

THE HOLY QURAN SERIES—II

COLLECTION AND ARRANGEMENT  
OF THE HOLY QURAN

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## INTRODUCTION

The Holy Quran was revealed piecemeal during a period of twenty-three years. Sometimes whole chapters were revealed entire. This was generally the case in relation to the shorter chapters. But some of the longer chapters, such as ch. vi which consists of twenty sections, were also revealed entire. Generally however, especially in the later period, revelation came in smaller portions, one or more verses being revealed at a time, sometimes even parts of verses. In this case it was the Holy Prophet's practice to specify the particular place in which the new revelation was to be inserted. Every portion revealed, whether long or short, was preserved in two ways; firstly by committing it to writing by one of the amanuenses who were always at hand; so much so that even during the famous flight of the Holy Prophet from Mecca to Medina he had writing material with him, his companion Abu Bakr doing the work of the amanuensis; and secondly, by one or more companions committing the new revelation to memory immediately. The revelation of some of the longer chapters extended over many years, but the arrangement of verses in each chapter was according to the Holy Prophet's direction followed by all reciters. And as the practice had grown up early of some people committing the whole of the revealed portion to memory, a fixed order of chapters was also followed.

The collection of the Holy Quran which means the arrangement of verses in the chapters and of the chapters in the Book was thus entirely the work of the

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Holy Prophet done under Divine guidance, and it is a mistake to think that either Abu Bakr or 'Uthman was the collector of the Holy Quran. Abu Bakr made the first complete written copy by arranging the manuscripts written by the Prophet's amanuenses in the order of the oral recitation as directed by the Holy Prophet. 'Uthman's work was simply the ordering of copies to be made from the written manuscript of Abu Bakr's time and placing these standard copies in the various centres of Islamic learning so that those who wrote the Holy Quran might be able to compare their copies with the standard copy, and thus rectify errors which would have otherwise crept into the sacred text. The text of the Holy Quran has thus been safeguarded from all alterations or corruptions. Sir William Muir admits this in the introduction to his *Life of Muhammad* : "There is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text."

It would be seen that a chronological arrangement of the verses and the chapters of the Holy Quran is simply impossible, as even in the shorter chapters some portions were revealed after a long interval, while the revelation of the longer chapters extended in some cases over ten years. It is certain, for instance, that the first five verses of the 96th chapter were the first in revelation, but it is equally certain that the remaining fourteen verses of that chapter came after some years when the Prophet was being persecuted for saying prayers, as vv. 9 and 10 clearly show. But it was the

Holy Prophet himself who directed the arrangement of the verses and the chapters, and that arrangement certainly follows an order. It is not a haphazard arrangement as some critics think. If there had not been a purpose beneath it, why should the Prophet have ordered a particular verse to be placed in a particular place ?

It is my object in the following pages to show that the Holy Quran as in our hands is a faithful reproduction of the text as left by the Holy Prophet and that the present arrangement of its chapters and verses was directed by the Holy Prophet himself. The whole subject has been divided into five heads as follows :—

1. The text of the Holy Quran was safe in writing.

2. The text of the Holy Quran was safe in memory.

3. The arrangement of the verses in each chapter, and that of the chapters themselves, was effected in the life-time of the Holy Prophet in accordance with his directions.

4. Codices of Abu Bakr and 'Uthman.

5. The significance of differences of readings.

A sixth chapter has been added dealing with :

6. Allegations against the purity of the text of the Holy Quran.

## CHAPTER I

### THE QURANIC TEXT WAS SAFE IN WRITING

The first and the most important circumstance which assisted in the preservation of the text of the Holy Quran is that every verse of it was put into writing in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. Writing was known at Mecca and Medina before the advent of Islam, and though the Arabs generally relied upon their wonderfully retentive memories 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 *as-sab 'ul-mu'allaqāt*, or "the seven suspended ones." These odes were so named from the circumstance that they were suspended in the Ka'ba by their authors at the pilgrimage season as odes of unequalled poetic beauty, and there they remained placarded for some time. These were seven different odes by seven different famous poets of the pre-Islamic days, and their being in writing conclusively proves that the art of writing was not unknown to the Arabs, and that they put their prized works into writing.

Various anecdotes have been reported which show that the whole of the Holy Quran also existed in a

written form in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. That there is overwhelming evidence of the Quran having been reduced to writing before the eyes of the Holy Prophet is amply attested by Sir William Muir, one of the most hostile critics of Islam, who has found it impossible to deny its truth. He writes:—

“But there is good reason for believing that many fragmentary copies, embracing amongst them the whole Quran, or nearly the whole, were during his life-time 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 despatches. . . . 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” (Introduction to Muir’s Life of Muhammad, p. xxviii).

The Holy Quran itself furnishes abundant evidence that it existed in a written form. It again and again calls itself *kitāb* which means a *book*, or a writing which is complete in itself. The Quran is also designated as the *suhuf*, which means *written papers*. Thus in 98 : 2 we have : “An Apostle from Allah reciting pure pages, wherein are the right books.” The pure pages are the pages of the Holy Quran, and the right

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books are its chapters; for not only is the entire Quran called *al-kitāb* or *the Book*, but its different chapters are also called *books*. Again in 80 : 11—16 we read: "Nay! surely it is a source of eminence—so let him who pleases mind it—in honoured books (Ar. *ṣuḥuf*), exalted, purified, in the hands of scribes, noble, virtuous." Thus we see that the Holy Quran describes itself in clear and unmistakable words both as a *kitāb* and as a *ṣaḥīfā*, 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 *ṣaḥaf* is derived the word *Muṣ-ḥaf*, a name to this day applied to the Holy Quran, which means a book or a volume consisting of a collection of *ṣaḥīfas* or *written pages* (see Lane's Lexicon under the root *ṣaḥaf*). The word *Qur'ān* is derived from the root *Qar'* which means *reading* or *reciting*, and the Holy Book is called the *Qur'ān*, showing that it was meant for reading or reciting. Every portion of it was both written and recited, and hence it is the *Qur'ān* as well as the *Kitāb*.

There are many other references in the Holy Quran showing that its chapters existed in a written form at an early date. The 56th chapter of the Holy Book, which is entitled *al-Wāqī'a* or the "Great Event," is among the earliest chapters revealed at Mecca, and the following words occur therein: "Most surely it is an honoured Quran, in a book that is protected: none shall touch it save the purified ones"

(77—79). These words establish two points: firstly, that the Quran asserted itself to be a protected book, *i. e.* a book which none could alter; and secondly, that it claimed to be written at that early date, because the impure are forbidden to *touch* it. If it was not found in a written form, it could not be described as a thing which could be touched. Rodwell gives the following foot-note under this passage: "This passage implies the existence of copies of portions at least of the Quran in common use. It was quoted by the sister of 'Umar when, at his conversion, he desired to take her copy of *sura xx* into his hands. Verses 79, 80 were directed by the Caliph Muhammad Abul Qasim ibn 'Abdullah to be inscribed on all copies of the Quran." The conclusion, of course, is evident. The words not only signify that the portions already revealed had been reduced to writing, but also that the whole must become a written book in time a book that is protected, and which the impure shall not touch. It is an admitted fact that every portion of the Holy Quran 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 Quran 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 Quran, and to suppose that while some chapters were written, others were not thought fit to be written, or that equal



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care was not taken of all the parts or that the laudable desire to preserve every word of the Holy Quran was not manifested by the Holy Prophet or his followers. The Holy Quran was a "book" "written in pure pages," which "none but the pure should touch," and these descriptions apply to each and every word of the Holy Book.

Again, it is in a chapter revealed and proclaimed at Mecca that we meet with the following challenge to the unbelievers who looked upon the Holy Quran as a fabrication of the Prophet: "Or do they say, 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 Quran, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others" (17 : 88). And in a chapter revealed at Medina 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 never shall you do it—then be on your guard against the fire" (2 : 23, 24). Now, all these challenges to the opponents to produce one *sura* or ten *sruas* like the Quran imply that the *suras* of the Holy Quran existed in a written form at the time of the challenge; otherwise the challenge would have been meaningless, for they could not be challenged to

produce its like unless they could have access to the written chapters.

There are numerous anecdotes showing that when the Holy Prophet received a revelation it was at once reduced to writing, and thus every verse or chapter of the Holy Quran, when it was revealed, was put into writing in the presence of the Holy Prophet. In a report narrated by Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi and Ahmad, the Caliph 'Uthman thus explained the practice as to the writing of the revelations of the Holy Quran: "It was customary with the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, that when portions of different chapters were revealed to him, and when any verse was revealed, he called one of those persons who used to write the Holy Quran and said to him, 'Write these verses in the chapter where such and such verses occur.'" 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 Quran was revealed to him. The person who describes this practice of the Holy Prophet is 'Uthman, one of the earliest converts to Islam and a son-in-law of the Holy Prophet. 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

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with those of another. This evidence is conclusive, and there is absolutely no evidence to the effect that any portion of the Holy Quran was left unwritten.

Other reports of the highest authority support the evidence of 'Uthman. Thus Bukharee narrates under the heading *The Amanuenses of the Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him*, the following report from Bara: "When the verse *lā yastawil-qā'idūna . . .* (4 : 95) was revealed, the Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said, 'Bring Zaid to me, and let him bring the tablet and the inkstand.' Then he said to him (Zaid), 'Write *lā yastawī . . .*' (the verse revealed)." In another report narrated by Bukharee under the same heading, Abu Bakr addresses Zaid, the same man who was ordered to write the verse in the above report, in these words: "You used to write the revelation for the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him." Besides Zaid, who, being the official scribe, did by far the greater part of the work of writing the revelations of the Holy Prophet at Medina, many other persons are mentioned who did this work at Mecca, and, in the absence of Zaid, at Medina. Among these are mentioned Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, 'Abdullah ibn Sa'd, Zubair son of 'Awam, Khalid and Aban sons of Sa'id, Ubayy son of Ka'b, Hanzala son of Rabi', Mu'aiqab son of Abu Fatima, 'Abdullah son of Arqam, Sharhubail son

of Hasana, and 'Abdullah son of Rawaha.<sup>1</sup> But it is not to be supposed that these were the only persons among the companions who could write, or actually transcribed copies of the Holy Quran. These were the men who performed the work of amanuenses for the Holy Prophet, and whose names have been preserved to us in reports. Nor is the list given above a complete list of all the amanuenses.

Besides these reports, which directly establish the fact that every verse of the Holy Quran was written at the time of its revelation, there are many other anecdotes supporting the same conclusion. For instance, Muslim narrates a report according to which the Holy Prophet said to his companions: "Do not write from me anything except the Quran." This direction, which was meant as a precautionary step against the confusion of the Holy Quran with what the Holy Prophet spoke on other occasions, also shows clearly that arrangements had been made by him for the writing of the Holy Quran. The direction takes it for granted that the Holy Quran was written. If it had not been the practice to write every verse and chapter of the Holy Quran, no objection would have been taken to the writing of other words uttered by the Holy Prophet.

There is another report, mentioned by Ibn Hisham in the story of conversion of 'Umar, which shows that written copies of the chapters of the Holy

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1. See *Fat-hul-Bari*, vol. ix, p. 19, under the heading *The Amanuenses of the Holy Prophet*.

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Quran were in common use among the early Muslim converts at Mecca. '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. An altercation followed in which 'Umar's sister and her husband were wounded. 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 were reading, so that he might see what it was that Muhammad had brought to them. She told him that, being a *mushrik*, he was impure and could not touch the Quran, 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. This lengthy report of the conversion of 'Umar shows conclusively that at that early period copies of the Quran were commonly used by the believers. 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 Quran was reduced to writing. But there is a fallacy in this argument. The statement that the 20th chapter of the Holy Quran 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 incidently 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 Quran except this anecdote, still we should be justified in drawing from it the conclusion that the portions of the Holy Quran 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; and that lady's consciousness that the Holy Quran forbade the touching of its manuscripts by impure hands affords the clearest evidence that written copies of every chapter of the Holy Quran existed, even at Mecca, at a time when the converts to Islam were very few in number.

The above conclusion is corroborated by another report related by Bukharee. It runs thus: "We were forbidden to travel to the enemy's land with the Quran." This report conclusively proves that written copies of the Holy Quran existed in such abundance that it was found necessary to issue an order against the taking of 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. It is thus clear that the

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Muslims generally had written copies of the Quran in their possession.

The circumstances attending the collection of the Holy Quran 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 Quran, were not admitted until a written copy of them was found with one of the companions. This is clear from the words of Zaid, as recorded in Bukharee: "So I searched the Quran... until I found the last portion of the chapter entitled *Immunity* with Abu Khuzaima, one of the Ansar".<sup>1</sup> Ibn Hajar, the famous commentator of Bukharee, says: "Abu Bakr did not order the writing of any thing (*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 *Barā'* 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 Quran was written in manuscripts, but the manuscripts were dispersed, and Abu Bakr collected them in one volume."<sup>2</sup> Another report by Ibn Abi Dawood is also mentioned, according to which 'Umar publicly announced (when the collection of the Quran was taken in hand by Abu Bakr) that whoever possessed

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1. See Bukharee, chapter on the *Collection of the Quran*.

2. *Fat-hul-Bari*, vol. ix, p. 10.

any portion of the Quran which he had directly received from the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, should bring it; and they used to write it on paper and tablets and palm branches shorn of leaves. Nothing was accepted from any body 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"<sup>1</sup> There is another report mentioned by Zuhri which says: "The Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, died while the Quran was written upon palm branches shorn of leaves and skins."<sup>2</sup> 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."<sup>3</sup> All these reports point to the certain conclusion that every verse and chapter of the Holy Quran had been written by the direction of the Holy Prophet in his own presence.

I have already given the names of several scribes. There were so many men among the companions who could write that as many as forty-two of these are related

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1. Fat-hul-Bari, vol. ix. p. 12. 2. Nihaya, under the root 'asb. 3. Fat-hul-Bari, vol. ix. p. 12.



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to have acted as scribes for the Holy Prophet. We have seen that copies of the different chapters of the Holy Quran were in common use among the faithful, a fact clearly borne out by the report of 'Umar's conversion. This shows that there was no paucity of scribes. Besides the Holy Quran, 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.<sup>1</sup> Letters were written by order of the Holy Prophet to several potentates. The truce at Hudaibiya was written by 'Ali. Correspondence was also kept up with the Jews in Hebrew.<sup>2</sup> Not only could men read and write, but even women were taught the art. Among the wives of the Holy Prophet, at least 'A'isha and Hafsa could read and write, as many reliable reports show.

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1. Bukharee tells us in the *Kitāb-ul-'Ilm* that 'Abdullah, son of 'Amru, used to write reports in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. Some other cases are also mentioned in the same chapter, according to which some reports were reduced to writing. 2. This is mentioned in a report narrated by Abu Dawood under the heading *Reports from the Ahl Kitāb*.

## CHAPTER II

### THE QURANIC TEXT WAS SAFE IN MEMORY

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 *ummīs*, *i.e.* men who did not know reading or writing, and for whom, therefore, memory served the purpose of writing. They had all their poems and long genealogies by heart and possessed wonderful memories. 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, whether friends or foes, 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 Holy Prophet. The importance of the Holy Quran 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, and they secured it in the securest of places, *viz.* their hearts. For its sake they suffered all kinds of persecution and forsook

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their friends, their relatives, their properties, 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 a trade or a profession spent a part of the day in the transaction of their affairs and the rest in the company of the Holy Prophet. Many of them had made special arrangements among themselves to be kept apprised of the new revelations that came to him. The second Caliph, 'Umar, tells us, according to a report of Bukharee, that he and one of his neighbours from among the Ansar living in one of the suburbs of Medina used to go by turns to the Holy Prophet, each of them remaining in his company for a day while the other did his work : "When I went to the Holy Prophet, I returned to bring him the news of that day relating to revelation and other things, and when he went, then he brought me the news." There were also companions who, after the flight to Medina, had no work to do because of the interruption of their business by their persecutors. They passed their whole time in the Mosque, and were ever ready to commit to memory any fresh revelation that the Holy Prophet might announce.

