The Purity
OF THE TEXT
OF THE
Holy Quran,

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The Purity of the Text of the Holy Quran,

1. The Divine Promise of Protection.

"Verily We sent down the Quran, and verily We ourselves will be its guardian." (Alquran xv: 9.)

The fulfilment of the promise contained in the verse quoted above is such a clear fact in the history of the Holy Quran, that even a man like Sir William Muir who undertook the writing of his "Life of Mohammad" to assist the Christian Missionaries in their evangelical work among the Muslims has been compelled to admit that "there is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text,"* and to indorse the verdict of another Christian writer, Von Hammer, "that we hold the Quran to be as sorely Mohammad word, as the Mohammedans hold it to be the Word of God."† The question naturally arises, what were the circumstances which helped in the transmission of the Quran to us exactly as it was revealed to the Holy Prophet? These circumstances relate to two different periods in the history of Islam, viz., the lifetime of the Founder who was the recipient of the Divine revelation, and the time of his early successors who with the utmost faithfulness handed down to posterity the Quran as it was left by the Holy Prophet at the time of his death.

Before describing these circumstances, however, it seems necessary to make a few remarks on the verse quoted in the beginning of this article as an answer to certain objections against its true interpretation by an anonymous Christian writer,‡ who makes the allegation that the word az-zikr in this verse does not mean the Quran, but every revelation sent down to any prophet of God at any time. This misinterpretation of the word is due to an ignorance of the context. The word zikr no doubt means "any book of the prophets," but it especially means the Quran§ and the context shows clearly that it is the latter significance which az-zikr bears in the verse under discussion. It is the ninth verse of the fifteenth chapter which opens thus: "These are the signs of the Book, and of the lucid Quran." From the sixth to the ninth verse the chapter reads as follows: "But they say, O thou to whom the zikr has been sent down! verily, thou art possessed. Why dost thou not bring the angels to us if thou art of the truthful? We send not down

† Ibid, page xxvi.
§ See Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon under the word zikr.
angels without due cause, and when the angels are actually sent down, the infidels would not then be respite. Verily, We have sent down the zikr and verily We will be its guardian.” (xv: 6—9.) Now the promise of guarding in the last sentence is evidently regarding the same zikr that is spoken of in the first sentence as having been sent down to the Holy Prophet, and thus there remains not the least doubt as to the truth of the fact that by the zikr in the verse under discussion is meant only the Holy Quran.

This conclusion is borne out by many other verses of the Holy Quran which contain similar promises regarding the Holy Book. Thus in the forty-first chapter of the Holy Quran entitled “Ha Mim, As-Sijdah,” we read: “Verily, they who believe not in the warning after it has come to them—yet verily the Quran is a glorious Book. Falsehood, from whatever side it cometh, shall not come nigh it; it is a missive from the Wise, the Praisedworthy” (xli: 41, 42). This and such other verses clearly show that the Holy Quran announced in the very beginning the Divine promise of its protection from all kinds of destruction, corruption or alteration. Hence from the earliest times the Muslims have looked upon these verses as containing a promise that the Holy Quran shall be perfectly guarded against all attacks to destroy it or to alter its text. Thus both Mujahid and Qatada, the earliest authorities on commentary, agree in this interpretation of both these verses, and state that by guarding the Quran in xv: 9, and by not allowing falsehood to approach the holy Book from before or behind in xli: 42, it is meant that no word shall be added to it which is not part of the Divine revelation and no word shall be omitted from it which is part of the Divine revelation, granted to the Holy Prophet, Mohammad. Both these authorities and all the other authorities on the commentary of the Holy Quran also agree that by as-zikr in both these verses is meant the Holy Quran.†

Therefore, we have evidence here that the earliest authorities to whose opinion we can have access understood these verses in the same sense in which the Muslims understand them to-day, and any attempt to throw discredit upon that meaning or to attach any other significance to the words of the verses quoted above is fruitless.

The author of the Tawil-ul Quran further contends that the existence of a promise does not prove its fulfilment and hence the promise itself is not an evidence. This is, no doubt, true, but there are other circumstances which, when considered in connection with the promise itself, afford a conclusive proof of its fulfilment. If the promise had not been fulfilled, and there had been any alteration in the text of the Holy Quran, one of two things must have happened, viz., either those who had witnessed these alterations would have lost their faith in the Holy Quran as the Word of God or they would have given some interpretation other than their apparent interpretation to the verses quoted above. But that neither of these things happened we know for certain. The earliest

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* The word zikr is again used here for the Holy Quran as the context shows early. I take the translation of this passage from Rodwell.

authorities like Mujahid and Qatada, as we have already shown, consider these verses to contain a promise that the text of the Holy Quran shall never be tampered with, and no other meaning is mentioned by any of the earlier authorities. Therefore, we have clear proof that no other sense was ever attached to these words by the companions of the Holy Prophet for if it had been, we should have had some report to that effect. To cite another instance of this from the earlier history of Islam, let me refer to a prophecy contained in Tradition. There is a tradition to the effect that the Holy Prophet said to his wives: and the apparent significance of which being "the quickest of you in joining me, (i.e., after death) will be she whose hands are the longest." It was in this sense that the Holy Prophet's wives took these words, for they immediately began to measure their hands to compare their lengths. But tradition tells us that they were wrong in attaching this significance to these words which, it afterwards turned out, really meant that "the quickest of you in joining me (after death) will be she who is the most extensive of you in giving," i.e., the most charitable. It was in accordance with the latter significance that the prophecy was fulfilled, and tradition has not failed to give us the right interpretation, though the prophecy formed no part of the Quran. Therefore, we are right in concluding that if the prophecy regarding the protection of the text of the Quran from being tampered with had not been fulfilled in the apparent sense of the verses which contain that prophecy, the matter was of so overwhelming an importance that we would have had numerous companions attaching a different significance to the words of the prophecy and telling posterity that the words were not to be taken in their apparent significance. But in the large collection we do not meet with a single report to that effect, leaving aside the question of its credibility. It is impossible that if the prophecy had not been fulfilled in the literal significance of the words, not only should thousands of companions have passed over the occurrence in silence, but the earliest authorities who learned the Holy Quran.

* The traditioned is thus stated in Sahih Muslim: "It is reported by Ayesha, the mother of the faithful that the messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him. said that, 'the quickest of you join me will be she whose hands are the longest.' She said that the wives of the Prophet began thereupon to measure their hands in order to find out who had the longest hands. She also said that Zainab proved to be the one with the longest hands, for she used to give away with her hands and was charitable." The following interpretation of this tradition is given by Navawi: "The meaning of this tradition is as follows: The wives of the Holy Prophet thought that the length of hands in the prophecy was to be taken literally and, therefore, they began to measure the length of their hands. Sauda was the one who had the longest hands literally while Zainab had the longest hands in giving alms and doing charitable deeds, and Zainab was the first who died after the Holy Prophet. Then they understood that the length of hands signified extensiveness in giving and charity. The lexicographers explain such phrases as (lit such a one has lengthy hands) as meaning that such a one is very generous and charitable." (Navawi on Muslim). Bukharee and its well-known commentary Fath-ul-Bari also agree that the prophecy was first taken in a literal sense, but that it afterwards appeared that the words conveyed a different significance. (Bukharee, chapter of sadagat or charities).

† For this significance of the words of the tradition, see Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon under the root derivation page 1897, 3rd column.
from the companions themselves should have positively stated that the
verses under discussion meant that no alteration would find its way
into the Holy Book.

