

Paigham-E-Haqq

MESSAGE OF TRUTH

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-I-Islam (Lahore) Fiji
(Ahmadiyya * Society for the propagation of Islam)
(* The term Ahmadiyya is derived from the name of the
Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) whose other name was Ahmad)

Our humble plea to the reader is not to let your prejudice cloud your views towards our Movement but to consider these articles in a cool and dispassionate manner.

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran 16:125)

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to facilitate inter-faith and inter-denomination dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE HOLY QURAN BY MAULANA MUHAMMAD ALI

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The main objective of the A.A.I.L.L is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world - Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by great misconceptions and wrong popular notions. Islam seeks to attract the *hearts and minds* of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles. *Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad* (d.1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

International: it recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Peaceful: Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

Tolerant: Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practice any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

Rational: In all matters, it argues use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

Inspiring: Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servant even today as in the past.

Non-sectarian: Every person professing Islam by the words *La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah* (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that *no* prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, *Mujaddids* will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

About Ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in many countries including:

USA	Guyana
UK	Australia
Holland	Canada
Indonesia	Germany
Suriname	India
Trinidad	South Africa
	Philippines

Achievements:

The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, including French German, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese and Arabic. The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world including the first ever in Western Europe.

History:

- 1889: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.
- 1901: Movement given name Ahmadiyya after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name Ahmad
- 1905: Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.
- 1908: Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.
- 1914: Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded Lahore as Continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.
- 1951: Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (9.1981 becomes Head.
- 1981-1996: Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent Medical Doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution
- 1996 -2002: Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished Retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.
- 2002: Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

There has been a demand for a revised edition of my English Translation and Commentary of the Holy Qur'an since the end of the Second World War. Conditions have changed so rapidly since I first took this work in hand in 1909 that I myself felt the need for a revised edition. In fact, it is not only the change of circumstances that called for a revision; by own knowledge of the Holy Book has since increased to a very large extent owing to the fact that I have been engaged day and night in further research in this line, studying the Holy Qur'an, the Hadith and other religious literature of Islam. During this interval of about 33 years — the first edition was published in 1917 — I made substantial contribution to the religious literature of Islam both in English and in Urdu. After the English Translation I wrote a voluminous Urdu Commentary, the Bayan al-Qur'an, in three volumes, and this kept me occupied for another seven years. It extends to over 2,500 pages and is much more explanatory than the notes in the English Translation. During the same period I also wrote a life of the Holy Prophet in Urdu, which was later translated into English under the name of Muhammad the Prophet. A little later was issued a history of the Early Caliphate both in Urdu and in English. About the year 1928 a smaller edition of the English Translation without Arabic Text and with briefer notes was published. Then came the translation and commentary in Urdu of the Sahih Bukhari, the well-known Hadith collection. In 1936 was published another voluminous work in English, The Religion of Islam, which contains full information on almost all Islamic questions of modern days. The New World Order, A Manual of Hadith and The Living Thoughts of the Prophet Muhammad were added after 1940.

Owing to the extensive study which I had to make for these writings I myself felt that I had received more light and was bound to give the English-reading public, which extends over a vast part of the world, a deeper insight into the Holy Qur'an than I had given in my younger days. I began the work of revising the translation and commentary of the Holy Qur'an some time late in 1946, but the year 1947 was a critical year for the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent and, on 29th August, 1947, I myself had to flee for my life from Dalhousie, where I used to work in the summer months. The literary work that I was doing there suffered considerably but I took it up later at Quetta, where I passed the summer of 1948. Before making much progress, however, I fell seriously ill and the work had again to be put off for more than six months. The manuscript was ready by the middle of 1950, but another serious illness overtook me at Karachi, where I was then carrying on this work. I was spared, however, by God's grace, to see the work through the press, and to give it the finishing touches; perhaps also to render some further service to the cause of Truth. Though still on my sick-bed I am able to go through the proofs and revise the Introduction.

Before stating what changes I have made in the Revised Edition I quote a few paragraphs from the old preface relating to the chief features of this Translation:

"As regards the translation I need not say much. That a need was felt for a translation of the Holy Book of Islam with full explanatory notes from the pen of a Muslim in spite of the existing translations is universally admitted. Whether this translation satisfies that need, only time will decide. I may, however, say that I have tried to be more faithful to the Arabic Text than all existing English translations. It will be noticed that additional words as explaining the sense of the original have generally been avoided, and where necessary — and these cases are very few — they are given within brackets. Wherever a departure has been made from the ordinary or primary significance of a word, reason for this departure has been given in a footnote and authorities have been amply quoted.

"There are some novel features in this translation. The Arabic Text has been inserted, the translation and the text occupying opposite columns. Each verse begins with a new line in both the Text and the translation, and verses are numbered to facilitate reference. Necessary explanations are given in footnotes, and generally either authorities are quoted or reasons given for the opinion expressed. This made the work very laborious, but I have undertaken this labour to make the work a real source of satisfaction to those who might otherwise be inclined to be sceptical regarding many statements which will appear new to the ordinary reader. I have tried to avoid repetition in the explanatory footnotes by giving a reference where repetition was necessary, but I must confess that these references are far from being exhaustive. When the significance of a word has been explained in one place it has been thought unnecessary, except in rare cases, to make a reference to it. For the reader's facility I have, however, added a list of the Arabic words explained, and the reader may refer to it when necessary.

"Besides the footnotes, ample introductory notes have been given at the commencement of each chapter. These introductory notes give the abstract of each chapter in sections, at the same time showing the connection of the sections and also explaining that of the different chapters with each other. This feature of the translation is altogether new, and will, I hope, in course of time, prove of immense service in eradicating the idea which is so prevalent now that there is no arrangement in the verses and chapters of the Holy Qur'an. It is quite true that the Qur'an does not classify the different subjects and treat them separately in each section or chapter. The reason for this is that the Holy Qur'an is not a book of laws, but essentially a book meant for the spiritual and moral advancement of man, and therefore the power, greatness, grandeur and glory of God is its chief theme,

the principles of social laws enunciated therein being also meant to promote the moral and spiritual advancement of man. But that there exists an arrangement will be clear even to the most superficial reader of the introductory notes on these chapters. It will be further noted that the Makkan and Madinan revelations are beautifully welded together, and there are groups of chapters belonging to about one time and relating to one subject. The introductory notes also show whether a particular chapter was revealed at Makkah or Madinah, and also the probable period to which it belongs. Exact dates and specified order of the revelation of different chapters are often mere conjectures, and therefore I have avoided this useless task.

"The references to the authorities quoted in the notes are explained in the Key to References. Among the commentators, I have made the greatest use of the voluminous commentaries of Ibn Jarir, Imam Fakhr al-Din Razi, Imam Athir al-Din Abu Hayyan and the shorter but by no means less valuable commentaries of Zamakhshari, Baidawi and Jami' al-Bayan of Ibn Kathir. Among the lexicons, Taj al-'Arus and the Lisan al-'Arab are voluminous standard works and have been freely consulted, but the smaller work of Imam Raghīb Isfahani, known as Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an, has afforded immense help, and it undoubtedly occupies the first place among the standard works in Arabic Lexicology so far as the Qur'an is concerned. The valuable dictionaries of Hadith, the Nihayah, of Ibn Athir and the Majma' al-Bihar have also proved very serviceable in explaining many a moot point. It will, however, be noted that I have more often referred to Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon, a work the value of which for the English student of Arabic can hardly be overestimated; this has been done purposely so that the reader of this volume may have the facility to refer to an easily accessible work. It is a pity that the great author was not spared to complete his work, but up to the letter fa, Lane has placed the world under the greatest obligation. Besides commentaries and lexicons, historical and other works have also been consulted. Among the collections of Hadith, Bukhari, Kitab al-Tafsir, or chapter on the commentary of the Holy Qur'an, has been before me throughout, but the whole of Bukhari and other reliable Hadith collections have also been consulted. And lastly, the greatest religious leader of the present time, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qaidian, has inspired me with all that is best in this work. I have drunk deep at the fountain of knowledge which this great Reformer — Mujaddid of the present century and founder of the Ahmadiyyah Movement — has made to flow. There is one more person whose name I must mention in this connection, the late Maulawi Hakim Nur al-Din, who in his last long illness patiently went through much the greater part of the explanatory notes and made many valuable suggestions. To him, indeed, the Muslim world owes a deep debt of gratitude as the leader of the new turn given to the exposition of the Holy Qur'an. He has done his work and passed away silently, but it is a fact that he spent the whole of his life in studying the Holy Qur'an, and must be ranked with the greatest expositors of the Holy Book.

"The principle of the greatest importance to which I have adhered in interpreting the Holy Qur'an is that no word of the Holy Book should be interpreted in such a manner as to contradict the plainer teachings of the Holy Qur'an, a principle to which the Holy Word has itself called the attention of its reader in 3:7; see 3:7a. This rule forms the basis of my interpretation of the Qur'an, and this is a very sound basis, if we remember that the Holy Qur'an contains metaphors, parables, and allegories side by side with plain teachings. The Practice (Sunnah) and Sayings of the Holy Prophet, when contained in reliable reports, are the best commentary of the Holy Word, and I have therefore attached the greatest importance to them. Earlier authorities have also been respected, but reports and comments contradicting the Qur'an itself cannot but be rejected. I have also kept before me the rule that the meaning to be adopted in any case should be that which suits the context best, and the only other limitation to which I have subjected myself is that the use of that word in that sense is allowed by the lexicons or by Arabic literature. Existing translations have rendered me great help, but I have adopted an interpretation only after fully satisfying myself and having recourse to original authorities. Many of the stories generally accepted by the commentators find no place in my commentary, except in cases where there is either sufficient historical evidence or the corroborative testimony of some reliable Saying of the Holy Prophet. Many of these stories were, I believe, incorporated into Islamic literature by the flow of converts from Judaism and Christianity into Islam. I must add that the present tendency of Muslim theologians to regard the commentaries of the Middle Ages as the final word on the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an is very injurious and practically shuts out the great treasures of knowledge which an exposition of the Holy Book in the new light reveals. A study of the old commentators, to ignore whose great labour would indeed be a sin, also shows how freely they commented upon the Holy Book. The great service which they have done to the cause of Truth would indeed have been lost to the world if they had looked upon their predecessors as uttering the final word on the exposition of the Holy Qur'an, as most theologians do today."

It is a matter of no small pleasure to me that many of the special features of my Translation as noted above have been adopted by later Muslim translators of the Holy Qur'an, the introductory notes to the chapters, giving the abstract of each chapter and showing its connection with what has gone before, have been specially appreciated. Even in the matter of interpretation, most of the views adopted by me have found acceptance with them. The following quotations from *The Moslem World*, July 1931, Revd. Zwemer's quarterly, would furnish interesting reading in this connection:

"A careful comparison of Mr. Pickthall's translation with that of the Ahmadiyya translator, Maulvi Muhammad Ali, shows conclusively, that Mr. Pickthall's work is not very much more than a revision of the Ahmadiyya version" (p. 289).

"We have made a thorough examination of about forty verses in the second chapter, sixty verses in the third, forty verses in the nineteenth, and all of the last fifteen chapters, comparing his renderings with those of Sale, Rodwell, Palmer and Muhammad Ali; as well as with the Arabic. From this careful investigation we have come to the conclusion that Mr. Pickthall's translation, in all that part of his work which we have examined, resembles very closely the version of Muhammad Ali, the difference between the two versions in many passages being merely verbal" (p. 290).

"Now if we compare the above passage (3:57-63) with the versions of S, R and P, we shall see that Mr. Pickthall is very much nearer to MA than he is to any of the three previous translators, so that one gets the impression that although he may have taken a word here and there from R and P, yet he has not followed them so closely as he obviously followed MA" (p. 292).

"The dependence of Mr. Pickthall upon the work of MA is also indicated in an occasional footnote, and those who will compare these footnotes with the notes in the 1920 edition of MA, which contains his commentary, will find that throughout chapter 2 almost every footnote is based on the Ahmadiyya Commentary" (p. 293).

"We think it will now be evident to the reader how much Mr. Pickthall is indebted to the version of Maulvi Muhammad Ali, not only for his footnotes but also for the translation itself" (p. 293).

"By comparing these two passages with Mr. Sarwar's rendering given on page 133 of the last issue of this journal, it will be seen that both Mr. Sarwar and Mr. Pickthall have followed MA very closely" (p. 294).

"In the passages which we have examined carefully, namely the verses at the beginning of the second, third and nineteenth suras, and the last fifteen, the translation of Pickthall follows MA so closely that one finds very few evidences of original work" (p. 297).

Similar views have been expressed by other writers. Thus the author of *Islam in its True Light* calls this Translation "a leading star for subsequent similar Muslim works" (p. 69) and mentions both Mr. Sarwar and Mr. Pickthall as following closely this Translation. The reason is not far to seek. My work was a work of labour. For every rendering or explanation I had to search Hadith collections, Lexicologies, Commentaries and other important works, and every opinion expressed was substantiated by quoting authorities. Differences there have been in the past, and in future too there will be differences, but wherever I have differed I have given my authority for the difference. Moreover the principle I have kept in view in this Translation and Commentary, i.e., seeking the explanation of a problematic point first of all from the Holy Qur'an itself, has kept me nearest to the truth, and those who study the Qur'an closely will find very few occasions to differ with me. The Christian writer of the article in *The Moslem World*, from which I have quoted above, concludes with the following words:

"One cannot read far in the translation of Maulvi Muhammad Ali or in his notes without being convinced that before he began his work on the Koran he was already widely read in the Arabic Authorities listed on page ix, to which frequent reference is made in his notes; also his quotations from Lane's *Lexicon* indicate that he was not altogether oblivious to the results of European scholarship" (p. 303).

And then it is added:

"It is a pity that his work is so saturated with the peculiar doctrines of the Ahmadiyya sect and with bitter denunciation of Christian teachings that the results of his Oriental scholarship have been seriously vitiated."

I may here add that it is not only in having recourse to Lane's *Lexicon* that I have taken advantage of European scholarship. For full nine years before taking up this translation I was engaged in studying every aspect of the European criticism of Islam as well as of Christianity and religion in general, as I had specially to deal with these subjects in *The Review of Religions*, of which I was the first editor. I had thus an occasion to go through both the higher criticism of religion by advanced thinkers and what I may call the narrower criticism of Islam by the Christian missionaries who had no eye for the broader principles of Islam and its cosmopolitan teachings, and the unparalleled transformation wrought by Islam. The talk of Ahmadiyyah doctrines is, however, nothing but false propaganda. The faith of Islam is one and all sects of Islam are one so far as the essential doctrines of Islam are concerned. There are differences in interpretation but they all relate to minor and secondary points. The Christian reviewer's combining together "the peculiar doctrines of the Ahmadiyya sect" and "bitter denunciation of the Christian teachings" lets the cat out of the bag. So far as the criticism of the false church doctrines of Trinity, Sonship and Atonement is concerned, the doctrines are so emphatically denounced in plain words in the Qur'an itself that no commentator need be bitter. What offends the Christian missionary and what he calls the peculiar doctrines of the Ahmadiyyah sect is no more than an expression of opinion that Jesus Christ did not bodily ascend to heaven and is not alive there and that he died a natural death like other prophets. There is not a single doctrine of the religion of Islam in which this Translation differs from orthodox views. I hope to be excused for clearing up this point by a quotation from Mr. Pickthall's review of my book *The Religion of Islam in the Islamic Culture* for October 1936:

"Probably no man living has done longer or more valuable service for the cause of Islamic revival than Maulana Muhammad Ali of Lahore. ... In our opinion the present volume is his finest work ... It is a description of Al-Islam by one well-versed in the Qur'an and the Sunnah who has on his mind the shame of the Muslim decadence of the past five centuries and in his heart the hope of the revival, of which signs can now be seen on every side. Without moving a hair's breadth from the Traditional position with regard to worship and religious duties, the author shows a wide field in which changes are lawful and may be desirable because here the rules

and practices are not based on an ordinance of the Quran or an edict of the Prophet." (p. 659)

Mr. Pickthall was an orthodox Muslim, and what he has said of The Religion of Islam is true of this Translation. There is not a hair's breadth departure from the essentials of Islam, and this Translation does not contain anything contrary to the views of the great Imams and learned Ahl Sunnah that have gone before. That there have been differences in the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an among the greatest commentators, among even the Companions of the Holy Prophet and the great Imams, cannot be denied. But these differences do not relate to the essentials of the faith of Islam on which all Muslims are agreed; they relate to minor or secondary points. All Muslims believe in the Unity of God and the prophethood of Muhammad. They believe in all the prophets of God and in His Books. They believe that Divine revelation came to perfection with the Prophet Muhammad who is thus the last of the prophets — Khatam al-Nabiyyin — after whom no prophet will come, and the Holy Qur'an is the last Divine message to the whole of humanity. All these doctrines find clear expression in my translation and the explanatory footnotes.

The only important matter wherein I may be said to have differed with the majority relates to the death of Jesus Christ. But in the first place the belief that Jesus is alive somewhere in the heavens has never been included among the essentials of Islam. It has never been included among the religious doctrines of the faith of Islam. There are Muslims who still believe that four prophets are alive, Khidr, Idris, Elias and Jesus Christ, but that is not an article of faith with any Muslim. Many learned Muslims have held such belief regarding the first three to be based on Israelite stories and as having nothing to support it in the Holy Qur'an and authentic Hadith. They are not looked upon as unorthodox for that reason. Why should this Translation be looked upon as unorthodox for saying the same thing about a belief in Jesus Christ being alive? I may call the reader's attention to another fact as well. Most learned Muslims all over the world, if not all, are today convinced that Jesus Christ died like other prophets and many of them have given expression to such views, among them being the famous Mufti Muhammad 'Abdu-hu and Sayyid Rashid Rada' of Egypt.

I may be excused for quoting two other orthodox views about this Translation. Maulana 'Abdul Majid Daryabadi, editor, Such, Lucknow, who is a recognized leader of orthodox Muslim opinion, wrote on 25th June 1943:

"To deny the excellence of Maulvi Muhammad 'Ali's translation, the influence it has exercised and its proselytizing utility, would be to deny the light of the sun. The translation certainly helped in bringing thousands of non-Muslims to the Muslim fold and hundreds of thousands of unbelievers much nearer Islam. Speaking of my own self, I gladly admit that this translation was one of the few books which brought me towards Islam fifteen or sixteen years ago when I was groping in darkness, atheism and scepticism. Even Maulana Muhammad 'Ali of the Comrade was greatly enthralled by this translation

and had nothing but praise for it."

Here we have the view of not one but two great orthodox leaders of Islam. I would add only one more orthodox leader's view to show that there is not the least ground for the false propaganda that this Translation is saturated with any unorthodox or heretical views. It is the Urdu paper Wakil, which was published from Amritsar and of which both the editor and the proprietor were orthodox Muslims. Its review of this Translation when it was first issued was in the following words:

"We have seen the translation critically and have no hesitation in remarking that the simplicity of its language and the correctness of the version are all enviable. The writer has kept his annotations altogether free from sectarian influence with wonderful impartiality, and has gathered together the wealth of authentic Muslim theology. He has also displayed great skill and wisdom in using the new weapons of defence in refuting the objections of the opponents of Islam."

As I have already stated, I have throughout this Translation quoted authorities wherever I have differed with previous translators or commentators or with certain views generally held by Muslims but which are not supported by the Holy Qur'an or by authentic Hadith of the Holy Prophet. In the revised edition I have laid even greater emphasis on this point. In the case of Hadith collections I have now given exact references, to book and chapter, which were wanting in the first edition, and have moreover made greater use of reliable Hadith when they explain the Qur'an, giving the greatest importance to Bukhari — Asahh al-Kutub ba'da Kitab Allah — the most correct of the books after the Book of God. Lexicons have also been resorted to on a vaster scale, and a complete index of the Arabic words and phrases explained has been added. The general index has been amplified, and headings have been added bearing on important subjects dealt with in the Qur'an.

Changes have been made in many footnotes and a large number of new notes has been added. As regards the Translation itself, I have tried to make it simpler, though still adhering to the principle adopted in the first edition of being faithful to the Arabic text.

Changes have also been made in the subjects discussed in the Introduction. The subject of the Purity of the Quranic Text was very important as throwing light on the collection and arrangement of the Holy Book and it has been retained with some changes. But the summary of the teachings of Islam and details of the Islamic Institution of prayer are now obtainable separately and have been omitted from the Introduction. In the place of these, new and important subjects have been inserted to afford facility to the reader in understanding the Holy Qur'an itself.

MUHAMMAD 'ALI.

Muslim Town,
Lahore (Pakistan).
18th January 1951.

INTRODUCTION

1. THE HOLY QUR'AN AND ITS DIVISIONS

Al-Qur'an.

The name Al-Qur'an, the proper name of the Sacred Book of the Muslims, occurs several times in the Book itself (2:185, etc.). The word Qur'an is an infinitive noun from the root qara'a meaning, primarily, he collected things together, and also, he read or recited; and the Book is so called both because it is a collection of the best religious teachings and because it is a Book that is or should be read; as a matter of fact, it is the most widely read book in the whole world. It is plainly stated to be a revelation from the Lord of the worlds (26:192), or a revelation from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise (39:1, etc.), and so on. It was sent down to the Prophet Muhammad (47:2), having been revealed to his heart through the Holy Spirit (26:193, 194), in the Arabic language (26:195; 43:3). The first revelation came to the Holy Prophet in the month of Rama'dan (2:185), on the 25th or 27th night, which is known as Lailat al-Qadr (97:1).

Other names and Epithets

The Holy Book speaks of itself by the following additional names: al-Kit? (2:2), a writing which is complete in itself; al-Furqan (25:1), that which distinguishes between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong; al-Dhikr (15:9), the Reminder or a source of eminence and glory to mankind; al-Mau'izah (10:57), the Admonition; al-Hukm (13:37), the Judgment; al-Hikmat (17:39), the Wisdom; al-Shif'a (10:57), that which heals; al-Huda (72:13), that which guides or makes one attain the goal; al-Tanzil (26:192), the Revelation; al-Rahmat (2:105), the Mercy; al-Ruh (42:52), the Spirit or that which gives life; al-Khair (3:104), the Goodness; al-Bayan (3:138), that which explains all things or clear statement; al-Ni'mat (93:11), the Favour; al-Burham (4:174), the clear Argument or manifest proof; al-Qayyim (18:2), the Maintainer or Rightly-directing; al-Muhaimin (5:48), the Guardian (of previous revelation); al-Nur (7:157), the Light; al-Haqq (17:81), the Truth; Habl-Allah (3:103), the Covenant of Allah. In addition to these, many qualifying epithets are applied to the Holy Book, such as al-Mubin (12:1), one that makes manifest; al-Karim (56:77), the Bounteous; al-Majid (50:1), the Glorious; al-Hakim (36:2), full of Wisdom; al-'Aziz (41:41), the Mighty or Invincible; al-Mukarramah (80:13), the Honoured; al-Marfu'ah (80:14), the Exalted; al-Mutahharah (80:14), the Purified; al-'Ajab (72:1), the Wonderful; Mubarak (6:92), Blessed; and Musaddiq (6:92), confirming the truth of previous revelation.