The Holy Prophet himself laid the greatest stress upon the learning, reciting, and teaching of the Holy Quran. Muslim relates a report from 'Aqba ibn 'Amir, who said that one day "the Holy Prophet

came out and we were in the *suffa* (an annexe) of the Mosque, and he asked, 'Which of you likes to go every day to Bat-ha or 'Aqiq and bring two female camels with large humps upon their backs, without doing any wrong to any body or to a relative?' We replied, 'O Messenger of God, 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 God, which is better for him than two camels?—and three verses are better than three camels, and four verses than four camels: in this way is any number of verses better than the same number of camels.'" Bukharee reports 'Uthman as saying that "the Holy Prophet said that 'the best man among you is he who has learnt the Quran and teaches it.'" Other reports to the same effect, and adjudged to be trustworthy by both Bukharee and Muslim, run as follows "A'isha says that the Holy Prophet said: 'The skilful in reciting the Quran are classed with the scribes who are honoured and virtuous; and he who reiterates in reciting the Quran, on account of his inability to recite it, has a double reward.'" "Ibn 'Umar reported that the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said: 'No one is to be envied but two persons—one, a man to whom God has given the Quran, and he recites it day and night and acts upon it, and the other a man whom God has given wealth, and he spends it in the way of Allah day and night.'" "Abu Musa Ash'ari reported the

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following words from the Holy Prophet: 'The condition of a Muslim who reads the Quran is like the fruit of the orange-tree: its taste is agreeable, and so also is its odour; and the condition of a Muslim who does not read the Quran is like the date, which has a sweet taste but no odour.'" The last report contrasts the Muslim who acts upon the injunctions of the Holy Quran, but does not recite it, with him who both acts upon it and recites it; and thus it shows that it was not simply acting upon the Holy Quran on which the Holy Prophet laid stress, but he made its simple recitation equally important. The recitation was needed not only to guard the text of the Holy Quran, but also to keep its injunctions fresh in the mind.

Various other reports of undoubted authenticity, showing that the recitation of the Quran was an important obligation which rested upon every Muslim, are contained in the collections of reports. Bukharee has a chapter named the *Chapter on the istidhkār of the Quran and its ta'āhud*, that is, "reciting the Quran frequently and recurring to it time after time." In this chapter various reports are narrated enjoining the frequent recitation of the Holy Quran. It has another chapter headed, *The teaching of the Quran to children*, a third with the heading, *The most excellent of men is he who recites and teaches the Quran*, and a fourth which is headed, *The reading*

*of the Quran from memory.* For the sake of brevity, I give simply the headings of the chapters and refrain from quoting the reports narrated by the learned collector to prove the various assertions contained in them. These headings are sufficient to show that committing the Quran to memory was enjoined by the Holy Prophet upon all his followers, and it was considered by the companions to be a duty fraught with great religious merit. Hence it was necessary that every one 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 Quran 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 for 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 Quran" (Muir).

It appears from the above reports that the Holy Prophet desired that his companions should try to excel each other in their knowledge of the Holy Quran. There were other reasons which made the companions

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vie with one another in committing the Holy Book to memory. The office of *imām*, or leader of public prayers, was as a rule bestowed upon the man who had the greater knowledge of the Holy Quran. 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 Quran than any other member of that tribe. Bukharee also tells us that the office of *imām* was conferred upon deserving persons irrespective of their nationality or position in society. The distinction of having the office of *imām* conferred on one was a practical incentive to a greater knowledge of the Quran. Similarly, when a new tribe accepted Islam, the man who was chosen to be sent to them to teach them the doctrines and the principles of the new faith was one who was most acquainted with the Quran. And these were not the only ways in which the reciters of the Quran were honoured in those early days, for there are many reports which show that the reciters of the Quran were highly honoured and respected in every way among the companions.

These were the reasons which led a great number of the companions of the Holy Prophet to engrave the words of the Quran on the tablets of their hearts. The Holy Prophet himself set an example in frequently reciting the Holy Quran 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 he recited certain chapters when travelling on the back of a camel,<sup>1</sup> and that he loved to hear others recite the Holy Word. According to one report he kept awake on a certain night to listen to a person who was reciting the Quran in the mosque.<sup>2</sup> Another report also related by Bukharee, represents 'Abdullah as saying: "The Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said to me, 'Recite to me the Quran.' I replied, 'What! should 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 *Women*.

There are also reports which show that the injunctions of the Holy Prophet relating to the committing of the Holy Quran to memory and its frequent recitation were so literally carried out by the companions that he himself had to give them directions against a course which might be a burden to them. It is stated that one of the companions of the Holy Prophet, who finished the recitation of the whole of the Quran once every night, was expressly enjoined by him to finish it at the least in three or five or seven days, and was

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<sup>1</sup> "I saw the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, and he was reciting the chapter entitled *Victory* while on the back of his camel."

<sup>2</sup> Bukharee. ch. *Forgetting of the Quran*.



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forbidden to go through the whole once every night.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in a report received through a different chain of reporters, the same companion, 'Abdullah, son of 'Amru, is represented as asking the Holy Prophet how much time he should take to finish one reading of the Quran. The Prophet told him that he should finish it in thirty days, and on his repeated requests to allow him to do it sooner, he reduced the number of days to five or three.<sup>2</sup> Ibn Mas'ud relates that the Holy Prophet said: "Read the Quran in seven days, and do not read it in less than three days." According to another report, 'A'isha said that "the Holy Prophet did not usually finish the Quran in less than three days."<sup>3</sup> It is clear from these reports that the whole of the Quran 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.

These conclusions are further supported by many trustworthy reports, which show that there were numerous men among the companions who could recite the whole of the Quran from memory. These men were called the *qurrā*, or the reciters, and they were known to have committed the Quran to memory. The author of the *Fat-hul Bari* explains the word *qurrā* as meaning "persons

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<sup>1</sup> Bukharee, ch. In how many days should the Quran be read.

<sup>2</sup> Darimi. <sup>3</sup> *Fat-hul Bari*, vol. ix, p. 53.

noted for committing the Quran to memory and for teaching it to others." Of course, the word also signified persons having a sound knowledge of the Quran. Seventy of the *qurrā* were treacherously put to death at the Bi'r Ma'unah by a tribe of unbelievers. This fact is attested by the most trustworthy and authentic reports related by Bukharee and other reliable collectors. The fact that such a large number of them was murdered in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet shows that there were hundreds of them among the companions. In the chapter headed, *The Qurra from among the Companions of the Holy Prophet*, Bukharee relates several anecdotes. In the first of these 'Abdullah ibn 'Amru (who, as we have already seen, had committed the whole of the Quran to memory), is reported to have said, when speaking of 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud: "I shall ever love him, for I heard the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, say, 'Learn the Quran from four men, from 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, Salim, Mu'adh and Ubbay ibn Ka'b.'" This, of course, did not imply inability on the part of the other companions to teach the Holy Quran, nor did the words mean that none of the companions besides these four retained the whole of the Quran in their 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 Quran 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 more of the Quran than his audience. In cases where several persons had equal knowledge, as, for instance, when they all knew the whole of the Quran by heart, other tests were applied. Now, it is certain that there were men among the companions who could recite the whole of the Quran from memory. Therefore Abu Bakr could not be appointed to lead the prayers if his knowledge of the Quran were not as extensive. Hence it follows that Abu Bakr also could recite the whole of the Quran from memory. There are many other indications, such as the building of a mosque in the yard of his house, in which he recited the Holy Quran every day, his being in daily converse with the Holy Prophet, etc., all of which assist in showing that Abu Bakr knew the whole of the Quran by heart. Similarly 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, retained the whole of the Quran in his memory, finishing its recital every night, whereupon the Holy Prophet, learning this fact, told him to finish the recital once in a month. In fact, many persons are mentioned as being able to recite the whole of the Quran 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 Talha, Sa'd, Ibn Mas'ud, Salim, Abu Huraira, etc., while three women, *viz.*

'A'isha, Hafsa, and Umm Salma, are also named in the same category. Several other persons are also named from among the *Anṣār* as being able to recite the whole of the Quran 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 Yamama, which was fought a few months after his death.

There is only one report the evidence of which is considered to be conflicting with that furnished by all the reports cited above. This report, which is narrated by Bukharee, runs as follows: "Anas reported that the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, died while none had collected the Quran with the exception of four men, Abu Darda and Mu'adh ibn Jabal, and Zaid ibn Thabit and Abu Zaid." In a report to the same effect narrated by the same authority, the name of Ubayy ibn Ka'b, is mentioned in the place of Abu Darda. This report apparently contradicts many other reports, if the "collecting" of the Quran is taken to be equivalent to the committing of the whole of the Quran to memory and no limitation is placed upon the meaning. The word *jam'*, which means *collecting*, is generally applied in the reports with reference to the Holy Quran in the sense of collecting different manuscripts into a single volume, but it may

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also mean the retaining of the whole of it in memory. Taking the word in its ordinary significance, *viz.* collecting the different written chapters into a single volume, the report does not negative the existence of any number of reciters who had memorized the whole of the Quran. There is no difficulty in accepting this interpretation, except that when steps were taken for the collection of the Quran in the caliphate of Abu Bakr, no collection prepared in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet was brought forward to facilitate the heavy task before Zaid, who was chosen for collecting the scattered manuscripts of the Holy Quran into one volume. But the fact is that Zaid sought the manuscripts that were written in the presence and by the direction of the Holy Prophet, and thus the objection vanishes. But even if the "collection of the Quran" in the report under discussion is taken to mean the recitation of the entire Quran from memory, there is no difficulty. The meaning is made clear by another report, which gives the circumstances under which these words were spoken by Anas. There were two rival tribes at Medina, the Khazraj and the Aus, and Anas belonged to the former. Before the advent of Islam their relations were hostile, but on their conversion to Islam they both became one. Still, the old feelings of rivalry were sometimes stirred up, and it is to one such occasion that the report relates. The Aus prided themselves on the possession of certain members, four

in number, who had earned a good fame. As against this the Khazraj named four of their men who had collected the Holy Quran, or who could recite the whole of it from memory. Accordingly, the claim was made only against the single tribe of Aus. This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that the four men named all belong to the tribe of Khazraj, and the exclusion of such famous men as 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, Salim, and others from among the refugees, shows clearly that the claim was advanced only for one tribe as against a rival tribe.

The recitation of the Quran and its committal to memory were not, however, only optional, for the Quran formed a part of public as well as private prayers. Five times a day had the Muslims to pray publicly, while prayers in the latter portion of the night were of a private nature. The recitation of portions of the Holy Quran 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 is himself related to have often recited the long chapters in the beginning of the Quran in the latter part of the night, *i.e.* in the *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 chapter entitled the Cow, which

forms a twelfth part of the Quran. Even in the public prayers long chapters were recited. There are many reports from which it appears that such long chapters as the *Cow* were read in a single *rak'a* in the morning prayers. 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 *Tūr*, which contains nearly fifty verses. In imitation of the Holy Prophet, his followers, whenever they had occasion to lead the prayers, recited very long chapters. One of them recited the second chapter, *i.e.* the *Cow* in prayer at the nightfall, and a complaint was made against him by one who, tired by a whole day's labour, wanted to go to rest sooner. 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 Quran to memory, but the part so committed was always kept fresh in the mind by constant recitation in prayers, though, as we have already seen, the Quran was frequently recited by the companions even outside prayers. Therefore, even if the Holy Quran had never been written, no verse of it could have been lost, so great was the publicity which every verse of it received, and so often was it recited by the Holy Prophet and his companions in public as well as in private.

## CHAPTER III

### ARRANGEMENT OF THE VERSES AND CHAPTERS

The Holy Quran bears clear evidence to the fact that the arrangement of its chapters and verses was brought about by the Holy Prophet himself under the guidance of Divine revelation. Thus in 75 : 17, 18 we have; "Surely on Us (devolves) the collecting of it and the reciting of it. Therefore, when We have recited it, follow its recitation." These verses clearly show that the collection of the Quran, that is, its gathering into one whole, with an arrangement of its various parts, was brought about by the guidance of Divine revelation. Arrangement and collection were, according to them, as much the work of Divine revelation as the reading of a verse to the Holy Prophet, *i. e.* its revelation. The Quran itself, therefore, asserts not only that it is the Word of God, but that its collection and arrangement were also brought about by Divine revelation. It should be borne in mind that the word *jam'* in the above verse implies both *collection* and *arrangement*, since no collection could be brought about without arrangement. Now, the verse shows that this arrangement was different from the order of the revelation of the verses. It describes 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 chapters of the Holy Quran 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 in the verse quoted above.

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

1. Was any arrangement followed by the Prophet himself and by his companions in his lifetime?
2. Was that arrangement different from the order in which the verses or 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 of 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 supposition that no arrangement is discoverable in the verses and chapters is the only basis on which the proposition rests. The following short paragraph from Muir's introduction 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. He says :

“We are not, however, to assume that the entire Quran 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 tradition 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 Quran, 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,

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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 foot-notes 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 Quran in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, Muir had to admit that "we read of certain companions who could repeat the whole Quran in a *given time*, which might be held to imply some usual connection of the parts." In another foot-note it is admitted that there were four or five persons who could repeat "with scrupulous accuracy" the whole of the Quran, and "several others who could very nearly repeat the whole, before Muhammad's death." Again, while denying that even the number of *suras* was determined by the Holy Prophet, for fear of being contradicted he cautiously adds the following foot-note:

"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 Baqr*' (*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 ibn Mas'ud learned seventy *suras* from the Prophet's own mouth, and Muhammad on his death-bed 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 foot-note 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 death-bed, also imply the existence of such *suras* in a complete and finished form."

In this manner, almost every remark made in the paragraph quoted above is contradicted in the foot-notes on the basis of historical facts met with in authentic reports. And though the statements in the foot-notes 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 in the verses and chapters of the Holy Quran, and historical evidence is produced in the foot-notes showing that there was a connection. The text makes the allegation that

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even the *suras* were not distinctly marked out by the Holy Prophet and their number was not determined by him, and the foot-note 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 be easily seen that if "seventy *suras*, including the seven long ones," existed "in a complete and finished form," as the foot-note admits,—and there is no evidence showing that the remaining forty-four short *suras*, which were, no doubt, generally recited in prayers, did not exist in the same form,—the presumption is that all the *suras* 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 *suras*, but the whole Quran, and that too "with scrupulous accuracy."

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 Quran 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 Quran current at the time

followed a different order? And every man who knew any portion of the Holy Quran—and every one of the companions knew some portion—followed a different arrangement! Does any evidence support these assertions? And what order did the reciters of the Holy Quran follow? 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 Quran 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 Quran, which the companions could learn from each other, but everybody would have his own Quran, and no one would be certain of the correctness of what his brother recited. Moreover, we learn from authentic reports that when

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any person, while reciting a portion of the Holy Quran from memory, made a mistake or left out a verse, some one 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 thousands of verses to memory unless there was some arrangement to be followed.

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 God, when portions of different chapters were 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 was 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 Quran tells us, it was done under the guidance of Divine revelation, and this arrangement did not follow the chronological order of the revelation of verses.