It is clear from the above that the companions of the Holy Prophet
understood the prophecy relating to the guardianship of the Holy
Quran in the apparent sense of the words of the prophecy. Therefore,
if the text of the Holy Quran had been tampered with before their
eyes, they could not have believed in the prophecy or in the word which
contained it as the Word of God. But history does not show that any
such thing ever happened or that any party of the companions of the
Holy Prophet or any single companion ever expressed any doubt as to
the truth of the Holy Prophet on that ground. There is no such
obscurity about the history of Islam that we should be justified in
thinking that such an important occurrence, if it had happened, could
have been left out or remained hidden from the knowledge of posterity.
Nor could the companions have kept silence on witnessing such an
obvious failure of the prophecy, for we see them expressing their doubts
freely even in the presence of the Holy Prophet. This assertion is
amply borne out by the circumstances of the famous truce of Hudaibiyya.
The Holy Prophet saw in a vision that he and his companions were
performing a pilgrimage. As he was always certain of the truth of his
visions and revelations and knew the present vision to be from God, he
set out on a journey for Mecca to perform the pilgrimage with over
fourteen hundred of his companions. When he reached Hudaibiyya,
the Quresh came out against him and told the holy Prophet that they
would not allow the pilgrims to proceed further. Here a truce was
arranged between the two parties by which not only the Holy Prophet
agreed to return to Medina without performing the pilgrimage, but the
other terms also were unfavourable to the Muslims. The acceptance of
these conditions caused a murmur among the companions of the Holy
Prophet for by them they were to return without performing a pilgrimage.
Omar gave expression to their views and coming in the presence of the
Holy Prophet, he asked him how it was that he agreed to go back with-
out performing a pilgrimage while he had promised to them on the
basis of his vision that the pilgrimage would be performed. His doubts
were only removed when he was informed by the Holy Prophet that the
vision did not promise a pilgrimage during that year, but gave
promise only of a pilgrimage, and that therefore it could not be falsified
by their mere inability to perform the pilgrimage on that occasion. It
was on learning this explanation that the companions of the Holy Prophet
were satisfied*. The tradition shows clearly that the companions of
the Holy Prophet expressed their doubts freely when they were not
satisfied about anything. It is, therefore, certain that if there had been

* The pilgrimage as promised by the vision was performed by the Holy Prophet
a year afterwards. The episode relating to the expression of doubts by Omar is thus
given in the Sahih Bukhâre: Then Omar, son of Khatîb said “So I came to the
prophet of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, and said to him,
art thou not the prophet of God truly? He said, Yes, I am. Again I said, are we
not in the right and our opponents in the wrong? He said, yes. Then I asked him,
why should we then accept such unfavourable terms in our religion? He said, verily I
the least alteration in the text of the Holy Quran, grave doubt would have been entertained as to the truth of the prophecy and reports of these doubts would no doubt have been transmitted to posterity. But the utter absence of all such reports shows clearly that no doubt was ever entertained and that no accordingly alteration had ever taken place in the text of the Holy Quran as it had been taught to the companions by the Holy Prophet himself in his life-time.

One tradition is cited by the author of the Tawil-ul-Quran in support of his assertion that by the guarding of the Holy Quran was not meant the guarding of its text from being tampered with. This tradition he takes from the Ibn-i-Maja, a second class authority on Tradition. The tradition says that a time will come when the Holy Book, i.e., the Quran, will be entirely taken away and not a single verse of it will be left. From this tradition he concludes that if the Holy Quran can be entirely taken away without doing any harm to the promise contained in the words, “Verily We sent down the Quran, and verily We shall be its guardian,” this promise could not be inconsistent with the loss of any portion of the Divine revelation or any alteration in its text. The fallacy of this argument lies in that by the taking away of the Holy Quran is not meant the taking away of its words but the taking away of the spirit. That this is the true purport of the words of the tradition is clear from other and more authentic traditions. Thus both Bukharree and Muslim relate a tradition which expressly says that the knowledge of the Quran shall be taken away not by the disappearance of its words, but by the death of the learned men.* Another report mentioned by Baihaqi says that a time will come when nothing will remain of Islam but its name and nothing will remain of the Quran but its letter;† A third tradition which is related by Tirmazi, Ahmad and Darimi besides Ibn-i-Maja, (the latter being the sole authority on which the author of the Tawil-ul-Quran relies) supports the same conclusion in equally clear words. When the Holy Prophet spoke of the disappearance of knowledge, one of the companions asked him how the knowledge of the Quran would disappear when they were reciting it constantly and teaching it to their children who in their turn would

* The tradition runs as follows: “Abdullah, son of Amru, reported that the Messenger of God, may peace and blessings of God be upon him, said that God would not take away knowledge by its actual removal from among men, but He would take away knowledge by taking away learned men” (Mishkat, Kitab-ul-Ilm.)

† This tradition is also given in Mishkat kitabul Ilm and is also follows: “It is reported by Ali that the Messenger of God, may peace and blessings of God be upon him, said that a time would come over men when there would remain naught of Islam but its name and naught of Quran but its words; their mosques would be well-stocked with people but they would be waste because of the absence of guidance; their learned men would be the most mischievous of those under the canopy of heaven; from among them would come forth the great tribulation and into them would it return.”
teach to their children.* The Holy Prophet told him that what he meant by the disappearance of the knowledge of the Holy Quran was that people would no more act upon its injunctions or make it the guiding rule of their lives. All these traditions clearly show that the Holy Prophet never meant, when he spoke of the disappearance of the knowledge of the Holy Quran, that the Holy Book would itself disappear from the earth. What he meant was that people would not act upon it.

All these considerations point to but one conclusion, viz., that the companions of the Holy Prophet clearly understood the promise contained in the Holy Quran as to its being guarded by Almighty God in the apparent sense of the words of the promise, and as no one ever expressed any doubt as to the fulfilment of this important promise, it also follows that no alteration whatever took place in the text of the Holy Quran after the death of the Holy Prophet. Hence it is that the Muslims of all generations have laid great stress upon this promise. Its existence combined with a few other historical circumstances of unquestionable truth affords the strongest proof that the text of the Holy Book has never been tampered with. There is another consideration which affords indirect evidence of the fulfilment of this promise. At one and the same time two important promises of protection were made to the Holy Prophet, one a promise of protecting the person of the Prophet against the evil designs and the attacks of his enemies, and the other a promise of protecting the text of the Holy Quran from being tampered with. The fulfilment of the first promise related to the life-time of the Holy Prophet and that of the second to the time which followed his death. The mission of the Prophet was confronted with two great dangers, viz., that the Holy Prophet should be killed by his enemies and thus the work which he had begun and the Divine revelation which was granted to him should remain incomplete, or that after his death the Holy Book should be changed and altered as had been the case with the previous books. Some of the prophets before him were murdered and the books which others had left after them for the guidance of their followers had been tampered with. But the mission of the Holy Prophet was safeguarded against both these dangers by the two promises referred to above.† Now it is easy to see that the fulfilment of the first promise was far more difficult than that of the second, but no one can deny that it was clearly fulfilled. Various

* The original tradition is as follows:

"Ziyad, son of Labeid, reported that the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, spoke of something which he said would happen at the time of the disappearance of knowledge. I said, O Messenger of God, how would knowledge disappear when we read the Quran and teach it to our children and our children would teach it to their children, so on till the Judgment Day. The Prophet said, 'May thy mother be bereft of thee, O Ziyad! I thought that thou wast one of the most wise men in Medina. Do not these Jews and Christains read the Taurat and the Injil, but they do not act upon anything contained in these books" (Mishkat Kitabul-Ilm).

† The Divine promise to protect the person of the Holy Prophet against the evil designs of his enemies is expressly contained in the following verse:

"O Apostle! proclaim all that has been sent down to the from thy Lord: for if thou do it not, thou hast not delivered the Message at all. And God will protect thee from the people," (Alquran v: 71.) The same promise is contained in various other verses of the Holy Quran.
attempts were made upon the life of the Holy Prophet both at Mecca and at Medina but they were all brought. The fulfilment of this promise in the life-time of the Holy Prophet was an assurance to his companions that the second promise would also be fulfilled, for the Mighty God who could frustrate all the designs of powerful enemies against a helpless and solitary man to fulfil the promise concerning the safety of the Holy Prophet could not fail to bring to fulfilment the equally important promise of guarding the Holy Quran against any alteration. The fulfilment of these two promises clearly establishes the Divine origin of the world which contains them.

2. Arguments showing that the Holy Quran was written in the life-time of the Holy Prophet by his own direction.

I will now consider the circumstances which assisted in the preservation of the text of the Holy Quran. The first and the most important of these is that every verse of the Holy Quran was written in the life-time of the Holy Prophet before his eyes. Writing was generally known at Mecca and Medina before the advent of Islam, and though the Arabs generally trusted 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 the seven famous odes known as lit., the seven suspended ones. These odes were so named from the circumstance that they were suspended upon the Ka'ba by their authors, as odes of unequalled poetic beauty, at the pilgrimage season, and there they remained placarded for some time. These were seven different odes by seven different famous poets of the pre-Islamic days and were suspended in succession.