Divisions

The Holy Qur'an is divided into 114 chapters, each of which is called a surah (2:23). The word surah means literally eminence or high degree, and also any step of a structure, and in the Book itself it is applied to a chapter of the Qur'an either because of its eminence or because each chapter is, as it were, a distinct degree or step in the whole Book, which is thus compared to a structure. The chapters of the Holy Qur'an are of varying length, the largest comprising fully one twelfth of the entire Book - 286 verses - and the smallest containing only three verses. Each chapter is, however, complete in itself and is, therefore, called a book, and the whole of the Qur'an is said to contain many books: "Pure pages wherein are (all) right books" (98:2, 3). The longer chapters are divided into ruku's or sections, each section generally dealing with one subject, the different sections being interrelated. Again, each section contains a number of ayahs or verses. The word ayah means, originally, an apparent sign or mark and, in this sense, it comes to mean a miracle, but it also signifies a communication or a

message from God and is applied as such to a verse of the Holy Qur'an as well as to a revelation or a law. Each chapter, with the exception of the concluding 35 chapters, is divided into sections, the largest number of sections in a chapter being 40; and each section, as also each single-section chapter, is divided into a number of verses. The total number of verses in the Holy Qur'an is 6237, or 6350, if we add to each chapter the common opening verse of Bismillah. For the purposes of recitation, the Holy Qur'an is divided into 30 parts of equal length, each called a juz', to enable the reciter to complete its recitation in one month, every part being again sub-divided into four parts. Another division of the Book, traceable to the Prophet himself, is into seven manzils or portions to enable the reciter to complete its recitation in seven days. These divisions, however, have nothing to do with the subject-matter of the Qur'an.

Revealed piecemeal but collected and arranged from the first

The Qur'an was revealed piecemeal (25:32) during a period of 23 years, the shorter chapters generally, and some of the larger ones, being revealed entire and at one time, while the revelation of the majority of the larger chapters and some of the shorter chapters extended over many years. The practice was, as will be shown later on, that when a chapter was revealed in parts, the Holy Prophet specified, under Divine guidance, the place of the verse revealed, and thus the arrangement of verses in each chapter was entirely his work. Similarly, later on when a considerable portion had been revealed, the arrangement of the chapters was also the work of the Holy Prophet himself. It is in one of the earliest revelations that the Holy Qur'an speaks of its collection as well as its revelation as being a part of the Divine scheme: "Surely on Us rests the collecting of it and the reciting of it" (75:17). The collection of the Holy Qur'an - which means the arrangement of its verses and chapters - was, therefore, a work which was performed by the Holy Prophet himself under Divine guidance, and it is a mistake to think that either Abu Bakr or 'Uthman was the collector of the Qur'an, though both of them did important work in connection with the dissemination of the written copies of the sacred text. Abu Bakr made the first complete written copy, by arranging the manuscripts written in the time of the Holy Prophet, in the order of the oral recitation of the Prophet's time. 'Uthman's work, on the other hand, was only the ordering of copies to be made from the written manuscript of Abu Bakr's time and the placing of these copies in the various centres of Islamic learning, so that those who wrote the Holy Qur'an might be able to follow the standard copy. The text of the Holy Qur'an has thus been safeguarded from all alterations or corruptions in accordance with the Divine promise contained in one of the earliest revelations: "Surely We have revealed the Reminder, and surely We are its Guardian" (15:9). The subject of the purity of the text of the Holy Qur'an has been fully discussed further on.

Makkan and Madinan Revelations.

Another division of the Holy Book concerns the Makkan and Madinan revelations. Of the 23 years over which the revelation of the entire Book is spread, 13 years were passed by the Holy Prophet at Makkah and 10 were passed at Madinah, to which city he had to flee for the safety of his own life and the lives of his followers. Of the entire number of chapters, 93 were revealed at Makkah and 21 were revealed at Madinah, but the 110th chapter, though belonging to the Madinah period, was revealed at Makkah during the well-known farewell pilgrimage.

The Madinan chapters, being generally longer, contain really about a third of the entire Qur'an. In arrangement, the Makkan revelation is intermixed with the Madinan revelation. Thus the Holy Qur'an opens with a Makkan revelation which is entitled the "Opening", and is followed by four chapters revealed at Madinah, which take up over one fifth of the whole Book. Then follow alternately Makkan and Madinan revelations.

As regards the dates of the revelation of the various Makkan chapters, it is difficult to assign a particular year to a particular chapter, except in rare cases, but broadly they may be divided into three groups: those revealed in the early Makkan period, i.e., during the first five years; those revealed in the middle Makkan period, i.e., from the sixth to the tenth year; and those revealed during the late Makkan period, i.e., from the 11th year to the Flight (Hijrah). The dates of the Madinan chapters, on the other hand, are tolerably certain and definite, but in this case the difficulty is that the revelation of the longer chapters extended over lengthy periods, and a chapter which undoubtedly belongs to the earliest days at Madinah sometimes contains verses which were revealed in the closing days of the Holy Prophet's life.

Subject to the remarks made above, the following dates may approximately be assigned to the different chapters or groups of chapters:

Early Makkan period...60 chapters:1, 17–21, 50–56, 67–109, 111–114.

Middle Makkan period...17 chapters:29–32, 34–39, 40–46.

Late Makkan period...15 chapters:6, 7, 10–16, 22, 23, 25–28.

A.H. 1–2...6 chapters:2, 8, 47, 61, 62, 64.

A.H. 3–4...3 chapters:3, 58, 59.

A.H. 5–8...9 chapters:4, 5, 24, 33, 48, 57, 60, 63, 65.

A.H. 9–10...4 chapters:9, 49, 66, 110.

Chronological order

The first five verses of the 96th chapter were undoubtedly the first revelation, and these were equally certainly followed by the first part of the 74th chapter, which again was, in all probability, followed by the first chapter, after which came the first part of the 73rd chapter. Beyond this, it is impossible to give a tolerably certain order. The attempt to give a chronological order is an undoubted failure, as even the shorter chapters were not revealed entire. For instance, chronological order would place the 96th chapter first, while, as a matter of fact, every historian of Islam knows that only the first five verses were revealed first, vv. 6–19 coming long afterwards, when persecution of the Prophet had actually begun, as is made clear by vv. 9, 10, which speak of the Prophet being prohibited from saying his prayers, and must be referred to about the time when Arqam's house was chosen for saying prayers, an event belonging to the fourth year of the Call. If, then, we are confronted with such a serious difficulty in giving the first place to a chapter with which the revelation of the Holy Qur'an undoubtedly began, what about the later chapters, and especially the longer ones? Take the second chapter in the present order as another example. There is not the least doubt that its revelation began in the first or, at the latest, in the second year of the Hijrah, but it is equally certain that it contains verses which were revealed in 10 A.H. A chronological order of the different chapters is, therefore, an impossibility, and all that we can say with tolerable certainty is that the greater part of a certain chapter was revealed during a certain period, and this is my reason for assigning particular periods to particular chapters.

Makkan and Madinan Revelations intermingled in the final arrangement

The first thing that strikes us in the present arrangement is the

intermingling of Makkan and Madinan revelations. Surely there must have been some reason underlying this arrangement and to discover this we must find the chief features which distinguish the Makkan from the Madinan revelations. A contrast of the two makes it clear that, while the Makkan revelations grounded the Muslims in faith in God, the Madinan revelation was meant to translate the faith into action. It is true that exhortations for good and noble deeds are met with in the Makkan revelations and that faith is still shown in the Madinan revelations to be the foundation on which the structure of deeds should be built, but, in the main, stress is laid in the former on faith in an Omnipresent and Omnipotent God Who requites every good and evil deed, while the latter deals chiefly with what is good and what is evil; in other words, with the details of the law. Another feature distinguishing the two revelations is that, while the Makkan revelation is generally prophetic, the revelation that came down at Madinah deals with the fulfilment of prophecy. Again, if the Makkan revelation shows how true happiness of mind may be sought in communion with God, the Madinan revelation points out how man's dealing with man may be a source of bliss and comfort to him. Hence, a scientific arrangement of the Holy Qur'an could be made to rest only on the intermingling of the two revelations — the intermingling of faith with deeds, of prophecy with the fulfilment of prophecy, of Divine communion with man's relation to and treatment of man.

A cursory view of the present arrangement

A detailed view of the order in which the chapters follow one another shows the truth of the remarks made above; and for this the reader is referred to the introductory notes prefacing each chapter. A brief outline, however, may be given here. The Holy Book is prefaced with a short Makkan chapter which, in its seven short verses, contains the essence of the whole of the Qur'an, and teaches a prayer which is admittedly the most beautiful of all prayers taught by any religion, and which sets before man an ideal greater than any other which can be conceived. If the preface is the quintessence of the Qur'an and places before man the highest ideal, the commencement of the Book is equally scientific, for the second chapter opens with a clear statement as to its aims and objects. The first four chapters all belong to the Madinan revelation and, occupying as they do over a fifth of the whole Qur'an, deal in detail with the teachings of Islam, comparing them with the previously existing teachings, particularly Jewish and Christian, which had by that time become the prototypes of error in religion, the former laying too much stress on outward ritual, while utterly neglecting the spirit, and the latter condemning law itself, trusting to faith in Christ alone. The greater part of Islamic law dealing with the individual, home and civic life of man is contained in these four chapters.

These are followed by two of the longest Makkan chapters, the first of which deals in detail with the doctrine of Divine Unity, and the second with that of prophethood. This latter chapter illustrates the doctrine of prophethood with reference to the histories of some well-known prophets. These two are again followed by two Madinan chapters, which fit in with the context, as they show how opposition to Truth as revealed to the Holy Prophet was dealt with: the first of these — the 8th — deals with their discomfiture in the first struggle in the battle of Badr and the second — the 9th — with their final vanquishment.

Then follows a group of seven Makkan chapters, the Alif Lam Ra group, dealing with the truth of the Holy Prophet's revelations, internal evidence, evidence from man's nature, from the histories of the previous prophets and from external nature, being produced to establish that truth. Another group of five Makkan chapters follows it, all dealing with the greatness

to which Islam was destined to rise, with special reference to Jewish history in ch. 17, to Christian history and doctrine in ch. 18 and ch. 19, to the history of Moses in ch. 20, and to the history of prophets in general and their deliverance in ch. 21. Two more Makkan chapters follow, the first showing that the Prophet's cause must triumph, though the faithful would be required to make great sacrifices for the cause of Truth, and the second showing that the foundation on which the greatness of the Muslim nation rested was moral, not material. A Madinan chapter — the 24th — is then brought in to show how the prophecies of the Makkan revelations were being brought to fulfilment by the establishment of a Muslim kingdom and the dissemination of the spiritual light of Islam. The 25th chapter is again a Makkan revelation, which shows, as its name indicates, that the distinction between truth and falsehood which the Holy Qur'an was to establish was witnessed in the lives of the Companions of the Holy Prophet.

A group of three more Makkan chapters, the Ta Sin group, is then introduced, prophesying the ultimate triumph of the Holy Prophet with special reference to the triumph of Moses over a powerful enemy who was bent upon destroying the Israelites. Another group of four Makkan chapters, the Alif Lam Mim group, follows and shows that the state of helplessness and utter weakness in which the Muslims were at the time would soon be changed. A Madinan chapter — the 33rd — is again inserted showing how the combined forces of the enemies of Islam in the Battle of the Allies failed to crush Islam. The utmost simplicity of the Holy Prophet's domestic life is here brought in to show that the attractions of this world, such as wealth or kingdom, had no charm for him, notwithstanding that he then ruled Arabia, and that thenceforward he was a model for all nations and for all ages, no prophet being needed after him, and emphasizing that it was only shortsighted carpners who found fault with one who led a life of such unexampled purity and simplicity. A group of six Makkan chapters follows, showing that the rise and fall of nations are brought about by the good and evil which they do, and that nations which rise to greatness can retain their eminent position only if they are not ungrateful for the favours conferred upon them.

The next group of seven Makkan chapters is known as the Ha Mim group, and it lays stress on the fact that Truth must overcome opposition and that no temporal power with all the temporal resources at its back can annihilate Truth. This is followed by a group of three Madinan chapters; the 47th, which was revealed in the first year of the Hijrah, showing that those who had accepted the truth as revealed to the Holy Prophet, though in great distress, would soon have their condition ameliorated; the next, which belongs to the sixth year of the Hijrah, predicting in the clearest words the final triumph of Islam over all the religions of the world; and the last of this group, which was revealed towards the close of the Holy Prophet's life, enjoining on the Muslims the duty of respect for one another. From the 50th to the 56th, is another group of seven Makkan chapters pointing out the great spiritual awakening which was to be brought about by the Holy Qur'an. Then comes the last group of Madinan revelations, ten chapters in all, from the 57th to the 66th, which supplement what has already been said in the previous Madinan chapters, the last of these, the 65th and 66th, being clearly a supplement to the second chapter, al-Baqarah, and dealing with the subject of divorce and temporary separation.

Then follow 48 short Makkan chapters, showing how men and nations can rise to eminence by following the Truth which is revealed in the Holy Qur'an, and how they suffer loss by rejecting the Truth. The Holy Book ends with a concise but clear declaration of Divine Unity, in chapter 112; the last two

chapters tell a man how to seek refuge in Divine protection against all kinds of mischief.

2. WORLD'S GREATEST SPIRITUAL FORCE

Object to bring humanity to perfection

The Holy Qur'an claims to be the greatest spiritual force which is ultimately destined to bring the whole of humanity to perfection. Anyone who will simply cast a glance at its opening and closing verses will not fail to see this. It opens thus:

"Praise be to Allah, the Nourisher of the worlds to perfection ('Lord' of the worlds)" (1:1).

And it ends thus:

"Say: I seek refuge with the Nourisher of mankind to perfection ('Lord' of men)" (114:1).

And this is the theme of the Holy Book throughout. It calls itself al-Ruh (42:52) or the Spirit which gives life to humanity, and time and again compares itself to the water which gives life to a dead earth:

"And of His signs is this, that thou seest the earth still, but when We send down water thereon, it stirs and swells. He Who gives it life is surely the Giver of life to the dead" (41:39).

This giving of life to the dead earth is a constant theme of the Qur'an and it is full of repeated assurances that the dead earth will be raised to life spiritual: "Know that Allah gives life to the earth after its death. Indeed, We have made the signs clear for you that you may understand" (57:17). It calls itself *Shif'a* or Healing (10:57) to show that it heals all the spiritual diseases of humanity. It calls itself *al-Dhikr* or a source of eminence to mankind (15:9; see 21:10a, 43:5a). It calls itself *al-Nur* or the Light (7:157) which will ultimately dispel all darkness from the surface of the earth. It calls itself *al-Haqq* or the Truth (17:81) which will ultimately take hold of the minds of men and before which falsehood will vanish. It calls itself *al-Huda* or the Guidance (72:13) which will make men ultimately attain the goal of life.

A spiritual force which will ultimately overcome all

It goes further and lays claim to the fact that it is the only spiritual force which will ultimately conquer the whole world and that the whole of humanity cannot produce a force like it:

"And if there could be a Qur'an with which the mountains were made to pass away, or the earth were cloven asunder, or the dead were made to speak — nay, the commandment is wholly Allah's" (13:31).

"Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, thou wouldst certainly have seen it falling down, splitting asunder" (59:21).

All opposition to it was to be swept away:

"Leave Me and the deniers, possessors of plenty, and respite them a little" (73:11).

Not the whole world could produce a book like it:

"If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Qur'an, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others" (17:88).

"And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it, and call on your

helpers besides Allah, if you are truthful" (2:23).

And it is repeated thrice that the Qur'an was ultimately to prevail over the whole world:

"He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over all religions" (61:9; 48:28; 9:33).

Unparalleled transformation wrought by the Qur'an

In fact, the transformation wrought by the Holy Qur'an is unparalleled in the history of the world. No other reformer brought about such an entire change in the lives of a whole nation in his lifetime. The Qur'an found the Arabs worshippers of idols, stones, trees, heaps of sand, and yet, within less than a quarter of a century, the worship of the One God ruled the whole country, idolatry being wiped out from one end to the other. It swept away all superstitions and gave in their place the most rational religion that the world could imagine. The Arab who prided himself in his ignorance had, as if by a magician's wand, become the lover of knowledge, drinking deep at every fountain of learning to which he could get access. This was the direct effect of the teachings of the Qur'an, which not only appealed to reason, ever and anon, but declared man's thirst for knowledge to be insatiable, when it directed the Prophet himself to pray: "O my Lord, increase me in knowledge" (20:114). Not only had the Qur'an swept away the deep vices and barefaced immorality of the Arab; it had also inspired him with a burning desire for the best and noblest deeds in the service of humanity. The burying alive of the daughter, the marriage with a step-mother, and loose sex relations had given place to equal respect for the offspring, whether male or female, to equal rights of inheritance for father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister, husband and wife, to the chastest relations of sex and to placing the highest value on sexual morality and the chastity of woman. Drunkenness, to which Arabia had been addicted from time immemorial, disappeared so entirely that the very goblets and the vessels which were used for drinking and keeping wine could no more be found and, greatest of all, from an Arabia, the various elements of which were so constantly at war with one another that the whole country was about to perish, being "on the brink of a pit of fire" (3:103), as the Qur'an so beautifully and so tersely puts it - from an Arabia full of these jarring and warring elements, the Qur'an welded together a nation, a united nation full of life and vigour, before whose onward march the greatest kingdoms of the world crumbled as if they were but toys before the reality of the new faith. No faith ever imparted such a new life to its votaries on such a wide scale - a life affecting all branches of human activity; a transformation of the individual, of the family, of the society, of the nation, of the country; an awakening material as well as moral, intellectual as well as spiritual. The Qur'an effected a transformation of humanity from the lowest depths of degradation to the highest pinnacle of civilization within an incredibly short time where centuries of reformation work had proved fruitless. To its unparalleled nature, testimony is borne by the non-Muslim, sometimes anti-Muslim, historian. Here are a few instances: "From time beyond memory, Mecca and the whole Peninsula had been steeped in spiritual torpor. The slight and transient influences of Judaism, Christianity, or philosophical inquiry upon the Arab mind had been but as the ruffling here and there of the surface of a quiet lake; all remained still and motionless below. The people were sunk in superstition, cruelty and vice...Their religion was a gross idolatry; and their faith the dark superstitious dread of unseen things...Thirteen years before the Hejira, Mecca lay lifeless in this debased state. What a change had these thirteen years now produced!...Jewish truth had long sounded in the ears of the men of Medina; but it was not until they heard the spirit-stirring strains of the Arabian Prophet that they too awoke from

their slumber, and sprang suddenly into a new and earnest life" (Muir's Life of Mahomet, ch. vii).

"A more disunited people it would be hard to find, till suddenly, the miracle took place! A man arose who, by his personality and by his claim to direct Divine guidance, actually brought about the impossible - namely, the union of all these warring factions" (The Ins and Outs of Mesopotamia, p. 99).

"And yet we may truly say that no history can boast events that strike the imagination in a more lively manner, or can be more surprising in themselves, than those we meet with in the lives of the first Muslims; whether we consider the Great Chief, or his ministers, the most illustrious of men; or whether we take an account of the manners of the several countries he conquered; or observe the courage, virtue, and sentiments that equally prevailed among his generals and soldiers" (The Life of Mahomet by the Count of Boulainvilliers, English Translation, p. 5).

"That the best of Arab writers has never succeeded in producing anything equal in merit to the Qur'an itself is not surprising" (Palmer's Introduction to English Translation of the Quran, p. iv).

"It is the one miracle claimed by Muhammad - his standing miracle, he called it - and a miracle indeed it is" (Bosworth Smith, Mohammed, p. 290).

"Never has a people been led more rapidly to civilization, such as it was, than were the Arabs through Islam" (New Researches, by H. Hirschfeld, p. 5).

"The Quran is unapproachable as regards convincing power, eloquence, and even composition" (Ibid., p. 8).

"And to it was also indirectly due the marvellous development of all branches of science in the Moslem world" (Ibid., p. 9).

"Here, therefore, its merits as a literary production should, perhaps, not be measured by some preconceived maxims of subjective and aesthetic taste, but by the effects which it produced in Muhammad's contemporaries and fellow-countrymen. 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-organized body, animated by ideas far beyond those which had until now ruled the Arabian mind, then its eloquence was perfect, simply because it created a civilized nation out of savage tribes, and shot a fresh woof into the old warp of history" (Dr. Steingass, in Hughes' Dictionary of Islam, art. "Quran").

Two other unique characteristics

The marvellous effect produced by the Holy Qur'an on the minds of those who first came into contact with it, the unparalleled revolution brought about in the world, the uplift of not one but many nations from the depth of degradation to the height of civilization is, however, not the only characteristic which establishes its claim to uniqueness. It possesses two other characteristics equally unique — the wealth of ideas and the beauty of style — and these two combined with the effect it produced are the three things which raise the Qur'an to an eminence to which no other book has ever aspired and which make an imitation of it impossible. In fact, the effect produced by the Holy Qur'an is not a magical mystery. It was merely the greatness and reasonableness of the ideas clothed in the best of forms that appealed to the heart of man and, taking deep root in it, became the driving power to the great goal of life. A blaze of light was cast on all the great questions which had hitherto puzzled man, and the way was thus cleared for onward march

and progress. Hence it is, that one of the names by which the Holy Book speaks of itself is al-Burhan, or the Clear Argument, showing that argument was the weapon which it used to conquer the heart of man; and, as it appealed to reason and not to sentiment, its conquests were so far-reaching and permanent that it swept away all mysteries and dispelled all darkness. It is also called al-Bayan, or the Explanation, indicating that it had removed all obscurities in religious problems. It claimed not only to have perfected religion (5:3), and thus to have stated all religious truths needed for the moral and spiritual advancement of man, but also to have dealt with all objections to its truth: "And they cannot bring thee a question, but We have brought thee the truth and the best explanation" (25:33).

Style and Diction

A few more words on the outer garb in which the grand life-giving ideas of the Qur'an are clothed and I shall have done with this subject. The style and diction of the Qur'an have been universally praised. In the introduction to his translation of the Holy Qur'an, Sale says:

"The Koran is universally allowed to be written with the utmost elegance and purity of language in the dialect of the tribe of the Koreish, the most noble and polite of all the Arabians, but with some mixture, though very rare, of other dialects. It is confessedly the standard of the Arabic tongue."