If the arrangement of verses was different from the order of their revelation, the next question that arises is, was that 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 Quran 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 Quran 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 will be 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 critic of Islam, that there has not been the slightest change in any word or letter of the Quran or in the arrangement of the verses or chapters since the time of 'Uthman, the third Caliph. Our copies of the Quran are admittedly exact copies, true and authentic in every way, of the codex of 'Uthman, and hence, to prove that the arrangement of verses and chapters at present is the same as that followed by the



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Holy Prophet, we have only to show that the codex of '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 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 Quran, has already been shown. That that arrangement was changed by 'Uthman is for him to show who makes the assertion. When 'Uthman began to make his collection, or, more correctly, when he began to make copies of the Quran 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 most well-known companions, reputed for their knowledge of the Quran, 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 individual that he had changed the arrangement of the verses in the chapters of the Holy Quran. 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.

Besides the negative proof cited above, which conclusively shows that at no time in the history of the Quran 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. Under the heading, *The Excellence of the chapter entitled al-Baqara*, Bukharee relates the following: "The Holy Prophet said, 'whoever reads the last two verses of the chapter entitled *Baqara* on any night, they are sufficient for him.'" This saying, which reports the exact words of the Holy Prophet, shows two things. Firstly, 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 Quran could change. In the second place, it shows that the verses with which the chapter entitled the *Cow* now ends were also the concluding verses of that chapter in the time of the Holy Prophet, and therefore the arrangement in the

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copies of the Quran 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 this chapter are identified with the 285th and 286th verses with which the chapter ends. According to another authentic report, the Holy Prophet told his followers to recite the "first ten verses" of the chapter entitled the Cave at the appearance of the Anti-Christ. 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. This report occurs in the Muslim. The first ten verses as in our copies of the Quran are plainly the verses meant, as in these verses the doctrine of the sonship of Jesus, a doctrine identified with the teaching of the Anti-Christ by the Holy Quran, is refuted in forcible words. This report also shows that the arrangement of verses in the time of the Holy Prophet was the same as it is now.

In no report is any arrangement of verses other than the one which exists in the current copies of the Holy Quran hinted at. Had the Holy Prophet left the Quran in an unarranged form, different arrangements of verses would no doubt have been followed by different companions, and in the great mass of reports there would have been references to some of these arrangements. But the absence of any such reference conclusively proves that there was only one arrangement of verses, which was followed by all the companions.

and that arrangement was the same as we have now in our copies of the Quran, because there is no reference at all to any change having been introduced at any time. There is only one report which speaks of 'Ali having made a collection of the Quran in the order of its revelation, but this, if true, only supports the conclusion we have already arrived at as to the present arrangement being the one in existence in the life time of the Holy Prophet. The fact, if true, is mentioned only on account of the peculiarity of the arrangement, and by reason of its distinction from the recognized and accepted arrangement. Had there been a third arrangement besides these two, we should also have had a reference to it. The order of revelation, as we have seen, was not followed by the Holy Prophet, for his arrangement was according to subject-matter and not according to chronology. 'Ali might have thought of preserving the order of revelation for historical purposes. In the time of 'Uthman, when copies of the Quran were made for distribution, 'Ali was one of the companions who superintended the copying, and there is no doubt that if he had looked upon the present arrangement as inaccurate, he would have either objected to it or refused to co-operate in such an arrangement. But, along with the whole body of the companions, 'Ali followed an arrangement different from the order of the revelation, though he might also have preserved the chronological order. Had he considered the latter arrangement to be

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the authentic arrangement, he would no doubt have given currency to it during his caliphate. But neither in the time of the first three Caliphs nor in his own reign did he ever, privately or publicly, make a statement that the arrangement of verses and chapters in the current copies of the Holy Quran was not followed by the Holy Prophet, and that it ought to be superseded by a chronological arrangement. These considerations clearly show that the arrangement of verses in the copies made by 'Uthman was recognized by all the companions without a single exception to be the arrangement followed by the Holy Prophet.

The above considerations prove conclusively that the division of the Holy Quran into chapters and the arrangement of verses in each chapter were both performed under the directions of the Holy Prophet. When a new verse was revealed, a place was assigned to it by the Holy Prophet, and no companion could assign it a place at his own choice. The greater part of the chapter entitled *al-Baqara*, for instance, was revealed during the early days of the Holy Prophet at Medina, but some verses belonging to it were revealed very late. Such were the verses relating to the prohibition of usury, as some reports show. The place assigned to these verses is immediately after the verses which speak of alms. The reason for this arrangement is that both injunctions, *viz.* the injunction relating to the giving of alms and the injunction relating to the prohibition of usury, were meant for the benefit of the poor, and

these were two steps in the same direction, that is, the amelioration of the poor. In fact, the division of the Holy Quran into chapters, and the arrangement of verses in these chapters, by the Holy Prophet, are such clear facts that there is no indication that a difference of opinion ever existed on these points, either among the companions or the later Muslims. No one can be shown to have ever asserted that a certain verse in a certain chapter in the collection in our hands belonged to a different chapter, or that a verse occupying a certain position occupied a different position at any time. In many reports references to verses are contained in numbers, and this shows clearly that the arrangement of verses was complete in the life-time of the Holy Prophet. To add another example to those already given, there is a report which narrates that Ibn Mas'ud recited forty verses of the chapter entitled *al-Anfāl* in a certain prayer. This is narrated in Bkh. According to another report also narrated by Bkh., the Holy Prophet used to recite, when he would wake for his *tahajjud* prayers, "the last ten verses of the chapter entitled *Āl-'Imrān*, and in imitation of him the Muslims still recite the same ten verses. These facts also prove that the same arrangement of verses was followed during the life-time of the Holy Prophet that is followed now, and that the division of the Holy Quran into chapters was distinctly marked at the time.

The next question that we have to consider is the arrangement of chapters. In the discussion of this

question it may be stated at the very outset that any arrangement in the recital of chapters in or apart from prayers was regarded as unnecessary, except when the whole of the Quran was to be recited. As we have seen in reports already quoted, there were men among the companions who knew the whole of the Quran by heart, and to keep it fresh in their memory they used to recite the whole within a stated time. Indeed, Bukharee has a chapter with the heading, *In how much time should the recital of the Quran be finished*. Under this heading, as already stated, reports are mentioned according to which the Holy Prophet forbade one of his companions to finish the recital of the Quran in less than three days, and forbade another to finish it in less than seven days. These reports show the practice of the companions of the Holy Prophet. Those among them who knew the whole of the Quran by heart used to repeat it constantly, and finished the recitation of the whole ordinarily in seven days. Indeed, it would not have been possible to retain such a large book in memory except by its constant recital and repetition. The Holy Prophet himself had told them that they should constantly resort to a recital of the Holy Quran, and that otherwise it could not be retained in memory. Hence they constantly resorted to its recital. Now, to finish the Quran within a stated time and to recur to it again and again, it was necessary that some arrangement of chapters should have been observed. Ahmad and Abu Dawood and others have narrated the following report which

shows that the arrangement of chapters was also effected by the Holy Prophet. Anas says: "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 Quran 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, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, as to how they divided the Quran 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 *Qāf*, which are termed the *nufassal*.'" There is good reason to believe the authenticity of this report. It divides the Holy Quran into seven portions, each portion to be recited in one day, and the recital of the whole Quran is thus finished in seven days. From other trustworthy reports we learn that the Holy Prophet had enjoined some of his companions not to finish the Holy Quran 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 reports. Hence we have no reason to doubt their truth. Now, the report 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 report. The seventh portion begins with the chapter entitled *Qāf*, 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 Quran in our hands. It should be borne in mind that in our copies the *Qāf* is the fiftieth chapter, the difference arising from the fact that in the report quoted above the *Fātiḥa*, 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 Quran 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 Quran was not complete till the death of the Holy Prophet, and verses and chapters were constantly being revealed. It is quite true that the Quran 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 "Quran" signified the part of the Quran that had been revealed. Now, the report quoted above speaks of the conversion to Islam of the *Banī Thaḳīf*, which did not take place till the ninth year of Hijra, in which year the chapter

entitled *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 Quran 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, and no objection to it is based on reasonable grounds. The verses that were revealed afterwards were put in their proper place in the chapters to which they belonged, and only one short *sura*, the Help, was revealed afterwards, and it was given a place in the last *Manzil*, and did not interfere with the enumeration of the chapters contained in the first six portions.

There is no evidence that the arrangement of chapters existing in the time of the Holy Prophet was altered in any way by Abu Bakr or 'Uthman. Against Abu Bakr no one has ever advanced such a charge, and 'Uthman only followed the collection of Abu Bakr. The copies made in the time of 'Uthman were made under the directions of the companions who possessed the best knowledge of the Quran, and many of them, as Ubayy ibn Ka'b, knew the whole of it by heart. The arguments which I have advanced above as to the arrangement of verses apply *mutatis mutandis* to the arrangement of chapters. But as some reports speak of different arrangements of chapters, I shall consider them before leaving this subject.

Let us take first the chapter headed *Talif-ul*

*Qur'ān* in Bukharee. According to the first report mentioned in this chapter, a man from Iraq came to 'A'isha and asked her to show him her copy of the Quran. On being questioned as to what he meant to do with it, he said that no arrangement was followed in the recital of the Quran, and that he wanted her copy for a right arrangement of the Holy Book. Upon this, the report tells us, "'A'isha rebuked him and accosted him in the following words: 'What harm is there which is read first? Verily what was revealed of it first was a chapter from among the *mufaṣṣal*, speaking of paradise and hell. But when people began to accept Islam, injunctions were revealed about the things legal and the things prohibited. Had the first injunction revealed been the prohibition of drinking, they would have said that they could not give up drinking.' . . . Then she brought out her copy of the Quran and recited verses of some chapters." In this report we have the objection of a man from Iraq, not one of the companions but a new convert to Islam, and the reply of 'A'isha. In the reply the objector is rebuked for saying that no arrangement was followed in the recital of the Quran, and it is explained to him what necessitated an arrangement different from the chronological order. It appears from the reply that his question related to the order of revelation, for he was told that there was no harm in placing a verse revealed before another after it in the arrangement. The copy of the Quran which 'A'isha showed the ques-

tioner had also its arrangement different from the order of revelation, for she is stated to have recited verses of different chapters in support of her argument. And the man was satisfied with 'A'isha's argument and did not take her copy, which he would have certainly done if the arrangement of 'A'isha's copy had been different from the current copies of the Quran.

It should also be borne in mind that the arrangement of chapters to which we have referred above was observed only in the recital of the whole Quran, and no such arrangement was observed in its recital in prayers or outside prayers, when only certain portions were recited. In prayers, for instance, if any chapter or any portion of a chapter was recited in one *rak'a*, any other chapter or portion of a chapter whatever could be recited in the second *rak'a*. There is ample evidence as to this in reports. Similarly, two or more chapters could be read in a single *rak'a*. In some cases there were combinations of 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*, beginning with *Qif*, and two *Hā Mims*. Thus in each *rak'a* two of these chapters were recited, the total number of *rak'as* 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 *ṭilīf Ibn Mas'ūd*, or the combination of Ibn Mas'ud. But this combination has nothing to do

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with the arrangement of chapters in the Quran, nor was it followed on all occasions. Even in the public prayers the arrangement of chapters was not followed. On one occasion the Holy Prophet recited the fourth chapter, *al-Nisā*, in the first *rak'a* and the third chapter, *Āl-'Imrān*, in the second. Authentic reports also show that the Holy Prophet used to recite a portion of one chapter in one *rak'a* and a portion of another chapter, whether before or after the first in actual arrangement, in the second *rak'a*. There is also a report that a certain companion who led the prayers in a certain mosque commenced every *rak'a* with the short chapter entitled *Unity*, and then followed it with any other chapter, and when the Holy Prophet was apprised of this circumstance, he did not object to it. And in the morning prayers on Fridays, the Holy Prophet generally recited the chapter *al Sajda*, the 32nd chapter, in the first *rak'a*, and the chapter *al Dahr*, the 76th chapter, in the second *rak'a*; yet this did not mean that the latter chapter should follow the former in actual arrangement.

Ibn Mas'ud based his arrangement on a certain combination followed in certain prayers, and thus made an error in judgment. Yet in the main even his arrangement was not different from the arrangement followed in 'Uthman's copy. The same longer chapters, the *fiwāl*, were first in his copy as in 'Uthman's, with this difference only, that

*al-Nisā* preceded *Āl-ʿImrān*, the order of the third and fourth chapters being thus reversed. The reversal of this order is also due to the Holy Prophet having once done it in reciting them in prayers. These are the only two differences as regards the arrangement of chapters that are mentioned to have existed in Ibn Masʿud's copy. So the error is either to be attributed to Ibn Masʿud or to those who have supposed that his arrangement of the chapters of the Quran differed in these two points from the recognized arrangement followed in the official copies issued by ʿUthman. Even the existence of the difference confirms the conclusion that the arrangement of chapters followed by ʿUthman was the same as that followed by the Holy Prophet. There is agreement in the main between other companions and Ibn Masʿud. If the order of chapters was not fixed by the Holy Prophet himself, what led Ibn Masʿud to follow the same arrangement as was followed by ʿUthman and the other companions? Such an agreement in the arrangement of 114 chapters was not possible unless both were following one and the same authority who had fixed that order. Such authority could be none but the Holy Prophet. As further testimony that Ibn Masʿud's arrangement of chapters was materially the same as was followed in ʿUthman's copies, and as is followed by us to this day, we have a report in Bukhāree in which Ibn Masʿud names the five chapters in the middle of the Quran, *Banī Isrāʾīl*, *al-Kahf*, *Ṭā Hā*,

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*Maryam* and *Anbiyā* in the same order in which they are found in our copies of the Holy Quran. All this evidence leads us to the certain conclusion that Ibn Mas'ud's arrangement of chapters was the same as in the copies made by the order of 'Uthman, that if there was any difference it was very slight and immaterial and that this difference arose out of a misunderstanding on the part of Ibn Mas'ud.

Two other persons are named as having followed a different arrangement of chapters in the collection of the Quran. These are Ubayy ibn Ka'b and 'Ali. The case of the former may be disposed of at once, as there is no testimony worthy 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 have arisen from the same source as in the case of Ibn Mas'ud. 'Ali is said to have collected the chapters in the 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 Quran, arranging its chapters in chronological order. The authenticity of this report has been questioned, for that Quran was never handed down to posterity, though 'Ali reigned as Caliph immediately after 'Uthman. Moreover, there are reports of a higher authority which do not give to 'Ali such credit. According to one 'Ali himself said that "the greatest of men as regards the collection of

the Quran is Abu Bakr; he is the first man who collected the Quran." The report which makes 'Ali say that he did not rest after the death of the Prophet till he had collected the whole of the Quran is also contradicted by the fact that even during his caliphate 'Ali never referred to or accepted a different copy of the Quran or a different arrangement of its chapters. There is another consideration which shows that neither 'Ali nor Ubayy followed any arrangement of chapters other than the one which was followed by 'Uthman. Ubayy and 'Ali were among the men under whose directions the copies of the Quran were written in the caliphate of 'Uthman and therefore they were as greatly concerned in giving us the present arrangement of chapters as 'Uthman or any other companion.