Various anecdotes preserved to us in the traditions show that the whole of the Holy Quran existed in a written form the life-time of the Holy Prophet, while the Holy Book itself contains many references showing that it was written at the time. But before referring to these two sources of evidence, I would give a quotation from Sir William Muir, showing that there is such an overwhelming evidence of the Quran having been reduced to writing before the eyes of the Holy Prophet that one of the most hostile critics of Islam 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 Koran, 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 Mahomet assumed the prophetical office. And at Medina many of his followers were employed by the prophet in writing his letters or despatches. The poorer captives taken at Bedr 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 Mohammad," p. xcviii).
The Holy Quran itself furnishes ample evidence that it existed in a written form. It is again and again called the kitab which means a book or a thing written. The Quran is also designated as the suhuf, which means written papers. Thus in xviii : 2, we have: which means "a messenger from God reading to them pure pages in which are unchanging books." The pure pages are the pages of the Holy Quran and the unchanging books are its chapters, for not only is the entire Quran called Alkitab or the Book, but its different chapters are also called books. Again in lxxx: 11-15 we read: which Rodwell renders as follows: "Verily it (the Koran) is a warning (and whose is willing beareth it in mind) written on honoured pages, exalted, purified, by the hands of scribes, honored, righteous." The word sahifa (pl. suhuf) which is used here is the very word applied to the collections made by Zaid in the caliphate of Abu Bekr and later in that of Othman. Thus we see that the Holy Quran describes itself in clear words both as a kitab and as sahifa, 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 sahaf is derived the word mushaf, a name to this day applied to the Holy Quran, which means a book or a volume consisting of a collection of sahifas or written pages (see Lane's Lexicon under the root). The word Quran is derived from the root Qara which means reading or reciting, and the Holy Book is called Quran showing that it was meant for reading or reciting. Every portion of it was both written and recited and hence it is the Quran as well as the kitab.

There are many other references in the Holy Quran showing that its chapters existed in a written form at an early date. The fifty-sixth chapter of the Holy Book which is entitled alwaqiah or the "Inevitable" is among the earliest chapters revealed at Mecca, and in it occur the following verses: "Verily it is the honorable Quran written in the preserved Book: let none touch it but the purified" (76-78). These verses establish two points; firstly that the Quran asserted to be a preserved Book, i.e., a book which none could alter, and secondly, that it claimed to be written at that early date, because 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 Koran in common use. It was quoted by the sister of Omar; when, at his conversion, he desired to take her copy of Sura xx into his hands. Verses 77, 78, were directed by the Calif Mohammed Abulcasim bin Abdulla to be inscribed on all copies of the Quran" (Rodwell's Koran, p. 54). To say that the passage affords evidence of copies only of some portions of the Holy Quran is not true. The verse does not contain any word which can lead us to the conclusion that some portions of the Holy Book were not written. It speaks of the whole of the Quran and not of some portions of it to the exclusion of other. The testimony afforded by the verse is that the Holy Quran was written and to show that any portion of it was not written there must be opposing evidence. But in the Holy Quran and the traditions there is not to be met with the least trace of any such evidence. On the other hand, it is an admitted fact that every portion of the Holy Quran was looked upon
the same 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 should entitle us to make any such distinction between the different portions of the Holy Quran and to suppose that while some chapters were written, the others were not thought fit to be written, or that the same care was not taken of all the parts or that the same desire to preserve every word of the Holy Quran was not shown by the Holy Prophet or his followers. The Holy Quran was a "book," "written in honored 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. "If they shall say, 'The Quran is his own device', say, 'Then bring ten Suras like it of your devising, and call whom you can to your aid beside God, if you are men of truth'" (xi : 16). A similar challenge is contained in a chapter of a still earlier date: "Say, Assuredly if mankind and the Jinn should conspire to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce its like, though the one should help the other (xviii : 91). And in a chapter revealed at Medina, we have: "And if you be in doubt as to that which have sent down to Our servant, then produce a Sura of like sort, and summon your witnesses besides God if you are truthful: But if you do it not, and by no means shall you do it, then fear the fire prepared for the unbelievers" (ii : 21, 22) Now all these challenges to the opponents to produce one suras like the Quran imply that the suras of the Holy Quran existed in a written form at the time of the challenge, because otherwise the challenge would have been meaningless. The unbelievers could not be expected to commit to memory the whole or several chapters of the Quran, and therefore, they could not be challenged to produce its like unless they could have access to the written chapters.

In traditions of the highest authority there are numerous anecdotes showing that when the Holy Prophet received a revelation it was at once reduced to writing. The first revelation which the Holy Prophet received was brought to him written on a paper,* which the angel asked him to read, and probably it was a hint to the prophet that every revelation which was brought to him should be written down. However that may be, it is a fact that every verse or chapter of the Holy Quran when it was revealed was put to writing in the presence of the Holy Prophet. Thus in a tradition related by Abu Daood, Tirmazi and Ahmad, the Caliph Osman thus explained the practice as to the writing.

* The tradition from which I draw this inference is given in the beginning of the Sahih Bukharee, and runs, thus: "The angel came to him (the Holy Prophet) when he was in the cave of Hira and said to him 'Read.' He replied: 'I cannot read.'" The tradition states that this was repeated three times, and after this the angel dictated to him the opening verses of the ninety-sixth chapter which is entitled the "Alaq." The angel's asking the Holy Prophet to read and his reply that he was unable to read show conclusively that the revelation was shown to him written on a paper, and further that the Holy Prophet could not himself read or write.
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, when portions of different chapters were revealed to him, that when any verse was revealed, he called one of those persons who used to write the Holy Quran and said to him, 'Write these in the chapter where such and such verses occur.'" This tradition mentions, not what the Holy Prophet did on one occasion, but what he always used to do, when any verse of the Holy Quran was revealed to him. The person who describes this practice of the Holy Prophet is Osman, 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 to 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 verses of one chapter with those of another. This evidence is conclusive because there is not the slightest evidence that any portion of the Holy Quran was left without writing.

Other traditions of the highest authority support the evidence of Osman. Thus Bukhāree reports under the heading, "The Amānuensis of the Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him," another tradition from Bara: "When the verse (iv:95) was revealed, the Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said, 'Bring Zaid to me and he should come with the tablet and the inkstand.' Then he said to him (Zaid), Write (the verse revealed)." In another tradition reported by Bukhāree under the same heading, Abu Bēkr addresses Zaid, the same man who was ordered to write the verse in the above tradition in these words: "Verily thou didst use 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 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 the name of Abu Bākr, Omar, Osman, Ali, Abdulla bin Sa'd bin Abi Sarh (who became an apostate but embraced Islam again after the conquest of Mecca), Zubair, son of Awam, Khalid and Ahab, sons of Said, Ubayy son of Ka'b, Hanzala son of Rabi, Muaiqab son of Abu Fatima, Abdulla son of Arqam, Sharhubail son of Hasan and Abdullah son of Rawaha.* 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 did the work of amanuenses for the Holy Prophet and whose names have been preserved to us in traditions. Nor is the list given above a complete list of all the amanuenses.

Besides these traditions 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 reports a tradition according to which the Holy Prophet

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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 for the writing of the Holy Quran by the Holy Prophet. 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. This conclusion is further corroborated by the circumstance that where there was no danger of confusion on the part of the writers, the writing of certain traditions was also allowed.  

There is another tradition mentioned by Ibn-i-Hisham in the story of the conversion of Omar which shows that written copies of the chapters of the Holy Quran were in common use among the early Muslim converts at Mecca. Omar with a drawn sword in his hand made for the Holy Prophet one day to murder him. In the way he learnt that his own sister and brother-in-law were hidden converts to Islam. So he turned his steps to his sister's house. "At that time there was in the house a third man, Khabbab son of Art, who had with him a volume in which was written Ta Ha (the twentieth chapter of the Holy Quran) which he was teaching to Omar's sister and her husband. When they perceived Omar coming, Khabbab hid himself in a corner of the house, and Fatima, Omar's sister, took the volume and hid it under herself. But Omar had already so far approached them that he had heard the voice of Khabbab's recital of the Holy Quran. So the first question he asked, when he entered the house, was as to what they were reading. They replied, 'Thou hast not heard anything.' He said, 'Yes I have heard and I have been informed that you have followed Mohamad in his religion.' Then he caught hold of his brother-in-law, Sai'd, son of Zaid. His sister advanced towards him to protect her husband and was severely hurt in the struggle. Then Omar's sister and her husband told him that they were really converts to Islam and that he might do what he liked. When Omar saw his sister bleeding, he was sorry for what he had done and asked his sister to let him have the book which they were reading, so that he might see what it was that Mohamad had brought to them. Omar himself could write. On hearing his demand, his sister expressed the fear that he might destroy the document. Omar gave her his word and swore by his idols that he would return to her the document after perusing it. Then she told him that being a Mushrik (one who set up false gods with God), he was impure and could not touch the Quran because it said that none should touch it except the pure. Then Omar washed himself and his sister handed over to him the book which had Ta Ha written in it. Omar read a portion of it and began to admire it and showed a reverence for the book. Thereupon Khabbab seeing that he was well disposed towards Islam, asked him to accept Islam." This long quotation which is a part of the lengthy tradition of the conversion of Omar shows

* See Buharee, Kitab-ul-Ilm.
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 twentieth chapter of the Holy Quran existed in a written form before the conversion of Omar is not made to give any importance to that chapter, so that one may think that the reporter mentioned it because of its peculiarity. On the other hand, this statement is made incidentally in a narrative reported with quite a different object, and hence it is only illustrative of the practice of the Holy Prophet and the Muslims at that early date. Even if there were no other evidence of the writing of the Holy Quran except this anecdote, still we would 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 twentieth chapter did not possess any peculiarity which should have entitled it to be written while the other chapters were only orally recited. On the other hand, it is not one of the chapters which are mentioned as being commonly recited in public prayers, while numerous other chapters, some of them much longer than it, are mentioned as being thus recited and it can be easily seen that written copies of chapters which were commonly recited in prayers must have been in use to a far greater extent. Hence the existence of the twentieth chapter in a written form, the use of the manuscript made in Omar's sister's family which 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 afford to us the clearest evidence that written copies of every chapter of Holy Quran existed even at Mecca at a time when the converts to Islam were very few in numbers.