And again:

"The style of the Koran is generally beautiful and fluent ...and in many places, especially where the majesty and the attributes of God are described, sublime and magnificent."

What, however, establishes the Qur'an's claim to uniqueness even in the outward form, apart from its subject and the effect produced, is the permanent hold that it has kept on the Arabic language itself, the fact that it remains forever the standard by which the beauty of style and diction may be judged in Arabic literature. No other book in the world can be credited with even the achievement of keeping alive a language for thirteen centuries; the Qur'an has done this, attaining to the eminence of being the standard of eloquence for so long, and of retaining that position while the nation speaking it emerged from oblivion to become the leader of civilization in the world, leaving its home to settle in far distant lands where Arabic became either the spoken language of the masses or at least their literary language. Such is the incredible achievement of the Holy Qur'an. It is true that the Arabs had a literary language before the Qur'an - the language of poetry, which, notwithstanding slight dialectic differences, conformed to one standard - but the scope of that poetry was very limited. Their most eloquent themes rarely went beyond the praise of wine or woman and horse or sword. In the condition in which Arabic was before the advent of Islam, it would soon have shared the fate of the sister languages of the Semitic group. It was the Qur'an which made it the language of a civilized world from the Oxus to the Atlantic. Whatever changes spoken Arabic, like any other language, may have undergone, literary Arabic is to this day the Arabic of the Qur'an, and the Qur'an remains its one masterpiece.

3. RELATION TO EARLIER SCRIPTURES

Previous Scriptures recognized

The Holy Qur'an requires a belief not only in its own truth but also in the truth of previous scriptures delivered to the prophets of different nations of the world. At its commencement, it lays down clearly:

"And (those) who believe in that which has been revealed to

thee and that which was revealed before thee" (2:4).

The universality of what was revealed before is clearly accepted:

"And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them" (35:24).

"And for every nation there is a messenger" (10:47).

Lest anyone should be misled by the names of a few prophets mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, it is stated:

"And certainly We sent messengers before thee - of them are those We have mentioned to thee and of them are those We have not mentioned to thee" (40:78; 4:164).

Thus the Holy Qur'an accepts the truth of the sacred books of the world, and hence it is again and again spoken of as a Book verifying that which is before it. The basis of the relation in which the Holy Qur'an stands to other scriptures is, therefore, that they are all members of one family; they all have a Divine origin.

Guardian of previous scriptures

The Verifier of the sacred books of the world, however, occupies a unique position among them. The relation in which the Holy Qur'an stands to earlier scriptures is thus lucidly set forth by the Holy Book itself:

"And We have revealed to thee the Book with the truth, verifying that which is before it of the Book and a guardian over it" (5:48).

The Qur'an is thus not only a verifier of the sacred books of all nations as stated above; it is also a guardian over them. In other words, it guards the original teachings of the prophets of God, for, as elsewhere stated, those teachings had undergone alterations, and only a revelation from God could separate the pure Divine teaching from the mass of error which had grown around it. This was the work done by the Holy Qur'an, and hence it is called a guardian over the earlier scriptures. Of all the scriptures, it has particularly chosen the Gospels to show in what ways erroneous doctrines had almost entirely suppressed the truth preached by a prophet of God. They seem, moreover, to have been chosen as an example, for how could earlier scriptures escape alterations, if the teachings of so recent a prophet as Jesus Christ could not be handed over intact to posterity?

The Qur'an as a judge in existing differences

The Holy Qur'an further claims that it came as a judge to decide the differences between the various religions:

"We certainly sent (messengers) to nations before thee, ... And We have not revealed to thee the Book except that thou mayest make clear to them that wherein they differ" (16:63, 64).

As already stated, the Qur'an proclaimed that prophets had been raised in every nation, and, therefore, that every nation had received guidance from God, yet nation differed from nation even in the essentials of faith. The position of the Holy Qur'an was, therefore, essentially that of a judge deciding between these various claimants.

It explains all obscurities

The most important point to be borne in mind in connection with the relation of the Holy Qur'an to the earlier scriptures is

that it makes clear what is obscure in them and explains fully what is there stated briefly. Revelation, according to the Holy Qur'an, is not only universal but also progressive, and it attains perfection in the Final Revelation. A revelation was granted to each nation according to its requirements, and in each age in accordance with the capacity of the people of that age. As the human brain became more and more developed, more and more light was cast by revelation on matters relating to the unseen, on the existence and attributes of the Divine Being, on the nature of revelation from Him, on the requital of good and evil, on life after death, and on paradise and hell. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'an is again and again called a Book "that makes manifest". It shed complete light on the essentials of the faith and made manifest what had hitherto of necessity remained obscure.

Perfect Revelation of Divine Will

Further, as a result of what has been said above, the Holy Qur'an claims that it came as a perfect revelation of Divine will:

"This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion" (5:3).

The finality of the Quranic revelation is, therefore, based on its perfection. New scriptures were revealed as long as they were needed, but when perfect light was cast on all essentials of religion in the Holy Qur'an, no prophet was needed after Muhammad. Six hundred years before him, Jesus Christ, who was the last among these national prophets - the Holy Prophet Muhammad being the prophet not of one nation but of the whole world - had declared in plain words that he could not guide the world to Perfect Truth, because the world at that stage was not in a fit condition to receive that truth:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:12, 13).

Among the scriptures of the world the Holy Qur'an, therefore, occupies a unique position as a perfect revelation of the Divine will.

A correct history

The idea that the Qur'an has merely borrowed something from the earlier scriptures, especially from the Torah and the Gospels, must be examined in the light of facts. That the Qur'an deals with the religious topics which are dealt with in those books goes without saying; that it relates the history of some of the prophets whose history is also related in the Bible is also a fact, but to say that it borrows from those books is entirely wrong. Take first the essentials of religion as they are dealt with in the Holy Qur'an. Neither the Old nor the New Testament, nor any other sacred book, makes any approach to the grand and noble truths that find expression in the Holy Qur'an. Take next the histories of the prophets, as they are narrated in the Bible and as they are narrated in the Holy Qur'an, and you will find that the latter corrects the errors of the former as it does in the matter of religious doctrines. The Bible speaks of many of the prophets of God as committing the most heinous sins; it speaks of Abraham as telling lies and casting away Hagar and her son; it speaks of Lot as committing incest with his own daughters; it speaks of Aaron as making a calf for worship and leading the Israelites to its worship; it speaks of David as committing adultery with Uriah's wife; it speaks of Solomon as worshipping idols; but the Holy Qur'an accepts none of these statements, definitely rejects most of them and clears these prophets of the false charges against them. The unlearned

Prophet of Arabia swept away the errors which were a blot on the face of prophethood.

4. LIBERAL VIEW OF OTHER RELIGIONS

Faith in all prophets

There is a very general and very deep-rooted misconception that the Qur'an preaches intolerance, and that Muhammad preached his faith with the sword in one hand and the Qur'an in the other. Misrepresentation could go no further. The basic principle of Islam, a faith in all the prophets of the world, is enough to give the lie to this allegation. The great and liberal mind that preached not only love and respect for the founders of the great religions of the world but much more than that, faith in them, could not shrink to the narrowness of intolerance for those very religions. Tolerance is not, in fact, the word that can sufficiently indicate the breadth of the attitude of Islam towards other religions. It preaches equal love for all, equal respect for all, and equal faith in all.

No Compulsion in Religion

Again, intolerance could not be ascribed to a book which altogether excludes compulsion from the sphere of religion. "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256), it lays down in the clearest words. In fact, the Holy Qur'an is full of statements showing that belief in this or that religion is a person's own concern, and that he is given the choice of adopting one way or another: that, if he accepts truth, it is for his own good, and that, if he sticks to error, it is to his own detriment. I give below a few of these quotations:

"We have truly shown him the way; he may be thankful or unthankful" (76:3).

"The Truth is from your Lord; so let him who please believe and let him who please disbelieve" (18:29).

"Clear proofs have indeed come to you from your Lord: so whoever sees, it is for his own good; and whoever is blind, it is to his own harm" (6:104).

"If you do good, you do good for your own souls. And if you do evil, it is for them" (17:7).

Why fighting was allowed

The Muslims were allowed to fight indeed, but what was the object? Not to compel the unbelievers to accept Islam, for it was against all the broad principles in which they had hitherto been brought up. No, it was to establish religious freedom, to stop all religious persecution, to protect the houses of worship of all religions, mosques among them. Here are a few quotations:

"And if Allah did not repel some people by others, cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down" (22:40).

"And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is only for Allah" (2:193).

"And fight them until there is no more persecution, and all religions for Allah" (8:39).

Under what conditions was the permission to fight given to the Muslims? Every student of Islamic history knows that the Holy Prophet and his companions were subjected to the severest persecution, as Islam began to gain ground at Makkah; over a hundred of them fled to Abyssinia, but persecution grew still more relentless. Ultimately, the Muslims had to take refuge in Madinah, but they were not left alone even there, and the

sword was taken up by the enemy to annihilate Islam and the Muslims. The Qur'an bears express testimony to this:

"Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made, because they are oppressed. And Allah is able to assist them — those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah" (22:39, 40).

Later, the express condition was laid down:

"And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but be not aggressive. Surely Allah loves not the aggressors" (2:190).

The Qur'an, therefore, allowed fighting only to **save** a persecuted community from powerful oppressors, and hence the condition was laid down that fighting was to be stopped as soon as persecution ceased:

"But if they desist, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. And fight them until there is no persecution" (2:192, 193).

If the enemy offered peace, peace was to be accepted, though the enemy's intention might be only to deceive the Muslims:

"And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it, and trust in Allah. Surely He is the Hearer, the Knower. And if they intend to deceive thee, then surely Allah is sufficient for thee" (8:61, 62).

The Holy Prophet made treaties of peace with his enemies; one such treaty brought about the famous truce of Hudaibiyah, the terms of which were not only disadvantageous, but also humiliating to the Muslims. According to the terms of this treaty "if an unbeliever, being converted to Islam, went over to the Muslims, he was to be returned, but if a Muslim went over to the unbelievers, he was not to be given back to the Muslims". This clause of the treaty cuts at the root of all allegations of the use of force by the Holy Prophet. It also shows the strong conviction of the Holy Prophet that neither would Muslims go back to unbelief, nor would the new converts to Islam be deterred from embracing Islam because the Prophet gave them no shelter. And these expectations proved true, for while not a single Muslim deserted Islam, a large number came over to Islam, and, being refused shelter at Madinah, formed a colony of their own in neutral territory.

It is a mistake to suppose that the conditions related above were abrogated at any time. The condition to fight "against those who fight against you" remained in force to the last. The last expedition led by the Holy Prophet was the famous Tabuk expedition, and every historian of Islam knows that, though the Prophet had marched a very long distance to Tabuk at the head of an army of thirty thousand, yet, when he found that the enemy did not fulfil the condition laid down above, he returned, and did not allow his troops to attack the enemy territory. Nor is there a single direction in the latest revelation on this subject, in ch. 9, The Immunity, that goes against this condition. The opening verse of that chapter speaks expressly of "idolaters with whom you made an agreement", and then, v. 4, excepts from its purview "those of the idolaters with whom you made an agreement, then they have not failed you in anything and have not backed up anyone against you", thus showing clearly that the "immunity" related only to such idolatrous tribes as had first made agreements with the Muslims and then, violating them, killed and persecuted the Muslims wherever they found them, as v. 10 says expressly: "They respect neither ties of relationship nor covenant in the case of a believer". Such people are also spoken of in an earlier revelation: "Those with whom thou makest an agreement, then they break their agreement

every time, and they keep not their duty" (8:56). Further on, in ch. 9, the condition of the enemy attacking the Muslims first is plainly repeated: "Will you not fight a people who broke their oaths and aimed at the expulsion of the Messenger, and they attacked you first?" (9:13). So from first to last, the Holy Qur'an allowed fighting only against those who fought the Muslims first; it allowed expressly only fighting in defence without which the Muslims could not live and it clearly forbade aggressive war. The waging of war on unbelievers to compel them to accept Islam is a myth pure and simple, a thing unknown to the Holy Qur'an. It was the enemy that waged war on the Muslims to turn them away from their religion, as the Holy Book so clearly asserts: "And they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can" (2:217).

Relations of friendship with others

It is sometimes asserted that the Qur'an forbids relations of friendship with the followers of other religions. How could a Book which allows a man to have as his comrade in life a woman following another religion (5:5), say in the same breath that no friendly relations can be had with the followers of other religions? The loving relation of husband and wife is the friendliest of all relations and, when this is expressly permitted, there is not the least reason to suppose that other friendly relations are forbidden. The fact is that, wherever there is prohibition against making friends with other people, it relates only to the people who were at war with the Muslims, and this is plainly stated in the Qur'an:

"Allah forbids you not respecting those who fight you not for religion, nor drive you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly. Surely Allah loves the doers of justice. Allah forbids you only respecting those who fight you for religion, and drive you forth from your homes and help (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends of them; and whoever makes friends of them, these are the wrongdoers" (60:8, 9).

No punishment for apostasy

Another widely prevailing misconception may also be noted here. It is generally thought that the Qur'an provides a death sentence for those who desert the religion of Islam. Anyone who takes the trouble to read the Qur'an will see that there is not the least ground for such a supposition. The Qur'an speaks repeatedly of people going back to unbelief after believing, but never once does it say that they should be killed or punished. I give here a few quotations:

"And whoever of you turns back from his religion, then he dies while an unbeliever — these it is whose works go for nothing in this world and the Hereafter" (2:217).

"O you who believe, should anyone of you turn back from his religion, then Allah will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him" (5:54).

"Those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in disbelief, their repentance is not accepted, and these are they that go astray" (3:90).

On the other hand, the Qur'an speaks of a plan of the Jews to adopt Islam first and then desert it, thus creating the impression that Islam was not a religion worth having (3:72). Such a scheme could never have entered their heads while living at Madinah, where the Government was Muslim, if apostasy, according to the Quranic law, were punishable with death. The misconception seems to have arisen from the fact that people who, after becoming apostates, joined the enemy, were treated as enemies, or that, where an apostate took the life of

a Muslim, he was put to death, not for changing his religion, but for committing murder.

5. LIFE AFTER DEATH

Death a stage in Evolution

Though this subject has been dealt with fully in the footnotes under appropriate verses, I am dealing with it in the Introduction for two reasons. In the first place, because there are many misunderstandings about it, and secondly, because it is in the Holy Qur'an that full light is cast on this subject and no other sacred Book makes any approach to the wonderful disclosures made in the Qur'an. According to the Holy Qur'an, death does not bring the life of man to an end; it only opens the door to a higher form of life. Just as from dust is evolved the man, from the deeds which he does is evolved the higher man. As from the small life-germ grows up the man and he does not lose his individuality for all the changes which he undergoes, so from this man is made the higher man, his attributes being changed and he being made to grow into what he cannot conceive at present.

Connection between the two lives

The life after death, according to the Holy Qur'an, opens out a wide vista of progress before man, a new world of advancement before which the progress of this life sinks into insignificance: "And certainly the Hereafter is greater in degrees and greater in excellence" (17:21). The connection between the two lives, the life on this earth and the life after death, is established in the clearest words. Heaven and hell are not places of enjoyment and torture to be met with only after death; they are realities even here. The Hereafter is not a mystery beyond the grave; it begins in this very life. For the good, the heavenly life, and for the wicked, a life in hell, begins even here:

"And for him who fears to stand before his Lord are two Gardens" (55:46).

"O soul that art at rest, return to thy Lord, well-pleased (with Him), well-pleasing (Him), so enter among My servants, and enter My Garden" (89:27-30).

"It is the Fire kindled by Allah, which rises above the hearts" (104:6, 7).

"And whoever is blind in this (life), he will be blind in the Hereafter" (17:72).

For explanation, see the footnotes under these verses.

The Resurrection or the Hour

While the life after death is spoken of as a continuation of this life, a particular day is repeatedly mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, under various names, as the day on which that life finds a complete manifestation. It is generally called *yaum al qiyamah* or the day of the great rising or the Resurrection (2:113), and is also spoken of as the day of Decision (77:13), the day of Reckoning (38:26), the day of Judgment (51:12), or the day of Meeting (with God) (40:15), the day of the Gathering together (42:7) etc.

The most frequently occurring word for the Resurrection is *al-Sa'ah*, which originally means any portion of time, and is, therefore, generally rendered as the Hour. Raghīb, the well-known lexicographer of the Qur'an, says that there are three *sa'ahs* (hours) in the sense of resurrection, viz., (1) *kubra* (or the greater), which is the rising up of the people for reckoning; (2) *wusta* (or the middle), which is the passing away of a nation; and (3) *sughra* (or the minor), which is the death of the

individual. The word is used in all these senses in the Holy Qur'an. An example of the last occurs in 6:31: "They are losers indeed who reject the meeting with Allah, until when the hour comes upon them suddenly," where the hour clearly stands for the death of the person who gives the lie. As regards the use of the word in the other two senses, it is very frequent, and the two significances are often interchangeable, either sense being applicable.

Resurrection in this life

The different words which stand for the Resurrection are in some sense also applicable to this life; the rising of the dead is sometimes their spiritual resurrection which was to be brought about by the preaching of the Holy Prophet; the day of Decision also signifies the triumph of Truth and the vanquishment of falsehood; the day of Reckoning is equally the reckoning in this life, and so is the day of Requital. The law of the requital of good and evil affects this life as much as the next, a complete manifestation taking place when the limitations of the body of clay are removed by death, which thus becomes a starting-point for a new and higher life. It is a law that works every moment and will not come into operation on a particular day; even paradise and hell are spoken of as originating with this life. Hence God is repeatedly described as Quick in Reckoning (2:202; 3:19, 199, etc.), meaning that His reckoning is working every moment. Every evil deed leaves its impress on the human mind: "Nay, rather, what they earned is rust upon their hearts" (83:14), so that the consequence follows as soon as a deed is done. Still more plainly: "And We have made every man's actions to cling to his neck, and We shall bring forth to him on the day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open" (17:13). Thus an action leaves its effect upon man as soon as it is done; only it is not seen by the human eye, but will be palpably manifest in the form of a wide-open book on the day of Resurrection, for the veil which covers the eye now, so that it cannot see the finer things, shall then be removed: "Thou wast indeed heedless of this, but now We have removed from thee thy veil, so thy sight is sharp this day" (50:22). The law of the requital of good and evil is thus working all the time; only the consequences cannot be seen by the physical eye, but the finer senses granted at the Resurrection will see them clearly: "On the day when hidden things are manifested" (86:9).

The Balance

The law of the requital of good and evil is a comprehensive one: "So he who does an atom's weight of good will see it. And he who does an atom's weight of evil will see it" (99:7, 8). So every good deed bears fruit, and every evil deed bears an evil consequence, whether the doer is a Muslim or a non-Muslim; but, owing to the preponderance of mercy in Divine nature, good brings tenfold fruit, even seven hundredfold; see 6:160; 2:261; 28:84; 42:30, etc.

A man is judged by the preponderance of good or evil in him and it is in this connection that the setting up of a *mizan*, or a balance, is spoken of. The words *wazn* and *mizan*, as used in the Holy Qur'an in this connection, do not indicate weighing with a pair of scales; it is in the wider sense of fulfilling the requirements of justice that they are used. For instance, 57:25 speaks of messengers being sent with the Book and the *mizan*, where the *mizan* clearly stands for rules of justice or principles of equity — "that men may conduct themselves with equity". Again, 55:7 speaks of a *mizan* being set up in nature: "And the heaven, He raised it high, and He set up the *mizan*". Here the *mizan* stands for justice, according to well-known commentators. A similar measure or balance is spoken of as being set up to judge man, whether it is good that preponderates in him or evil. Here are a few quotations:

"And We will set up a just balance on the day of Resurrection, so no soul will be wronged in the least. And if there be the weight of a grain of mustard seed, We will bring it. And Sufficient are We to take account" (21:47).

"And the judging on that day will be just; so as for those whose good deeds are heavy, they are the successful. And as for those whose good deeds are light, those are they who ruined their souls" (7:8, 9).

The Book of Deeds

A few words may be added as to the book of deeds. We are told that every action, however great or small, is written down:

"And the book (kitab) is placed, and thou seest the guilty fearing for what is in it, and they say: O woe to us! what a book is this! It leaves out neither a small thing, nor a great one, but numbers them all" (18:49).

"So whoever does good deeds and is a believer, there is no rejection of his effort, and We surely write it down for him" (21:94).

"He utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand" (50:18).

"Or do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private counsels? Aye! and Our messengers with them write down" (43:80).

"And surely there are keepers over you, honourable recorders, they know what you do" (82:10-12).

"This is Our record (kitab) that speaks against you with truth. Surely We wrote what you did" (45:29).

Not only has every individual his book of deeds, but even nations are spoken of as having their books of deeds:

"And thou wilt see every nation kneeling down. Every nation will be called to its record (kit?). This day you are requited for what you did"(45:28).

It must, however, be borne in mind that the word kit? (translated as book or record) or kataba (he wrote) is used in a very wide sense in the Holy Qur'an. As Raghīb says, kitab does not always mean a collection of written leaves; it sometimes signifies the knowledge of God, or His command, or what He has made obligatory. Nor does kataba always signify that he wrote certain words on paper with ink and pen; it also means he made a thing obligatory, or decreed, ordained, or prescribed a thing. Let us see now what is meant by the writing of the deeds and the book of deeds. The above quotations show that by the writing of the deeds is meant their preserving and guarding, the angels being called both keepers and recorders. The following verses throw additional light on this subject:

"And We have made every man's actions to cling to his neck, and We shall bring forth to him on the day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open. Read thy book. Thine own soul is sufficient as a reckoner against thee this day" (17:13, 14).

"For him are (angels) guarding the consequences (of his deeds), before him and behind him, who guard him by Allah's command" (13:11).

"Nay, surely the record of the wicked is in the prison. And what will make thee know what the prison is? It is a written book" (83:7-9).

"Nay, surely the record of the righteous is in the highest places. And what will make thee know what the highest places are? It is a written book" (83:18-20).