There is one report more which may be mentioned in connection with the arrangement of chapters, as from it a contrary conclusion is sometimes drawn by mistake. Ibn 'Abbas thus narrates this report: "I said to 'Uthman, 'What led you to put *al-Anfāl* (the eighth chapter) in juxtaposition with *Barā'a*, and you did not write between them the *Bismillāh*, thus classing these two chapters with the seven long ones?' Upon this question 'Uthman gave me the following reply: 'It was customary with the Holy Prophet, when many chapters were being revealed to him, that when any portion of any chapter was revealed, he sent for one of his amanuenses and told him to write down these verses in the chapter where such and such things were



spoken of. Now *al-Anfāl* was one of the chapters revealed early at Medina, and *Barā'a* 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.' ” 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 or a chapter was to be placed. It also shows that the arrangement was effected according to subject-matter by the Holy Prophet himself, for it was the identity of the subject-matter which decided that the eighth and the ninth chapters should be placed in juxtaposition. In fact, the report relates in express and clear words, not only that the Holy Prophet pointed out the position of every verse, but also that he pointed out the position of every chapter, and distinctly told his companions which chapter should follow which in the collection, and that it was he who arranged the chapters according to their subject-matter. Now, taking the case of the two chapters mentioned in the report, does it follow from what is said in it that the Holy Prophet gave no directions at all as to their arrangement? The chapter entitled *Barā'a* was, we know, revealed to the Holy Prophet more than a year before

his death, and accordingly it is not right to say that he had no time to give distinct directions as to its place. The fact is that the Holy Prophet himself desired the two chapters to be thus placed side by side, and the *Barā'a* to be written without *Bismillāh*, the formula with which every chapter begins. The two chapters, although known under two different names, were really parts of a single chapter. The first thirty verses of the *Barā'a* (according to others, thirteen or forty), were proclaimed to the assembled hosts in the days of pilgrimage, and this was the reason that the *Barā'a* was regarded as a different chapter. Hence the Holy Prophet never told his companions distinctly that the *Barā'a* was only a part of *al Anfāl*, and it was for this reason that it was looked upon as a distinct chapter. But neither did the Holy Prophet commence it with the opening formula, because in a certain sense—that is, the identity of the subject-matter—it was regarded as a part of the eighth chapter. This is what 'Uthman explained to Ibn 'Abbas.

All these circumstances lead us to the certain and undeniable conclusion that the arrangement of the chapters of the Holy Quran and the arrangement of the verses in each chapter were both effected by the Holy Prophet. There is strong internal evidence to the same effect. The chapters, like the verses, have a connection with each other, as shown in the introductory notes on the different chapters in my Translation of the Holy Quran.

## CHAPTER IV

### CODICES OF ABU BAKR AND 'UTHMAN.

The next point to be considered is, if the whole of the Quran was safe in writing as well as in memory, and if even its verses and chapters were arranged before the death of the Holy Prophet, what was meant by the collection of the Quran in the time of Abu Bakr or in that of 'Uthman.

As I have already remarked, the primary work of the collection of the Holy Quran was done by the Holy Prophet himself under the guidance of Divine revelation. To this the Holy Book itself refers in the following words: "Surely on Us devolves the collecting of it and the recital of it; therefore when We have recited it, follow its recitation" (75 : 17, 18). On another occasion, the objection of the unbelievers to the gradual revelation of the Holy Quran is thus met: "And those who disbelieve say: Why has not the Quran been revealed to him all at once? Thus that We may establish your heart by it, and We have arranged it well in arranging" (25 : 32). Here again it is asserted that the putting together and arranging of parts was the work of Divine revelation. These verses and the facts already mentioned go a long way to show that the primary collection of the Holy Quran was effected by the

Holy Prophet. But we have seen that such collection was needed only by those who wished to commit the whole of the Quran to memory, and that it was in reciting the whole that the arrangement of chapters was needed. Hence, though the whole Quran existed in a complete and arranged form in the memories of the companions, it did not exist in a single volume in a written form. 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 volume impossible. Hence a collection of the Quran in a volume was needed after the death of the Holy Prophet, which should be in accordance with the collection made by the Holy Prophet as existing in the memories of his companions. Such a collection 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 Quran was taken in hand by Abu Bakr.

A reference to the report which describes the circumstances necessitating the collection of the Quran confirms the statement made above. The account is given by Zaid ibn Thabit, the Holy Prophet's amanuen-

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sis at Medina, and it has been preserved to us in an authentic report recorded in the Bukharee. Soon after the death of the Holy Prophet, Abu Bakr had to send an expedition against Musailma. A battle was fought at Yamamah, in which great carnage occurred among Muslims, and many of the reciters of the Holy Quran lost their lives. Since the Holy Quran existed as a whole up to this time only in the memories of the reciters, and the written fragments had not been collected in a single volume, 'Umar apprehended a great danger if more reciters fell in some other battle. Straightway he went to Abu Bakr. "A great number of the reciters of the Quran have been slain in the battle of Yamamah," he said, "and I fear that slaughter may again wax hot among the reciters of the Quran in other fields of battle, and that much of the Quran may be lost therefrom. In my opinion it is absolutely necessary that you should give immediate orders for the collection of the Quran." But the companions of the Holy Prophet were so faithful to their master that the doing of a thing which the Holy Prophet had not done seemed to them a departure from the path which he had shown to them. "How can I do a thing," replied Abu Bakr, "which the Holy Prophet, 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. "You are", said Abu Bakr to him when he came, "a young man and wise, against whom no

one amongst us can cast an imputation of any kind, and you were wont to write the revelations of the Holy Prophet. Search therefore (the written portions of) the Quran and collect it (into one volume)." The first impulse of Zaid was the same as that of Abu Bakr. "How can you do a thing," said he, "which the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon 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.

The report quoted above proves several points. Firstly, it shows that the whole of the Quran was safe in the memories of the reciters who had learned it in the life-time of the Holy Prophet. There was nothing to be feared so long as the reciters were safe, but if they perished in a battle, then, it was feared, certain portions of the Holy Quran 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 Quran undertaken in the time of Abu Bakr was meant only to supply the place of the reciters if by some mishap in a battle they were all lost. The report does not allege that the Quran had not been collected up to that time: on the other hand, it asserts that the Quran was safe in men's memories, but that a written collection was needed in view of the possible loss of the reciters in a

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field of 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 Quran, no portion of it had been lost, and that there were still many reciters who had it safe in their memories. 'Umar only feared loss of portions of the Quran by the loss of the remaining reciters in some other battle that might ensue. Nothing had been lost up to that time, but something might be lost in the future if immediate steps were not taken for a collection in writing. To sum up, the report shows that the entire Quran was safe in the memories of the reciters, that 'Umar only desired to make a collection of the Quran in writing in addition to the collection existing in the memories of the reciters, and that nothing had been lost from the collection existing in their memories when the collection in writing was undertaken. These are three important points which settle the matter that the collection of the Quranic revelations in our hands does not differ in any way from the collection existing in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, and that nothing was added to or lost from it at any time.

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. In-

deed, 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 Dawood 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 branches in the life-time of the Holy Prophet, and nothing was accepted from anybody until two witnesses bore testimony."<sup>1</sup> The report clearly confirms the conclusion already arrived at, that the object of the collection undertaken in the time of 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 Quran had been revealed at Mecca, and even the portion that was revealed at Medina was not wholly in the possession of Zaid. He had to search not only writings, but writings which had been written *in the presence of the Holy Prophet*. He was chosen for the task because he had written the greater portion of the revelation at Medina, 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 Quran from memory in obedience to the

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1. Fath-ul Bari, Vol, ix p. 12.



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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.

These are clear considerations showing that the task with which Zaid was entrusted was the collection and arrangement of the original copies 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 Quran 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* the Quran and collect it," and it is easy to see that a search could only be spoken of in relation to writings. If the object of the new collection for which 'Umar contended were simply to reduce the Quran to writing as recited by the experts, Abu Bakr would not have told Zaid to "*search* the Quran and collect it." Nor would Zaid, in such a case, have considered the task to be as difficult as the removing of a mountain. Sufficient accuracy could have been obtained by gathering together a few reciters, and Zaid had only to write out the Holy Quran as dictated by them.

But 'Umar's object was 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. And 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 the Quran and to collect it from palm branches and tables of stone and the hearts of men, until I found the concluding verses of the chapter entitled *Immunity* in the possession of Abu Khuzaima Ansari, and I did not find them in the possession of anybody else" This shows that Zaid had two things to do: to search the writings and to collect them in 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. Moreover, memory had also to be resorted to, to test the accuracy of the writings. 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 many of the reciters were still alive, and it is for this reason that Zaid mentions that in collecting the writ-

ings he had to resort to the hearts of men besides the writings. The words do not indicate that he sought for some chapters from writings and for others from memory, for if he had limited his inquiry to memory 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.

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 Quran as stored and collected in the memories of the companions, and as repeated and recited, publicly as well as privately, in the life-time 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 reproduction 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 Quran from his lips were still alive. The Quran as recited by the Holy Prophet was still fresh in the memories of his companions, and any tampering with the text could have been easily brought to notice. Thirdly, we find the companions so cautious

even in reporting the words of the Holy Prophet that we cannot imagine that they would tamper with the Divine revelation only six months after his death. They held the Divine word in such great awe and reverence that it is impossible they should have fabricated a word or sanctioned the omission of any part of the Holy Book. Fourthly, as we have already seen, there were many among them who could repeat the whole of the Quran 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. Fifthly, there were many transcripts of the revelation 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 for 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 copy 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 probability of any error creeping into the text. Memory and writing corroborated the already unimpeachable testimony afforded by each, and thus placed beyond the

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shadow of a doubt the accuracy of the text of the Holy Quran. Sixthly, 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 Sir William 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."

Thus there are strong and conclusive arguments showing that the copy made from the transcripts under the orders of Abu Bakr agreed in every way, in text as well as in arrangement, with the collection made under the directions of the Holy Prophet himself and preserved in memory by the reciters. This copy 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 Hafsa, the daughter of 'Umar, and a widow of the Holy Prophet. Thus the copy of the Holy Quran transcribed by the orders of Abu Bakr came down to the reign of 'Uthman without any alteration in its text or arrangement. It is highly probable that copies were made from this collection by those who needed them, and thus it was sufficiently circulated. But some circumstances coming to the notice of 'Uthman, he

deemed it necessary to circulate official copies, transcribed by the official scribes, and suppress all those made by private persons, either from the collection of Zaid or other writings still prevalent among them. An authentic report narrated by Bukharee thus describes the circumstances: "Anas son of Malik relates that there came to 'Uthman, Huzaifa who had been fighting with the people of Syria in the conquest of Armenia and with the people of Iraq in Azerbaijan, 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 Hafsa, asking her to send him the Quran in her possession, so that they might make other copies of it and then send the original copy back to her. Thereupon Hafsa sent the copy to 'Uthman, and he ordered Zaid ibn Thabit and 'Abdullah ibn Zubair and Sa'id-ibn-il-'As and 'Abdul 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 Medinite): 'When you differ with Zaid in anything concerning the Quran, 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 Hafsa, and sent to every quarter one of the copies thus made,

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and ordered all other copies or leaves on which the Quran was written to be burned."

The report states clearly the circumstances which led 'Uthman to destroy all private and substitute in their place official copies transcribed from the collection of Zaid made in the time of Abu Bakr. The Caliph was told by one of his generals who had been fighting in Armenia and Azerbaijan that there were variations in the modes of reading the Quran in such distant parts of the kingdom as Syria and Iraq. No such differences are pointed out to have existed at Medina or Mecca, 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'a*, or *the modes of reading*. Nor were they of such a serious nature as those existing among the Jews and the Christians with regard to their Scriptures, 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 for us to say, but a reference to earlier anecdotes casts some further light upon their nature. We are told in authentic reports that different modes of reading certain words were allowed by the Holy Prophet himself, and companions unacquainted with the permission at first severely took to task anybody whom they heard reading

any word of the Holy Quran in a different method. Thus 'Umar on one occasion heard Hisham pronouncing certain words of the Quran in a different method, and in great wrath dragged him into the presence of the Holy Prophet, who approved Hisham's reading. 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. The permission to read any word in a different method was thus based on a necessity. 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 of the companions, however, still taught the Quran adhering to certain readings which were not in accordance with the pure style of the Quraish. Some of them may have even abused the permission and favoured certain readings, though they had no need for them. This evil seems to have spread at Kufa, and it was to this that Huzaifa referred when he was alarmed at the variation in the readings. According to certain reports he strongly reproved those who took to peculiar readings some saying that they followed the reading of Ibn Mas'ud, others that of Abu Musa, and other still of Ubayy ibn Ka'b. Another evil that had sprung out of these variations in readings was that the new converts, unable to realize the need for which they had



been permitted, began to attribute heresy one to another for a difference in the reading of certain words. It was this which made Huzaifa and 'Uthman have great apprehensions, as many reports show, and the only remedy for it was that the variations for which there now remained no need, should be entirely suppressed in reading as well as in writing, and that the pure language of the Quraish, in which the Quran had been revealed, should be used by all.

The instruction which 'Uthman gave to the syndicate of the scribes further supports the above conclusions. To the members of the committee who belonged to the tribes of the Quraish he gave the direction in plain words: "When you differ with Zaid in anything concerning the Quran, then write it in the language of the Quraish, for it is in their language that it was revealed." This direction, we are told, was obeyed. A similar direction had been issued earlier by 'Umar to Ibn Mas'ud telling him to teach the Quran in the language of Quraish and not in the language of the Hudhail. '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 off once for all those variations which 'Umar also wanted to put a stop to. It may be asked what was meant by differing with Zaid in anything concerning the Quran. In another report, also related by Bukharae, we have the words, "when you differ

with Zaid in an 'arabiyya in the 'arabiyya of the Quran,' the word 'arabiyya signifying 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, as previously stated, did not belong to the tribe of the Quraish, and hence, where there was 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 a report. On the authority of Ibn Shahab, the same narrator as in Bukharee's report, Tirmidhi adds the following anecdote to the report accepted and narrated by Bukharee: "And they differed on that occasion as to *tābūt* and *tābīh*. The Quraish members said that it was *tābūt*, and Zaid said that it was *tābīh*. The difference was reported to 'Uthman, and he directed them to write it *tābūt*, adding that the Quran was revealed in the dialect of the Quraish" This anecdote illustrates the nature of the differences at which Huzaifa was alarmed. It shows that the differences whose removal was aimed at by 'Uthman were not ordinarily more serious than this. But since the companions of the Holy Prophet believed every word to proceed from a Divine source, they could not tolerate even such slight differences. And since the need for which such variations in the reading of certain words as were previously permitted ceased to exist, and the danger of differences being

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accentuated increased with the influx of large numbers of foreigners into the holy religion of Islam, 'Uthman thought it expedient to put a stop to all variations by circulating copies of the Holy Quran transcribed and superintended by competent men under his own orders, and suppressing all private copies which contained such variations.

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 in the distant parts of the kingdom were brought to the notice of 'Uthman, the first idea to which he gave expression was to obtain the copy in the possession of Hafsa, and to have other copies transcribed from it for circulation among the Muslims. And from this intention he made no departure. The copies of the Quran transcribed under his orders were true and faithful copies of the collection of Zaid, which, as we have seen, was in the custody of Hafsa, after the death of 'Umar. It was Zaid who collected the copy in the time of Abu Bakr, and it was Zaid who was called upon to make fresh copies from it in the time of 'Uthman.

There is no mention at all of any departure having been made from the writing of Zaid in the copy of Hafsa. Hence we have conclusive testimony showing that the copies of the Quran made and circulated under the orders of 'Uthman were exact and faithful copies of the original collection of Zaid. Again, the

message of 'Uthman to Hafsa was: "Send us the copy of the Quran that we may make copies from it, and then we will return it to you." In accordance with this, the copy of Hafsa was returned after the requisite number of copies had been made. 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 the Muslims had been divided into two factions, and that copy was still in the possession of Hafsa. The men who murdered in cold blood the aged and venerable prince 'Uthman could not have failed to bring to light any difference that might have existed between the copy of Hafsa and the copies made by him. But there is nothing on record to show that any such difference really existed, and this evidence further corroborates the conclusion that the copies made by 'Uthman were true and faithful copies of the original collection made by Zaid in the time of Abu Bakr.