The circumstances attending the collection of the Holy Quran in the time of Abu Bekr 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 until a written copy of them was found with one of the companions. This is clear from the words of Zaid as recorded in the Bukharee: "So I searched the Quran . . . . . . until I found the last portion of the chapter entitled 'Repentance' with Abu Khazima, one of Ansar" (see Bukharee, chapter on the 'Collection of the Quran'). In explaining the tradition, part of which has been quoted here, the famous commentator of Bukharee, the author of the Fath-ul-Bari, says: "Abu Bekr did not order the writing of anything, (i.e., any verse) which was not already written (i.e., in the life-time of the Holy Prophet), and it was for this reason that Zaid hesitated to write the concluding portion of the chapter Buraat (Repentance) 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

* See Fath-ul-Bari, Volume IX, page 10, where the following words occur:
Abu Bekr collected them in one volume.”* Another report by Ibn-i-Abi-Daood is also mentioned according to which “Omar publicly announced (when the collection of the Quran was taken in hand by Abu Bekr) that whoever possessed 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 these on paper and tablets and leafless palm branches. Nothing was accepted from any body until two witnesses bore witness,” to which the author of the Fath-ul-Bari adds: “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.”* There is another tradition mentioned by Zohri which says: The Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, was taken (i.e., he died) while the Quran was written only upon leafless palm branches and skins.”† 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.”‡ All these reports point to the certain conclusion that every verse and chapter of the whole Quran had been written by the direction of the Holy Prophet in his own presence.

Against this mighty evidence, not a single tradition can be pointed out which might show that any part of the Holy Quran was not written. The author of the Tawil-ul-Quran who writes in a spirit of bitter animosity has made some very wild statements to throw discredit upon the writing of the Holy Quran in the life-time of the Holy Prophet. He says: “Those who could read or write among the companions were so rare that we may say there was practically none who could read or write.” Again, “Zaid was a mere boy who did not know how to handle the pen. Whatever work of writing had to be done for the Prophet was done by the Jews. Now tell us who wrote the revelations of the Quran fourteen or fifteen years before this?” Then he names Abdulla bin Abi Suh who afterwards became an apostate and adds: “Such being the paucity of scribes among the faithful, and so great being the failure to have the Quran written, it was deemed advisable that it should not be written at all and should be preserved only in the hearts of the faithful.” I have not come across any decent writing containing so many false statements in a single paragraph.

These allegations imply that among the companions of the Holy Prophet there was none who could write, with the exception of Zaid whose knowledge of writing was so defective that he did not know how to use the pen, and Abdullah who became an apostate, and that since scribes could not be found, therefore the writing of the Holy Quran was entirely dispensed with. The absurdity of these allegations is evident to any body who has the slightest acquaintance with the history of Islam, while the reader who has read the evidence produced above needs no

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† See Nihaya by Ibn-ul-Asir under the root
other argument to condemn them as daring falsehoods, so strong and so convincing is the evidence as to the Qur’an having been written in the life-time of the Holy Prophet that no sane author who has written on Islam has ever denied the fact.

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 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 Omar’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. Letters were written by order of the Holy Prophet to several potentates. The truce at Hudaibiyya was written by Ali. Correspondence was also kept up with the Jews in Hebrew. Not only could men read and write but even women were taught the art. Among the wives of the Holy Prophet, at least Ayesha and Hafsa could read and write, as many reliable traditions show. It is difficult to say whether the allegation that no one could read or write among the companions is due to sheer ignorance or intentional perversion of facts, but the latter seems the more probable conclusion. The author of the Tawil-ul-Quran has, it appears, intentionally omitted to mention all those historical facts which show the absurdity of his allegations and has based his theory upon a single tradition whose meaning he has intentionally perverted.

The following tradition is cited by the author of the Tawil-ul-Quran in support of the assertion that “Zaid was a mere boy and did not know how to handle the pen”: The literal translation of this tradition is as follows: “Zaid bin Sabit reported as follows: ‘The Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, commanded me so I learnt for his sake the Hebrew writing, and he said, In truth I cannot trust the Jews in writing for me. So I learnt it, and only half a month had passed when I became skilled in it. So I wrote for him when he had to write letters and read out to him when a letter was written to him.’” This plain statement made by Zaid as to his learning Hebrew, as is admitted even by Sir William Muir in a foot-note in his introduction to the “Life of Mohammad” (see page xiv), is distorted by the clever author of the Tawil-ul-Quran into an admission by Zaid as to his inability to write Arabic. The words Ketab-i-Zahood meaning “Hebrew writing,” he purposely mistranslates as meaning the “writing from the Jews or the Hebrew people,” and thus the passage which really means: “I learnt for his sake Hebrew writing” is rendered as meaning “I learnt for his sake writing from the Jews.” Now any one who has any pretension to

* Bukharaee tells us in the Kitab-ul-IIm that Abdullah son of Amru used to write traditions in the life-time of the Holy Prophet. Some other cases are also mentioned in the same chapter in which traditions were reduced to writing.

† This is mentioned in a tradition narrated by Abu Daoood under the heading “Reports from the Ahl-i-Kitab,” not “Kitab-ul-IIm, as the author of the Tawil-ul-Quran thinks. This is the tradition referred to in the next paragraph.
a knowledge of the Arabic language will see that *Ketab-i-Zahood* does not and cannot mean "writing from the Jews." It only means "the Jewish or Hebrew writing." Moreover, the context itself shows that Zaid was not speaking of the writing of the Qur'an, because the writing of the Qur'an was never trusted to the Jews by the Holy Prophet. A great part of the Holy Qur'an had been revealed at Mecca where there were no Jews and we know it for certain that written copies of the chapters of the Holy Qur'an existed and were in common use among the Muslims long before the Holy Prophet's Flight to Medina. Now the question is, who wrote all these copies, for Zaid had not yet become a Muslim and the Jews did not live in Mecca? In thus misinterpreting the plain words of the tradition, the author of the Tawil-ul-Quran has made a most hopeless attempt to throw discredit upon the incontrovertible fact of the Qur'an having been written by the direction of the Holy Prophet in his life-time. The tradition under discussion only speaks of the prophet's letters written to and received from the Jews and not of the writing of the revelation, as even the concluding words, "I wrote for him when he had to write a letter and read out to him when a letter was written to him" clearly show. No honest writer could distort plain words in the manner in which the anonymous author of the Tawil-ul-Quran has done it. Perhaps it was on account of his daring misrepresentations that he concealed his name. Zaid's becoming skilled in writing Hebrew within such a short time is not at all surprising because Hebrew and Arabic are so closely related to each other that a knowledge of the one makes a knowledge of the other very easy of access. The misinterpretation of this one tradition is sufficient to reveal the character of the Tawil-ul-Quran and the spirit in which its author has written the book. It is a fact that the book has been written to assist the Missionary propaganda by means of false statements concerning the Holy religion of Islam and it reveals a deplorable state of the missionary ideas of honesty and veracity and a deplorable attitude of the missionary minds towards other religions.

The above tradition is the only which has been produced by the author of the Tawil-ul-Quran as evidence against the writing of the Holy Qur'an in the life-time of the Holy Prophet, and from this the reader can easily see how futile are the attempts of the Christian missionaries to throw discredit upon the unparalleled purity of the text of the Holy Qur'an. Another objection of the same author is that the writing material which was used for writing the Qur'an was of such a nature that it could not be preserved for a long time. This writing on material consisted of paper, stone-tablets, skins, palm-branches and bones as various traditions tell us. It is admitted that the writing paper, skin and stone-tablets was safe, but it is added that the writing on these three things was very scarce because these things were rare and that the greater part of the Holy Qur'an was written on bones and palm-branches which could not be safely preserved, and that therefore the greater part of the Holy Qur'an was lost. So after all even the author of the Tawil-ul-Quran has to admit that the Holy Qur'an was written, but his ingenious brain at once assists him with the theory that the greater part was written on bones because skins, paper and stone-tablets were rare? What his sources of
information for this statement are, the learned author is too discreet to mention. Bones and branches are not less durable than paper, and though they are mentioned among the writing materials, yet it is easy to see that long chapters could not be written on such material. The copy of the twentieth Sura for instance used in Omar’s sister’s family was not written upon bones or branches otherwise it could not be so readily concealed. Thus all considerations point out that the entire Quran existed in a written form in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet.

