The third stage of the gathering of the Qur'ān occurred in the time of Uthmān. The Muslims had slowly advanced their frontiers and more and more people had accepted Islam. Due to the expansion the Qur'ān recitation was becoming diverse and was recited in various different dialects. This reached an alarming stage where people began to dispute as to which was the correct dialect.¹¹

Uthmān (may Allāh be pleased with him) gathered all the papers into one book form in the Quraishi dialect. This was completed in the twenty-fifth year of Hijrah.¹² Copies were sent to the different Muslim lands. By taking the necessary steps in properly compiling the Qur'ān into a book, in one dialect, Uthmān (may Allāh be pleased with him) had resolved any disputes and had prepared a standard copy for Muslims everywhere. It was not incumbent upon the Muslims to learn all the different modes of recitation of the Qur'ān. Therefore to erase any dispute or doubt, these steps were taken.

According to Harūn ibn Mūsā, it was Yahyā ibn Ma'mar al-Basrī (died 89 A.H./707 C.E.) who was the first to add the dots on the Holy Qur'an.¹³

⁹ *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Book, the Tafsir of the Qur'ān. Chapter, the saying of Allāh 'verily from Allāh has come to you a Prophet...' Hadith no. 4311.

¹⁰ p. 152. *al-Aqida al-Hasana (al-Mar'uf bi) Aqa'id al-Islam*. Hazrat Shah Wali Allāh Muhaddith Delhvi. Edited by Moulana Mufti Muhammad Khalil Khan, Farid Book Stall, Lahore, 1400 A.H.

¹¹ See *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*. p. 38-9. Vol. I. Dar al-Kutub a-Ilmiyya, Beirut, Lebanon, 2004.

The variant recitations of the Qur'ān did not arise after the Prophet passed away, but in fact was something that had been present in his time.

Abdullah Ibn Abbas reports: Allāh's apostle said "Gabriel recited the Qur'ān to me in one way. Then I requested him (to read it in another way), and continued asking him to recite it in other ways, and he recited it in several ways till he ultimately recited it in seven different ways." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Vol VI, book 61, no: 513), translated by Dr. Mohsin Khan, Kazi Publications, Pakistan, 1986).

¹² p. XXVIII. Introduction to *Kanzul Iman*. Maulana Shah Ahmad Raza Khan. English translation by Professor Shah Farid al-Haque. World Islamic Mission Pakistan, Karachi. n.d. on publication date.

¹³ *Tahzib al-Tahzib*, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani. p. 192. Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, 2nd edition, Beirut, 1993.

4.5. Objections from the Orientalists¹⁴ on the Qur'ān.

Western scholars for centuries have attempted to confuse and misguide Muslims by raising objections on the Qur'ān. Their attempts have been shallow, inaccurate and fruitless. The Qur'ān asserts that it is the word of God and challenges those who do not accept this to replicate it. Allāh says:

'Say (O Messenger) if all mankind and the jinn would come together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce its like even though they exerted all their strength in aiding one another' (17:88).

Just like the Arabs before them, the Orientalists have failed in trying to match the Qur'ān in any aspect.

Here are some of their key objections on the Qur'ān.

4.5.1 The Qur'ān as the Word of God

The majority of Western scholars have never accepted the Qur'ān as the word of Allāh. The same allegation was made by the Arab polytheists. Upon hearing the glorious revelation the Meccan Pagans proclaimed:

'This revelation is nothing but a lie which he (Muhammad, peace be upon him) has forged and others have helped at it' (25:4).

Orientalists like A. Sprenger, William Muir, Theodor Noldeke, Ignas Goldziher, and W. Wellhausen have repeated the same objection. Their works have been further developed and summarised by 'scholars' like Richard Bell and his student Montgomery Watt.

Answer.

• Allāh ensured that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was not seen to read and write in public. The Qur'ān states:

'And you were not used to reading any book before this nor to writing with your right hand; otherwise the followers of falsehood would have had doubt' (29:48).

Even Watt states:

'The probability is that Muhammad could read and write sufficiently for business purposes, but it seems that he had not read any (religious) scriptures.'¹⁵

¹⁴ Professor 'Abd al-Qādir Sayyid 'Abd al-Rauf (from the Department of Theology, al-Azhar University) quotes Professor 'Abd al-Ghafour Azīz in his definition of Orientalism: '[Orientalism is] the study conducted by westerners of the doctrine of the Islamic east, its civilization, language, morals, history, norms and habits and so on. A person who occupies himself with such studies is called a *Mustashriq*.' (Professor 'Abd al-Qādir Sayyid 'Abd al-Rauf in *Darāsāt fī al-Tabshīr wa al-Istishrāq*. Usūl al-Dīn, al-Azhar University, Cairo. n.d. on date of publication.)