Had the action of 'Uthman in destroying all private copies of the Holy Quran been arbitrary or unjustifiable, the companions of the Holy Prophet would never have yielded to it. But it appears that they not only approved of his action, but also assisted him with willingness in the execution of his designs. Nor did 'Uthman take this step without consulting the companions. According to a report narrated by Ibn Abi Dawood, through a chain of narrators which has been admitted as trustworthy, 'Ali said: "Do

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not say aught of 'Uthman but what is good, for he did not take the step with regard to the suppression of the private copies of the Quran except after consultation with us. He spoke to us, saying, 'What do you think about this reading? I have been informed that some of them say to others, "My reading is better than thine." This, I think, may amount to unbelief.' We asked him what step he thought it 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."<sup>1</sup> This anecdote shows that it was only after consultation with the general body of the companions that 'Uthman took any 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, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, and others. It appears that originally there were four members only, as the report in the Bukharee tells us, but that others were added later on, perhaps because a larger number of copies than that imagined at first was required. 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud was the only companion noted for his knowledge of the Quran who was not included in the committee, but his exclusion was not due to any prejudice against him, but to his residence at a considerable distance from Medina. 'Abdullah lived at Kufa, and much delay would have been caused in the progress of the work if he had been included.

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1. Fat-hul Bari, vol ix, p. 16.

in the committee. And as 'Uthman began this work after due consultation with the general body of the companions, 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 orders for burning all private copies of the Quran, and they were all pleased with it, and none of them took exception to it.

Ibn Mas'ud, for the reason stated above, could not take any part in the supervision of the transcription of copies made under the orders of 'Uthman, and he is the only person who in some reports, by no means of the highest authority, is said to have made certain remarks against Zaid. For instance, he is reported to have disliked the appointment of Zaid for transcribing the copies, and to have remarked: "What! the transcription of the Quran is taken away from me and it is entrusted to a man who was in the back of an unbeliever when I was a Muslim," referring to his older age and priority in the acceptance of Islam. Either this report is not true or Ibn Mas'ud, if he actually uttered these words, made a grievous error. Zaid was the person who had collected and transcribed the Quran in the time of Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr and 'Umar could not think of a better man than Zaid, and they entrusted to him the task of collection. When 'Uthman felt a similar need, he inquired of the companions as to who was best qualified for the task and who excelled others in the art of writing, and he was told that Zaid was

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the man. This was the reason for his selection of Zaid to do the work of transcribing, and with him was joined a syndicate of several other companions to superintend the work, and it was in accordance with their directions that he transcribed the copies. Ibn Mas'ud was, therefore, hardly right in speaking of Zaid in disparaging terms, if he spoke those words. But we may entertain grave doubts as to his having spoken them, for on the earlier occasion, when more important work was done than mere transcription, Ibn Mas'ud never spoke a word against Zaid. The remarks which he is said to have made would have been more appropriate if they had been uttered at the time when Zaid was entrusted by Abu Bakr and 'Umar with the work of collecting the Holy Quran from writings in manuscripts. But if the report be true, then its concluding words are sufficient to show that Ibn Mas'ud was really in error, for we are told that "the most eminent companions disliked this remark of Ibn Mas'ud." Moreover, according to this report, Ibn Mas'ud did not find any fault with 'Uthman. There are certain reports of very doubtful authenticity which assert that Ibn Mas'ud had really refused to give up his copy of the Quran or to accept that sent by 'Uthman, but these reports have not been accepted by any reliable collector.

These considerations leave no doubt that the copies circulated by 'Uthman were true and faithful copies of the collection of Abu Bakr, which again

agreed in every word and point with the Quran as-taught by the Holy Prophet. When 'Uthman issued his copies, thousands of the companions were still living, and many of these, such as Ubayy, 'Abdullah son of 'Umar, and others, were among the men who had committed to memory the whole of the Quran in the life-time of the Holy Prophet, while hundreds of others must have learnt it by heart after his death, as it was then in circulation. It was only thirteen years after the death of the Holy Prophet that 'Uthman had given orders for making official copies of the Holy Quran, and if these had in any way differed from the original copy or from what had been preserved in memory, the companions would certainly have raised their voices against such maltreatment of the Holy Book. But even Ibn Mas'ud, with all the ill-will which he is reported to have borne against 'Uthman and Zaid, never pointed out a single word in the Quran that had been either altered, omitted, or added by 'Uthman.

'Uthman then made no alteration in the Quran as it was collected by Abu Bakr immediately after the death of the Holy Prophet. He employed the same scribe who was employed before him by Abu Bakr and in his life-time by the Holy Prophet himself. He acted after consultation with the companions, securing the services of the most eminent men who were noted for their knowledge of the Quran to superintend the work of the transcription. The copies made by his orders were recognized as true copies by the whole



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Muslim world. Nor could any alteration in the copies alter the text as preserved in the memories of thousands of men. The bitterest foes of 'Uthman, those who cut off his head while he was reading the Quran and who had the whole power in their hands, never charged him with having tampered with the Quran, though ordering the burning of the copies of the Holy Book was one of their charges against him. But this latter charge was advanced because the act of burning papers on which the Holy Word was written was considered sacrilegious. 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 Quran from the official copies circulated by 'Uthman. As regards the copies in our hands, it is admitted by the bitterest enemies of Islam that the copies made by 'Uthman have been handed down to later generations entirely unaltered.

## CHAPTER V.

### DIFFERENCES OF READINGS.

The Arabic word used in the reports to denote *reading* is *ḥarf*. This word means “a dialect, an idiom, or a mode of expression, peculiar to certain of the Arabs,” according to Lane’s Lexicon, which is based on the best Arabic authorities. 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 (TA), *the Quran has been revealed according to seven dialects*, of the dialects of the Arabs (A Obeyd. Az, I As, Q): or this means, according to seven modes or manners (Mgh, Msb) of reading: whence (you say) such an one reads in the manner of reading of Ibn Mas‘ud.’ These quotations would show that the differences of reading spoken of in certain reports were only those arising from the variations of dialects, which necessitated the reading or expressing of certain words in a different manner by various tribes.

Let us now turn to the reports and see how far this conclusion is supported by them. The following reports bear on this subject:—

(1) Bukharee reports from Ibn ‘Abbas: “The Holy Prophet said, ‘Gabriel taught me to read the

Quran according to one *ḥarf* only. I addressed him repeatedly, and asked him to read it in other dialects also, and this I continued to do until he read it to me in seven dialects '” Muslim gives the same report in the same words through a different chain of narrators, the original narrator being still Ibn ‘Abbas, but the following words are added: “Ibn Shahab said, ‘It has been brought to my knowledge that seven *ḥarfs* (dialects) are in a matter which remains the same (that is to say, reading in any one of these dialects does not change the meaning), and they give rise to no difference as to what is lawful and what is forbidden.’ ”

(2) Bukharee reports from Ibn Mas‘ud: “I heard a man recite the Quran, and I had heard the Holy Prophet read it differently. So I brought him to the Holy Prophet. When I informed him of what had happened, I perceived displeasure in his countenance, and he said, ‘Both of you read correctly; therefore do not differ, for surely there were those before you who differed and they perished.’ ”

(3) Bukharee and Muslim report from ‘Umar ibn Khattab: “I heard Hisham ibn Hakim ibn Hizam read the chapter entitled *Furqān* in a manner different from that in which I read it, and it was the Holy Prophet himself who had taught me to read it thus. So I was about to stop him hastily, but I waited and let him read until he had finished. Then I threw my mantle round his neck, and brought him to the Messenger of God, and I said, ‘O Messenger of God,

I have heard this man recite the chapter entitled *al-Furqān* in a manner different from that in which you taught me to read it.' The Messenger of God ordered me to release Hisham, and then ordered him to recite the chapter. He read in a manner in which I had heard him read it. The Messenger of God said, 'Thus has it been revealed.' Then he ordered me to read it, and when I read it he said, 'Thus has it been revealed.' Surely this Quran has been revealed in seven dialects; therefore recite it in the manner in which you find it easy to do so.' "

(4) According to another report by Muslim, Ubayy ibn Ka'b heard two persons read the Quran in a manner different from that in which he had been taught to read it. On his bringing the matter to the notice of the Holy Prophet, the latter approved of their reading. This perplexed Ubayy, whom the Holy Prophet satisfied by the following explanation, of which Ubayy himself is the reporter: "O Ubayy, the Holy Quran was revealed to me to be read in one dialect only. I asked for permission to read it in other dialects, so that it might be easy for my people to recite it. Thereupon I was permitted to read it in two dialects; and again I asked for permission for more, so that it might be easy for my people, and I was permitted to read it in seven dialects."

(5) Muslim reports from Ubayy ibn Ka'b to the following effect: "The Prophet of God was near the place known as the 'Pool of the Bani Ghafar' when

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Gabriel came to him and said, 'Surely God commands you to make your people read the Quran in one dialect only.' The Holy Prophet replied, 'I crave the pardon of God and His forgiveness, for my people cannot bear this.'" We are then told that the Holy Prophet continued to ask for permission to read the Quran in other dialects until he was permitted to read it in seven dialects.

(6) Abu Dawood makes Jabir narrate the following words: "The Holy Prophet came to us, and we were reading the Quran, among us being Arabians as well as foreigners, and he said, 'Keep on reading, for every one's reading is good. And there will come crowds of men who will read the Quran straight on (that is to say, with good voices), like as an arrow is made straight, and they will hasten their reward in this life and will not look for it in the next.'"

(7) Tirmidhi reports the following from Ubayy ibn Ka'b: "The Messenger of God was visited by Gabriel, and he said to him, 'O Gabriel, surely I have been sent to a people who are without learning; among them is the old woman and the old man, and the boy and the girl, and the man who has never read a book.' Gabriel said, 'O Muhammad, surely the Quran has been revealed in seven dialects.'"

These are the only important reports dealing with the subject of various readings as permitted by the Holy Prophet. The one conclusion upon which they all agree is that the alleged differences were not

differences of text, but in the manner of readings or pronouncing certain words. To make this point clearer, I would discuss the several points mentioned in them at some length. The first question is, can the time to which these reports relate be fixed with any degree of certainty? In other words, was the permission to read the Quran in seven dialects granted contemporaneously with the commencement of the revelation or at a later time, and in the latter case, what was the probable date? This circumstance will serve to throw much light on the question of the nature of the differences, as I will show later on. It will also settle the question of the text. One inference as to time can be drawn from the fifth report given above, which tells us that at the time when the permission was granted, the Holy Prophet was near the place known as the "Pool of the Bani-Ghafar." This place, as is well known, is situated at Medina, and consequently one thing of which we are certain as regards the time of the permission is that it was after the flight of the Holy Prophet to Medina. No variety of readings was therefore permitted at least during the first thirteen years at Mecca, when Islam was properly limited to the Meccans. There is another point, however, which shows that the permission to read in different dialects was not granted until after the conquest of Mecca; that is to say, about the ninth year of Hijra. In one of the reports given by Bukharee, Hisham ibn Hakim ibn Hizam is mentioned as the

person who surprised 'Umar by reading the Quran in a manner or dialect different from that in which 'Umar read it. Now, Hisham did not become a convert to Islam until after the conquest of Mecca, which event took place in the eighth year of Hijra, or nearly two years before the death of the Holy Prophet. The inference which can be drawn from this circumstance is that the permission as to reading in various dialects was granted about this time, for if it had been granted before, a man like 'Umar could not have remained ignorant of it. Not one of the reports, moreover, names any of the earlier converts as having read the Quran in a dialect different from the pure idiom of the Quraish in which it was revealed originally.

Considerations such as the above show that the permission to read the Quran 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. And it is a fact that more than nine-tenths of the Quran had been revealed before the conquest of Mecca, and the whole of that was revealed in the language of the Quraish. This also shows that the permission was meant originally for such other tribes, and this point settles conclusively that the text of the Holy Quran was that in which it was revealed originally. 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 to 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 *ḥattā* while the Huzail pronounce the same word as *‘attā*, there being no difference in the significance of the two words. Other variations of the same kind are *ti‘lamūn* instead *ta‘lamūn*, as the tribe of Asad read it; *yāsin* instead of *āsin* in 47 : 15; the reading of *ḥamzah* (one of the letters of the alphabet) by the Tamim, where the Quraish did not read it; and so on.

In support of the above are certain anecdotes left by early authorities. Thus Abu Shama reported from one of the earlier authorities that “the Holy Quran 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.”\*

\*Fathul Bari, vol. ix, p. 24.



Another remarkable circumstance is that among the earlier converts to Islam no such differences can be shown to have existed, nor were there any differences of readings among such eminent and learned companions as, for instance, Abu Bakr and 'Umar or Abu Bakr and 'Ali. This leads us to the same conclusion as we have arrived at above, viz. that the different readings were not variations of text, but only different modes of pronouncing the same word in various dialects. It was, as we have seen, an actual need. It was very hard for the uneducated Arab tribes, whose dialects slightly varied from the standard of the Quraish—whose idiom was regarded as the purest and most chaste of all Arabic idioms—to speak every word exactly as the Quraish spoke it. It was necessary for every person who embraced Islam to know and to be able to recite a certain portion of the Holy Quran, and they were allowed the facility, with Divine permission, to express a word according to their own idiom when they found it hard to express or utter it in accordance with the chaste idiom of the Quraish.

To what extent the various dialects in which the recital of the Quran 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. But 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'âl*, *halumma*, and *aqbil*, all meaning *come*. This is not an actual case of variation of reading in the Holy Quran according to different dialects, but the example is only given to show the nature of the variation in such cases. This example shows that it was only in cases where the idea expressed by a word was so plain as not to be mistaken by a man of even ordinary understanding that the use of one word for an equivalent one of a different dialect was permitted. 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. This is attested by the report which tells us that by reading the Quran in any one of the seven dialects no difference was caused as to the things allowed and the things prohibited.

It has been objected that, if the differences had been so slight as to have naturally arisen in the

utterance of certain words by an illiterate people speaking different dialects, the companions would not have dealt so harshly with each other. 'Umar was about to stop Hisham in his prayers, as the report tells us, and at last brought him before the Holy Prophet with his mantle thrown round his neck, as if he had been guilty of some great offence. Such an incident, it is alleged, could not have taken place unless Hisham were reading a text totally differing from the text as known to 'Umar. This is, of course, a mere conjecture. We have produced above the strongest historical evidence showing that the differences of readings among the companions of the Holy Prophet arose only from the variations of dialects. But the companions were so scrupulous about every word and every letter of the Divine revelation that the slightest change in any word or letter of the Holy Quran was to them the greatest of sins. Hence it was that 'Umar was so impatient when he heard Hisham reading.

Another objection against the variety of readings being only dialectic is that Hisham and 'Umar both belonged to the tribe of the Quraish, and that hence the dialect of Hisham could not have been different from that of 'Umar whereas the report shows that there was a difference between them. To understand this point, it must be borne in mind that once the necessity of dialectic variation was recognized and permission was granted, that permission could not

be limited to a particular tribe. The Holy Quran was taught by the companions to each other, and hence to a certain extent the peculiarities of one dialect or tribe found their way into another. Moreover, it was not necessary that, if one tribe was unable to utter a certain word according to the dialect of another tribe, the latter should also be unable to utter the equivalent word of the former. To give an example, the tribe of Huzail said 'attā for ḥattā (meaning *until*), the latter pronunciation being that of the Quraish, but the Quraish could pronounce it in both ways, and they had no aversion to either form of the word. Though they ordinarily said ḥattā, they could also pronounce the word as 'attā, as the case of Ibn Mas'ud shows, who read 'attā ḥīn instead of ḥattā ḥīn. The Quraish, in fact, seem to have had the aptitude to speak freely in the dialects of the other Arabian tribes, the reason of this probably being that thousands of men from every corner of the country flocked every year to the Ka'ba, when, besides paying a visit to the Holy Temple, they had also literary assemblies and commercial transactions in which the Quraish took part. On account of their being guardians of the Ka'ba, the Quraish had to come into contact with every tribe, and this intercourse had become more permanent by the establishment of commercial relations. It had also facilitated for them the utterance of certain words according to the peculiar modes of other tribes. Now, Hisham

became a Muslim after the conquest of Mecca, and this was the time when many Arabian tribes were embracing Islam. It is therefore probable that Hisham learned the chapter *al-Furqān*, which gave rise to the difference, from the Holy Prophet when the latter was teaching it to some other tribe, and thus certain dialectic variations found their way into Hisham's recital.