The first of these quotations shows that the book of deeds which a man will find on the day of Resurrection is nothing but the effect of the deeds he has done. In the second, it is not what a man does that is spoken of as being guarded, but it is clearly the doer who is guarded, and, reading it with the first quotation, the conclusion is evident that man's deeds are guarded by the impress which they make upon him. The third and the fourth quotations show that the book or record of deeds is identical with the place where it is kept; in the former, the book of deeds is in a prison and the prison is a written book; in the latter, the book of deeds is in the highest places and the highest places are a written book. The book of deeds is, therefore, within man because the deeds are preserved by the effect which they leave on man. It is said to be in a prison, in one case, because the evil deeds hamper a man's progress, and keep his faculties for the doing of great and good deeds shut up, as it were, within a prison; and, in the other case, it is said to be in the highest places, because by good deeds the faculties given to man find their highest development. It is quite in consonance with this that we are told that a man himself will make his own account: "Read thy book. Thine own soul is sufficient as a reckoner against thee this day" (17:14). It is sometimes the doer that reads his own book, while on another occasion he invites others to read the same: "Lo! Read my book" (69:19). Such is the doer of good, while the evildoer is made to say: "O would that my book had not been given to me! And I had not known what my account was!" (69:25,26). That each nation has also a book, as already pointed out, bears out the truth of what has been said here, for the impress of what a people do is equally left on their national life, and nations like individuals are judged by what they do.

Paradise

The life after death takes two forms: a life in paradise for those in whom the good preponderates over the evil, and a life in hell for those in whom the evil preponderates over the good. The word paradise (Ar. firdaus) occurs only twice in the Holy Qur'an - in 18:107 and 23:11. It is the word Jannah (Garden) or its plural Jannah that is generally used to indicate the abiding-place of the righteous, who are generally described as those who believe and do good deeds, while their abiding-place is generally said to be Gardens in which rivers flow, the rivers corresponding to faith, and the trees of the Garden corresponding to the good which a man does. The word Jannah is derived from jann, which means to conceal a thing so that it is not perceived by the senses, and jannah means a garden because its ground is covered by trees. The description of paradise as a garden with rivers flowing in it is, however, only a parable:

"A parable of the Garden which the dutiful are promised: therein are rivers of water" (47:15).

The blessings of paradise cannot be conceived in this life, and are not, therefore, things of this world:

"So no soul knows what refreshment of the eyes is hidden for them: a reward for what they did" (32:17).

An explanation of these words by the Holy Prophet is given in Bukhari as follows: "Allah says, I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and what the mind of man has not conceived" (B. 59:8). Therefore paradise and what it contains cannot even be conceived by the mind of man. Ibn 'Abbas is reported to have said that "nothing that is in paradise resembles anything that is

in this world except in name" (RM., vol. 1, p. 172). For instance, the word "ill (lit., shade) occurs very often in the Holy Qur'an in connection with the blessings of paradise, but a shade is not what is really meant, for there is no sun: "They will see therein neither sun, nor intense cold" (76:13). The word is there, but the significance underlying it is different. According to Raghīb, it stands for plenty or protection. Such is also rizq (sustenance) in paradise; it cannot be what sustains the body here; in fact, prayer itself is called a sustenance in 20:131. Nor are the fruits of paradise like the fruits of this life, because these are the fruits of deeds done: "Whenever they are given a portion of the fruit thereof, they will say: This is what was given to us before" (2:25). Evidently the fruits of the deeds are meant here, and not the fruits that the earth grows, because the latter are not given to all the faithful here, while the former are. Similar is the case with the water, the milk, the honey, the cushions, the thrones, the clothes and the adornments of the next life; these descriptions are of the nature of similes as the Qur'an expressly calls them a mathal - simile or parable.

In fact, a little consideration would show that even our ideas of place and time are not applicable to the next life. It is said in the Qur'an that paradise extends over the whole of the heavens and the earth: "And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden, as wide as the heavens and the earth" (3:133; 57:21); and when the Prophet was asked where hell was, if paradise extends over the whole of the heavens and the earth, he replied: "Where is the night when the day comes?" (RM., vol. 1, p. 670). This shows clearly that paradise and hell are more like two conditions than two places. Again, notwithstanding that the two are poles asunder, the one being the highest of the high and the other the lowest of the low, they are separated only by a wall: "Then a wall, with a door in it, will be raised between them. Within it shall be mercy, and outside of it chastisement" (57:13). Elsewhere, speaking of the inmates of paradise and the inmates of hell, it says: "And between them is a veil" (7:46). Again, a vehement "raging and roaring" of hell-fire is mentioned repeatedly (25:12; 67:7), but those in paradise "will not hear the faintest sound of it" (21:102), while we are told that those in hell shall talk with those in heaven and the two shall hear each other; see 7:44-50. I quote only the concluding verse: "And the companions of the Fire call out to the owners of the Garden: Pour on us some water or some of that which Allah has provided for you. They say: Surely Allah has forbidden them both to the disbelievers". Thus those in paradise shall hear the talk of those in hell, but they shall not hear the roaring of the fire of hell. This shows that hell is a condition which shall be perceived only by those in it, and similar is the case with paradise.

Paradise and Hell begin in this life

As I have already pointed out, the Holy Qur'an says that paradise and hell begin in this very life. Read the following verses along with those already quoted:

"And give good news to those who believe and do good deeds, that for them are Gardens in which rivers flow. Whenever they are given a portion of the fruit thereof, they will say: This is what was given to us before; and they are given the like of it" (2:25).

"For them is a known sustenance" (37:41).

"And He will make them enter the Garden, which He has made known to them" (47:6).

The first of these verses shows that the fruits which the righteous shall find in paradise shall be the same as were given to them in this life; the second and the third show that the sustenance

which shall be given to them in paradise is made known to them in this very life. It is clear that the sustenance and the fruits spoken of here are not those which the righteous have in common with the evildoers, the fruits and the sustenance that the earth grows, which is needed for the support of the body of both. The things meant are those which are granted specially to the righteous, to which the evildoers have no access; in fact, they remain quite blind to them in this life and are, therefore, deprived of them in the Hereafter: "And whoever is blind in this (world) he will also be blind in the Hereafter" (17:72). These are the fruits of good deeds and the sustenance which the righteous find in the remembrance of God; see further 20:130, 131. It is in accordance with this that the soul that has found rest in God is admitted to paradise in this life: "O soul that art at rest, return to thy Lord, well-pleased (with Him), well-pleasing (Him), so enter among My servants, and enter My Garden" (89:27-30).

Highest bliss of Paradise

It is quite in accordance with this conclusion that we find that the highest bliss of paradise is plainly stated to be the pleasure of God, the greatest spiritual blessing which the righteous strive for in this life, and by attaining which they enter into paradise in this very life, as has just been shown:

"Allah has promised to the believers, men and women, Gardens wherein flow rivers, to abide therein, and goodly dwellings in Gardens of perpetual abode. And greatest of all is Allah's goodly pleasure. That is the grand achievement" (9:72).

Those in paradise shall be occupied with and find delight in the praise of God and in His glorification; in what is declared to be a spiritual sustenance for the righteous in this life (20:131):

"Their cry therein will be, Glory to Thee, O Allah! and their greeting, Peace! And the last of their cry will be, Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds!" (10:10).

There is no grief, fatigue or toil therein, and the heart is purified of all rancour and jealousy, peace and security reigning on all sides:

"Surely those who keep their duty are in Gardens and fountains. Enter them in peace, secure. And We shall root out whatever of rancour is in their breasts — as brethren on raised couches, face to face. Toil afflicts them not therein, nor will they be ejected therefrom" (15:45-48).

"They hear therein no vain or sinful talk — but only the saying, Peace! Peace!" (56:25, 26).

"And they say: Praise be to Allah, Who has removed grief from us! Surely our Lord is Forgiving, Multiplier of reward, Who out of His grace has made us alight in a house abiding forever; therein toil touches us not nor does fatigue afflict us therein" (35:34, 35).

Paradise is meant for further advancement

Notwithstanding all this, paradise, according to the Holy Qur'an, is not a place for simple enjoyment or rest; it is essentially a place for advancement to higher and higher stages:

"But those who keep their duty to their Lord, for them are high places, above them higher places, built (for them)" (39:20).

This shows that not only does paradise admit the righteous to high places, but it is, in fact, the starting-point for a new advancement, there being higher and higher places still, and it is in accordance with this that they are spoken of as having an

unceasing desire for attaining to higher and higher excellences, their prayer in paradise being:

“Our Lord, make perfect for us our light” (66:8).

This idea of a ceaseless advancement in paradise is one which is peculiar to the Holy Qur’an, and not the least trace of it is to be met with in any other scripture.

Hell is meant for purification

Quite in accordance with the idea of paradise as a place of unending progress to higher stages of life is the idea of hell, where punishment is not meant for torture but for purification, in order to make a man fit for spiritual advancement. The idea underlying hell is that those who wasted their opportunity in this life shall, under the inevitable law which makes every man taste of what he has done, be subjected to a course of treatment for the spiritual diseases which they have brought about with their own hands. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur’an makes a difference between the abiding in paradise and the abiding in hell, allowing a termination in the latter case but not in the former.

As I have already noted, punishment for evil deeds sometimes takes effect in this very life, and the Holy Qur’an lays down the principle in clear words that every such punishment is a remedial measure:

“And We did not send a prophet to a town but We seized its people with distress and affliction that they might humble themselves” (7:94).

“And indeed We sent messengers to nations before thee, then We seized them with distress and affliction that they might humble themselves” (6:42).

It is clear from this that God brings down His punishment upon a sinning people in order that they may turn to Him; in other words, that they may be awakened to the higher life. The same must, therefore, be the object of the punishment in hell. That this is really so is made clear, in the first place, by giving the utmost prominence to the quality of mercy in God, as already pointed out, and then by stating clearly that all men have been created for mercy:

“Except those on whom thy Lord has mercy; and for this did He create them” (11:119).

The purpose of God must be ultimately fulfilled and, though man may bring down punishment on himself by his deeds, yet as God has created him for mercy, mercy is the ultimate end in the Divine scheme. Elsewhere we are told:

“And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me” (51:56).

They must, therefore, ultimately be made fit for the service of God, and that is the higher life. With all its fearfulness, hell is called a *maula* (patron) of the sinners, in one place (57:15), and their *umm* (mother), in another (101:9). Both these descriptions of hell are a clear indication that hell is meant only to purify a man of the dross which he has accumulated with his own hands, just as fire purifies gold of dross. In fact, it is to point to this truth that the Holy Qur’an uses the word *fitnah* (which originally means the assaying of gold, or casting it into fire to purify it of dross), both of the persecutions which the faithful are made to suffer (2:191; 29:2; 29:10) and of the punishment which the evildoers shall suffer in hell (37:63), where the food which those in hell shall be given is called *fitnah*, because the

object in both cases is the same, the faithful being purified through persecutions and the evildoers by hell-fire. Therefore hell is called a patron of the sinners, because, through suffering, it will make them fit for spiritual progress; and it is called a mother of the sinners to show that its connection with them is that of a mother with her child, the sinners being brought up, as it were, in the bosom of hell. The fire is a source of torment, but it is also a purifier. The keenness of the torments of the other life is due to the keener perception of the soul, which is the necessary result of its separation from the earthly vessel. Bliss and torment, therefore, grow equally keener in that life.

Punishment of hell not everlasting

It is in consonance with its remedial nature that we find it stated that the sinners shall ultimately be taken out of hell. It is true that the word *abad* is thrice used in the Holy Qur’an in connection with the abiding in hell (4:169; 33:65; 72:23), but *abad* indicates eternity as well as long time, and that the latter significance must be taken in this case is made clear by the use, in the same connection, of the word *ahqab* (78:23), meaning years or long years. Besides this, a limitation is placed on the abiding in hell by the addition of the words except as thy Lord please, the exception clearly indicating the ultimate deliverance of those in hell. The following two verses may be noted in this connection:

“He will say: The Fire is your abode — you shall abide therein, except as Allah please. Surely thy Lord is Wise, Knowing” (6:128).

“Then as for those who are unhappy, they will be in the Fire; for them therein will be sighing and groaning — abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as thy Lord please. Surely thy Lord is Doer of what He intends” (11:106, 107).

Both these verses show clearly that the punishment of hell is not everlasting. To make this conclusion clearer still, the latter of these occasions may be compared with the next verse which describes the abiding in paradise:

“And as for those who are made happy, they will be in the Garden, abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as thy Lord please — a gift never to be cut off” (11:108).

The two expressions are similar: those in hell and those in paradise abide in it as long as the heavens and the earth endure, with an exception added in each case showing that they may be taken out of it. The concluding statements are, however, different. In the case of paradise, the idea that those in it may be taken out of it, if God pleases, is immediately followed by the statement that it is a gift which shall never be cut off, showing that they shall never be taken out of paradise; while, in the case of hell, the idea of those in it being taken out of it is confirmed by the concluding statement — “Surely thy Lord is Doer of what He intends”.

The conclusion drawn above is corroborated by the sayings of the Holy Prophet. Thus a saying reported in the Muslim concludes:

“Then will Allah say, The angels and the prophets and the faithful have all in their turn interceded for the sinners and now there remains none to intercede for them except the Most Merciful of all merciful ones. So He will take out a handful from the Fire and bring out a people who never worked any good” (Ms. 1:72).

Further, Bukhari records a saying to the effect that, when the sinners are taken out from hell, they shall be thrown into "the river of life, and they will grow as grows a seed by the side of a river" (B. 2:15), which clearly indicates that they shall be made fit for a higher life. The Kanz al-'Ummal records the following: "Surely a day will come over hell when it will be like a field of corn that has dried up, after flourishing for a while" (KU, vol. vii, p. 245); "Surely a day will come over hell when there shall not be a single human being in it" (Ibid). A saying of 'Umar is recorded as follows: "Even if the dwellers in hell may be numberless as the sands of the desert, a day will come when they will be taken out of it" (Fath al-Bayan).

6. THE POSITION OF WOMAN

Spiritually woman raised to the position of man

This is another subject on which great misunderstanding prevails. The belief that, according to the Qur'an, woman has no soul is almost general in the West. Probably it took hold of the mind of Europe at a time when Europeans had no access to the Qur'an. No other religious book and no other reformer has done one-tenth of what the Holy Qur'an or the Holy Prophet Muhammad has done to raise the position of woman. Read the Qur'an and you find good and righteous women being given the same position as good and righteous men. Both sexes are spoken of in the same terms. The highest favour which God has bestowed upon man is the gift of Divine revelation, and we find women, to whom Divine revelation came, spoken of along with men:

"And We revealed to Moses' mother, saying: Give him suck; then when thou fearest for him, cast him into the river and fear not, nor grieve; surely We shall bring him back to thee and make him one of the messengers" (28:7).

"When We revealed to thy mother that which was revealed" (20:38).

"And when the angels said: O Mary, surely All' has chosen thee and purified thee and chosen thee above the women of the world" (3:42).

Further, where the Holy Qur'an speaks of the great prophets of God, saying: "And mention Abraham in the Book" (19:41), "And mention Moses in the Book" (19:51), and so on, it speaks of a woman in exactly the same terms: "And mention Mary in the Book" (19:16). No other religious book has given such a high spiritual position to woman.

The Qur'an makes no difference between man and woman in the bestowal of reward for the good he or she does:

"I will not suffer the work of a worker among you be the lost, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other" (3:195).

"And whoever does good deeds, whether male or female, and he (or she) is a believer - these will enter the Garden, and they will not be dealt with a whit unjustly" (4:124).

"Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We shall certainly make him live a good life, and We shall certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did" (16:97).

"And whoever does good, whether male or female, and he is a believer, these shall enter the Garden, to be given therein sustenance without measure" (40:40).

Also, 33:35, speaking of good women alongside of good men, enumerates every good quality as being possessed by women exactly as it is possessed by men, and ends with the words: "Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward". With God, therefore, according to the Qur'an, there is no difference between men and women, and morally and spiritually they can rise to the same eminence.

Woman is the equal of man in rights of property

On the material side, too, we find no difference, except what nature requires for its own ends. A woman can earn, inherit and own property and dispose of it just as a man can, and the Holy Qur'an is explicit on all these points:

"For men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women is the benefit of what they earn" (4:32).

"For men is a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave, and for women a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave" (4:7).

"But if they (the women) of themselves be pleased to give you a portion thereof, consume it with enjoyment and pleasure" (4:4).

Woman, in Arabia, had no rights of property; nay, she herself was part of the inheritance, and was taken possession of along with other property. She had no right to the property of her deceased husband or father. The Qur'an took her from this low position and raised her to a position of perfect freedom as regards her property rights and her right to inheritance, a position which, among other nations, she has only partly attained and that after centuries of hard struggle.

Polygamy

It is, however, asserted that polygamy and the seclusion of women, as enjoined in the Holy Qur'an, have done more harm to woman than the benefit conferred on her by bestowal of property rights. The fact is that a great misunderstanding exists on these two points. Monogamy is the rule in Islam and polygamy only an exception allowed subject to certain conditions. The following two verses are the only authority for the sanction of polygamy, and let us see how far they carry us:

"And if you fear that you cannot do justice to orphans, marry such women as seem good to you, two, or three, or four; but if you fear that you will not do justice, then marry only one or what your right hands possess. This is more proper that you may not do injustice" (4:3).

"And they ask thee a decision about women. Say: Allah makes known to you His decision concerning them; and that which is recited to you in the Book is concerning widowed women, whom you give not what is appointed for them, while you are not inclined to marry them" (4:127).

Now the first of these verses allows polygamy on the express condition that "you cannot do justice to orphans", and what is meant is made clear by the second verse, which contains a clear reference to the first verse in the words, "that which is recited to you in the Book is concerning widowed women". The Arabs were guilty of a double injustice to widows: they did not give them and their children a share in the inheritance of their husbands, nor were they inclined to marry widows who had children, because the responsibility for the maintenance of the children would in that case devolve upon them. The Qur'an remedied both these evils; it gave a share of inheritance to the widow with a share also for the orphans, and it commended

the taking of such widows in marriage, and allowed polygamy expressly for this purpose. It should, therefore, be clearly understood that monogamy is the rule in Islam and polygamy is allowed only as a remedial measure, and that, not for the sake of the man, but for the sake of the widow and her children. This permission was given at a time when the wars, which were forced on the Muslims, had decimated the men, so that many widows and orphans were left for whom it was necessary to provide. A provision was made in the form of polygamy so that the widow should find a home and protector and the orphans should have paternal care and affection. Europe today has its problem of the excess of women, and let it consider if it can solve that problem otherwise than by sanctioning a limited polygamy. Perhaps the only other way is prostitution, which prevails widely in all European countries and, where the law of the country does not recognize it, it is recognized in practice. Nature will have its course, and allowing illicit intercourse is the only other alternative to a limited polygamy.

Seclusion

As regards the seclusion of women, the Qur'an never prohibited women from going out of their houses for their needs. In the time of the Prophet, women went regularly to mosques, and said their prayers along with men, standing in a separate row. They also joined their husbands in the labour of the field; they even went with the army to the field of battle, and looked after the wounded, removing them from the field, if necessary, and helped fighting-men in many other ways. They could even fight the enemy in an emergency. No occupation was prohibited to them, and they could do any work they chose. The only restrictions on their liberty are contained in the following verses:

"Say to the believing men that they lower their gaze and restrain their sexual passions. That is purer for them. Surely Allah is Aware of what they do. And say to the believing women that they lower their gaze and restrain their sexual passions and do not display their adornment except what appears thereof. And let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms" (24:30, 31).

Now the real restriction contained in these verses is that both men and women should, when they meet each other, cast down their looks, but there is an additional restriction in the case of women that they should not display their adornment with the exception of "what appears thereof". The exception has been explained as meaning "what is customary and natural to uncover".

That women went to mosques with their faces uncovered is recognized on all hands, and there is also a saying of the Holy Prophet that, when a woman reaches the age of puberty, she should cover her body except the face and the hands. The majority of the commentators are also of opinion that the exception relates to the face and the hands. Hence, while a display of beauty is forbidden, the restriction does not interfere with the necessary activities of woman. She can do any work that she likes to earn her livelihood, for the Holy Qur'an says plainly, as already quoted, that women shall have the benefit of what they earn. A limited seclusion and a limited polygamy do not, therefore, interfere with the necessary activities of woman; they are both meant for her protection and as preventives against loose sexual relations, which ultimately undermine society.

7. PURITY OF THE QURANIC TEXT

Among all the religious books of the world, the Holy Qur'an is the only Book which enjoys the distinction of having a pure text.

Every word and letter of the Holy Book, as we have it today, is as it left the lips of the Holy Prophet Muhammad to whom the Book was revealed, and it is for this reason that, through all the centuries since it was revealed and among all the Muslims from East to West, among the numerous contending sects, there is only one Qur'an. It is the only revealed Book in which one can have access, with the fullest certainty, to that Divine light which was revealed to the heart of a prophet of God. The factors which contributed to this safe preservation of the text are its being reduced to writing under the direction of the Prophet himself and its being committed to memory by a large number of people, at the time of its revelation.

7.1: EVERY PORTION OF THE HOLY QUR'AN WAS WRITTEN AS IT WAS REVEALED

Writing known at Makkah

The first and the most important circumstance which assisted in the preservation of the text of the Holy Qur'an is that every verse of it was put into writing in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet before his own eyes. Writing was known at Makkah and Madinah before the advent of Islam, and though the Arabs generally relied upon a wonderfully retentive memory for the preservation of thousands of verses and long lists of genealogies, yet they reduced to writing their more important compositions, and hung them in some public place where their compatriots could see and admire them. Hence their seven famous odes are known as *Al-Sab'al-Mu'allaqat* — The Seven Suspended Ones. These odes were so named from the circumstance that they were suspended in the Ka'bah by their authors at the pilgrimage season as odes of unequalled poetic beauty, and there they remained placarded for some time.

Muir bears testimony to both facts, to writing being known at Makkah and Madinah, and to the Qur'an being written:

"But there is good reason for believing that many fragmentary copies, embracing amongst them the whole Qur'an, or nearly the whole, were during his lifetime made by the Prophet's followers. Writing was without doubt generally known at Mecca long before Muhammad assumed the prophetic office. And at Medina many of his followers were employed by the Prophet in writing his letters or dispatches....The poorer captives taken at Badr were offered their release on condition that they taught a certain number of Medina citizens to write. And although the people of Medina were not so generally educated as those of Mecca, yet many are noticed as having been able to write before Islam" (Muir's *Life of Muhammad*, Intro., p. xviii).

Internal evidence as to the writing of the Qur'an

The first thing we notice about the Holy Book is that there is a hint as to the use of the pen in the very first revelation that came to the Holy Prophet. The first five short sentences revealed to the Prophet were:

"Read in the name of thy Lord Who creates —
 "Creates man from a clot,
 "Read and thy Lord is most Generous,
 "Who taught by the pen,
 "Taught man what he knew not" (96:1-5).