¹⁵ Watt, W.M. (1998).p.26. '*Muhammad's Mecca*'. In *Religion in pre-Islamic Arabia*. Edinburgh University Press.

- The enemies of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) were expert Arabs. If the Qur'ān was man-written, why did they display marvel at its eloquence and why could they not produce words like it? ¹⁶
- Furthermore we find in the Holy Qur'ān scientific facts which have been proven as truthful only in the last one hundred years. How could the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) living in the sixth century;
 - Describe the evolution of the embryo inside the uterus with utmost accuracy, as we find it in modern science?
 - Describe the concept of reproduction in the plant kingdom, outlining sexual and asexual reproduction?
 - Be aware that the density of air decreases with altitude so that breathing becomes difficult? (6:125).
 - Identify that all living things are made from water? (21:30).

The only way the Qur'ān could contain such information is if it was written by the Creator of all that exists, Allāh Almighty.

4.5.2. Only four Companions had memorised the Qur'ān.

The Orientalists claim that during the Prophet's lifetime – according to the Hadith recorded by Imam al-Bukhāri – only four people memorised the Qur'ān, Abū al-Dardā, Mu'āz ibn Jabal, Zaid ibn Thābit and Abū Zaid.

Answer.

This objection stems from a lack of understanding of Arabic. The Hadīth being referred to is the saying of Anas ibn Mālik (may Allāh be pleased with him) who said:

مات النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ولم يجمع القرآن غير أربعة أبو الدرداء و
معاذ بن جبل و زيد بن ثابت و أبو زيد

'The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) passed away in the state that no one gathered (*Yajma*) the Qur'ān except four: Abū al-Dardā, Mu'āz ibn Jabal, Zaid ibn Thābit and Abū Zaid.'¹⁷

The word is no one *gathered* (*Yajma*) the Qur'ān, in written form. It does not refer to memorising the Qur'ān which is *Hifz* in Arabic. As it has been mentioned, countless Companions memorised the Qur'ān. In the Battle of Yamāma, it is reported that

¹⁶ When Walid ibn Mughira, the uncle of Abu Jahl, heard the Qur'ān he told his tribe; 'By God I have just heard from Muhammad (peace be upon him) what is not the speech of a human or a genie, for it is abundantly sweet.'

It was a practice during the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) that whenever someone wrote a poem that was matchless in eloquence and literal beauty, the poem would be hung on the wall of the Ka'ba for everyone to admire. Labid ibn Rabiya, a master of literature at that time, had been bestowed this honour. However when Surah Baqarah was revealed it was also hung on the wall of Ka'ba beside the poem of Labid. Labid, who was a polytheist at the time, went to inspect it and he was so amazed by it that he proclaimed 'This is such work that no one has the power to produce it except he who receives revelation.'

¹⁷ *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Book; the Superiority of the Qur'ān, Chapter, the reciters from the Companions. Hadith no. 4620.

seven hundred *Companions* were martyred.¹⁸ So how can it be said that only four had memorised the Qur'ān?¹⁹

Also, Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd's name is not mentioned in the above four though it is well known that he was a Hāfiz. In fact the Prophet actually instructed Muslims to learn the Qur'ān from him.²⁰ Would the Prophet have told his Companions to learn the Qur'ān from him if he knew that he did not know it?

4.5.3. Uthmān's burning of the Qur'ān.

Noldeke²¹ claims that when Uthmān (may Allāh be pleased with him) compiled the Qur'ān into one standard copy he had the others burnt to hide the fact that there were huge discrepancies.

Answer.

Certainly, we agree that Uthmān did burn copies of the Qur'ān, but the reason was not because he wanted to hide the huge discrepancies. Rather, it was done with the intention of standardising the *dialects*. The meaning and the message of the Qur'ān was not at all distorted.

¹⁸ p. XV. Introduction to *Kanzul Iman*. Maulana Shah Ahmad Raza Khan. English translation by Professor Shah Farid al-Haque. World Islamic Mission Pakistan, Karachi. n.d. on publication date. See also Introduction to *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*. p. 37. Vol. I. Dar al-Kutub a-Ilmiyya, Beirut, Lebanon, 2004.

¹⁹ Moreover, it should be mentioned that the Arabs were known for their great memory and they preferred to secure facts by heart rather than writing it down.

Zwettler acknowledges:

'In the ancient times, when writing was scarcely used, memory and oral transmission was exercised and strengthened to a degree now almost unknown.' (p.14. Zwettler, Michael (1978). *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry*. Ohio State Press).

²⁰ *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Book of Superiorities. Chapter, the superiority of Salim Maula Abu Huzaifa. Hadith no. 3475.

²¹ Noldeke, Theodore (2004). 'Provenance and Transmission'. In *The Koran, Critical concepts in Islamic Studies*, edited by Colin Turner; vol. I: p. 88-90, Routledge, Curzon, GB.