It must not be thought that every word of the Holy Quran was pronounced in seven different ways. What is meant is only this, that the variations of reading permitted belonged to one or other of the seven dialects. These variations were very few, for had there been a greater number of them, authentic reports would no doubt have preserved them in large numbers. The confusing of these dialectic variations with the readings which are mentioned in certain commentaries is a mistake. The nature of these readings I will describe later on. But so far as the dialectic variations permitted by the Holy Prophet (the *sab'at-i-ahruf* of the reports) are concerned, there are wonderfully few traces of them in the reports, showing that they were actually very few. Indeed, as I have shown above, the regular intercourse of the Arab tribes with the Quraish, and their commercial relations, had left no difference of importance in their dialects, and the variations that existed were very few and unimportant. Hence the dialectic variations permitted in the readings of the Quran were also very few.

The above considerations clearly show that the variations at no time formed a part of the text of the Holy Quran, nor were they ever meant for permanent retention. The necessity which had given rise to them was of a purely local and temporary nature. Almost the whole of the Quran had been revealed before the time that these variations were permitted. The Holy Prophet himself never recited in his public prayers any portion of the Holy Quran in any dialect other than that of the Quraish. 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 Quran in the slightest degree. This was the text which the Holy Prophet used in his public recitals and public prayers. 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 Quran, even after the permission as to dialectic variations, suffered no change. The text as it was written was still the same, *i.e.* in conformity with the dialect of the Quraish. These two points, *viz.* the writing of the Quran and the Holy Prophet's own recital, conclusively show that the dialectic variations permitted towards the close of the Holy Prophet's ministry did not in any way affect the original text.

From the above it becomes clear that 'Uthman did

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not suppress any part of the text of the Holy Quran by disallowing the writing of the dialectic variations, for these were never a part of it. The circumstances which obliged him to take this step have been narrated elsewhere. Islam had spread far and wide beyond Arabia, and people whose mother-tongue was not Arabic were embracing Islam in large numbers. To teach the Quran to these people was a task different from teaching it to the Arabian tribes. The latter, when they embraced Islam, had special facilities for learning the Quran, for it was in their language. But they had their special difficulties. They were accustomed to a particular idiom and particular way of pronouncing certain words from their childhood, and it was very difficult for them to dispense with their own idioms. The people of other countries had, however, to learn Arabic before learning the Holy Quran, and hence it was as easy for them to read the original text as the dialectic variations. It was, however, brought to the knowledge of 'Uthman that some people were teaching these dialectic variations to the new converts, and as these new converts could not easily understand the true nature and significance of such variations, differences and quarrels were the result. 'Uthman's object was to put a stop to such quarrels. It was for this reason that he ordered copies of the Quran to be made from the collection of Zaid, as made in the time of Abu Bakr, and all other copies to be destroyed. It was a most judicious and most necessary step. At

all events, 'Uthman only prevented the writing of the dialectic variations, and we know for a fact that even the Holy Prophet did not order their writing. 'Uthman's action was, therefore, entirely in accordance with the wishes of the Holy Prophet. By the suppression of the writings containing dialectic variations the text of the Holy Quran did not lose anything, but had its purity firmly established.

It is sometimes alleged that the existence of certain readings which are to be met with in certain reports and commentaries makes it uncertain which is the original and the revealed text, and that thus the purity of the text of the Holy Quran is destroyed. 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 Quran, as in our copies of the Holy Book, is that no different text is met with in any copy of the Holy Quran anywhere in the world. During all the ages and in all the 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 Muslims in 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 Quran, and not a single copy can be produced with a



varying text. If temporal 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. In fact, temporal authority could not have access to what millions of men possessed and had in their hearts. 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, and to-day we should have had many such copies in circulation in the Muslim world. But, strangely enough, there does not exist a single copy varying from the received edition in the slightest degree. The text is in all cases the same, and thus the variety of readings in no way detracts from the value of the purity of the Quranic text.

The various readings may be dealt with under the following heads. Firstly, there are the dialectic variations. 'Uthman could not stop their recitation. Though, therefore, these variations ceased to affect a wider circle, they could not at once come to an end. Some of these must have been preserved in reports by the admirers of those who used them, and by others for the sake of curiosity. With a few exceptions, it is difficult to say now which of the existing readings belong to this class. It has been pointed out by some that those readings which do not agree with the writing of the Quran belong, if authentic, to this class, but this

mere conjecture. Indeed, it does not concern us to know which readings may be brought under this head, for, as we have seen, they have never been considered parts of the text of the Quran. Secondly, there are differences in the number of *wāos* (meaning *and*), and some other such unimportant differences in the number of one or two other letters, not affecting the meaning in the slightest degree. Thirdly, apart from the necessity of dialectic variations there may have been some revelations in which an optional reading, differing from the text which has been safely preserved to us, may have been permitted. Readings belonging to this class can be accepted only on the highest authority, and the trustworthiness of the report must be clearly established. There can be no objection to the existence of such readings, but neither is it necessary for a reader of the Quran to know them, for the text is complete even without them. Such readings, if traced with certainty to the Holy Prophet, are considered to have the value of an authentic report in explaining the meaning of the text. Fourthly, a number of readings have been introduced by misapprehension of an expository word or phrase as part of the text of the Holy Quran. Some companion might have explained a word when reading the Quran by some other word or phrase, or he might have noted it on the margin of his copy of the Holy Quran, which some hearer of his words or reader of his copy mistook for an alternative reading. The copies of the Quran we

possess are free from all such readings, as has been shown above, for the greatest care was taken by Abu Bakr and 'Uthman in the collection and copying of the Holy Volume, and with them were associated all the other companions.

Fifthly, there are said to be certain readings introduced after 'Uthman had sent the official copies in various directions. The original writings are said to have been without dots and without vowel points, and this is stated to be the reason of certain differences in readings having arisen in different centres. It is further asserted that these different readings were actually followed in reciting the Quran by reciters in different centres, each one thinking his reading to be the only true reading. There are two very strong objections to this theory which do not permit us to believe in its truth. In the first place, if the Quran was publicly recited in different ways in the different centres, and at each centre a peculiar reading was considered to be the only correct reading, and as such actually the true text of the Holy Quran, why were not these readings made to supplant at that centre the text of the Quran as we now have it? Why were not these readings introduced into the copies of the Quran? Is it not strange that the copies of the Quran made and circulated at a particular centre continued to follow the original text, while that text was not followed in reciting or teaching or learning the Quran? What use

did the writing serve in such a case, and why did not those very men make their copies of the Quran tally with their recital? Certainly they had nothing to fear from the authorities, for the authorities, according to the supposition, did not interfere with their public recital of the Quran and their publicly teaching it in a different manner. Hence there was no reason why persons who believed a certain reading to be the true reading, and followed the same in their prayers or in teaching the Quran to others, should not introduce such reading into their copies of the Quran. But as no copy of the Quran with a text differing from ours is ever known to have existed, we may be sure that no such readings were ever publicly promulgated.

The second objection to the above theory is that if at different centres different readings of the Quran had been followed and taught, these differences, at least in oral recitation, would have become permanent, and we should have had to-day a different version followed, not only in every different country, but also in every important city of even a single country, and thus we should have had to-day no two persons belonging to two different countries or towns agreeing in the same reading. But do we find this to be the case as a matter of fact? Not at all. On the contrary, take any two Muslims from the most distant places who can recite the Quran and they will be found to be following one and the same text, the text that we have in our copies.

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Hence we cannot believe that at some earlier time different readings were followed by different centres. If such differences had existed, their scope would have widened day by day, and they could not have vanished all of a sudden. But their utter absence to-day shows that different readings of this class never existed, or, if they existed, they were never considered, even by those who favoured them, to be part of the Divine revelation to supersede the text, but only as possible alternatives by adopting which the meaning was not changed.

It should also be borne in mind that writing was not the only means of preserving the text, so that the possible want of dots and vowel-points in the copies of 'Uthman would not have left the text undecided. Memory was another safe repository in which the text of the Holy Quran was preserved with the utmost care, and when recited from memory no uncertainty or doubt of any kind was left. Therefore, side by side with writing, memory also guarded the text, and the combined evidence of the two could not leave the least doubt. There were even in the life time of the Holy Prophet many reciters of the Quran, that is to say, men who could repeat the whole of the Quran from memory, and their number fast increased with the spread and progress of Islam. At every centre of learning there were hundreds of these reciters, and thus there was ample means to decide any moot point concerning the text if a doubt ever arose.

It should also be noted that the number of readings alleged to have been reported by earlier authorities was very small, and the great mass of readings, like the great mass of reports, developed later. This is a very significant circumstance, as it shows that the number of authentic readings must be insignificantly small. The number of companions and *tābi'in* (immediate followers of the companions) who are mentioned to have reported readings is very small, but after them came a generation who made recitation their profession and multiplied the number of readings. Therefore it is only on the highest and most trustworthy authority that any reading can be accepted, and it would then have to be seen to which class that reading belongs. The mere circumstance that a reading can be traced with certainty to an earlier authority or even a companion does not show that it is actually an alternative Divine revelation. But the one point which is certain, and which is the only point which requires practical settlement, is that, whatever the nature of a reading, the purity of the text of the Holy Quran remains unassailed.

As regards the readings of the last class, I think that they may have been put forward as possible alternatives which did not substantially affect the meaning of the text. This appears to be the only reasonable conclusion when all the circumstances are considered, and especially when it is borne in mind that these readings never supplanted the text which was always

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followed when the Holy Quran was recited on any important occasion, as, for instance, in public prayers, or when, by transcribing copies, permanence was meant to be given to it. The copies of the Quran throughout the world are free from all differences, errors, imperfections, interpolations, or corruption, and they have ever remained free from all these defects during the thirteen centuries that have elapsed since the first promulgation of Islam.

## CHAPTER VI

### ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE PURITY OF THE QURANIC TEXT

Though the testimony produced under the previous headings of this important subject is sufficient to convince an intelligent reader of the absolute purity of the text of the Holy Quran and quite conclusive as to the fact that the Holy Book has been handed down to us without any addition, alteration, or loss, yet it seems necessary for a comprehensive discussion of the subject to deal separately and at some length with the few objections which are met with in Christian writings on the Muslim religion. These objections may be briefly summed up as follows :

(1) The existence of some passages in a fragmentary form leads to the logical conclusion that these passages must have been complete originally, and that some portions must have been lost in the transmission of the Holy Book.

(2) The suppression by 'Uthman of some codices of the Quran in the possession of the companions must have resulted in the loss of some portions of the Quran.

(3) Certain passages might not have been intended



by the Holy Prophet for permanent insertion in the Holy Quran, or might have been abrogated, and Zaid, on account of his ignorance of the circumstances, might have retained them in the Holy Book.

(4) The existence of some reports showing that certain passages were recited in the time of the Holy Prophet, combined with the circumstance that those passages are not now met with in the Quran, is a proof that the Quran has not been handed down to us complete.

(5) The existence of a Muslim sect (the Shias) holding the belief that the Quran is not complete leads to the same conclusion.

This is a brief summary of all the objections I have been able to gather from different writings by Christian critics of the Quran. Taking these objections in the order given above, we shall first consider the position of the critics who, like the author of the article on "Muhammadanism" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, assert that 'Uthman's copies of the Holy Quran were not complete because "some passages are evidently fragmentary." An intelligent reader will easily see that such a poor contention against the strong historical testimony in support of the absolute purity of the text of the Holy Quran must be rejected as absurd. It is an erroneous conclusion, and utterly illogical, that because a certain passage appears to a certain reader to be incomplete and fragmentary, therefore some portion

must have been lost, and the speaker must have uttered it in another form. To apply such a test to historical facts is dangerous logic. When there is the strongest historical evidence that among the companions of the Holy Prophet there were many men and women who had committed the whole of the Quran to memory, and that most of them were still alive when a complete copy was prepared by Zaid from a collection of the transcripts made in the presence of the Holy Prophet, it is a mere delusion to think that some portions might have been overlooked by him. The report which describes the work of collection tells us that Zaid not only sought out all the manuscripts, but that he also called in the assistance of the memory of the reciters. And what is the alleged fragmentariness of certain passages but a form of rhetoric, the beauty and force of which cannot be realized by critics unacquainted with Arabic idiom? The so-called fragmentary passages are really expressions of exquisite beauty, and it is only a superficial knowledge of Arabic idiom that makes these critics think that some portion has been lost.

As if to support the assertion that the fragmentariness of certain passages is evidence of something having been lost, the writer in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, whose objection I have quoted above, adds, probably thinking it to be corroborative testimony, that "a few detached pieces are still extant which were originally parts of the Quran, although they have

been omitted by Zaid." Now, this properly relates to the fourth objection, where the nature of such "detached pieces" and the trustworthiness of the reports containing them will be fully inquired into. But the critic would no doubt have given some weight to his assertion if he had shown that any of the "detached pieces" which are met with in certain reports so fit in with any of the alleged fragmentary passages that the whole may become a complete sentence. Proceeding upon the supposition that reliable reports have preserved some of the lost passages, the question is, do the passages so preserved answer to the allegations made in the first and the fifth objections? In other words, can they be regarded as parts of some fragmentary passages in the Holy Quran, or do they favour the higher pretensions advanced for 'Ali, the immediate successor of 'Uthman? The answer to both these questions must be given in the negative. What according to the critics was lost, therefore, is nowhere to be found, and what is preserved in some of the reports was never lost.

Take the second objection now. 'Uthman gave orders for the destruction of all copies of the Quran current in his time with the exception of the original collection made in the time of Abu Bakr, from which his own copies were made. Of the copies destroyed, or ordered to be destroyed, the greatest importance is attached to two, that of Ubayy and that of Ibn Mas'ud. Regarding the nature of the differences

between these copies and the official copies of 'Uthman, I would take, as representing sane hostile criticism at its best, the opinion of the author of the article "Muhammadanism" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Under the heading "other editions" he writes:

"At the same time, the other forms of the *Quran* did not at once become extinct. In particular we have some information about the codex of Ubayy. If the list which gives the order of its *suras* is correct, it must have contained substantially the same materials as our text; in that case, Ubayy must have used the original collection of Zaid. The same is true of the codex of Ibn Mas'ud, of which we have also a catalogue. It appears that the principle of putting the larger *suras* before the shorter was more consistently carried out by him than by Zaid. He omits I and the magic formulæ of CXIII, CXIV. Ubayy, on the other hand, had embodied two additional short prayers which we may regard as Muhammad's. One can easily understand that differences of opinion may have existed as to whether and how far formularies of this kind belonged to the *Quran*. Some of the divergent readings of both these texts have been preserved, as well as a considerable number of their ancient variants. Most of them are decidedly inferior to the received readings, but some are quite as good, and a few deserve preference."

To do justice to the author of this article, I may

also quote the following paragraph in which grounds are given for believing 'Uthman's text to be the only valid text. This paragraph immediately follows the one quoted above, and runs thus :

“The only man who appears to have seriously opposed the general introduction of 'Uthman's text is Ibn Mas'ud. He was one of the oldest disciples of the Prophet, and had often rendered him personal service ; but he was a man of contracted views, although he is one of the pillars of Muslim theology. His opposition had no effect. Now, when we consider that at that time there were many Muslims who had heard the Quran from the mouth of the Prophet, that other measures of the imbecile 'Uthman met with the most vehement resistance on the part of the bigoted champions of the faith, that these were still further incited against him by some of his ambitious old comrades until at last they murdered him, and, finally, that in the civil wars after his death the several parties were glad of any pretext of branding their opponents as infidels ; when we consider all this, we must regard it as a strong testimony in favour of 'Uthman's Quran that no party, not even that of 'Ali, found fault with his conduct in this matter, or repudiated the text formed by Zaid, who was one of the most devoted adherents of 'Uthman and his family.”