It is an established fact that the Prophet knew neither reading nor writing. Strange as it may appear, in the very first message that he received from On High, he is told not only to read but also to seek the help of the pen, which was the only means of the preservation of knowledge. It was due to this that from the very first he made arrangements to have every revelation reduced to writing as it came down to him, in addition to having committed it to memory, which he did by reading it out to those

around him. Moreover, the Holy Qur'an itself furnishes abundant evidence that it existed in a written form. It again and again calls itself a kitab, which means a book, or a writing which is complete in itself (see 2:2b). The Qur'an is also designated as suhuf, which means written pages: "A Messenger from Allah, reciting pure pages, wherein are right books" (98:2). The pure pages are the pages of the Holy Qur'an, and the right books are its chapters; for not only is the entire Qur'an called al-Kitab or the Book, but its different chapters are also called books. Again: "Nay, surely it is a Reminder. So let him, who will, mind it. In honoured books, exalted, purified, in the hands of scribes, noble, virtuous" (80:11-16). The word saḥifah (whose plural suhuf is used here, translated here as books) is the very word applied to the collection made by Zaid in the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and later in that of 'Uthman. Thus we see that the Holy Qur'an describes itself in clear and unmistakable words both as a kitab and as a saḥifah, words used in the Arabic language to denote a written book, a fact to which every dictionary of the Arabic language testifies. From the same root saḥaf is derived the word Mushaf, a name to this day applied to the Holy Qur'an, which means a book or a volume consisting of a collection of saḥifas or written pages.

There are many other references in the Holy Qur'an showing that its chapters existed in a written form at an early date. Thus: "Surely it is a bounteous Qur'an, in a book that is protected, which none touches save the purified ones" (56:77-79). The chapter in which these verses occur is one of the earliest revelations. Rodwell gives the following footnote under this passage: "This passage implies the existence of copies of portions at least of the Qur'an in common use. It was quoted by the sister of 'Umar when, at his conversion, he desired to take her copy of surah 20 into his hands. Verses 78, 79 were directed by the Caliph Muhammad Abu-l-Qasim ibn 'Abd Allah to be inscribed on all copies of the Qur'an". It is an admitted fact that every portion of the Holy Qur'an was regarded with equal reverence by the Muslims, and every word of it was believed to be the Word of God. It is, therefore, quite unreasonable to suppose that some portions of the Holy Qur'an were written, while others were not. There is not a single circumstance in the whole history of Islam which can entitle us to make any such distinction between the different portions of the Holy Qur'an, and to suppose that while some chapters were written, others were not thought fit to be written, or that equal care was not taken of all the parts. Again, it is in a chapter revealed at Makkah that we meet with the following challenge to the unbelievers: "Or, say they: He has forged it. Say: Then bring ten forged chapters like it, and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful" (11:13). A similar challenge is contained in a chapter of a still earlier date: "Say: If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Qur'an, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others" (17:88). And in a chapter revealed at Madinah we have: "And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call on your helpers besides Allah if you are truthful. But if you do it not — and you can never do it — then be on your guard against the Fire" (2:23, 24). Now, all these challenges to the opponents to produce one surah or ten surahs like the Qur'an imply that the surahs of the Holy Qur'an existed in a written form at the time of the challenge; otherwise the challenge would have been meaningless.

Historical evidence as to the writing of the Qur'an

There are numerous anecdotes showing that when the Holy Prophet received a revelation, it was immediately reduced to writing. The general practice is thus described, by no less a personage than 'Uthman, the third Caliph whose name is in particular associated with the collection of the Qur'an and who, being one of the earliest converts to Islam, remained with the

Prophet almost since the Call:

"It was customary with the Messenger of Allah, when portions of different chapters were being revealed to him, that when any verse was revealed, he called one of those persons who used to write the Holy Qur'ah and said to him, Write these verses in the chapter where such and such verses occur" (AD. 2:123; Tr. Abwab Tafsir al-Quran?, on Surah 9).

This report mentions, not what the Holy Prophet did on one occasion, but what he always used to do whenever any verse of the Holy Qur'an was revealed to him. Thus we have the clearest testimony that every verse of the Divine revelation was put into writing by the order and in the presence of the Holy Prophet, while additional care was taken by him to point out the place and chapter of a verse, when there were two or more unfinished chapters, so that the scribes might not confuse the verses of one chapter with those of another.

The Prophet's Scribes

Other reports of the highest authority support the evidence of 'Uthman. Thus Bukhari narrates under the heading The Amanuenses of the Prophet:

"When the verse la yastawi-l-qa'idun ... (4:95) was revealed, the Prophet (peace and the blessing of Allah be upon him!) said, 'Bring Zaid to me, and let him bring the tablet and the inkstand'. Then he said to him (Zaid), Write la yastawi...' (the verse revealed)" (B. 66:4).

According to another report under the same heading, Abu Bakr sent for Zaid and said to him: "You used to write the revelation for the Messenger of Allah (peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!)" (B. 65: ix, 20). Besides Zaid, who did by far the greater part of the work of writing the revelations of the Holy Prophet at Madinah, many other persons are mentioned who did this work at Makkah and, in the absence of Zaid, at Madinah. Among these are mentioned Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Zubair ibn 'Awam, 'Abd Allah ibn Sa'd, Khalid and Aban, sons of Sa'id, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Hanzalah ibn Rabi', Mu'aiqab ibn Abu Fatimah, 'Abd Allah ibn Arqam ibn Shurahbil, and 'Abd Allah ibn Rawahah (FB., vol. ix, p. 19). In fact as many as forty-two of the Companions are related to have acted as scribes for the Holy Prophet. The importance given to the writing down of the revelations as they came down to the Prophet was so great that in the historic Flight of the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah, pen, inkstand and writing material were among the essential necessities of the journey. There was no paucity of scribes as besides the Holy Qur'an many other things were written. Some of the Companions used to write the words uttered by the Holy Prophet, which were generally reported only orally (B. 3:39). Letters were written by order of the Holy Prophet to several potentates (B. 64:84). The truce at Hudaibiyah was also written (B. 54:15). Correspondence was also kept up with the Jews in Hebrew (B. 94:40). Not only could men read and write, but even women were taught the art. Among the wives of the Holy Prophet, at least 'A'ishah and Hafsa could read and write, as many reliable reports show. But it is not to be supposed that these were the only persons among the Companions who could write, or who actually transcribed copies of the Holy Qur'an. These were the men who performed the work of amanuenses for the Holy Prophet. There were many others who wrote copies of the Holy Qur'an for their own use.

Besides these reports, which directly establish the fact that every verse of the Holy Qur'an was written at the time of its revelation, there are many other anecdotes indirectly supporting the same conclusion. For instance, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "Do not write from me anything except the

Qur'an" (FB., vol. ix, p. 10). This direction, which was meant as a precautionary step against the confusion of the Holy Qur'an with what the Holy Prophet spoke on other occasions, takes it for granted that the Holy Qur'an was written. This conclusion is further corroborated by the circumstance that where there was no danger of confusion on the part of the writers, the writing of certain Hadith was also allowed (B. 3:39).

There is another report mentioned by Ibn Hisham, in the story of the conversion of 'Umar, which shows that written copies of the chapters of the Holy Qur'an were in common use among the early Muslim converts at Makkah. 'Umar, with a drawn sword in his hand, one day left his house with the intention of murdering the Holy Prophet. On the way he learnt that his own sister and brother-in-law were secret converts to Islam. So he turned his steps to his sister's house. "At that time there was in the house a third man, Khabbab, who had with him a book containing Ta Ha (the 20th chapter of the Holy Qur'an), which he was teaching to 'Umar's sister and her husband. When they perceived 'Umar coming, Khabbab hid himself in a corner of the house, and Fatimah, 'Umar's sister, took the book and hid it. But 'Umar had already so far approached them that he had heard the voice of Khabbab reciting the Holy Qur'an. So the first question he asked, when he entered the house, was as to what they were reading. They replied, 'You have not heard anything'. He said, 'Yes, I have heard, and I have been informed that you have followed Muhammad in his religion'. Then he caught hold of his brother-in-law Sa'id son of Zaid. His sister advanced towards him to protect her husband and was severely hurt in the struggle. Then 'Umar's sister and her husband told him that they were really converts to Islam and that he might do what he liked. When 'Umar saw his sister bleeding, he was sorry for what he had done, and asked her to let him have the book which they had been reading, so that he might see what it was that Muhammad had brought to them. 'Umar himself could read and write. On hearing his demand, his sister expressed the fear that he might destroy the volume. 'Umar gave her his word, and swore by his idols that he would return the volume to her after perusing it. Then she told him that, being a mushrik (one who set up false gods with God), he was impure and could not touch the Qur'an, because there was a verse in it to the effect that none should touch it except the pure. Then 'Umar washed himself, and his sister handed over to him the book which had Ta Ha written in it. 'Umar read a portion of it, and began to admire it and showed a reverence for the book. Thereupon Khabbab, seeing that he was well disposed towards Islam, asked him to accept Islam" (IH). This long quotation, which is a part of the lengthy report of the conversion of 'Umar, shows conclusively that at that early period copies of the Qur'an were commonly used by the believers, Ta Ha being a revelation of the early Makkan period.

It is sometimes argued that such anecdotes only show that some chapters were written, and that therefore there is no evidence that every verse of the Holy Qur'an was reduced to writing. But there is a fallacy in this argument. The statement that the 20th chapter of the Holy Qur'an existed in a written form before the conversion of 'Umar is not made for the purpose of giving any importance to that chapter, or to show that the reporter mentioned it because of its peculiarity. It is made incidentally in a narrative reported with quite a different object, and hence it is only illustrative of the practice of the Holy Prophet and the Muslims at that early date. Even if there were no other evidence of the writing of the Holy Qur'an except this anecdote, still we should be justified in drawing from it the conclusion that the portions of the Holy Qur'an revealed up to

that time existed in a written form, and that it was the practice to write the revelation. The existence of the 20th chapter in a written form, and the use made of the manuscript in 'Umar's sister's family, shows that similar use was made of this and other chapters among the believers. They were also aware that the sacred manuscripts could not be touched by impure hands. The above conclusion is corroborated by another report: "We were forbidden to travel to the enemy's land with the Qur'an" (B. 56:129). This report conclusively proves that written copies of the Holy Qur'an existed in abundance, and Muslims were forbidden to take such copies to the enemy's country, for fear lest they should fall into the hands of men who might spitefully treat them with disrespect.

Abu Bakr collected manuscripts of the Qur'an written under the Prophet's directions.

The circumstances attending the collection of the Holy Qur'an in the time of Abu Bakr also show that every verse of the revelation had been written down in the presence of the Holy Prophet. Thus we read of two verses which, in spite of Zaid's knowledge that they formed part of the Holy Qur'an, were not admitted until a written copy of them was found with one of the Companions. "So I searched the Qur'an ... until I found the last portion of the chapter entitled The Immunity with Abu Khuzaimah, one of the Ansar" (B. 66:3). In explaining the report, part of which has been quoted here, the famous commentator of Bukhari, the author of Fath al-Bari, says:

"Abu Bakr did not order the writing of anything (i.e., any verse) which was not already written (i.e., in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet), and it was for this reason that Zaid hesitated to write the concluding portion of the chapter Al-Bara'at (The Immunity) until he found it written, though it was known to him and to those who are mentioned with him".

And a little further on:

"And the whole Qur'an was written in manuscripts, but the manuscripts were dispersed, and Abu Bakr collected them in one volume" (FB., vol. ix, p. 10).

Another report by Ibn Abi Dawud is also mentioned, according to which " 'Umar publicly announced (when the collection of the Qur'an was taken in hand by Abu Bakr) that whoever possessed any portion of the Qur'an, which he had directly received from the Messenger of Allah (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!) should bring it; and they used to write these on paper and tablets and palm-stems shorn of leaves. Nothing was accepted from anybody until two witnesses bore witness"; to which it is added: "And this shows that Zaid did not deem it sufficient that a verse was written until somebody bore witness who had heard it directly from the Holy Prophet's mouth, though Zaid himself remembered it. This he did for greater precaution" (FB., vol. ix, p. 12). There is another report mentioned by Zuhri, which says: "The Messenger of Allah died while the Qur'an was written upon palm-stems shorn of leaves and skins" (N. under 'asb). After mentioning some of these reports the commentator adds:

"And their object was that nothing should be copied except from what had been written in the presence of the Prophet, not from memory only" (FB., vol. ix, p. 12).

All these reports point to the certain conclusion that every verse and chapter of the Holy Qur'an had been written by the direction of the Holy Prophet in his own presence.

7.2: ALL REVELATION WAS COMMITTED TO MEMORY

Memory safest of repositories with the Arabs

Every portion of the Qur'an was committed to memory as soon as it was revealed. With the Arabs memory was the safest of repositories. In fact, they placed so great a reliance upon memory that they took a pride in being called *umm*?, i.e., men who did not know reading or writing, and for whom, therefore, memory served the purpose of writing. They had learnt all their poems and long genealogies by heart. We learn from numerous reports that whenever a passage was revealed, it was recited by the Holy Prophet to those who happened to be present at the time and many of his followers committed it to memory at once, others again learning it from those who heard it from the mouth of the Prophet. The importance of the Holy Qur'an for the Companions lay not only in the fact that for them it was a code of moral and social laws; it was not sufficient for them to know only its general purport. They believed every word and every letter of it to proceed from no other than the Divine source, and hence every word of it was for them a heavenly treasure they had on earth, so they secured it in the securest of places, viz., their hearts. For its sake they suffered all kinds of persecution and forsook their friends, their relatives, their properties, and their homes. Every new verse revealed breathed new life into them. Hence they tried their utmost to keep themselves acquainted with every fresh revelation. Those among them who followed trade or any other profession spent a part of the day in the transaction of their affairs and the rest in the company of the Holy Prophet. Those who lived at a distance from the mosque used to go to the Prophet by turns. Thus 'Umar says: "When I went to the Holy Prophet, I returned to bring him (his neighbour) the news of that day relating to revelation and other things, and when he went, then he brought me the news" (B. 3:27). There were also the Ashab al-Suffah who passed their whole time in the mosque, and were ever ready to commit to memory any fresh revelation that the Holy Prophet announced.

Stress laid by the Prophet on learning and teaching the Qur'an

The Holy Prophet himself laid the greatest stress upon the learning, reciting, and teaching of the Holy Qur'an. According to one report:

"The Holy Prophet came out and we were in the suffah (annexe) of the mosque, and he asked, 'Which of you likes to go every day to Batha or 'Aqiq and bring two female camels with large humps upon their backs, without doing any wrong to anybody or to a relative?'. We replied, 'O Messenger of Allah, we all like it'. He said, 'Does not one of you come in the morning to the mosque, and teach or repeat two verses of the Book of Allah, which is better for him than two camels? And three verses are better than three camels, and four verses better than four camels: in this way is any number of verses better than the same number of camels'" (Ms. 6, Fada'l al-Qur'an, 7).

'Uthman reported that the Holy Prophet said: "The best man among you is he who has learnt the Qur'an and teaches it". Some other reports run as follows: " 'A'ishah says that the Holy Prophet said: The skilful in reciting the Qur'an are classed with the scribes, who are honoured and virtuous; and he who reiterates in reciting the Qur'an, on account of his inability to recite it, has a double reward" (Ms. 6, Fada'al al-Qur'an, 4). Ibn 'Umar reported that the Messenger of Allah said: "No one is to be envied but two persons — one, a man to whom Allah has given the Qur'an, and he recites it day and night and acts upon it, and the other a man whom Allah has given wealth, and he spends it in the way of Allah day and night" (B. 95:5). Hence the Companions of the Prophet not only acted upon the Qur'an

but they also recited it aloud. This fact is specially mentioned in connection with Abu Bakr, of whom it is related that he recited the Holy Qur'an aloud in the compound of his house, which was situated on a public thoroughfare, and the disbelievers objected to this on the ground that he thus influenced the minds of others and persuaded them in favour of the Qur'an (B. 39:4).

Various other reports of undoubted authenticity, showing that the recitation of the Holy Qur'an was an important obligation which rested upon every Muslim, are contained in the collections of reports. Bukhari has a chapter named The chapter on the istidhkar of the Qur'an and its ta'ahud (B. 66:23), that is, "Reciting the Qur'an frequently and recurring to it time after time". In this chapter various reports are narrated enjoining the frequent recitation of the Holy Qur'an. The same renowned collection has another chapter headed The teaching of the Qur'a to children (B. 66:25), a third with the heading The most excellent of men is he who learns and teaches the Qur'an (B. 66:21), and a fourth which is headed The reciting of the Qur'an from memory (B. 66:22). For the sake of brevity I give simply the headings of the chapters. These headings are sufficient to show that committing the Qur'an to memory was enjoined by the Holy Prophet upon all his followers, and it was considered by his Companions to be a duty fraught with great religious merit. Hence it was necessary that everyone of them should commit to memory at least some parts of the Holy Book. Though even now there are thousands of men in every Muslim country who can repeat the whole of the Qur'an from memory, the peculiar conditions existing in Arabia facilitated the task to a far greater extent. This is admitted even by a hostile critic:

"Passionately fond of poetry, but without the ready means of committing to writing the effusions of their bards, the Arabs had long been used to imprint these, as well as the traditions of genealogical and tribal events, on the living tablets of the heart. The recollective faculty was thus cultivated to the highest pitch; and it was applied, with all the ardour of an awakened spirit, to the Qur'an" (Muir).

Greater knowledge of the Qur'an entitled a person to be Imam

There were other reasons which made the Companions vie one with another in committing the Holy Book to memory. The office of imamat, or leading of public prayers, was as a rule bestowed upon the man who had the greater knowledge of the Holy Qur'an (Tr. 2:61). All authentic reports establish this point. One report tells us that in a certain tribe a boy eight years old used to lead the prayers because he knew a greater portion of the Holy Qur'an than any other member of that tribe. This boy, 'Amr ibn Salamah, thus relates his own story:

"We (i.e., the tribe to which the narrator belonged) had alighted in a place by water, and people who went to the Holy Prophet passed by us. When they returned they used to repeat to us the revelations which they heard from the Holy Prophet. I had a good memory, and so, while there, I committed to memory a great portion of the Holy Qur'an from the visitors. After a time my father also went to the Holy Prophet with some people of his tribe to declare their acceptance of Islam. The Holy Prophet taught them the prayers, and told them that the prayers should be led by a person who knew more of the Qur'an than others. On account of what I had already committed to memory, I satisfied this condition. So they made me their imam" (Msh. 4:26).

The distinction of having the office of imamat conferred on one was a practical incentive to a greater knowledge of the Qur'an.

Similarly, when a new tribe accepted Islam, the man who was chosen to be sent to them to teach them the doctrines and principles of the new faith was one who was most acquainted with the Qur'an. There are many reports which show that the reciters of the Qur'an were highly honoured and respected in every way among the Companions.

The Prophet himself recited the Qur'an frequently

These were the reasons which led a great number of the Companions of the Holy Prophet to engrave the words of the Qur'an on the tablets of their hearts. The Holy Prophet himself set an example in frequently reciting the Holy Qur'an in public as well as in private. It was not only in prayers that long portions of the Holy Book were recited. We have on record instances showing that the Prophet recited the Holy Qur'an when traveling on the back of a camel (B. 66:24). He also loved to hear others recite the Holy Word. Still another reports a Companion as saying: "The Messenger of Allah said to me, 'Recite to me the Qur'an'. I replied, 'Shall I recite to thee and to thee it has been revealed?' He said, 'I love to hear others recite it'. Thereupon I began to recite the chapter entitled The Women" (B. 66:33).

These anecdotes show that the Holy Prophet induced his Companions by his own example to recite the Holy Qur'an. These inducements were not without their effect. The Muslims treasured up the Word of God in their hearts, and its reading and teaching became very common. So common, indeed, had the recitation of the Qur'an become, that when the Holy Prophet spoke of the disappearance of the knowledge of the Qur'an at some future time, Ziyad, son of Labid, one of the Companions, at once cried out: "How could knowledge disappear, O Messenger of Allah, when we read the Qur'an and teach it to our women and children" (Tr. 39:5). This question arose out of a misapprehension of the words of the Holy Prophet, who meant, not that the words of the Holy Qur'an would disappear, but that people would not act in accordance with the spirit of those words.

Limits placed on recital of the Qur'an

Eagerness to commit the Holy Qur'an to memory and recite it frequently was in fact so great that the Prophet had to place a limit as to the number of days in which the whole Qur'an should be recited. According to one Hadith the Prophet, on being asked as to how much time one should take to finish one reading of the Qur'an, laid down the limit of thirty days (B. 66:34). The division of the Qur'an into thirty parts seems to be based on this direction. This Hadith goes on to say that the minimum limit allowed was seven days. It is stated that one of the Companions who finished the recitation of the whole of the Qur'an once every night, was expressly enjoined by him not to finish it in less than seven days, and was forbidden to go through the whole once every night (B. 66:34). In fact, the Prophet himself apportioned the Holy Qur'an into seven manzils (FB., vol. ix, p. 39), and thus practically laid down the restriction that the Holy Qur'an should not be recited in less than seven days. Ibn Mas'ud relates that the Holy Prophet said: "Read the Qur'an in seven days, and do not read it in less than three days" (FB., vol. ix, p. 83). According to another report, 'A'ishah said that "the Holy Prophet did not usually finish the Qur'an in less than three days" (FB., vol. ix, p. 83). All these reports show clearly that the Companions vied one with another in the frequent recitation of the Qur'an. In fact, so frequently was the recitation of the Holy Qur'an resorted to, that injunctions became necessary to stop a too rapid recitation. It is also clear from these reports that the whole of the Qur'an was committed to memory by many of the Companions, otherwise it could not be spoken of as being finished in a stated interval of time. That it was recited from memory is clear from the fact that it was recited at night.

Persons who knew the whole Qur'an by heart

These conclusions are further supported by many trustworthy reports, which show that there were numerous men among the Companions who could recite the whole Qur'an from memory. These men were called qurr'a (pl. of Qari') or the reciters, and they were known to have committed the whole Qur'an to memory. FB explains the word qurr'a as meaning "persons noted for committing the Qur'an to memory and for teaching it to others". Of course, the word also signified persons having a sound knowledge of the Qur'an. Seventy of the qurr'a were treacherously put to death at the Bi'r Ma'unah by a tribe of the unbelievers (B. 64:30). The fact that such a large number of them were murdered in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet shows that there were hundreds of them among the Companions. In the chapter headed The Qurr'a from among the Companions of the Holy Prophet, Bukhari relates several anecdotes. In the first of these, 'Abd Allah, son of 'Amr (who, as we have already seen, had committed the whole of the Qur'an to memory), is reported to have said, when speaking of 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud: "I shall ever love him, for I heard the Holy Prophet say, 'Learn the Qur'an from four men, from 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, Salim, Mu'adh, and Ubayy ibn Ka'b.'" This, of course, did not imply inability on the part of the other Companions to teach the Holy Qur'an, nor did the words mean that none of the Companions besides these four retained the whole of the Qur'an in their memory. In fact, to be a good teacher of the Holy Qur'an, it was not sufficient that a person should be able to recite the Holy Book from memory. It was absolutely necessary that he should have a good understanding and a sound knowledge of the Holy Qur'an. Probably they were named because they always tried to learn the revelations directly from the Holy Prophet. One of them, 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, it is reported, used to say that he received over seventy chapters of the Holy Qur'an directly from the mouth of the Holy Prophet (B. 44:8). Other reports tell us that there were many other Companions who could recite the whole of the Qur'an from memory.