3. Arguments showing that the whole of the Holy Quran was committed to memory by the followers of the Holy Prophet in his life-time.

It has already been shown that when any verse of the Holy Quran was revealed to the Holy Prophet, he used to send for some one of his scribes and to dictate it to him. Thus every verse of the Holy Quran was written in his presence. We also learn from numerous traditions that whenever a passage was revealed, it was recited by the 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 it was a code of moral and social laws for them of which it was sufficient for them to know the 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, therefore, they secured it in the securest of places, viz., their hearts. For its sake they suffered all kinds of persecution and forsook their friends, their relatives their properties, 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 the profession of trade or any other profession spent a part of the day in the transaction of their affairs and the rest in the company of the Holy Prophet. Many of them had made special arrangements among themselves to be kept apprised of the new revelations that came to the Holy Prophet. The second Caliph, Omar, tells us, according to a report of Bukharee, that he and one of his neighbours from among the Ansar living in one of the superb 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 brought to him the news of that day relating to revelation and other things; and when he went then he, brought me the news” (Bukharee). There were also companions who after he 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 in his Sahih a tradition from Aqba bin Amir who said that one
day "the Holy Prophet came out and we were in the Suṣṭah (an appertenance) of the Mosque, and he asked, 'which of you likes to go every day to Bathan 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'."* Bukhāree reports Osman as saying that "the Holy Prophet said that the best man among you is he who has learnt the Quran and teaches it." Other traditions to the same effect and adjudged to be trustworthy by both Bukhāree and Muslim run, when rendered into English, as follows: "'Ayesha says that the Holy Prophet said: 'The skilful in reciting the Quran are classed with thescribes 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-i-Omar 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 God day and night.' 'Abu Musa, Ash'āri reported the 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 has no odour.'" The last tradition compares 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 traditions of undoubted authenticity, showing that the recitation of the Quran was an important obligation which lay upon every Muslim, are contained in the books on traditions. Bukhāree has a chapter named the "chapter on the istikzar of the Quran and its ta'ahud," that is, "reciting the Quran frequently and recurring to it time after time." In this chapter various traditions are related enjoining the frequent recitation of the Holy Quran. The same renowned and trustworthy traditionist 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

The tradition runs thus:
memory." For the sake of brevity, I give simply the headings of the chapters and refrain from quoting the traditions 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 Mohammedan country who can repeat the whole of the Quran from memory, but the particular conditions of 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."

It appears from the above traditions 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 vie with one another in committing the Holy Book to memory. The office of imamat or leading public prayers was as a rule bestowed upon the man who had greater knowledge of the Holy Quran. All authentic traditions establish this point. One tradition 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. This boy Amru bin Salma thus relates his own story: "We, (i.e., the tribe to which the narrator belonged) had alighted in a place by water, and people who went to the Holy Prophet passed by us. When they returned they used to repeat to us the revelations which they heard from the Holy Prophet. I had a good memory and so while there I committed to memory a great portion of the Holy Quran from these visitors. After a time my father also went to the Holy Prophet with some people of his tribe to declare their acceptance of Islam. The Holy Prophet taught them the prayers and told them that the prayers should be led by a person who knew more of the Quran than others. On account of what I had already committed to memory, I satisfied this condition. So they made me their imam."† These people were among the later converts to Islam. Bukharee also tells us that the office of imamat was conferred upon deserving persons irrespective of their nationality or position in society. The distinction to have the office of imamat (the leading of public prayers) 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 principles of the new faith was one who was most acquainted with the Quran. And these were not the only ways in which

* Muir's Life of Mohammad, Introduction, page xvi.
† This tradition is related by Abu Daood—and it is also related by Bukharee and others.
the reciters of the Quran were honored in those early days, for there are many traditions which show that the reciters of the Quran were highly honored and respected in every way among the companions.

These were 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 and that he loved to hear others recite the holy word. According to one tradition he kept waking on a certain night to listen to a person who was reciting the Quran in the Mosque (Bukharee, chapter on the ‘forgetting of the Quran.’) Another tradition also related by Bukharee represents Abdulla 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.”

These anecdotes show that the Holy Prophet induced his companions by his own example to recite the Holy Quran. These inducements were not without their effect. The Muslims treasured up the Word of God in their hearts and its reading and teaching became very common. So common had the recitation of the Quran become indeed that when the Holy Prophet spoke of the disappearance of the knowledge of the Quran at some future time, Ziyad, son of Labid one of the companions, at once cried out: “How would knowledge disappear, O Messenger of God, when we read the Quran and teach it to our children, and our children would teach it to their children, so on till the judgment day.” This question arose out of a misapprehension of the words of the Holy Prophet who meant, not that the words of the Holy Quran would disappear, but that people would cease to act in accordance with the spirit of those words. This tradition which is related by Tirmazi and some other collectors of tradition has already been quoted, and it shows that every verse of the Holy Quran had such a wide publication among the companions and was so generally known to them that they could not even think how any part of it could disappear.

There are also traditions 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. In a tradition related in the Bukharee (chapter headed: “In how many days should the Quran be read”) 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

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* See Bukharee “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.”

† See Bukharee.
expressly enjoyed by him to finish it at the least in three or five or seven days and was forbidden to go through the whole once every night. This tradition shows clearly that there were companions who could recite the whole of the Quran in a single night. The direction given by the Holy Prophet that the recitation of the Holy Quran should not be finished in less than three days was meant to inform them that it should be read thoughtfully. 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 days. He replied that he could do it sooner whereupon the Holy Prophet lessened the time by five days. Thus he continued to express his ability to finish the Quran sooner and the Holy Prophet went on lessening the limit every time by a few days he reached the number five (according to another report three).* Ibn-i-Masood 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 Ayesha said that "the Holy Prophet did not usually finish the Quran in less than three days."‡ All these traditions show clearly that the companions vied with one another in the frequent recitation of the Quran and that many of them could recite the whole in a single day. In fact so frequently was the recitation of the Holy Quran resorted to that injunctions became necessary to stop a too rapid recitation. It is also clear from these traditions 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.

The conclusions are further supported by many trustworthy traditions which relate that there were numerous men among the companions who could recite the Holy Quran from memory. These men were called the Qurra or the reciters, and they were known to have committed the Quran to memory. The author of the Fath-ul-Bari explains the word Qurra as meaning "persons 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 Qurra were treacherously put to death at the Bir Mauna by a tribe of the unbelievers. This is a fact borne witness to by the most trustworthy and authentic traditions related by Bukharee and other reliable collectors. The fact that such a large number of them was murdered in the life-time 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 traditions. In the first of these Abdullah, son of Amru (who, as we have already seen, committed the whole of the Quran to memory) is reported to have said when speaking of Abdullah, son of Masood: "I shall ever love him,

* According tradition found in the Musnad of Darimi.
† See Fathul Bari Vol. IX page 53.
‡ Idem i.
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 son of Masood, Sâlim, Muadh and Ubayy son of Kab." 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 his memory. In fact to be a good teacher of the Holy Quran, it was not sufficient that a person should be able to recite the Holy Book from memory. What was further necessary was that he should have a good understanding and a sound knowledge of the Holy Quran. The tradition only shows that the four men named could teach any and every chapter of the Holy Quran and hence they themselves also knew the whole of it. Probably they were named because they always tried to learn the revelations directly from the Holy Prophet. One of them Abdullah, son of Masood, it is reported in the very next tradition, used to say that he received over seventy chapters of the Holy Quran directly from the mouth of the Holy Prophet. It was probably on account of some such peculiarity that the Holy Prophet named four men only, for other traditions tell us that there were many other companions who could recite the whole of the Quran from memory.