Two points deserve to be discussed in this connection. It is admitted that substantially the copies of Ibn Mas'ud and Ubayy agreed with the copy of 'Uth-

man in text as well as in arrangement of the verses and the chapters, so much so, indeed, that the writer of the article from which the above quotations are taken thinks that the collections of Ubayy and Ibn Mas'ud must have been based on the original collection of Zaid, made in the time of Abu Bakr. But, as I have already shown, the text and arrangement were complete in the life-time of the Holy Prophet, and there were many companions who could recite the whole of the Quran by heart before the Holy Prophet died. It was this fact which made the collections of Ubayy and Ibn Mas'ud substantially agree with the copies made by Zaid, because all drew their knowledge from the same source. The differences of these two copies from the copy of 'Uthman were, according to the same writer, only on two points, *viz.* : firstly, Ubayy had in his copy two short prayers besides the known *suras*, and Ibn Mas'ud omitted from his copy the last two chapters which are contained in our copies of the Quran, and also the opening chapter which is called the *Fātiḥa* : and secondly, both had a certain number of readings differing from the copy of 'Uthman.

Accordingly, we have only to see whether Ubayy and Ibn Mas'ud had their own copies, whether they differed from 'Uthman's copies in the number of chapters and in the variety of readings, and if so, how far. We take Ubayy first. There is no reliable report showing that Ubayy had a copy of the Quran differing

from the ordinary copies in circulation, or that it had two short formulæ of prayer added at the end as two more chapters of the Holy Quran. Vague reports to this effect are mentioned by Jalal-ud-Din Sayuti in the Itqan, but Sayuti is unanimously looked upon as the last person on whom any reliance can be placed in the matter of the authenticity of reports. The following remarks of Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz in his 'Ujala Nafi'a are an echo of the general opinion of all authorities on the trustworthiness of such reports: "To the fourth class belong all those reports of which no trace at all is to be met with in the earlier generations, and which were reported only by people of a later time. With regard to these reports one of two things must have happened: either the earlier collectors, after inquiry into them, found them to be unauthentic or fabricated, and therefore they did not report them, or they did not think them to be fabricated, but found some of their narrators to be untrustworthy. Upon whatever supposition we may proceed, it follows that the reports of this class are not reliable. . . . The whole stock of reports on which Jalal-ud-Din Sayuti depends in his writings and pamphlets belongs to this class."

From the above, the reader will see how far the Itqan may be relied upon when there is nothing in reliable collections to support its conclusions. Nay, more than this, reliable reports, accredited by Bukharee and others, contradict the Itqan. There are some re-

ports which clearly state that Ubayy was one of the men whom 'Uthman had entrusted with the supervision of the work of transcription when he ordered the making of official copies from the original collection of Zaid. There are other reports which show that even in the time of Abu Bakr he assisted in the work of collection. Indeed, even the writer in the Encyclopaedia arrives at the conclusion that Ubayy must have based his copy on the first collection of Zaid. But if we suppose, for the sake of argument, that Ubayy had a copy of the Quran in which he wrote down two additional chapters containing short formulæ of prayer, even then it does not follow that these two prayers actually formed a part of the Quran, and that the copies circulated by 'Uthman are defective for omitting them. Among more than a hundred thousand companions of the Holy Prophet there was not a single person who supported Ubayy's views. Even Ibn Mas'ud, with his strange opinions on some other questions, did not share Ubayy's views. Now, the Quran was not the property of one or two individuals, so that any portion of it might have been known to Ubayy alone and thousands of other companions should never have heard of it. Every verse of the Holy Quran was, when revealed, proclaimed widely and circulated among friends as well as foes. One person could make an error, but this could be immediately rectified by the testimony of hundreds of others. The one thing which placed the Quran beyond the danger of the loss of any portion of it was that every verse



obtained a wide publicity at the time of its revelation, and thus it had not one guardian or custodian but thousands. It is the collective testimony of the whole body of companions that settles the point. It is not a case of difference between 'Uthman and Ubayy, so that a critic might think that the truth might have been with this person or that, but it is a case of the solitary view of one person opposed to the combined testimony of all the companions. In such a case and under such circumstances, when sufficient publicity was given to every verse revealed, it cannot be admitted that the two chapters were brought only to the knowledge of Ubayy while the other companions remained ignorant of them, and even opposed his views. All this, of course, is based on the supposition that the report mentioned in the Itqan is true in fact, which, as I have shown above, is really not the case.

We may, however, make this point clearer still by reference to the words of the alleged additional chapters in Ubayy's codex. The Itqan tells us that they were only two short formulæ of prayer, the first running thus: "O Allah! we beseech Thy help and ask Thy protection, and we laud Thee in the best manner, and we cast off and forsake him who disobeys Thee!" And the second thus: "O Allah! Thee do we serve and to Thee do we pray and make obeisance, and to Thee do we flee, and we are quick, and we hope for Thy mercy and we fear Thy chastisement, for surely Thy chastisement overtakes the unbelievers!"

The Muslim reader will at once see that this is the *du'ā-ul-qunūt* (lit. the supplication of the standing), which is still repeated by many Muslims in their prayers, others substituting for it any of the other prayers taught by the Holy Prophet. I may mention only one form of an alternative prayer which is even more authentic than this. It runs thus: "O Allah! guide me among those whom Thou hast guided, and protect me among those whom Thou hast protected, and befriend me among those whom Thou hast befriended, and bless me in what Thou hast granted me, and save me from the evil of what Thou judgest, for Thou judgest and art not judged; surely he whom Thou befriendest is not disgraced: Blessed art Thou, our Lord! and High"<sup>1</sup> It is easy to see that the first and the second prayers are both contained in reports of the Holy Prophet, and have nothing to do with the Holy Quran. Early and later Muslims all used these formulæ in their nightly prayers called the *witr*, and the Holy Prophet taught them to do so. It was not, then, only that the companions of the Holy Prophet had never been taught these words as part of the Quran, but they had been taught, and they knew, that they were not part of the Holy Quran. Similarly, other prayer formulæ are recited in the prayers when standing or sitting or when prostrate, and these are not verses of the Quran. If Ubayy actually wrote down the two formulæ in his copy of the Quran, which we have very strong reasons to doubt, he made a mistake, probably

<sup>1</sup> Mishkāt, chapter *witr*.

thinking that their recital in prayers entitled them to a place in the Holy Quran. But thousands of the other companions who had also heard the Holy Prophet reciting the same formulæ in his prayers, and who themselves also recited them, knew that they were not part of the Divine revelation. Ubayy was clearly in error and he soon renounced it, for when 'Uthman had the official copies made after consultation with all the companions, Ubayy, who was himself one of the supervisors, recognized their authority.

As regards the variation of certain readings, I have already discussed the question, and will now proceed to deal with the alleged rejection by Ibn Mas'ud of the two concluding chapters, and, as some add, of the Opening chapter also. On this point Bukharee has only this much, that somebody said to Ubayy that "Ibn Mas'ud said so and so" with reference to the *Mu'awwadhatân* (the last two chapters). Ubayy's answer to this question is reported to have been to the following effect: "I asked the Messenger of God, may peace and blessings of God be upon him, and he said to me that they were so read out to him and so he read." Then he said: "So we say as the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said." The wording of this report is not quite clear, and, accordingly, the concluding words are understood by some to have been spoken by Ibn Mas'ud and by others they are taken to be the words of Ubayy. Both opinions have other

reports to support them. In the former case, Ibn Mas'ud accepted Ubayy's opinion, and in the latter Ubayy stated his own belief. But even supposing that Ibn Mas'ud entertained a different opinion, he is alone in this case, and his opinion was not supported by a single other companion of the Holy Prophet. This is not only clear from their support of 'Uthman, but we have it also on record that "not a single other companion followed Ibn Mas'ud in this opinion." And, as we have seen, even Ubayy opposed Ibn Mas'ud on this point. It is rather an interesting circumstance that the two men, who are said to have differed from the other companions on one or two points, did not agree among themselves: each objected to the opinion of the other on the point on which he differed. The result is, that if they differed at all, neither of them had his views supported by any other companion on the points in which he differed, and his solitary opinion stands condemned by the consensus of opinion of the whole body of the companions. As regards his omission from his copy of the Quran of the *Fātiḥa*, or the Opening chapter, no reliable report bears testimony to it. If the report be true, the error may have arisen from the circumstance that the *Fātiḥa* was looked upon as a kind of abridgment of the whole Quran, and therefore Ibn Mas'ud did not write it with the rest of the Quran. In view of the great importance alluded to regarding the *Fātiḥa*, it is impossible to think that any Muslim should ever have entertained the idea that it did not form part of the

## Divine revelation.

The third objection is a mere conjecture. What the Holy Prophet intended, he pointed out to the scribes who wrote the Holy Quran and to others of his companions who committed it to memory. Had the collection of the Quran been the work of Zaid alone, unaided by any other companion, there might have been room for doubts. But as the concurrent testimony of numerous reports received through different channels shows, Zaid was assisted on each occasion in the task of the collection by the whole body of companions whose assistance was available. In such a case it was impossible, when many of those who knew the whole of the Quran by heart were still living, that anything which the Holy Prophet had taught to his followers as being part of the Quran should have been overlooked or any words should have found their way by mistake into it which the Holy Prophet had not meant to be included in the Divine revelation. Zaid, who did not depend upon writing alone, sought out the writings chapter by chapter where complete chapters had been revealed, and verse by verse where separate verses were revealed, and he had the testimony of the reciters to corroborate that which was supplied by the writings. These two mutually corroborative measures precluded all possibility of any error finding its way into the collection or of anything being overlooked. It was the double test which Zaid applied to every verse of the

Quran that he referred to when he spoke of his collecting the Quran from writing and from memory.

I shall now proceed to consider the fourth objection, relating to the existence of reports which speak of certain passages being recited in the time of the Holy Prophet or the existence of the "detached pieces," as the writer in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* calls them. That there are some reports showing the existence of some such passages I admit, but they are neither authentic nor reliable, though I am bound to add that misconception with regard to the meaning of certain words has given rise to much misunderstanding as to the true significance of some of these reports. Before considering each of these reports separately, I shall make some general remarks which will, I hope, help the reader to a clear understanding of the subject. To establish the purity of the text of the Holy Quran, we have to prove two points : firstly, that nothing has been added to the original text, and secondly, that nothing has been omitted. As regards the first of these points, no report, reliable or unreliable, authentic or fabricated, makes the assertion that anything contained in the Holy Quran, was not part of the Divine revelation in the life-time of the Holy Prophet, except the solitary report which relates that Ibn Mas'ud blotted out from his copy the last two chapters as contained in our copies of the Holy Quran. This I have already discussed, and have clearly shown that Ibn Mas'ud was in error, and that the whole body of the companions opposed him on this point.

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Moreover the opinion of a solitary person can have no weight against the unanimous testimony of all the other companions, based as that testimony is on their sure and certain knowledge. There is no other report whatever showing that anything which forms a part of the Quran at present was not a part of it in the life-time of the Holy Prophet. This circumstance is very valuable in considering the question whether any passage which is not to be found in our copies of the Holy Quran, was at any time a part of it. Only by means of a profound investigation and searching inquiry could the Holy Quran be so collected that nothing might find its way into it which was not a part of it; and as the collection in our hands has been admittedly successful in this respect, it follows that such an inquiry was made. But the same searching inquiry which successfully kept everything out of the Holy Quran which was not part of it, must reasonably be taken to have been successful in embodying in the Holy Book everything which was a part of it. Such an inquiry was possible on account of the presence of many of those who knew the whole of the Quran by heart, and whose collective testimony as to whether any passage was or was not a part of the Holy Quran was the most conclusive and certain proof that could be obtained. The absence of all proof as to addition indirectly leads to the conclusion that no passage was overlooked.

The next point on which I wish to lay special stress is the wrong method of drawing inferences from certain

reports, a method which is generally followed by all European critics. It is not the collective evidence of reports on which conclusions are based in all cases, but sometimes, when there is a preconceived idea, or where there is a proneness to hostile criticism, a solitary report is made to yield a conclusion which contradicts the strongest historical testimony, however absurd on the face of it such a conclusion may be. There is a large element of historical unreliability in many of the reports, and it was only after great patience and diligent search that the more reliable and authentic reports were compiled by some of the collectors. The chief place among these is occupied by the Bukharee, and, accordingly, it is safest to resort to it where some reports give rise to conflicting evidence. The first rule, then, which should be followed in interpreting reports is to distinguish the reliable from the unreliable generally. Without this we can never be safe in drawing a conclusion from any report. The second rule which should be followed, in the case of conflicting testimony afforded by certain reports, more or less reliable, is to see on which side the weight of evidence lies. But the most important and the surest test of all is, what conclusion is supported by practice?

These tests I shall now apply to the different reports which are relevant to the question of the purity of the text of the Holy Quran. But before doing this, I will quote the reports on which the objections are based.



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They are as follows :

(a) In the Muslim, *Kitāb-uz-Zakāt*, 'Abdul A swad reports the words of Abu Musa Ash'ari, who said: "Surely we used to recite a *sura* which we likened in length and warning to the *Barā'ā*, but I have forgotten it except this piece: 'If there were for the son of man two valleys of wealth, he would desire a third, and nothing can fill the belly [i. e. satisfy the desire] of the son of man except dust'; and we used to recite a *sura* which we likened to one of the *Musabbihāt* [the shorter chapters at the end of the Holy Quran], but I have forgotten it, and now remember only this much: 'O ye who believe! why do you say what you do not do; surely the testimony of this is written in your necks, and of this you will be questioned on the day of judgment.' "

(b) In the Muslim, *Kitāb-ul-Ridzā'ā*, the following is reported as having been related by 'A'isha: "Surely in what was revealed of the Quran there was this injunction, that ten known acts of suckling are effective in the prohibition of marriage relations, but these were abrogated and placed by five acts of suckling, and the Messenger of God, died, and this was among what was recited of the Quran."

(c) In the Muslim, *Kitāb-ul-Hudūd*, there is a report from 'Abdullah son of 'Abbas, who quoted the words of 'Umar, son of Khattab, spoken while he sat in the pulpit: "Surely God raised Muhammad, may

peace and the blessings of God be upon him, with truth, and He revealed to him the Book, and there was among what was sent down upon him the verse relating to stoning [of the adulterer and the adulteress]; we read it, and guarded it, and understood it, and the Messenger of God stoned [the offenders], and after him we also stoned them. But I fear that when time lengthens with the people, a sayer will say, 'Surely we do not find stoning in the Book of God,' and thus they will go astray by forsaking an injunction which God has sent down; and surely stoning is truly in the Book of God a punishment for the person who commits adultery, whether man or woman, either after its having been proved by witnesses, or by the woman's conception or the confession of the accused."

(d) In the *Itqan*, vol. ii. p. 30, 'A'isha is reported to have said that "there used to be recited two hundred verses in the chapter *al-Aḥzāb* in the time of the Holy Prophet, but when 'Uthman wrote the the copies of the *Quran*, we could not get more of it than what we have now."

(e) In the *Itqan*, vol. i. p. 81, there is a report from Malik saying that "when the first part of it [the chapter entitled *Immunity*] came down, the *Bismillāh* [or the opening formula] also came with it, from which it appears that it was like the *Baqara* in its length. And in the copy of Ibn Mas'ud there were 112 chapters, for he did not write the *Mu'awwadhatān* [the last two chapters], and in the copy of Ubayy

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there were 116 chapters, for he wrote at the end two chapters, *Hafd* and *Khala'*."