To take an example, Abu Bakr is not named in the above report, but it is a fact that he retained the whole of the Qur'an in his memory. It was Abu Bakr whom the Holy Prophet appointed on his death-bed to lead the public prayers. Authentic reports, as already stated, show that the person appointed to lead the prayers was always one who knew the Qur'an most. In cases where several persons had equal knowledge, as, for instance, when they all knew the whole of the Qur'an by heart, other tests were applied. Now, it is certain that there were men among the Companions who could recite the whole of the Qur'an from memory. Therefore Abu Bakr could not be appointed to lead the prayers, if he did not know the whole of the Qur'an by heart. Hence it follows that Abu Bakr also could recite the whole of the Qur'an from memory. Similarly 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar retained the whole of the Qur'an in his memory, finishing its recital every night, whereupon the Holy Prophet told him to finish the recital once in a month (B. 30:38). In fact, many persons are mentioned as being able to recite the whole of the Qur'an from memory in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, among these being the four Caliphs, viz., Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, and 'Ali, and such renowned Companions as Talhah, Sa'd, Ibn Mas'ud, Salim, Abu Hurairah, etc., while three women, viz., 'A'ishah, Hafsa and Umm Salamah are also named in the same category. Several other persons are also named from among the An'r as being able to recite the whole of the Qur'an from memory. But it is not to be supposed that only those persons were the reciters whose names have been preserved to us in reports. Seventy of them were killed by treachery in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, and about the same number fell in the battle of Yamamah, which was fought a few months after his death.

Recital of the Qur'an was necessary in public as well as private prayers

The recitation of the Qur'an and its committal to memory were not, however, only optional, for the Qur'an formed a part of public as well as private prayers. Five times a day had the Muslims to pray publicly, but every public service had an additional part, called sunnah, to be performed privately, while prayers in the later portion of the night were purely of a private nature. The recitation of portions of the Holy Qur'an in all these prayers was obligatory, and thus every Muslim had of necessity to repeat certain portions of it every day. Now, it is an established fact that generally very long portions were recited in the prayers, especially in those said during the latter part of the night. The Holy Prophet himself is related to have often recited the long chapters in the beginning of the Qur'an in his tahajjud prayers. His Companions also followed his example. Thus one Companion is said, in an anecdote left of him, to have recited in his tahajjud prayers the second chapter, which forms a twelfth part of the Qur'an. Even in the public prayers long chapters were recited. The evening prayers are the least suited for the recitation of the longer chapters, but even in these the Holy Prophet recited such chapters as the Tur, ch. 52 (B. 10:99). One Companion recited the second chapter in prayers at the nightfall, and a complaint was made against him by one who was tired by a whole day's labour (B. 10:60). In their private prayers also, the Companions recited long chapters. Thus not only was it necessary that every one of them should commit the whole or a certain portion of the Holy Qur'an to memory, but the part so committed was always kept fresh in the mind by constant recitation in prayers. One Hadith relates how a certain chapter, Q?, was learned by heart by a Companion from its frequent recitation in the Friday gatherings (Ms. 7:13). In fact, if there had been no other means of giving publicity to the Qur'an, its mere recitation in prayers was sufficient to give it such publication as would have guarded it against any possible alteration or loss.

There is only one Hadith the evidence of which is considered to be conflicting with that furnished by all the Hadith cited above. It runs as follows:

"Anas reported that the Holy Prophet died while none had collected the Qur'an with the exception of four men: Abu Dard'a and Mu'adh ibn Jabal, and Zaid ibn Thabit and Abu Sa'id" (B. 66:8).

In a report to the same effect narrated by the same authority, the name of Ubayy is mentioned instead of Abu Dard'a. This Hadith does not speak of committing the Qur'an to memory but of the collection of its manuscripts. There is no doubt that the word jam' (collecting) is used in Hadith in both senses, collection of the manuscripts and the retaining of the whole of the Qur'an in memory, but the latter significance is out of the question here, for it is a fact established beyond all doubt that a very large number of Companions knew the whole of the Qur'an by heart. Nor can an objection be raised to the first significance on the ground that, if the manuscripts of the Holy Qur'an had already been collected by these four men, why Abu Bakr and 'Umar were so anxious for its collection when many of the qurr'a fell in the battle of Yamamah and why Zaid considered it a very heavy task, when he was chosen for collecting the scattered manuscripts of the Holy Qur'an into one volume. The fact is that Zaid sought the manuscripts that were written in the presence and by the direction of the Holy Prophet.

Even if we admit, for the sake of argument, the existence of certain differences in the various reports quoted above, the one conclusion upon which they all agree is absolutely certain, viz., that among the Companions of the Holy Prophet there were persons who retained in memory the whole of the Qur'an

as taught by the Holy Prophet, and who at his death had the whole of it engraved on the tablets of their hearts. All this was done in obedience to the injunctions of the Holy Prophet, who laid great stress upon the reciting of the Qur'an and the committing of it to memory. And these measures to guard the text of the Holy Qur'an were in addition to writing. It may also be pointed out here that the gradual revelation of the Qur'an afforded great facility in committing it to memory. The interval between the revelation of two verses or two chapters afforded the Companions an opportunity to repeat it as often as they liked. The entire Qur'an was revealed in the long period of twenty-three years, and if Muslim boys of the age of ten or twelve years can even now commit the whole Qur'an to memory within one or two years, the Arab possessors of wonderfully retentive memories, to whom the importance of the Qur'an was far greater than to any Muslim of a later age, would not find it difficult to memorize it within the long period of twenty-three years, especially when it was given to them gradually.

7.3: ARRANGEMENT OF VERSES AND CHAPTERS WAS THE PROPHET'S OWN WORK

The Holy Qur'an was revealed piecemeal during a long period extending over twenty-three years. Some of the chapters were revealed complete, but the revelation of many others was fragmentary and extended over long periods. Now, the arrangement of chapters and verses in the copies of the Holy Qur'an at present in the hands of the Muslims does not follow the order of revelation. The important question before us, therefore, is whether the Holy Prophet himself arranged the verses and chapters in an order different from that of their revelation, and, if so, whether the present arrangement is the work of the Holy Prophet? In other words, was the Holy Qur'an left by the Holy Prophet in the same condition, as regards the arrangement of its verses and chapters, as that in which we now find it, or is its present condition different from that in which the Holy Prophet left it?

Internal evidence about the arrangement

That the arrangement of the verses and chapters of the Holy Qur'an was effected by the Holy Prophet under the guidance of Divine revelation is shown in the first place by the Holy Qur'an itself. There we read:

"Surely on Us rests the collecting of it and the reciting of it. So when We recite it, follow its recitation" (75:17, 18).

This is one of the very earliest revelations, showing that the collection of the Holy Qur'an, that is, its gathering into one whole, with an arrangement of its various parts, was according to the Divine scheme to be brought about by the guidance of Divine revelation. Arrangement and collection were, therefore, as much the work of Divine revelation as the reading of a verse to the Holy Prophet, i.e., its revelation. In another chapter, revealed a little later, we have:

"And those who disbelieve say: Why has not the Qur'an been revealed to him all at once? Thus, that We may strengthen thy heart thereby and We have arranged it well in arranging" (25:32).

The Qur'an itself, therefore, makes it clear that its collection and arrangement were also brought about by Divine revelation. It should be borne in mind that the word jam'in 75:17 above ("collecting") implies both collection and arrangement, since no collection could be brought about without an arrangement. These verses describe the arrangement and collection as a process different from the revelation of a verse to the Holy Prophet, thus showing that from the first it was meant that the verses and the chapters of the Holy Qur'an should be arranged in an order different from that of their revelation. If the order

in collection were to be the same as the order of the reading of the different verses to the Holy Prophet, i.e., the order of their revelation, collection and reading would not have been described as two different things.

Historical evidence as to arrangement

History bears ample testimony to the truth of the above assertion made in the Holy Qur'an, and we meet with the clearest proof in authentic and reliable reports that the Holy Prophet left at his death the complete Qur'an with the same arrangement of the verses and chapters as we have now in every Arabic Qur'an. We will consider the arrangement of verses and that of chapters separately, and in each enquiry we shall have to discuss the following points:

1. Was any arrangement followed by the Holy Prophet himself and by his Companions in his lifetime?
2. Was that arrangement different from the order in which the verses of the chapters were revealed?
3. Does the present arrangement differ from that followed by, or which existed in the lifetime of, the Holy Prophet?

That such a large book, treating of so many and such varied subjects, should have been committed to memory and regularly recited in and outside prayers, and taught by one man to another, without there being any settled arrangement of its parts, is a most preposterous proposition, but there is hardly a Christian critic of Islam who has not advanced it. The grounds for this assertion are the same in every case. Not the least regard is paid to historical evidence, and mere assertion that no arrangement is discoverable in the verses and chapters is made the basis on which the proposition rests. The following short paragraph from Muir's Introduction to his Life of Muhammad is not only illustrative of the assertions of Christian critics in general, but it also shows how the author himself has evaded the historical evidence:

"We are not, however, to assume that the entire Qur'an was at this period repeated in any fixed order. The present compilation, indeed, is held by the Muslims to follow the arrangement prescribed by Muhammad; and early traditions might appear to imply some known sequence.* But this cannot be admitted; for had any fixed order been observed or sanctioned by the Prophet, it would unquestionably have been preserved in the subsequent collection. Now the Qur'an, as handed down to our time, follows in the disposition of its several parts no intelligible arrangement whatever, either of subject or time; and it is inconceivable that Muhammad should have enjoined its recital invariably in this order. We must even doubt whether the number of suras, or chapters, was determined by Muhammad as we now have them. The internal sequence at any rate of the contents of the several suras cannot, in most cases, have been that intended by the Prophet".

Some of the footnotes given under this paragraph show the struggle in the writer's mind between historical facts and religious prejudice. Thus, while denying the existence of any fixed order in the Qur'an in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, Muir had to admit that "We read of certain Companions who could repeat the whole Qur'an in a given time, which might be held to imply some usual connection of the parts". In another footnote it is admitted that there were four or five persons who could repeat "with scrupulous accuracy" the whole of the Qur'an, and "several others who could very nearly repeat the whole, before Muhammad's death". Again, while denying that even the number of surahs was determined by the Holy Prophet, he adds the following footnote:

"But there is reason to believe that the chief suras, including all passages in most common use, were fixed and known by name or other distinctive mark. Some are spoken of, in early

and well-authenticated traditions, as having been so referred to by Muhammad himself. Thus he recalled his fugitive followers at the discomfiture of Honein by shouting to them as 'the men of the sura Bacr' (i.e., Sura ii).

"Several persons are stated by tradition to have learnt by heart a certain number of suras in Muhammad's lifetime. Thus 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud learned seventy suras from the Prophet's own mouth, and Muhammad on his deathbed repeated seventy suras, 'among which were the seven long ones'. These traditions signify a recognized division of at least some part of the revelation into suras, if not a usual order in repeating the suras themselves.

"The liturgical use of the suras by Muhammad must, no doubt, have in some measure fixed their form, and probably also their sequence."

In connection with the same subject it is said in another footnote that:

"the traditions just cited as to the number of suras which some of the Companions could repeat, and which Muhammad himself repeated on his deathbed, also imply the existence of such suras in a complete and finished form".

Thus almost every remark made in the paragraph quoted first is contradicted in the footnotes on the basis of historical facts met with in authentic reports. Though the statements in the footnotes are made reservedly, yet the contradictions are too clear to escape unnoticed by any careful reader, and the struggle in the writer's mind can be easily discerned. In the text it is asserted that there was no fixed order or arrangement of the verses and chapters of the Holy Qur'an, and historical evidence is produced in the footnotes showing that there was a connection. The text makes the allegation that even the surahs were not distinctly marked out by the Holy Prophet and their number was not determined by him, and the footnote brings forward historical testimony to the effect that there was a recognized division and that the form of the chapters was no doubt fixed. The reservations contained in such expressions as "some part" and "some measure" were only natural, considering the allegations in the text. It can easily be seen that if "seventy suras, including the seven long ones", existed "in a complete and finished form", as the footnote admits — and there is no evidence showing that the remaining forty-four short surahs, which were, no doubt, generally recited in prayers, did not exist in the same form — the presumption will be that all the surahs existed "in a complete and finished form". This conclusion becomes clearer still, when it is borne in mind that the same writer has also admitted that there were several Companions who could repeat, not only seventy surahs, but the whole Qur'an, and that too "with scrupulous accuracy".

Without a known order of verses the Qur'an could not be committed to memory

The assertion that no arrangement was followed in the case of single verses revealed at different times is so absurd on the very face of it that it hardly requires a refutation. How was it possible for anybody to commit the Holy Qur'an to memory, if there was no settled order in which the verses were read? What order did the different copies follow? Or was it that each copy of the Holy Qur'an current at the time followed a different order? And every man who knew any portion of the Holy Qur'an — and every one of the Companions knew some portion — followed a different arrangement? Does any evidence support these assertions? Or did each reciter follow a different order? What, again, was the order of the verses followed by those who led the public prayers? Is it conceivable that a book which was so widely committed to memory, and which was so frequently recited by thousands of men, existed in such an orderless state?

If there were no other evidence to show that the verses in the different chapters of the Holy Qur'an followed some arrangement, the mere fact that the Holy Book was committed to memory by the Companions would be sufficient to establish that conclusion. There are many chapters containing more than a hundred verses each, and unless these were arranged in a settled order, no one could be said to have committed to memory the whole of any chapter. Take the different permutations of only a hundred verses, and you will see that no two out of a hundred thousand men could have agreed upon one arrangement. In such a case there would have been not one Qur'an, which the Companions could learn from each other, but everybody would have his own Qur'an, and no one would be certain of the correctness of what his brother recited. Moreover, we learn from authentic reports that when any person, while reciting a portion of the Holy Qur'an from memory in prayers, made a mistake or left out a verse, someone of those who listened to him corrected the mistake or pointed out the particular verse. Now, this could not be done unless the same arrangement of verses was followed by all. In fact, it was simply impossible to commit the whole Qur'an or any part of it to memory unless there was some arrangement to be followed.

Chronological order could not be observed

Considerations such as the above clearly show that some arrangement of verses was necessarily followed. Was it the order of revelation? There is clear historical evidence that the Holy Prophet arranged the verses, not according to their chronological order, but according to matter. There were, no doubt, many chapters that were revealed complete, but there were others, particularly the longer ones, that were revealed by portions. Chronologically, verses of one chapter were followed by those of another, and hence in the arrangement of verses in chapters the chronological order could not be observed. The practice of the Holy Prophet in such cases is clearly stated in authentic reports. As 'Uthman tells us, in a report already quoted:

"It was customary with the Messenger of Allah, when portions of different chapters were being revealed to him, that when any verse was revealed, he called one of the amanuenses and said to him, 'Write these verses in the chapter where such and such verses occur.'" From this it appears that the place and chapter for every verse were pointed out by the Holy Prophet himself. With such obviously conclusive testimony before him, no sensible person would deny that the work of the arrangement of the verses in every chapter was done by the Holy Prophet himself, and, as the Holy Qur'an tells us, it was done under the guidance of Divine revelation, and the arrangement did not follow the chronological order of the revelation of verses.

No change was ever introduced by 'Uthman or anybody else. If the arrangement of verses was different from the order of their revelation, the next question that arises is, Was the arrangement different from the one upon which the whole Muslim world is now agreed? We must answer this question in the negative. The arrangement of the verses in the Qur'an we have in our hands is not in accordance with the order of revelation; and hence, if there is no trace in the history of the Qur'an of any change having been brought about in the arrangement of its verses at any time, the conclusion that the present arrangement is exactly the same as that followed by the Holy Prophet is absolutely certain and final. Now, it is admitted on all hands, and the truth of the fact has not been questioned by the most hostile critics of Islam, that there has not been the slightest change in any word or letter of the Qur'an or in the arrangement of its verses or chapters since the time of 'Uthman, the third Caliph. Our copies of the Qur'an are admittedly exact copies, true and authentic in every way, of the copies made by 'Uthman, and hence, to prove that the arrangement of verses

and chapters at present is the same as that followed by the Holy Prophet, we have only to show that the collection made by 'Uthman followed the original arrangement. It can easily be seen that at the time of his making the collection 'Uthman had no motive for changing the fixed arrangement which up to that time was followed by the Companions of the Holy Prophet. That an arrangement different from the chronological order of revelation was followed by the Holy Prophet and that the same arrangement was followed by the Companions in the learning and teaching of the Holy Qur'an, has already been shown. That that arrangement was changed by 'Uthman, there is not the slightest evidence to show. When 'Uthman began to make copies of the Qur'an from Abu Bakr's collection, thousands of the Companions of the Holy Prophet were still living, and no change in the arrangement of verses could have remained unnoticed. Moreover, the task of making the required copies was not in the charge of 'Uthman personally, but in that of several of the best-known Companions, reputed for their knowledge of the Qur'an, and none of these can be shown to have had any motive for altering the arrangement of verses existing at the time. Nor is there the slightest trace in the historical record of the time that the arrangement was altered. No charge has ever been preferred against 'Uthman by any sect of Islam or any individual that he had changed the arrangement of the verses in the chapters of the Holy Qur'an. In fact, the only charge against him is that he disallowed certain readings, and the nature of this charge I will describe later on. But of any alteration in the arrangement of verses there is absolutely no mention whatever in any report, authentic or unauthentic.

Positive evidence that the present arrangement is the Prophet's arrangement

Besides the negative proof cited above, which conclusively shows that at no time in the history of the Qur'an was the arrangement of its verses altered in the slightest degree, there is positive evidence leading to the same conclusion. This evidence may be gathered from incidental remarks made in certain authentic reports. Bukhari relates the following:

"The Holy Prophet said, 'Whoever reads the last two verses of the chapter entitled Baqarah on any night, they are sufficient for him'" (B. 64:12).

This shows that the Holy Prophet himself followed an arrangement which he had made known to his Companions, and they all followed the same arrangement; for if such had not been the case, he could not have referred to two verses as the last two verses of a certain chapter. The report unmistakably proves that every verse had a known and fixed place in a chapter, which no reciter of the Qur'an could change. In the second place, it shows that the verses with which the second chapter now ends were also the concluding verses of that chapter in the time of the Holy Prophet, and therefore the arrangement in the copies of the Qur'an at present is the same as that followed by the Holy Prophet. In support of this, there is another report in which the concluding verses of the second chapter are identified with the 285th and 286th verses of that chapter as enumerated in the present Translation. According to another Hadith, the Holy Prophet told his followers to recite the "first ten verses" of the chapter entitled The Cave at the appearance of Antichrist (AD. 36:13). Had there been no arrangement of verses, the "first ten verses" would have been a meaningless phrase, because it would not have indicated any particular ten verses. The last ten verses of the same chapter are also mentioned in this connection according to another report (AD. 36:13). A third speaks of the last ten verses of Al Imran, the third chapter, being recited by the Prophet when he got up for his tahajjud prayers (B. 65: iii, 19). All these Hadith and numerous other similar Hadith show conclusively that the arrangement of verses in the chapters was the Prophet's own

work. That this arrangement was the same as that followed now in the copies of the Holy Qur'an is shown by the absence of any other arrangement in the whole Muslim world.

Arrangement of chapters was also the Prophet's own work

Conclusive evidence that not only the verses but even the chapters were arranged by the Holy Prophet himself is afforded by the following Hadith reported by Anas:

"I was in the Thaqif embassy at the time of the Bani Thaqif's conversion to Islam. ... The Holy Prophet said to us, 'My portion of the Holy Qur'an has come to me unexpectedly, so I do not intend to go out, until I finish it'. Thereupon we questioned the Companions of the Holy Prophet, as to how they divided the Qur'an into portions. They said: 'We observe the following division into portions, three chapters and five chapters, and seven chapters, and nine chapters, and eleven chapters, and thirteen chapters, and all the remaining chapters beginning with Qaf, which are termed the mufassal'" (FB., vol. ix, p. 39).

There is good reason to believe the authenticity of this report. It divides the Holy Qur'an into seven manzils or portions, each portion to be recited in one day, and the recital of the whole Qur'an was thus finished in seven days. From other trustworthy Hadith already quoted we learn that the Holy Prophet enjoined his Companions not to finish the Holy Qur'an in less than seven days; and the two reports, communicated through entirely different channels, corroborating as they do the testimony of each other, testify to each other's truth and authenticity. Moreover, they are both accepted by eminent collectors of Hadith. Now, the Hadith quoted above shows clearly an arrangement of chapters, for the division into portions mentioned in this report is observed to this day by the whole Muslim world. The seven portions are called the seven manzils, or stages, and they include the same number of chapters as is mentioned in the Hadith. The seventh portion begins with the chapter entitled Qaf, as stated in the report, and the total number of chapters contained in the first six portions is forty-eight, as in the copies of the Qur'an in our hands. It should be borne in mind that in our copies, Qaf is the fiftieth chapter, the difference arising from the fact that in the report quoted above the Fatihah, or the Opening Chapter, is not included. This report affords the clearest and most conclusive testimony that the arrangement of the chapters of the Holy Qur'an was brought about by the Holy Prophet himself, like that of its verses, and their present arrangement does not differ in the least from the original. It may perhaps be objected that such an arrangement was not possible, as the Qur'an was not complete till the death of the Holy Prophet, and verses and chapters were constantly being revealed. It is quite true that the Qur'an could not be said to be complete so long as the recipient of the Divine revelation lived, but this could not interfere with the arrangement of verses and chapters. The word "Qur'an" signified the part of the Qur'an that had been revealed. The report quoted above speaks of the conversion to Islam of the Bani Thaqif, which happened in the ninth year of the Hijrah, in which year the chapter entitled The Immunity, which is looked upon as the latest in chronological order, was revealed. Hence at the time of which the report speaks, almost the whole of the Qur'an had been revealed, and the division into seven portions, which speaks of the number of chapters in each portion, has in its favour the authority of the Holy Prophet himself. The verses that were revealed afterwards were put in their proper place in the chapters to which they belonged. Only one short surah entitled The Help (ch. 110) was revealed afterwards and it found its proper place in the arrangement of chapters, without interfering with the enumeration of the chapters as contained in the first six portions, as it is placed in the seventh portion, the number of chapters in which is not specified.