To take an example, Abu Bakr is not named in the above tradition, 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. Now authentic traditions, 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 tradition tells us 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 where he used to recite the Holy Quran every day, his keeping constant company of the Holy Prophet, &c., which show that Abu Bakr knew the whole of the Quran by heart. Similarly, Abdullah, son of Omar, retained the whole of the Quran in his memory and finished it every night and the Holy Prophet having come to know this told him to finish it 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, Omar, Osman and Ali, and such renowned companions as Talha, Sad, Ibn-i-Masood, Sâlim, Abu Huraira, &c., while three women, viz., Ayesha, Hafsa and Umm-i-Salma are also named in the same category. Several other persons are also named from among the Helpers as being able to recite the whole of the Quran from memory. But it is not to be supposed

[[Vide the Sahih Bukharee, chapter Al-Qurra:]]

[[This tradition is narrated by Nisai and the chain of reporters through which he received it is admitted to be trustworthy.]]
that only those persons were the reciters whose names have been preserved to us in traditions. Seventy of them were killed by treachery in the life-time of the Holy Prophet and about the same number fell in the battle of Yemama which was fought a few months after the death of the Holy Prophet. Among these was also Salim whose name is clearly mentioned among those who could recite the whole of the Quran, yet when Omar made a representation to Abu Bakr for the collection of the Quran, he did not particularly name Salim, but only said that death had taken away many of the Qurra (reciters) in the field of Yemama. Had there been none among the slain except Salim who could recite the whole of the Quran from memory, Omar would not have spoken of the reciters generally.

There is only one tradition whose evidence is considered to be conflicting with that furnished by all the traditions cited above. This tradition 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, Abd-Darda and Muadh son of Jabal, and Zaid son of Sabit and Abu Zaid.” In a tradition to the same effect reported by the same authority the name of Ubayy, son of Keb, is mentioned in the place of Abd-Darda. This tradition apparently contradicts many other traditions 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 of the tradition. The word jama’ which means collecting is generally applied in the traditions with reference to the Holy Quran in the sense of collecting different manuscripts into a single volume, but it may 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 tradition does not negative the existence of any number of reciters who retained the whole of the Quran in memory. 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 life-time of the Holy Prophet was brought in 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 tradition 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 tradition which gives the circumstances under which these words were spoken by Anas. There were two rival tribes at Medina, 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 tradition relates. The Aus prided themselves

* Vide the Sahih: “Abu Bakr said, Omar came to me and said that death had worked vehemently among the reciters of the Quran in the battle of Yemama.”
in 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 belonged to the tribe of Khazraj, and the exclusion of such famous men as Abdullah son of Masood, Salim and others from among the refugees shows clearly that the claim was advanced only for one tribe as against a rival tribe.

Even if we admit for the sake of argument the existence of certain differences in the various traditions quoted above, the one conclusion upon which they all agree is absolutely certain, viz., that among the companions of the Holy Prophet there were certain persons, whether their number amounted only to four or to more than that, who retained in memory the whole of the Quran as taught by the Holy Prophet, and who at his death had the whole of it engraved on the tablets of their hearts. Thus while every companion committed to memory a certain portion of the Holy Quran, certain companions committed to memory the whole of it. The entire Quran was, therefore, not only guarded by the comparatively few men who could recite the whole of it safe in their memories by every one having a certain portion. All this was done in obedience to the injunctions of the Holy Prophet who laid great stress upon the reciting of the Quran and the committing of it to memory. And these measure to guard the text of the Holy Quran were in addition to writing. It may also be pointed out here that the gradual revelation of the Quran afforded a facility in committing it to memory. The interval between the revelation of two verses or two chapters afforded the companions an opportunity to repeat it as often as they liked. The entire Quran was revealed in the long period of twenty-three years, and if Muslim boys of the age of ten or twelve years can even now commit the whole Quran to memory with one or two years, the Arab possessors of wonderfully retentive memories to whom the importance of the Quran was far greater than to any Muslim of a later age could not find it difficult to commit it to memory within the long period of twenty-three years especially when it was given to them gradually.

The recitation of the Quran and its committing to memory were not however only optional, for the Quran formed a part of public as well as private prayer. Five times a day had the Muslim to pray publicly, while prayers in the later 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 we know it for a fact that generally very long portions were recited in the prayers, especially in the prayers 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. One tradition relates that he read nearly a third part of the Quran in a single rak’at. His companions also followed his example. Thus one companion is mentioned in an anecdote left
of him have recited the chapter entitled the “cow” which forms the twelfth part of the Quran in his tahajjud prayers. Even in the public prayers long chapters were recited. One tradition relate that the Holy Prophet while leading prayers read the chapter entitled the “Women” before the chapter entitled “The Family of Imran.” Now these two chapters form nearly an eighth part of the Quran and such a large portion read in a single prayer shows how frequently every part was in its turn recited in public prayers. There are many traditions from which it appears that such long chapters as the “Cow” which forms a twelfth part of the Quran were read in a single rak’at in the morning prayers. The evening prayers are the least suited for the recitation of the long chapters, but even in these the Holy Prophet recited such chapters as the “Tur” or the “Mount” which contains nearly fifty verses. In imitation of the Holy Prophet his followers wherever they had the occasion to lead the prayers recited very long chapters. One of them recited the second chapter, i.e., “the Cow,” in the prayer of 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 memory 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. One tradition relates how a certain chapter was learned by heart by a companion from its frequent recitation in the prayers. In fact, if there had been no other means of giving publicity to the Quran, its mere recitation in prayers was sufficient to give it such a publication as would have guarded it against every possible alteration or loss.

4. Arrangement of the Verses and Chapters of the Quran.

It has already been shown that the Holy Quran was both written and committed to memory in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. But we also know that the Quran was revealed piecemeal during a long period extending over twenty-three years. Some of the chapters were revealed complete but the revelation of many others was fragmentary and extended over long periods. It also happened often that while one chapter was still unfinished, a new chapter was revealed, and sometimes verses belonging to more than two unfinished chapters were revealed at one and the same time. Now the arrangement of chapters and verses in the copies of the Holy Quran at present in the hands of the Muslims does not follow the order of revelation. The important question before us, therefore, now is whether the Holy Prophet himself arranged the verses and chapters in an order different from that of their revelation, and, if so, whether the present arrangement of the verses and chapters is the same
as that which prevailed in the life-time of the Holy Prophet. In other words, was the Holy Quran left by the Holy Prophet in the same condition as regards the arrangement of its verses and chapters as that in which we now find it or is its present condition different from that in which the Holy Prophet left it?

Both intrinsic and extrinsic evidence conclusively show that the present arrangement of the chapters and verses of the Holy Quran was effected by the Holy Prophet under the guidance of Divine revelation. But as the intrinsic evidence on this point requires a separate treatment, I shall not attempt to give it here. The different verses in different chapters and the chapters themselves are so well arranged that no better arrangement is conceivable. It is only ignorance of the Holy Quran and Arabic idiom which has made some critics remark that there is no connection between certain verses or that there are some chasms. A deep reflection over the Holy Book reveals a close connection between verses are considered by hasty writers to be disconnected. But we leave this point for a separate discussion and would refer here only to the extrinsic evidence which proves that the present arrangement of the verses and chapters of the Holy Quran is not the work of Abu Bakr or Zaid, but that of the Holy Prophet himself who did it under the guidance of Divine revelation. Such evidence is not only met with abundantly in the traditions of the Holy Prophet, but it is also contained in the Holy Quran. Thus in lxv. 19 we read: “Verily it is for Us to collect it and to read it, and when We read it, then follow thou its reading.” This verse clearly shows that the collection of the Quran, that it is 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 this verse 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 Jama in the above verse implies both collection and arrangement, since no collection could be brought about without an 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 the chapters of the Holy Quran should be arranged in an order different from that of their revelation. Is 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 in the verse quoted above as two different things. The reader may also consult Lane’s Lexicon which gives “arranging” as a significance of the word Jama.

It is in authentic traditions, however, that we meet with the clearest proof 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 chapter separately and in each enquiry we shall
have to discuss the following points:

1. Was any arrangement followed by the Prophet himself and
by his companions in his life-time?

2. Was that arrangement different from the order in which the
verses or the chapters were revealed?

3. Is the present arrangement different from that followed by,
or in the life-time of, the Holy Prophet?

That such a large book treating of so many and such varied
subjects should have been committed to memory and regularly recited
in and outside prayers and taught by one man to another without there
being any settled arrangement of its parts is a most preposterous pro-
position, 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 the
supposition that no arrangement is discoverable in the verses and
chapters at present is the only basis on which the proposition is based.

Even Muir who sat down to write his "Life of Mohammed" on a strong
historical basis has in this respect followed the earlier Christian critics
and shut his eyes to the whole historical evidence. 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 Mohammad; 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 Mohammad should have enjoined its
recital invariably in this order. We must even doubt whether the
number of Suras, or chapters, was determined by Mohammad 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 life-time 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 Mohammad’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 Mohammad himself. Thus he recalled his fugitive followers at the discomfiture of Honein; by shouting to them as ‘the men of the Sura Baer’ (i.e., Sura ii).