These are the five reports on the basis of which it is sought to establish that some verses, passages, or chapters which once formed part of the Holy Quran are not now contained in it. The first question is, Are the e any reports which contradict the conclusion that is sought to be drawn from these? If there are, then the next point to be settled will be which set of reports is more reliable, on which side the weight of evidence lies, and which is the conclusion which early practice and established historical facts confirm. It is in the *Itqan* that the two last mentioned reports are met with, and the *Itqan* is the work of Jalal-ud-Din Sayuti, the material for whose writings, as already shown, is entirely drawn from reports of the lowest value—reports of which no trace is to be met with among earlier generations. Such reports cannot be depended upon even if their evidence is not contradicted by reliable reports, for their own unreliability is sufficient to condemn them. Thus there remain the three reports contained in the *Muslim*. In accordance with the first principle laid down above, let us now resort to the *Bukharee* and see if it supports any of these three narratives of the *Muslim*, for it must be borne in mind that the *Bukharee* is our best and highest authority on reports, and so the *Muslim* world has regarded the work ever since it became public. The *Bukharee*, according to the unanimous

verdict of all learned Muslims, not only surpasses in authority and reliability all the collections which were made before it, but none of the later collections can approach its trustworthiness. If, then, any report in the Muslim or any other collection contradicts the Bukharee, we should without any hesitation reject such a report. In the present case, however, it is not the testimony of the Bukharee alone which contradicts the three reports quoted above, but there is ample testimony in the Muslim itself and other collections which is against these reports.

Let us take these three reports separately and see how far they can be relied upon. The first mentions an address of Abu Musa Ash'ari to certain reciters of Basra to the effect that he and the other companions of the Holy Prophet used to recite two *suras*, but that with the exception of one passage of each of the *suras*, he had forgotten the whole. Both external and internal evidence supplied by the Muslim itself condemns the trustworthiness of this report. For external evidence we will consider first the chain of narrators on whose authority Muslim believed the report to be authentic. On referring to the chain of narrators, we find Suwaid ibn Sa'id to be the immediate informer of Muslim, and much depends on the circumstance as to how far he can be relied upon. The Mizan-ul-I'tidal of Dhahabi is the best and the most reliable work which criticizes the narrators. Referring to this

work, we find a long article on Suwaid ibn Sa'īd, in which a few of the collectors of reports express a good opinion about him, but the majority discredit him. It is, however, agreed upon by all that he attained to a very old age and became blind during his latter days, and in this condition he reported and taught reports which were not really his. Bukharee rejected his evidence as absolutely untrustworthy, and so did most of the other collectors. Some have gone so far as to condemn him as a liar, but there is no doubt that with the exception of some two or three collectors, Muslim being one of them, all the others agree that reports narrated by him could not be accepted. Abu Dawood judges him to be "worth nothing," while Ibn Habban tells us that he was accused of being a *sindeeq*, or one who concealed unbelief and made an outward show of belief. Muslim's most important and immediate informer, therefore, possessing so unenviable a record for unreliability bordering on mendacity, it is hardly necessary to consider the question of the reliability of the other narrators of this report.

There is another kind of external evidence supplied by Muslim which also contradicts the testimony of the report under discussion. Immediately preceding this report there are recorded in the Muslim four other reports to the same effect, with this difference that they describe the words attributed to Abu Musa Ash'ari by the said Suwaid as being remnants of a

forgotten chapter of the Quran, not as portions of the Holy Quran, but as words uttered by the Holy Prophet. According to the first of these, three men, Yahya ibn Yahya, Sa'id ibn Mansur, and Qutaiba ibn Sa'id, informed Muslim, through a chain of narrators ending with Anas, that the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said on one occasion (referring to man's love of riches) that "if there were two valleys of wealth for the son of man, he would still desire to possess a third, and nothing but dust can fill the belly of the son of man, and God certainly repents on him who repents." It will be seen that the words reported here to have been spoken by the Holy Prophet are exactly the same as are related to be a portion of a *sūra* in the report of Suwaid. Of the three men who vouched the truth and authenticity of his report, two, *viz.* Sa'id ibn Mansur and Yahya ibn Yahya, are expressly mentioned in the critical work of Dhahabi, the *Mizan-ul-I'tidal*, as being trustworthy, while of the third it is related that nothing is known about him. This report, therefore, stands on a far firmer basis than that under discussion. As against a single man who has been pronounced a *zindeeq*, liar, untrustworthy, by the almost unanimous testimony of the collectors, we have here the evidence, furnished by Muslim himself, of three men, two of whom at any rate are admitted to be trustworthy, that the passage in question did not form any part of the Quran, but was only a saying of the Holy Prophet

himself. Three other reports are narrated by Muslim, each of which ascribes the utterance of these words to the Holy Prophet, and none asserts that they were portions of chapters of the Quran which were quite forgotten. In one of these reports, to Ibn 'Abbas, the first narrator in this case, are ascribed the words that he was not aware "whether it was or was not a portion of the Quran," but these words are immediately contradicted by a second narrator, who does not mention the name of Ibn 'Abbas in connection with their utterance.

If we turn to Muslim himself, we find that of all the five reports which he has narrated relating to the passage, "If there were two valleys of wealth for the son of man, he would desire a third," such being the heading of his chapter, he has given the least credit to the report related by Suwaid ibn Sa'id, who makes the passage in question a remnant of a lost chapter. He begins his chapter with the report related by the three narrators quoted above, then follows it with three others, none of which makes the passage in question a portion of the Quran, and then relates the report in dispute, which, by placing it last, he himself hints to be the least credible of all and the lowest in authority. This is not a mere conjecture, for Muslim himself tells us in the introduction to his collection that under each heading he gives the priority in relation to those reports which he considers to be the more reliable. His words, literally translated, run as follows:

“We have set this rule before ourselves, that we should mention first those reports which are freer from defects than others, and which on account of the reliability and righteousness of their narrators are purer. . . . And we follow reports of this class with other reports, among whose narrators are men who cannot be relied upon to the same extent as narrators of the first class of reports, because they are not marked by the same degree of truthfulness and the same good memory.” These words clearly show that Muslim considered the report under discussion to be the least reliable of all, and hence we should not have the least hesitation in condemning it as false.

I will now consider the internal evidence afforded by the report itself. The words attributed to Abu Musa Ash‘ari are a clear evidence of the falsity of the report. He is made to say, “We used to recite a *sūra*,” indicating that he was not the only man who could recite the whole of that chapter by heart, but that there were others too. In fact, by “we” he means the companions of the Holy Prophet. The alleged chapter, therefore, must have been well-known to the companions. Supposing it was possible that Abu Musa Ash‘ari forgot the whole of it with the exception of a single passage, how was it that all the other companions also forgot it at the same time? None of the companions makes the slightest mention of such a chapter having ever formed a part of the



Quran; none, including Abu Musa Ash'ari, brought it to the notice of Zaid in the time of Abu Bakr, at the time when public announcement was made that any one who had received any portion of the Quran from the Holy Prophet should bring such portion, or in the time of 'Uthman, when a large number of companions were associated with Zaid to assist him in making copies of the Holy Quran. No reciter of the Quran ever pointed out that such an important chapter was missing from the Holy Book. Even the codices of Ibn Mas'ud and Ubayy, with their alleged differences, did not contain any trace of such a chapter. Not a single voice out of thousands of the companions was raised in support of Abu Musa, if he ever uttered these words. Thus external as well as internal evidence clearly shows the report to be absolutely false. The mere fact that Muslim has recorded it in his collection is no evidence, for, as I have shown, even Muslim did not give it any credit.

A detailed critical examination of the remaining two reports would perhaps be tiresome, and from what has already been written on one, the reader can easily see how unreliable reports of this sort are. It will, therefore, be sufficient to consider briefly the internal evidence which the remaining two reports supply. According to one of these, 'A'isha is reported to have said that there was a verse in the Holy Quran plainly saying that ten known acts of suckling were effective in marriage prohibitions; that this injunction was abrogated by

another, by which the number was reduced to five, and that this was recited in the Quran at the death of the Holy Prophet. This report must have been wrongly attributed to 'A'isha. The statement attributed to 'A'isha in the report gives us to understand clearly that the verse was recited by others than herself. In fact, if there had been any such verse, it could not have remained unknown to the companions generally, for it contained an injunction of daily application. On the other hand, it would have been the best known of all verses. It contained an injunction as to marriage prohibition, and in a society in which the infants were generally suckled by others than their mothers, it was of the utmost importance that everybody should know which were the women with whom marriage was forbidden by reason of foster relationship. Hence the knowledge of the verse could not be limited to a single person.

Up to the death of the Holy Prophet 'A'isha had heard it recited generally. Six months after this, her father, Abu Bakr, ordered the collection of the Holy Quran, and no such verse was brought to his notice or that of Zaid. 'A'isha herself never told the collectors that any such verse existed. Even at the time when 'Uthman made transcripts, 'A'isha was still living, and no such verse was pointed out even then by her. How was it that she spoke of such a verse to 'Urwa years afterwards and had nothing to say of it to her own father when a collection of the Holy Quran was being made under his orders? How was it, again, that no one

besides 'A'isha knew anything of such a verse? As in the case of the report already discussed, there is further evidence in the report recorded by Muslim himself that no such verse was ever known to any of the companions of the Holy Prophet. 'A'isha and other reporters are represented as giving expression to reports according to which the Holy Prophet was on different occasions asked as to whether one or two acts of suckling were effective in marriage prohibitions. Had there existed a verse plainly stating that ten or five acts of suckling had such an effect, the question would never have been asked. Therefore all considerations point to the fabrication of the report we are discussing.

The third report that remains may now be disposed of in a few words. The conclusion which is drawn from the words of 'Umar is that a passage regarding the punishment of adulterers and adulteresses was known to 'Umar and the other companions to be a part of the Quran, but that it was not met with in the Quran. 'Umar is said to have also related that that passage was recited and kept in memory and understood, and that the Holy Prophet acted upon it and so did his successors after him. Now, it may be asked what was it that led to the omission of the passage? With regard to the passage in question there can be only two propositions: (1) 'Umar and the other companions agreed that the passage was a part of the Quran; (2) 'Umar held the opinion that it was a part of the Quran, but the other companions rejected his view. Now, if they all

agreed that the passage was a part of the Quran, who withheld them from placing it in the Holy Book? The first proposition is, therefore, evidently absurd. As regards the second proposition, there is no evidence at all that 'Umar's statement was contradicted by any of the companions. But if it was actually contradicted, 'Umar must himself have been convinced of his error by not finding any support from any of the other companions. Thus either the report must be rejected as having been wrongly attributed to 'Umar or it should be taken that there was a misconception on the part of 'Umar.

It will be seen from the above that no reliability can be attached to any of these reports. But it will be asked, how was it that fabricated reports derogatory to Islam found a currency among the Muslims and were embodied in their collections by some well-known collectors? It should be borne in mind that the fabrication was effected at a later period by the *zindeeqs*. In the case of one of these reports, the character of whose first reporter has been laid bare, we have seen that he was accused of being a *zindeeq*. Yet Muslim accepted his authority, though he did not attach much weight to it. One reason of this, probably, was that at the time when Muslim wrote, his hidden feelings had not been seen into. It was in this way that some false reports derogatory to the dignity of Islam found currency and gained credit. But in most cases critical inquiry regarding the narrators of reports has successfully sifted the unreli-

able from the reliable reports. And even if external evidence did not exist, a critical study of such reports is in itself sufficient. And lastly, when differing statements clash with one another, we have to see on which side the weight of evidence lies. How can the evidence of one man carry any weight against the unanimous testimony of all the companions? - especially when that evidence relates to a circumstance the existence of which, if it ever existed, must have come to the knowledge of a very large number. Had there been the evidence of even two or three companions, there might have been cause for doubt in the mind of the historian, but such a claim made on the evidence of a single person, when negatived by the evidence of thousands of better informed witnesses, is the most preposterous claim that has ever been made. In each case we have the evidence of only one person, whose testimony is quite unsupported. Abu Musa Ash'ari is said to have asserted that two chapters were lost : there is nobody else to support him ; 'A'isha is alleged to have asserted the loss of some verses: she cannot produce the evidence of a single other witness from among thousands of companions ; and so with all the others. Where Ibn Mas'ud makes an assertion, Ubayy's evidence, along with that of the whole body of companions, goes against him, and where Ubayy make an assertion, Ibn Mas'ud's evidence, along with that of all the rest of the companions, contradicts him. It may be added that the evidence of one witness could not prove that any verse

really belonged to the Holy Quran, for it is a fact borne out by numerous reports that every verse of the Quran was widely published at the time of its revelation, and was secure in the memories of many reciters.

As regards the fifth objection, *viz.* that the Shias regard the Quran as incomplete, the following remarks from Muir's Life of Mohammad, which has raised and answered this question, will be a sufficient answer. He says :

“Assuming, then, that we possess unchanged the text of ‘Uthman’s recension, it remains to inquire whether that text was an honest reproduction of Zaid’s, with the simple reconcilment of unimportant variations. There is the fullest ground for believing that it was so. No early or trustworthy tradition throws suspicion upon ‘Uthman of tampering with the Quran in order to support his own claims. The Shias, indeed, of later times pretend that ‘Uthman left out certain *suras* 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 die. Again, at the time of the recension, there were still multitudes alive who had learnt the Quran 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 Quran, mutilated expressly to destroy their leader's claim? Yet we find that they continued to use the same Quran as their opponents and raised not the slightest objection against it."

The Shias, however, do not all believe that portions of the Holy Quran have been lost or that passages favouring 'Ali's claims were intentionally omitted by Zaid or 'Uthman. Most of them admit that the Holy Quran has been handed down to us in all its purity. Such is the belief of the more learned Shias, while it is largely the ignorant masses that think that some portions have been lost. In the Tafsir Safi, an important Shia commentary on the Holy Quran, the author, Mulla Muhsin, thus denounces the ignorant Shias who taught that certain portions were lost:

"Certain men from among us and the Hashwia masses have reported that the Quran 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 Quran is a miracle of the Holy Prophet and the source of all knowledge relating to law and all re-

ligious 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 Quran was collected and arranged in the life-time of the Holy Prophet exactly as it is in our hands. This is inferred from the fact that the Quran 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]. A large number of the companions, as 'Abdulia ibn Mas'ud and Ubayy ibn Ka'b, had finished the Holy Quran in the presence of the Holy Prophet several times. All these facts show conclusively that the Holy Quran was complete and collected in the life-time of the Holy Prophet, and it was not dispersed or scattered. It has been stated that those from among the Hashwia and Imamia sects [of the Shias] who hold a contrary view are nothing when compared with the vast majority who hold the right view. It should also be borne in mind that the contrary view was held only by some of the reporters who gave circulation to very



weak and unreliable reports.”

After this, Mulla Muhsin quotes the opinions of several learned Shias, honoured and respected by the whole Shia world, who taught in clear words that “the Quran as sent down by God to His Prophet is exactly what is now between the two boards [that is, in the written volume] and in the hands of the people.” He also quotes a report, the trustworthiness of which has never been questioned by any Shia. That report also supports the conclusion that the Holy Quran has come down to us without the alteration or loss of a single word or letter.

The above quotations are sufficient to show that learned Shia theologians agree with all the other Islamic sects in holding the contents and arrangement of the Quran to be exactly in the condition in which the Holy Prophet left them. Bukharee tells us in a report, the truth of which has never been questioned, that when Ibn ‘Abbas and Muhammad ibn Hanfiah were asked as to what the Holy Prophet had left behind him, they both replied: “He left nothing but what is contained between the two boards,” *i. e.*, in the copies of the Quran as circulated by ‘Uthman, for it was to these copies that the words *mā bain ad daffatain*, or “what is contained between the two boards,” were first applied.