



DIVINE PROMISE

DR MUHAMMAD SALEEM ANWAR

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By: Dr Muhammad Saleem Anwar

In the sixteenth century, the Christians under the banner of Martin Luther and others rose up in protest against the hegemony, excesses & grievances of the Church and clergy. Although with sincerity, and perhaps for a few right reasons, their retaliatory ‘coup’ to the Christian orthodoxy did not bring the fruition anticipated and craved for. It was more of an impetuous and erratic mega revolutionary cataclysm rather than a concrete strategy for reformation. As a result, the religious, moral, social, ethical & spiritual droop of Christianity is palpable, and is worth lamenting for.

In the name of modernity and reformation, some Muslim thinkers have begun journeying the conduit of our predecessors as foretold by the Prophet Muhammad *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wasallam* in the famous *hadith* of Abu Sa’id al-Khudri *radiallaahu ‘anhu*.

“You would tread the same path as was trodden by those before you inch by inch and step by step so much so that if they had entered into the hole of the lizard, you would follow them in that also. We said: Allah's Messenger, do you mean Jews and Christians by "those before you"? He said: Who else (than those two religious groups)?”¹

Today, defiance of the theories and discernments of the Jurists of the past has become the talk of the town even among practicing Muslims. With some exceptions, contemporary scholars and students of knowledge strive to climb the ladder of ‘successes’ through condescendence and disparagement of the scholars of the past. Their intention maybe pure but their attitude and demeanour are malignant. The lack of understanding and wisdom, and doubts about the authority of agreed upon ‘ulamaa, their knowledge and, at times their intentions are seen clearly with even closed eyes.

The final message of the Almighty is preserved forever. There can be no Muslim doubting this principle in theory. Yet the practice tends to suggest otherwise in modern Muslim world. Allaah *subhaanahu wa ta’aalaa* says:

“*Indeed we have revealed this reminder & verily, we shall preserve it*”²

One question needs deliberation here - does this promise refer to the wording of the holy Qur’an alone, or the meaning and import of the verses of holy Qur’an is also the beneficiary of the divine fortification? If only the words are guarded without intended meaning then what significance this preservation holds? Is it possible that some injunctions of the Shari’ah have remained completely obscure from the all or majority of the scholars of the ummah?

Imam Hasan al-Basri RA noted that the protection of Allaah is for the whole Sharia’h until the day of recompense. [حفظه بإبقاء شريعته إلى يوم القيامة]³

Sheikh Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadawi RA penned a detailed account on the subject. He declares that:

*“..the shari’ah is not transmitted to this generation in a book form alone. But rather its correct meaning and practical application are passed on to generation after generation...Of what use is the book whose words are preserved but the meaning remained incomprehensible to not just the masses but even masters of Shari’ah laws as a whole”*⁴

Of course, our *aslaaf* were not immune to commit errors. In fact they all erred in different fields on different occasions. However, as a group of scholars and jurists together, they were impervious to misguidance and miscalculation, as the famous hadith points out

لا تجتمع امتي على الضلالة

*My Ummah will never unite upon misguidance.*⁵

Sheikh Nadawi RA writes:

*“Although the hadith is considered da’if (weak) in its chain of narration, but the meaning is sound by the consensus of scholars”.*⁶

Hafith ibn Kathir RA carved in his exegesis on surah an-Nisa:

*“The Ummah of Muhammad is immune from error when they all agree on something, a miracle that serves to increase their honor, due to the greatness of their Prophet”.*⁷

Ibn Qayyim RA said:

*“Thanks be to Allaah that the ummah has never united upon the abandonment of even a sunnah except for those abrogated by clear evidences”.*⁸

Another hadith expounds on the same theme in the following words.

*“Some people from my ummah will remain victorious and triumphant until the day of judgment”.*⁹

The hadith masters understood it to be the group of ‘ulama.

Allah SWT stresses the promise more clearly elsewhere in Qur’an.

*“It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it. But when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated). Nay more, it is for Us to explain it (and make it clear)”.*¹⁰

Shah Waliullah Dihlawi RA comments on these verses in the following way:

*“Allah says that I am responsible for explaining the Qur’an. I will raise a group of scholars to elucidate and describe the words of Qur’an”.*¹¹

How can one believe that the fundamental principles of Qur’an and sunnah have remained unclear and ambiguous for centuries after understanding the explicit promise in this ayah? Is this not accusing Allah of not fulfilling His promise?

Conclusion:

This religion has been safeguarded by the Divine through uninterrupted chain of transmission from the hearts of scholars to the hearts of successive generations, and will continue to remain so until the decreed time.

We don’t need to re-invent the wheel by deliberating in to the issues already been dealt with by the scholars. As regards new issues, the jurists and qualified scholars are aware of their responsibility to do *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) to arrive at the solution.

Now explore yourself what was the understanding of the scholars since the departure of the Prophet SAW as regards the ruling of music, hijab, jihad, free-mixing of men & women, taqleed, suicide bombing, establishment of khilaafah etc.

References:

1. Sahih Muslim
2. Surah al-Hijr 15: ayah 9
3. Tafsir Bahr al Muhit by Abu Hayyan Muhammad ibn Yusuf
4. *‘asr-e-haazir mein deen ki tafheem-o-tashreeh*
5. Sunan Ibn Majah
6. *‘asr-e-haazir mein deen ki tafheem-o-tashreeh*
7. Tafsir Ibn Kathir volume 2
8. I’laam al Muwaqqi’een volume 2
9. Sahih Muslim
10. Surah al-Qiyaamah 75: ayah 19
11. Izaalatul Khifaa