Talif Ibn Mas'ud

As regards the suggestion that some of the Companions followed a different arrangement of chapters, it is simply a misconception. The best-known of these is what is known as the Talif Ibn Mas'ud or the Combination of Ibn Mas'ud. The fact is simply this that the Holy Prophet sometimes combined certain shorter chapters in his tahajjud prayers and Ibn Mas'ud had a particular liking for that combination. But it should be borne in mind that in prayers everybody was free, as every Muslim even now is free, to recite any portion of the Qur'an he liked. This freedom is expressly given in a Hadith which says that the recital of the Fatihah which is obligatory in every rak'ah of the prayer may be followed by the recital of any other portion of the Qur'an which one chooses (AD. 2:134). Similarly, two or more chapters could be read in a single rak'ah, and in some cases there were combinations of such chapters for recital in prayers. In his tahajjud prayers, for instance, the Holy Prophet used sometimes to recite twenty chapters, eighteen of which were termed the mufassal, or the shorter chapters towards the close of the Qur'an, beginning with Qaf (ch. 50) and two Ha Mims, or chapters commencing with Ha Mims. Thus in each rak'ah two of these chapters were recited, the total number of rak'ahs being ten. The Holy Prophet made a peculiar combination which has been preserved to us through Ibn Mas'ud, and accordingly it is known as the Talif Ibn Mas'ud or the Combination of Ibn Mas'ud. Now, this combination has nothing to do with the arrangement of chapters of the Qur'an, nor was it followed on all occasions. This peculiar combination was, in fact, preserved and mentioned only on account of peculiarity and departure from the original arrangement of chapters. Even in the public prayers the arrangement of chapters was not necessarily followed. On one occasion the Holy Prophet recited the fourth chapter in the first rak'ah and the third in the second, and the incident has been preserved to us in a report only because a departure was made in this case from the recognized arrangement (FB., vol. ix, p. 36). Many other instances of the same kind are on record. It is related for instance that the Prophet used to recite the 32nd chapter in the first rak'ah and the 76th chapter in the second rak'ah in his morning prayers on Fridays (B. 11:10). Another Hadith shows that a person had a special liking for the 112th chapter of the Qur'an and he recited it in every rak'ah of prayer, following it with any other chapter that he liked and the Prophet did not object to it (Tr. 43:11). The so-called Talif Ibn Mas'ud has therefore nothing to do with the arrangement of chapters in the Qur'an.

Ubayy and 'Ali's Collections

Two other persons are named as having followed a different arrangement of chapters in the collection of the Qur'an, Ubayy ibn Ka'b and 'Ali. The case of the former may be disposed of at once, as there is no testimony worth the name which shows that Ubayy followed a different arrangement of chapters. The only thing stated about him is that he placed the fourth chapter before the third. If that was the only difference of arrangement, it is quite immaterial, and the error may, as in the case of Ibn Mas'ud, be due to the reason that the Holy Prophet himself once recited the fourth chapter before the third in one of his prayers. As regards 'Ali, he is said to have collected the chapters in order of revelation, and there is a report stating that he did not rest after the Holy Prophet's death, until he had collected the Qur'an, arranging its chapters in chronological order. The authenticity of this report has been questioned, for such a Qur'an was never handed down to posterity, though 'Ali reigned as Caliph immediately after 'Uthman. And according to one report 'Ali himself said that "the greatest of men as regards the collection of the Qur'an is Abu Bakr; he is the first man who collected the Qur'an" (FB., vol. ix, p. 10). Besides this, Ubayy and 'Ali were among the men under whose directions the copies of the Qur'an were written in the time of 'Uthman and this is conclusive testimony that they considered the present arrangement of chapters as the right one.

Why the ninth chapter does not commence with Bismillāh
There is one Hadith more which may be mentioned in connection with the arrangement of chapters. Ibn 'Abba says:

"I said to 'Uthman, 'What led you to put al-Anfal (the eighth chapter) in juxtaposition with al-Bara'at (the ninth chapter) and you did not write between them the Bismillah, thus classing these two chapters with the seven long ones?' 'Uthman said: 'It was customary with the Messenger of Allah, when portions of different chapters were being revealed to him, that when any verse was revealed, he sent for one of his amanuenses and told him to write down those verses in the chapter where such and such verses occurred. Now al-Anfal was one of the chapters revealed early at Madinah, and al-Bara'at was one of the latest revealed chapters, and the subject-matter of these two chapters was identical. Therefore I believed that the latter chapter was a part of the former chapter, and the Holy Prophet died, and he did not distinctly say to us that it was a part' " (AD. 2:123; Tr. Abwal Tafsir al-Qur'an, on Surah 9).

This report, far from ascribing the arrangement of chapters to the judgment of 'Uthman, makes it clear that the arrangement of chapters was effected by none other than the Holy Prophet. It shows that, except in the case mentioned in the report, the Holy Prophet had "distinctly" told his Companions where a verse was to be placed in a chapter, or where a chapter was to be placed in the whole. It also shows that the arrangement was effected according to subject-matter by the Holy Prophet himself. In this particular case the Prophet did not distinctly state that the Bara'at was a continuation of the Anfal, therefore the two were treated as two chapters, though the Bismillah, not being revealed at the commencement of the Bara'at, the latter appeared to be a continuation of the preceding chapter. It only shows how scrupulous the Companions of the Prophet were in carrying out his directions.

7.4: ABU BAKR COLLECTED ORIGINAL WRITTEN MANUSCRIPTS OF THE QUR'AN

No written collection of the Qur'an could be made while the Prophet was alive

The primary work of the collection of the Holy Qur'an, as shown above, was done by the Holy Prophet himself under the guidance of Divine revelation. But we have seen that such collection was needed only by those who wished to commit the whole of the Qur'an to memory and that it was in reciting the whole that the arrangement of chapters was needed. Hence, though the whole Qur'an existed in a complete and arranged form in the memories of the Companions, yet there did not exist an authorized collection of it in writing. Every verse and every chapter was, no doubt, committed to writing as soon as it was revealed, but so long as the recipient of the Divine revelation lived, the whole could not be written in a single volume. At any time a verse might be revealed which it was necessary to place in the middle of a chapter, and hence the very circumstances of the case made the existence of a complete written volume impossible. Such a collection became, however, a necessity after the death of the Holy Prophet. It was also needed to facilitate reference to and circulation of the Holy Word, and to give it a more permanent form than was secured to it in being consigned to memory. Such was the object with which the collection of the Holy Qur'an was taken in hand by Abu Bakr.

Need of a written collection first felt by 'Umar

A reference to the report which describes the circumstances necessitating the collection of the Qur'an in the time of Abu Bakr confirms the statement made above. The account is given by Zaid ibn Thabit. Soon after the death of the Holy Prophet, Abu Bakr had to send an expedition against Musailimah. A battle was fought at Yamamah, in which great carnage occurred among the Muslims, and many of the qurra* (reciters) of the

Holy Qur'an lost their lives. 'Umar apprehended great danger, if more reciters fell in some other battle. Straightaway he went to Abu Bakr and advised him to give immediate orders for the collection of the written portions of the Qur'an into one volume. "A great number of the reciters of the Qur'an have been slain in the battle of Yamamah," he said, "and I fear that slaughter may again wax hot among the reciters of the Qur'an in other fields of battle, and that much of the Qur'an may thus be lost. In my opinion it is absolutely necessary that thou shouldst give immediate orders for the collection of the Qur'an". "How can I do a thing," replied Abu Bakr, "which the Holy Prophet (peace and the blessings of Allah be on him!) has not done?" "But," urged 'Umar, "that is the best course under the circumstances." Abu Bakr was convinced, after some discussion, and Zaid was sent for. "Thou wast wont to write the revelations of the Prophet. Search, therefore, for (the written portions of) the Qur'an and collect it (into one volume)." The first impulse of Zaid was the same as that of Abu Bakr. "How canst thou do a thing," said he, "which the Holy Prophet (peace and the blessings of Allah be on him!) has not done?" And so heavy did the task appear to him, that at that time he thought: "It would not have been more difficult for me, if I had been asked to remove a mountain". But at last he was prevailed upon, and began the search (B. 65: ix, 20).

Written collection was necessary to supplement its preservation in memory

The report quoted above proves several points. Firstly, it shows that the whole of the Qur'an was safe in the memories of the reciters who had learned it in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. There was nothing to be feared so long as the reciters were safe, but, if they perished in battles, then, it was feared, certain portions of the Holy Qur'an might be lost, because the manuscripts of different chapters and verses had not been up to that time collected in one place. Secondly, it appears from it that the collection of the Qur'an undertaken in the time of Abu Bakr was meant only to supplement its preservation in memory. The apprehensions in the mind of 'Umar arose because he feared that, as many reciters had perished in the battle of Yamamah, many others might be lost in some other battle. Memory was a good repository, no doubt, but such a collection could at any time be entirely lost by the loss of those who retained the Holy Book in memory. Thirdly, the report proves that up to the time when Abu Bakr took in hand the collection of the written Qur'an no portion of it had been lost, and that there were still many reciters who had it safe in their memories. To sum up, the report shows that the entire Qur'an was safe in the memories of the reciters, and that 'Umar only desired to make a collection of the Qur'an in writing in addition to the collection existing in the memories of the reciters.

We have now to explain what was meant by Abu Bakr when he said that he could not do a thing which had not been done by the Holy Prophet. 'Umar's question related, not to the mere collection of the Qur'an, but to the collection of the Qur'an in writing. The complete Qur'an with a perfect arrangement of its chapters and verses existed in the safest of repositories, the memories of men, but the different writings containing different portions of the Qur'an had never been collected together and arranged. 'Umar asked Abu Bakr to collect these writings, and this was what the Holy Prophet had not done, and therefore, in the first instance, Abu Bakr refused to do it. But 'Umar's case was based on strong and sound reasoning. The Prophet himself had done both works: he had every portion revealed to him reduced to writing and committed to memory. Abu Bakr was thus convinced of the truth and advisability of what 'Umar said.

Original manuscripts made in the Prophet's presence were to be collected

Another point to be elucidated in the report quoted above is

the statement of Zaid as to the great difficulty which he thought he was likely to experience in the performance of the task with which he was entrusted. Indeed, he thought that it would not have been more difficult for him if he had been asked to remove a mountain. What were his difficulties? A report narrated by Ibn Abi Dawud makes it clear:

“Umar rose and declared that whoever had received anything directly from the Holy Prophet should bring it (to Zaid), and they (i.e., the Companions) used to write it upon papers and tablets and palm-stems in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, and nothing was accepted from anybody until two witnesses bore testimony” (FB., vol. ix, p. 12).

The object of the collection undertaken by Abu Bakr was to gather together what had been written in the presence of the Holy Prophet. Zaid's collection was meant to secure the original writings, and this was the great difficulty to which Zaid alluded. A great portion of the Holy Qur'an had been revealed at Makkah, and even the portion that was revealed at Madinah was not wholly in the possession of Zaid. Zaid had to search writings made in the presence of the Holy Prophet. He was chosen for the task because he had written the greater portion of the revelation at Madinah and was presumed to have all those copies safe in his custody. But the task before him was a very difficult one. He had to search all the original writings and then give them an arrangement in accordance with that of the verses and chapters as followed in the recitation of the entire Qur'an from memory, in obedience to the directions given by the Holy Prophet. That these writings were safe cannot be doubted. Everything relating to Divine revelation was preserved with the utmost care. But the task was no doubt an arduous one, and required hard labour and diligent search; hence Zaid, with a true appreciation of the difficulties before him, said that it was equivalent to the removing of a mountain.

Abu Bakr's orders

There are clear considerations showing that the service with which Zaid was entrusted was the collection and arrangement of the original manuscripts of the different verses and chapters made in the presence of the Holy Prophet. The object of Abu Bakr and 'Umar was not to have a volume of the Holy Qur'an prepared by Zaid writing down the Holy Book as recited by the reciters, but to prepare a book by collecting the original writings. This is the reason that the word collection (Ar. jam') is always used in connection with this task, not arrangement or compilation. Hence also the first direction of Abu Bakr to Zaid was to “search for the Qur'an and collect it”, and it is easy to see that a search had only to be made for writings. If the object of the new collection for which 'Umar contended were simply to reduce the Qur'an to writing as recited by the qurr'a, sufficient accuracy could have been obtained by gathering together a few reciters, and Zaid had only to write out the Holy Qur'an as dictated by them and approved by the Companions. But 'Umar's object and Abu Bakr's orders were to gather the original writings which had been written according to the directions of the Holy Prophet himself, and thus to make the accuracy of the text doubly certain.

Zaid made a complete search and collected the original manuscripts

The report further tells us that Zaid actually followed this course; for, after being convinced that Abu Bakr and 'Umar were right, he thus describes what was done:

“Then I began to search for the Qur'an, and to collect it from palm-stems and tablets of stone and the hearts of men, until I found the concluding verses of the chapter entitled The Immunity in the possession of Abu Khuzaimah Ansari, and I did not find them in the possession of anybody else” (B. 65: ix, 20).

This shows that Zaid had two things to do; to search for the writings and to collect them into a single volume. Now, collection required an arrangement of verses and chapters, for the writings themselves were found in the possession of different men, and they could give no clue to the arrangement that was to be followed. It was for the sake of arrangement that Zaid had to resort to the reciters, and it is to this that the words “hearts of men” refer in the report quoted above. In fact, without the help of reciters the collection of the writings in the form of a complete volume was not possible. It was for this reason that 'Umar urged that the collection should be commenced whilst a large number of reciters were still alive, and it is for this reason that Zaid mentions that in collecting the writings he had to resort to memory, or “the hearts of men”, as he puts it. The words do not indicate that he sought for some chapters from writings and for others from memory, for if he could trust memory alone in the case of one part of the revelation, he had no need to search for writings for the rest, and the whole could have been easily written down from the dictation of the reciters.

Abu Bakr's collection in writing accorded with the Prophet's collection as preserved in memory

The most important question with regard to the collection made under the orders of Abu Bakr is: Did it accord in every respect with the Qur'an as stored and collected in the memories of the Companions, and as repeated and recited, publicly as well as privately, in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet? There is not the least reason to believe that it did not. In the first place, none of the compilers was actuated by any motive to make any change in the text. The earnest desire of all those engaged in the task was to have a complete and faithful collection of what had been revealed to the Holy Prophet, and Zaid had only undertaken the task after a full appreciation of the difficulties. Secondly, the collection began only six months after the death of the Holy Prophet, while almost all of those who had heard the Qur'an from his lips were still alive. The Qur'an, as recited by the Holy Prophet, was still fresh in the memories of the Companions, and any tampering with the text could have been easily brought to notice. Thirdly, there were many among them who could repeat the whole of the Qur'an from memory. There were others who knew large portions, and these were kept fresh in memory by constant recitation in and apart from prayers. It was impossible that any variation from the text as prevalent in the time of the Holy Prophet should have found its way into the collection in the presence of such men. Fourthly, there were many transcripts of the revelations current among the Companions. And since every verse was written at the time of its revelation, and copies of it were then made by the Companions, there were ample means of testing the accuracy of the collection of Zaid. These writings were in the possession of different Companions, and so they all had a chance to see for themselves that the collection made by Zaid was a faithful collection of the original writings. Moreover, the writings in the possession of one man could be compared with those in the possession of another, and thus, as in the case of recitation, there was no possibility of any error creeping into the text. Memory and writing thus corroborated the already unimpeachable testimony afforded by each. Fifthly, there is no mention at all in any report whatever that anything was left out of the collection made under the orders of Abu Bakr, or that anything had been added to it which was not considered to be part of the Divine revelation. As Muir says:

“We hear of no fragments, sentences, or words omitted by the compilers, nor of any that differed from the received edition. Any such would undoubtedly have been preserved and noticed in those traditional repositories which treasured up the minutest and most trivial acts and sayings of the Prophet.”

7.5: 'UTHMAN ORDERED FURTHER COPIES FROM ABU BAKR'S ORIGINAL COLLECTION

Circumstances which necessitated 'Uthman's making further copies of the Qur'an

As shown above, there are strong and conclusive arguments showing that the collection made under the orders of Abu Bakr agreed in every way, in text as well as in arrangement, with the collection made under the direction of the Holy Prophet himself and preserved in memory by the reciters. The collection thus made remained, we are told, in the possession of Abu Bakr, and after his death in that of 'Umar. After the latter's death, the copy was transferred to the custody of Hafsah, the daughter of 'Umar, and a widow of the Holy Prophet. Thus the collection made by the orders of Abu Bakr came down to the reign of 'Uthman without any alteration in its text or arrangement. But some circumstances coming to the notice of 'Uthman, he deemed it necessary to circulate official copies, transcribed by official scribes, and suppress all those made by private persons, either from the collection of Zaid or from other writings still prevalent among them.

The circumstances which made it necessary are thus described:

"Anas relates that there came to 'Uthman, Hudhaifah who had been fighting with the people of Syria in the conquest of Armenia and with the people of 'Iraq in Azarbaijan, and who was alarmed at their variations in the modes of reading, and he said to 'Uthman: 'O Commander of the Faithful, stop the people before they differ in the Holy Book as the Jews and the Christians differ in their Scriptures'. So 'Uthman sent word to Hafsah asking her to send him the Qur'an in her possession, so that they might make other copies of it and then send the original copy back to her. Thereupon Hafsah sent the copy to 'Uthman, and he ordered Zaid ibn Thabit and 'Abd Allah ibn Zubair and Sa'id ibn al-'As and 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Harith ibn Hisham, and they made copies from the original copy. 'Uthman also said to the three men who belonged to the Quraish (Zaid only being a Madinite): 'When you differ with Zaid in anything concerning the Qur'an, then write it in the language of the Quraish, for it is in their language that it was revealed'. They obeyed these instructions, and when they had made the required number of copies from the original copy, 'Uthman returned the original to Hafsah and sent to every quarter one of the copies thus made, and ordered all other copies or leaves on which the Qur'an was written to be burned" (B. 66:3).

The Caliph was told by one of his generals that there were variations in the modes of reading the Qur'an in such distant parts of the kingdom as Syria and Armenia. No such differences are pointed out to have existed at Madinah or Makkah, or anywhere within Arabia. It was only in newly converted countries, where Arabic was not spoken, that these differences were noticed. As to the nature of these differences, it is stated in clear words that they were only differences in qira'at, or modes of reading. But it was feared that, if nothing was done to put a stop to the slight differences existing at that time, they might, after the lapse of a few generations, develop into serious ones. What the differences exactly were it is difficult to say, but a reference to earlier anecdotes casts some further light upon their nature. We are told in authentic hadith that different modes of reading certain words were allowed by the Holy Prophet himself, and some Companions, unacquainted with the permission, at first severely took to task anybody whom they heard reading any word of the Holy Qur'an in a different method. The reason for this permission was that people belonging to certain tribes could not pronounce certain words in the ordinary way. These people were allowed to read them in the manner in which they could easily pronounce them. This subject has been more fully discussed further on.

Unnecessary variations in readings were forbidden by 'Umar before

The permission to read any word in a different method was based on a necessity. Only those could avail themselves of this permission who, on account of their being accustomed from their very childhood to pronounce certain words in a certain manner, could not pronounce them in the pure dialect of the Quraish. But when Islam spread beyond Arabia, the need to read certain words in a different method disappeared, for the foreigners could pronounce a word in the dialect of the Quraish with the same facility as in any other dialect. Some people, however, still taught the Qur'an adhering to certain readings which were not in accordance with the pure style of the Quraish. Some of them may even have abused the permission and favoured certain readings, though they had no need for them. This evil seems to have spread at Kufah, and it was to this that Hudhaifah referred when he was alarmed at the variation in the readings. This conclusion is corroborated by an anecdote relating to a period earlier than the time of 'Uthman. 'Umar was told that Ibn Mas'ud read 'atta hin instead of hatt hin, both meaning till a time (FB., vol. ix, p. 24). Now, in the dialect of the Hudhail and the Thaqif, hatt was pronounced 'atta (LL under 'atta). Ibn Mas'ud did not belong to either of these tribes, but he favoured a peculiar reading which had been permitted only because people belonging to certain tribes could not utter the word otherwise. When 'Umar was told that Ibn Mas'ud taught 'atta instead of hatta, the Caliph wrote to him that the Qur'an was revealed in the language of the Quraish, and that he should not read it in the dialect of the Hudhail: "so teach it to the people in the language of the Quraish and not in that of the Hudhail" (FB., vol. ix, p. 24).

'Uthman only followed 'Umar's action

It was to put a stop once for all to the continuity of such variations that 'Uthman ordered the burning of all private copies of the Qur'an. The instructions which 'Uthman gave to the syndicate of the scribes further supports this conclusion. To the members of the committee who belonged to the Quraish he gave the direction: "When you differ with Zaid in anything concerning the Qur'an, then write it in the language of the Quraish, for it is in their language that it was revealed" (B. 66:3). This direction, we are told, was obeyed. 'Uthman then went no further than 'Umar. Only the variations of readings became more pronounced in his time, and became the source of much evil, and he took a step which was calculated to wipe out once for all those variations which 'Umar also wanted to put a stop to. The significance of the differences alluded to in the above report is explained by another report, where the words are: "When you differ with Zaid in an 'arabiyyat in the 'arabiyyat of the Qur'an" (B. 66:2). The word 'arabiyyat signifies the Arabic language. The word clearly implies that by difference in the report is meant difference in the method of pronouncing a word in different dialects. Zaid did not belong to the tribe of the Quraish, and hence, when there was a difference in the manner of reading or writing a word, the decision of the Quraish members was to be accepted. The only example of the difference alluded to has been preserved to us in the following anecdote: "And they differed on that occasion as to tabut and tabuh. The Quraish members said that it was tabut, and Zaid said that it was tabuh. The difference was reported to 'Uthman, and he directed them to write it tabutt, adding that the Qur'an was revealed in the dialect of the Quraish" (FB., vol. ix, p. 17). This anecdote shows that the differences were really of a very trivial nature, but even such trivial differences had to be removed.