“Several persons are stated by tradition to have learnt by heart a certain number of Suras in Mohammad’s life-time. Thus Abdulla bin Masud learned seventy Suras from the Prophet’s own mouth and Mohammad on his death-bed repeated seventy Suras, ‘among which were the seven long ones.’ These traditions signify a recognised 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 Mohammad 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 Mohammad 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 traditions. 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 discovered. 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-note showing that there was a connection. The text makes the allegation that 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 recognised division and that 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 will be 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.”
As regards the stale assertion that the Quran follows no arrangement in the disposition of its several parts, it arises only out of an ignorance of the Holy Book. There exist commentaries in the Arabic language which show the connection of the verses and the chapters to each other, but the subject is not suited for a short article in a monthly. I would, however, give one example of the real connection between verses which a superficial reader would think to be totally unconnected. From the 150th verse the second chapter runs thus: “With somewhat of fear any hunger and loss of wealth and of lives and of fruits, will We surely prove you: but bear good tidings to the patients, (151) who, when a calamity falls upon them, say, ‘Verily we are God’s and verily to Him do we return. (152) On such the Lord sends down His blessings and mercy, and these—they are the rightly guided. (153) Verily, Safa and Marwa are among the Sanctuaries of God: whoever, therefore, makes a pilgrimage to the House or visits it may go round about them both. And whoever does good in obedience to God, then verily God is Grateful and Knowing.” Apparently the 153rd verse abruptly introduces a subject foreign to the purport of the context. A little reflection, however, makes it clear that this verse has a deep connection with the preceding verses. Safa and Marwa are the two hills which were the scene of Hajar’s suffering when she ran hither and thither in search of water for her infant child. Now the previous verses lay it down that when Almighty God tries His servants by sending down any suffering upon them and they are patient and faithful and trust in God, they are rewarded with great blessings and mercy from the Lord, and the verse which speaks of Safa and Marwa is really only an illustration of the principle laid down in these verses. It mentions two hills which were the scene of the sufferings of a faithful servant of God who, because of the faithfulness and patience shown under the heaviest sufferings, was rewarded with the greatest of blessings from heaven, so much so that these very hills became the sanctuaries of God. Going round these hills was a commemoration of the events which befell Hajar and the patience and faithfulness which she showed in that trial which had been sent upon her by God. Her reward was great, for the descendants of Ishmael were made a great nation and it was from among them that the Holy Prophet Mohammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, was raised. These facts reveal the existence of a deep connection between verses which to a superficial reader of the Quran would appear as having not the least connection with each other.

The allegation that there is no connection between the verses as at present arranged is, therefore, the result only of the ignorance of the deep significance of the Quranic words and expressions. As it is only upon this one supposition that the whole historical evidence concerning the arrangement of the Holy Quran is rejected, we may after having shown the error of this supposition proceed to consider the evidence itself. The assertion that no arrangement was followed in the case of single verses revealed at different times is so absurd on its very face that it hardly requires a refutation. How was it possible for any body 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 tradition support these absurd 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? It is inconceivable 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 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 could be certain of the correctness of what his friend recited. Moreover, we learn from authentic traditions that when 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 which they 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 traditions. As Osman tells us in a tradition already quoted, "it was customary with the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessing of God be upon him, 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 verses were pointed out by the Holy Prophet himself. With such clear and 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 that that 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 hostliest critic of Islam, that there has not been the slightest change in any word or letter of the Quran or in the arrangement of its verses or chapters since the time of Osman, the third of the Muslim Caliphs. Our copies of the Quran are admittedly exact copies, true and authentic in every way, of the collection made by Osman, and hence to prove that the arrangement of verses and chapters at present is the same as that followed by the Holy Prophet, we have only to show that the collection made by Osman followed the original arrangement. It can be easily seen that at the time of his making the collection, Osman 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 Osman is for him to show who makes the assertion. When Osman 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 Osman 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 Osman by any sect of Islam or any 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 we will describe later on when we have occasion to write about the various readings. But of any alteration in the arrangement verses there is absolutely of no mention whatever in any tradition 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 traditions. Under the heading "The excellence of the chapter entitled Al-Baqra" Bukharee
relates the following tradition: “The Holy Prophet, may peace and
the blessings of God be upon him, said, ‘Whoever reads the last two
verses of the chapter entitled Baqra on any night they are sufficient
for him.” This tradition which reports the exact words of the Holy
Prophet shows two things. Firstly, that the Holy Prophet himself
followed an arrangement which he 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 tradition shows clearly that every verse had
a known and fixed place in a chapter and no reciter of the Quran could
change its place. In the second place, this tradition 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 hence that the arrangement in the copies of the Quran at present
is the same that was followed by the Holy Prophet. In support of this
we may cite another tradition which is accepted as authentic by the
authorities on tradition. In this tradition these two verses, i.e., the
concluding verses of the chapter entitled the “Cow” are identified
with the 285th and 286th verses of that chapter as enumerated in
Rodwell’s translation. (See for this tradition the Fath-ul-Bari.) Ac-
tording to another authentic tradition the Holy Prophet told his follow-
ers 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
tradition occurs in the Sahih 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 indenified with the teaching
of the anti-Christ by the Holy Quran, is refuted in forcible words. This
tradition also shows that the arrangement of verses in the time of the
Holy Prophet was the same as it is now. Other traditions to the same
effect may, if necessary, be quoted.

In no tradition any arrangement of verses other than the one which
exists in the current copies of the Holy Quran is hinted at. Had the
Holy Prophet left the Quran in an unarranged form, different arrange-
ments of verses would no doubt have been followed by different com-
panions and in the great mass of traditions there would have been
references to some of these arrangements. But the absence of any such
reference shows conclusively 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 one copies of the Quran, because there
is no reference at all to any change having been introduced at any
time. There is only one tradition 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 arrange-
ment being the one in existence at the time of the Holy Prophet. The
fact, if true, is mentioned only on account of the peculiarity of the
arrangement, its distinction from the recognised and accepted arrange-
ment. 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 matter and not chronological. Ali might have thought of preserving the order of revelation for historical purposes. In the time Osman 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 not looked upon the present arrangement as the right arrangement, he would have either objected to it or refused to take any part in it. But along with the whole body of the companions, Ali followed an arrangement different from the order of the revelation though he might have preserved the chronological order also. Had he considered the latter arrangement to be the actual 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 as chronological arrangement. These considerations clearly show that the arrangement of verses in the copies made by Osman was recognised by all the companions without a single exception to be the arrangement followed by the Holy Prophet. Had it not been so there would have been many differences among them as to arrangement. But as a matter of fact even Ibn-i-Masud who otherwise expressed his dissatisfaction with the action of Osman in having disallowed certain readings favored by the former never took any objection to the arrangement of the verses in the copies made by the orders of the latter, nor did he himself ever propose a different arrangement.

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-Baqra, for instance, was revealed during the early days of the Holy Prophet at Medina, but some verses belonging to it were revealed only a few days before his death. Such were the verses relating to the prohibition of usury, as trustworthy traditions 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. The state of the society whose reform the Holy Quran had in view was such that the two injunctions could not be given together. It was necessary that the people to whom the injunction relating to the prohibition of usury was to be given should be first prepared to accept that teaching. Hence the two injunctions were revealed at different periods, but the subjects of which they treated were so closely related to each other that in an arrangement of verses they had to be placed side by side. But the division into chapters was marked by the Holy Prophet himself and we find the names of most of the chapters expressly mentioned in authentic traditions. In fact of the division of the Holy Quran into chapters and the arrangement of verses in these chapters by the Prophet are such clear facts that no difference at all can
be pointed out to have ever existed on these points among the companions of the later Muslims. No one can be shown to have ever asserted that 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 traditions 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 tradition which narrates that Ibn-i-Masud recited forty verses of the chapter entitled Al-Anfal in a certain prayer. This is narrated in the Sahih Bukhāree. Another traditionist Abdul Razzaq has mentioned the same tradition through a different chain of narrators with this difference that instead of mentioning the receiving of forty verses of the chapter, the narrator only says that he recited up to the verse which ends with such and such words. (Fatḥ-ul-Bari, Vol. II, page 212). Now if we compute forty verses from the beginning as mentioned by the first narrator, we find them ending with the words mentioned by the second narrator. From this it is clear that the present arrangement of verses was well-known in the life-time of the Holy Prophet. According to another tradition narrated by Bukhāree, the Holy Prophet used to recite, when he awoke for his tahajjud prayers, “the last ten verses of the chapter entitled Al-Imran,” and in imitation of him the Muslims still recite the same ten verses. This fact also proves 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 out-side prayers was regarded as unnecessary except when the whole of Quran was to be recited. As we have seen in traditions already quoted, there were men among the companions who knew the whole of the Quran by heart and to keep it fresh in memory they used to recite the whole within a stated time. Indeed Bukhāree has a chapter with the heading “In how much time should the recital of the Quran be finished.” Under this heading traditions are narrated 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 traditions 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. But it may be asked, does tradition support this conclusion? Ahmad and Abu Daud and others have narrated the following tradition which
shows that the arrangement of chapters was also effected by the Holy Prophet: Aus says: "I was in the Saqif embassy at the time of their conversion to Islam ....... The Holy Prophet said to us, "My portion of the Holy Quran has come to me unexpectedly, so I intend not 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 Qaf which are termed the Mufassal.' There is good reason to believe the authenticity of this tradition. 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 traditions 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 traditions reported 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 traditionists as authentic traditions. Hence we have no reason to doubt the truth of either. Now the tradition quoted above shows clearly an arrangement of chapters, for the division into portions mentioned in this tradition 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 tradition. The seventh portion begins with the chapter entitled Qaf as stated in the tradition, and the total number of chapters contained in the first six portions is forty-eight as even in the copies of the Quran in our hands. It should be borne in mind that in our copies the Qaf is the fiftieth chapter, the difference arising from the fact that in the tradition quoted above the Fatiha or the Opening chapter is not included. This tradition 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 the arrangement of its verses, and their present arrangement does not differ in the least from the original arrangement.