The copies made under 'Uthman's orders were faithful copies of Abu Bakr's collection. Did the copies transcribed under the orders of 'Uthman differ from the original collection made by Zaid in the time of Abu Bakr? The report tells us that, when variations of readings were brought to the notice of 'Uthman,

the only action that he took was to obtain the collection made in the time of Abu Bakr, and to have other copies transcribed from it for circulation. Thus copies of the Qur'an transcribed under his orders were true and faithful copies of the collection of Abu Bakr, which, as we have seen, was in the custody of Hafsa after the death of 'Umar. Zaid was one of the men who were now called upon to make fresh copies from it. To remove any difference of dialect or variation in the mode of writing certain words that might possibly arise, 'Uthman gave the orders that the reading of the Quraish should be adopted in preference to any other reading. But the only example of such variation that has been preserved to us in reports is that Zaid read a word as *tabuh* and the Quraish read it as *tabut*, there being a very slight difference as to the manner in which the final letter of the word was to be written, without there being the slightest change in significance; and such importance was given to this trifling difference that the matter was reported to 'Uthman for decision. Hence we have conclusive testimony in our hands showing that the copies of the Qur'an made and circulated under the orders of 'Uthman were exact and faithful copies of the original collection of Zaid made in the time of Abu Bakr. Had there been any difference between the original and the copies made, it would no doubt have come to light in the long reign of 'Uthman or in that of 'Ali, when Muslims had been divided into factions, and that copy was still in the possession of Hafsa. The men who murdered the aged and venerable Caliph could not have failed to bring to light any difference that might have existed between the copy of Hafsa and the copies made under his orders. But there is nothing on record to show that any such charge was brought against 'Uthman even by his murderers.

'Uthman's action in burning private copies supported by all. Had the action of 'Uthman in destroying all private copies of the Holy Qur'an been arbitrary or unjustifiable, the Companions of the Holy Prophet would never have yielded to it. They, however, not only approved of his action, but also willingly carried out his orders. A request had come to him from distant Syria that he should take immediate steps to put a stop to variations in readings, and this he could not do except by issuing official copies of the Holy Qur'an as collected by Abu Bakr and suppressing all private copies, which were perhaps not made with sufficient care and might have contained any variation of reading. Nor did 'Uthman take this step without consulting the Companions. 'Ali is reported to have said:

"Do not say anything about 'Uthman but what is good, for he did not take the step with regard to the suppression of the private copies of the Qur'an except after consultation with us. He spoke to us, saying, What do you think of this reading? I have been informed that some of them say to others, my reading is better than yours. This, I think, may amount to heresy. We asked him what steps he thought advisable to take in this matter. He replied that he thought it necessary to gather people on one reading. To this we all heartily agreed" (FB., vol. ix, p. 16).

Thus it was only after consultation with the general body of the Companions that 'Uthman took this step. There are said to have been twelve members in the syndicate which superintended the transcription of the copies. Among these were Zaid, Sa'id, Ubayy, Anas ibn Malik, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas, and others. It appears that originally there were four members only, but that others were added later on, perhaps because a larger number of copies than that imagined at first was required. 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud was the only Companion noted for his knowledge of the Qur'an, who was not included in the Committee, but his exclusion was not due to any prejudice against him, but to his residence at Kufah, a considerable distance from Madinah. 'Uthman began his work after due consultation with the general

body of the Companions, and they approved of his action after its completion. According to a report, Mus'ab ibn Sa'd said that he met many Companions when 'Uthman gave order for burning all private copies of the Qur'an, and they were all pleased with it, and none of them took exception to it (FB., vol. ix, p. 18). In fact, 'Uthman's apprehensions and those of the Companions, as the words of 'Ali reported above show, were not due so much to the existence of variations in readings as to the differences resulting from these variations.

The present Quranic Text is exactly as the Prophet left it

The work of collecting the written manuscripts of the Qur'an was thus carried out by Abu Bakr after the death of the Holy Prophet, and 'Uthman did nothing but order the necessary number of copies to be made from Abu Bakr's collection. He acted after consultation with the Companions, securing the services of the most eminent men who were noted for their knowledge of the Qur'an to carry out and superintend the work of the transcription. The copies made by his orders were recognized as true copies by the whole Muslim world. The bitterest foes of 'Uthman, who cut off his head while he was reading the Qur'an and who had the whole power in their hands, never charged him with having tampered with the Qur'an, though ordering the burning of the copies of the Holy Book was one of their charges against him. Even during the reign of 'Ali, no one pointed out a word which had been omitted by 'Uthman and 'Ali is himself stated to have transcribed copies of the Qur'an from the official copies circulated by 'Uthman.

The purity of the text of the Qur'an is thus conclusively demonstrated. The collection of Abu Bakr was a faithful reproduction of the revelation as reduced to writing in the presence of the Holy Prophet, and agreed every whit in text as well as in arrangement, with the Holy Qur'an as preserved in the memories of the Companions; the copies circulated by 'Uthman were true and faithful copies of Abu Bakr's collection, and these copies have admittedly remained unaltered through the thirteen centuries that have since elapsed.

7.6: DIFFERENCES OF READINGS

The significance of differences of readings.

Alleged differences of readings are said to interfere with the purity of the Quranic text in two ways. It is alleged that certain readings which had been permitted by the Holy Prophet were suppressed by 'Uthman, and thus with their loss a portion of the original text was lost. Another objection is that the variety of readings existing at the present time makes it difficult to decide with any degree of certainty as to which is the original or the authentic reading. These objections really arise out of a misconception of the significance of the word "reading" when used with regard to the Quranic text, and out of confusion between the meanings of *harf* and *qira'at* when used to denote "reading", and accordingly, it is necessary to inquire first into the true nature of the differences of readings.

In the first place it should be borne in mind that the Arabic word used in the reports to denote reading is *harf*. This word means "a dialect, an idiom or a mode of expression, peculiar to certain of the Arabs" (LL). It is this meaning which the word conveys in the reports speaking of the variety of readings, as Lane himself adds: "So in the saying of Muhammad, the Qur'an has been revealed according to seven dialects, of the dialects of the Arabs: or this means, according to seven modes or manners of reading: whence (you say) such a one reads in the manner of reading of Ibn Mas'ud". These quotations would show that differences spoken of in certain reports were only those arising from the variations of the dialects, which necessitated the reading or expressing of certain words in a different manner by various tribes.

Hadith on differences of readings

According to the Hadith, the permission to read the Qur'an in other dialects was granted when many of the Arabian tribes had embraced Islam, i.e., towards the close of the Holy Prophet's ministry. Conclusive testimony on this point is afforded by B. 66:5, according to which 'Umar was surprised by Hisham, who accepted Islam after the conquest of Makkah, reading certain words in a different manner. And it is a fact that more than nine-tenths of the Qur'an had been revealed before the conquest of Makkah, and the whole of that was revealed in the language of the Quraish. The differences of the readings were only such as were naturally necessitated by the influx into Islam of unlearned tribes, who spoke an idiom which was Arabic for all practical purposes, but which in the pronunciation of certain words differed slightly from the pure idiom of the Quraish. Examples of these differences have already been given. The Quraish say *hatta* (meaning until), while the Hudhail pronounce the same word as *'atta*, there being no difference in the significance of the two words. Other variations of the same kind are *ti'lamun* instead of *ta'lamun*, as the tribe of Asad read it; *yasin* instead of *asin* in 47:15; the reading of *hamzah* (one of the letters of the alphabet), by the Tamim where the Quraish did not read it; and so on (FB., vol. ix, p. 25).

In support of the above I may quote the following:

"The Holy Qur'an was first revealed in the language of the Quraish and such of the Arabs as were in their neighbourhood and spoke the chaste Arabic idiom; then it was permitted to the other Arab tribes to read it in their own idioms, to the use of which they were habituated from their childhood and they differed (from the pure idiom) in the pronunciation of certain words and the vowel-points. Therefore none of them was compelled to leave his own idiom for that of another, because of the difficulty which they would have experienced in doing so, and because of their great regard for their own idioms, so that they might easily understand the significance of what they read. All this was subject to the condition that there should be no change in the significance" (FB., vol. ix, p. 24).

Reports dealing with this subject point out the reason for which the permission was granted, and in each case we find the reason to be in accordance with what is stated above. For instance, according to one of the reports, the Holy Prophet asked the angel to "make it easy" for his people, showing that they experienced a difficulty in reading it otherwise (Ms. 6:13, *Fada'il al-Qur'an*). According to another, he is made to say that his people "could not bear it" (Ms. 6:13) — in other words, all the Arab tribes could not read in one dialect. According to a third, he pleads for his people, saying that they were unlearned, and among them were the old woman and the old man, and the boy and the girl, and the man who had never learned to read a book (Tr. *Abwab al-qira'at*). Hence they were permitted to read certain words according to their own dialects. We have also one report ending with the words, therefore read it in the manner in which you find it easy to do so (B. 66:5), which shows that the permission to read the Qur'an in dialects other than that of the Quraish was meant to afford facility to certain people.

To what extent the various dialects in which the recital of the Qur'an was permitted differed from each other is not a question of much importance, but there seems to be no doubt, as many instances preserved in reports show, that the variations were very slight and generally very unimportant. While holding this on the basis of historical evidence, so far as access can be had to it, we have no reason for denying that in certain cases a word of one dialect may have been allowed to be expressed by its equivalent in another dialect, where the latter dialect did not possess the original word. This is what is meant when it is said in certain reports that the expression of meaning by a

synonymous word was allowed in certain cases. Such a case is exemplified in one report by the use of any of the words *ta'ali*, *halumma* and *aqbil*, all meaning "come". This is not an actual case of variation of reading in the Holy Qur'an but the example is only given to show the nature of variation in such cases. Other variations of reading in these dialects were of a much more insignificant nature, and related to certain changes in vowel-points. Thus the meaning was in no case altered. There were differences in the utterance of certain words, but there was no difference at all in the significance conveyed.

Variations of reading never formed part of the Text

It must be further borne in mind that the variations at no time formed a part of the text of the Holy Qur'an, nor were they ever meant for permanent retention. The necessity which had given rise to them was of a purely local and temporary nature. They did not in any way alter the text of the Holy Qur'an as it was originally revealed. The Holy Prophet himself never recited in his public prayers any portion of the Holy Qur'an in any dialect other than that of the Quraish, for if he had done so, men like 'Umar and Ubayy, who said their daily prayers with the Holy Prophet, would not have found fault with dialectic variations, as they are reported to have done. The practice of the Holy Prophet, therefore, shows that the permission to use certain dialectic variations did not alter the original text of the Holy Qur'an in the slightest degree. Another evidence that the Holy Prophet intended only the dialect of the Quraish to be retained for permanent use, and permitted the variations only for a temporary need, is to be met with in the circumstance that the writing of the Qur'an, even after the permission as to dialectic variations, suffered no change.

No variation is met with in any copy of the Qur'an

We may now consider the second objection. It is alleged that the existence of certain readings, which are to be met with in certain hadith and commentaries, makes it uncertain which is the original and the revealed text. Now, whatever may be the nature of the readings referred to above, the one consideration which settles the absolute purity of the text of the Holy Qur'an is that no different text is met with in any copy of the Holy Qur'an, anywhere in the world. During all the ages and in all countries, with all the differences, there has been only one text. Not a single one of the alleged various readings has ever replaced any word of the current text anywhere in the Muslim world. There are Muslim countries situated farthest off from each other, there are Muslims who have been separated from each other for long ages, there are Muslim sects bearing the utmost enmity towards each other, yet they have always followed the same text of the Holy Qur'an, and not a single copy can be produced with a varying text. This certainly is not due to the exercise of any temporal authority for there has never been a single authority over the whole Muslim world. Moreover, if such authority could not or did not interfere with the recital of these readings, there is no reason to believe that it could or did interfere with their writing in the text. Therefore, if the men to whom those readings are attributed had given them the same value as the critics now give, they would certainly have introduced them into their private copies and replaced the text by those readings. But there does not exist a single copy varying from the received edition in the slightest degree. I have dealt with this subject in a separate book, *The Collection and Arrangement of the Holy Qur'an*, and for further information on the differences of readings, as also regarding certain allegations against the purity of the Quranic text, I would refer the reader to that volume.

I may, however, here add that, even if a certain person expressed views which were opposed to the collective testimony of all the Companions, it was the collective testimony that was to be accepted. 'Uthman, as already shown, worked

with the consent of the general body of the Companions. Even if it be admitted for the sake of argument that he suppressed anything, it could not have remained hidden after him. Even the men who murdered 'Uthman did not interfere with the circulation of 'Uthman's copy of the Holy Qur'an, nor did they put into circulation a different edition or a new chapter or even a single new verse. They never pointed out that a single word in the Divine revelation had been changed by 'Uthman. When 'Uthman's power ceased to exist or when he himself was murdered in cold blood by the insurgents, what hindrance was there then to the circulation of parts which 'Uthman might have suppressed? The end of 'Uthman's reign would have seen the circulation of all those parts which, it is alleged, had been suppressed by him, and such parts would no doubt have then been embodied in the copies of the Qur'an. But history shows no trace of any such happening. With all their differences, different men and different sects have always used one and the same copy of the Qur'an.

There is only one Qur'an in the whole Muslim world

It is sometimes asserted that the Shi'ahs regard the Qur'an as incomplete. The following remarks from Muir's *Life of Muhammad*, which has raised and answered this question, will be a sufficient answer:

"Assuming, then, that we possess unchanged the text of 'Uthman's recension, it remains to inquire whether the text was an honest reproduction of Zaid's, with the simple reconciliation of unimportant variations. There is the fullest ground for believing that it was so. No early or trustworthy tradition throws suspicions upon 'Uthman of tampering with the Qur'an in order to support his own claims. The Shi'ahs, indeed, of later times pretend that 'Uthman left out certain surahs or passages which favoured 'Ali. But this is incredible. When 'Uthman's edition was prepared, no open breach had taken place between the Omeyyads and the Alyites. The unity of Islam was still unthreatened. 'Ali's pretensions were as yet undeveloped. No sufficient object can, therefore, be assigned for the perpetration by 'Uthman of an offence which Muslims would have regarded as one of the blackest dye. Again, at the time of the recession, there were still multitudes alive who had learnt the Qur'an by heart as they had heard it originally delivered; and copies of any passages favouring 'Ali, if any such passages ever existed, must have been in the hands of his numerous adherents, both of which sources would have proved an effectual check upon any attempt at suppression. Further, the party of 'Ali, immediately on 'Uthman's death, assumed an independent attitude, and raised him to the Caliphate. Is it conceivable that, when thus arrived at power, they would have tolerated a mutilated Qur'an, mutilated expressly to destroy their leader's claim? Yet we find that they continued to use the same Qur'an as their opponents and raised no shadow of an objection against it."

To this I would add a few words from a Shi'ah commentator of the Holy Qur'an, Mulla Muhsin, who says in his *Tafsir Safi*:

"Certain men from among us and the Hashwiyah masses have reported that the Qur'an has suffered loss and alteration. But the true belief of our friends is against this, and such is the belief of the vast majority. For the Qur'an is a miracle of the Holy Prophet and the source of all knowledge relating to law and all religious injunctions, and the learned Muslims have taken the utmost pains for its protection, so that there is nothing relating to its vowel-points, its recital, its letters and its verses, which they do not know. With such strong measures of protection and such faithful preservation of the Holy Book (by the Muslims) it cannot be supposed that any alteration or loss could take place" (p. 14).

The learned author goes on to say:

"Surely the Qur'an was collected and arranged in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet exactly as it is in our hands. This is inferred from the fact that the Qur'an was even then recited and committed to memory as a whole, and there was a body of the Companions whose duty it was to commit it to memory. It was also recited and read out as a whole to the Holy Prophet (by the angel)."

Dr. Mingana's Leaves

Before concluding this subject, I may make a few remarks about what Dr. Mingana considers a great discovery — Leaves from three Ancient Qur'ans. These are certain leaves, none of them being a complete copy of the Qur'an or even a copy of any substantial portion of the Qur'an, said to have been bought by Dr. Agnes Lewis from a commercial antiquary, containing three writings crossing each other, the oldest of these writings being some passages of the Qur'an. When these passages were written and who wrote them are questions which Dr. Mingana has not answered. All statements to the effect that they are pre-'Uthmanic, or copies made from pre-'Uthmaic manuscripts, are simply conjectures, boldly put forward as "facts". And what are the differences that are shown to exist? That certain words are written in a different style of writing; that there are some variants (three in all); that there are three omissions, *huwa*, *kaffah* and *malakum* in three places, and that there is one addition, the word *Alli*?

The bold assertion is made on this basis that 'Uthman changed the text of the Qur'an, while even a cursory glance at these "Leaves" shows them to be an additional proof that the text of the Holy Qur'an is one and the same and has always remained the same, for these leaves do not show the omission, addition or variation of any verse or part of a verse, or any change in the order of chapters or in the order of the verses contained in a chapter, nor do they show that any verse was misplaced. Substantially, the portions of the Qur'an as found in these manuscripts are the same as in the received text. If there are any differences, they are such as would necessarily arise in the transcription of copies by inexperienced hands. Mistakes would necessarily occur in making transcriptions from other copies and it was to guard against such mistakes that 'Uthman ordered the official copies to be prepared, so that all copies made should be compared with them and mistakes arising in the transcription should thus be corrected. It is clear that the very few mistakes discovered in these Leaves are the mistakes of transcription by inexperienced hands, as the text given by Dr. Mingana clearly shows; for instance writing

writing

اعرض instead of اضلل ; اعرضن instead of اضل ;

ينالوا instead of يقران ; ينلوا instead of يقران

بركنا instead of اذانا ; اذنا instead of اذنا

and so on. These are clear mistakes of transcription, or perhaps sometimes a small vowel-point or part of a letter was obliterated by the rubbing-off process. It is rather amusing to find the purity of the text of the Holy Qur'an contested, on the basis of stray leaves, containing unknown and uncultured writing, once obliterated to give place to quite another writing. The alleged variations, it may be said without entering into details, are partly due to a slip of the pen of the scribe, partly to the rubbing-off of the vellum for a second writing, partly to cross super-impositions, and partly, perhaps, to doubtful reading on the part of Dr. Mingana

“The main difference of beliefs between the two sections are as follows”; -

Lahore Section

1. Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is khatam al-Nabiyyin, the interpretation of which is that he is the greatest and last of all the prophets.
2. The Holy Quran is the final Shariah (code) for the world.
3. No prophet, whether new or old, shall come after the Holy Prophet Muhammad.
4. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian was not a prophet but a Mujaddid (Reformer) and Promised Messiah and Mahdi in Islam.
5. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad never changed claim, views or definition of prophet hood in in 1901 with the Publication of Ek Ghalati ka Izala.
6. Belief in the advent of Mirza Sahib as a Mujaddid is not essential for becoming Muslim but his acceptance is necessary in the interest of progressive Islam.
7. Any one who profess faith in the Kalima-LA-ilaha illa Ilahu Muhammad ur Rasul Allah (there is only one God and Muhammad is His Apostle) - is a Muslim and not a Kafir.
8. It is permitted to say prayers behind any Muslim Imam provided he is not guilty of dubbing other Muslims.
9. Marriage relations with non-Ahmadis are permitted.
10. After the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) Wahi-e-Nabuwat has ceased, only Wahi-e-Walayath (Saintly revelation) is continued. Hazrat Mirza Sahib's revelation was Wahi-e- Walayath and not Wahi-e-Nabuwat.
11. The Founder of the Lahore Section was Maulana Muhammad Ali, M.A.LL.B. Translator of the Holy Quran into English, a companion and disciple of the Founder of the Movement.
12. The members of this section call themselves Ahmadis, and are generally known also as Ahmadis or Ahmadis of Lahore Movement.

Qadian Section

1. Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is khatam al- Nabiyyin, the interpretation of which is that he is the greatest though not last of all the prophets.
2. The same.
3. Prophets may come after the Holy Prophet Muhammad.
4. Mirza Ghulam Ahamd was a prophet as well as Promised Messiah and Mahdi in Islam.
5. The first written evidence of the change of the belief with regard to prophet hood was the poster *EK GHALTI KA IZALA*.
6. Belief in the mission of Mirza sahib as a prophet is essential for becoming Muslim.
7. Any one, who does not believe Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian to be a Prophet, is a kafir.
8. It is not permitted to say prayers behind any Imam who does not recognize Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claim.
9. Marriage relations with non-Ahmadis are not permitted.
10. After the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) Wahi-e-Nabuwat is continued. Hazrat Mirza Sahib's revelation was Wahi-e-Nabuwat.
11. The Founder of the Qadian Section was Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, who was the son of the Founder of the Movement and was a youngman in his teens at the time of his noble father's death.
12. The members of this section call themselves Ahmadis, but are generally known as Qadianis.

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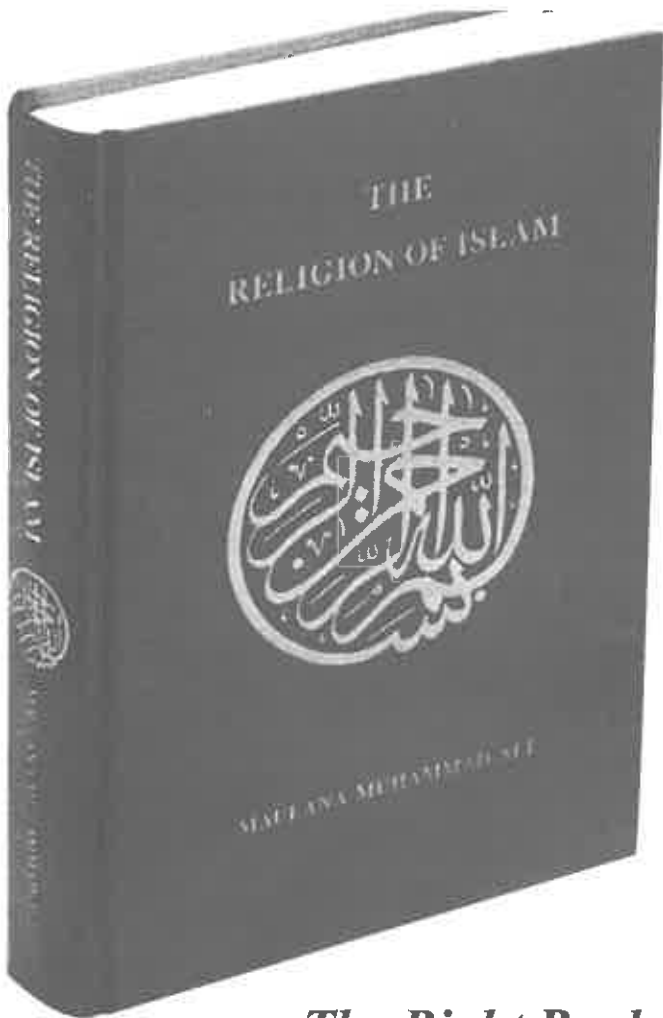
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