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 tradition quoted above speaks of the conversion to Islam of the Beni Saqif, which did not take place till the ninth year of Hijira, 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 tradition 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 a reasonable ground.
The verses that were revealed afterwards were put in their proper place in the chapters to which they belonged, and if any short Sura was also revealed afterwards, as the "Help," it also found its proper place in the arrangement of chapters, 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 Osman. Against Abu Bakr no one has ever advanced such a charge, and Osman only followed the collection of Abu Bakr. The copies made in the time of Osman were made under the directions of the companions who possessed the best knowledge of the Quran, and many of them as Obagy bin K‘ab knew the whole of it by heart. The arguments which we have advanced above as to the arrangement of verses apply mutatis mutandis to the arrangement of chapters. But as some traditions speak of different arrangements, we shall consider them before leaving this subject.

Let us take first the chapter headed Talif-ul-Quran in the Bukhāre. According to the first tradition mentioned in this chapter, a man from Iraq came to Ayesha 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 tradition tells us, Ayesha 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 muḥassal 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 tradition we have the objection of a man from Iraq, not one of the companions but a new convert to Islam, and the reply of Ayesha. 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 Ayesha showed the questioner 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 Ayesha's argument and did not take her copy which he would have certainly done if the arrangement of Ayesha'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'at, any other chapter or portion of a chapter whatever could be recited in the second rak'at. There is ample evidence as to this in traditions. Similarly two or more chapters could be read in a single rak'at, and in some cases there were combinations of such chapters for recital in prayers. In his tahajjud prayers, for instance, the Holy Prophet used sometimes to recite twenty chapters, eighteen of which were termed the mufassal, or the shorter chapters towards the close of the Quran beginning with Qaf, and two Ha Mims, or chapters commencing with Ha Mim. Thus in each rak'at two of these chapters were recited, the total number of rak'ats being ten. The Holy Prophet made a peculiar combination which has been preserved to us through Ibn-i-Masud, and accordingly it is known as the talif-i-Ibn-i-Masud or the combination of Ibn-i-Masud. Now this combination has nothing to do with the arrangement of chapters in the Quran, nor was it followed on all occasions. It was a combination, which according to Ibn-i-Masud, the Holy Prophet followed upon one occasion or more occasions than one in his later midnight prayers, and as authentic traditions show that the ordinary arrangement of chapters was not followed by the Holy Prophet or his companions in prayers, this peculiar combination does not detract aught from the value of the original arrangement. On two other hand, this peculiar combination was preserved and mentioned only on account of its peculiarity and departure from the original arrangement of chapters. Nor was this peculiar combination followed always even in tahajjud prayers, for there are other authentic traditions showing other combinations and the recital of other chapters. Even in the public prayers the arrangement of chapters was not followed. On one occasion the Holy Prophet recited the fourth chapter, An-Nisa in the first rak'at and the third chapter, Al-i-Imran, in the second, and the incident has been preserved to us in a tradition only because a departure was made in the case from the recognised arrangement. Many other instances of the same kind are on record, and as it was not obligatory to follow the arrangement of chapters in reciting them in prayers, such cases furnish only additional testimony to the truth of the fact that the arrangement of chapters followed at present is the same as was followed in the recital of the whole Quran in the life-time of the Holy Prophet according to his directions.

The circumstance narrated above as to the peculiar combination of the twenty chapters termed the mufassal combination resorted to by the Holy Prophet sometimes in his tahajjud prayers, has led some men to think that Ibn-i-Masud's copy of the Quran followed a different arrangement of chapters. But the only trustworthy evidence to support this is the tradition quoted above, which speaks of a certain combination of twenty short chapters in the tahajjud prayers, and when it is shown that the observance of the arrangement of chapters was not necessary in prayers, the force of that evidence vanishes altogether. Even supposing for the sake of argument that Ibn-i-Masud followed a different arrangement of chapters, and that it was according to that arrangement that the chapters were written in his copy of the Holy Quran, it does not follow that the his was the right arrangement or that the arrangement in Abu Bakr's or Osman's copy
was the wrong one. None of the companions favoured the arrangement of Ibn-i-Masud. On the other hand, all of them recognised the arrangement in Osman’s copy as the arrangement followed by the Holy Prophet. Among the companions who superintended the copying of the Quran in the reign of Osman, there were such eminent men as Ali, Obayy bin Ka‘b, Zaid bin Sabit and others. Osman had chosen, as I will show later on, twelve of the most eminent companions, who were distinguished for their sound knowledge of the Quran, and they decided all points on which any dispute arose. They could not be unaware of the particular combination of chapters which the Holy Prophet followed in his later midnight prayers, but they knew that no particular arrangement was adhered to by the Holy Prophet in the recital of chapters in prayers and no arrangement could in fact be observed. It is absurd to suppose that they were all ignorant of a certain combination and that Ibn-i-Masud alone knew it. Had the arrangement of chapters been left to private judgment, we could have supposed Ibn-i-Masud’s arrangement to be the right one and attributed the error to the rest of the companions. But the matter was to be decided by what the Holy Prophet had ordered. Ibn-i-Masud thought that a certain arrangement which he had seen the Holy Prophet following in his tahajjud prayers was the right arrangement. But he made a mistake. The companions knew that the arrangement followed in prayers was not and could not be the right arrangement. Authentic traditions related by them show that the Holy Prophet used to recite a portion of one chapter in one rak‘at and a portion of another chapter whether before or after the first in actual arrangement in the second rak‘at. They also knew the case in which a companion who led the prayers in a certain mosque commenced every rak‘at 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. They knew farther that in the morning prayers on Fridays, the Holy Prophet generally recited the chapter As-Sijda, the 32nd chapter, in the first rak‘at and the chapter Ad-Dahr, the seventy-sixth chapter, in the second rak‘at, yet this did not mean that latter chapter should follow the former in actual arrangement. They knew the actual arrangement and they followed it Ibn-i-Masud 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 Osman’s copy. The same longer chapters, the Tiwal, were first in his copy as in Osman’s, with this difference only that An-Nisa preceded Al-i-Inran, 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-i-Masud’s copy. So the error is either to be attributed to Ibn-i-Masud or to those who have supposed that his arrangement of the chapters of the Quran differed in these two points from the recognised arrangement followed in the official copies issued by Osman. Even the existence of the difference confirms the conclusion that the arrangement of chapters followed by Osman was exactly the same as that followed by the Holy Prophet. There is agreement in the
main between other companions and Ibn-i-Masud, and the difference arises only out of an error of judgment. The only differences in Ibn-i-Masud's arrangement, if these differences did actually exist in his copy, were those which arose out of Holy Prophet reciting certain chapters in a different order in the prayers. Perhaps Ibn-i-Masud thought that the order of those few chapters had been changed by the Holy Prophet when he heard him reciting them in prayers, but the other companions knew that it was not obligatory to follow the arrangement in prayers. Now we ask, if the order of chapters was not fixed by the Holy Prophet himself, what led Ibn-i-Masud to follow the same arrangement as was followed by Osman 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-i-Masud's arrangement of chapters was materially the same as was followed in Osman's copies and as is followed by us to this day, we have a tradition in Bukhārī in which Ibn-i-Masud names the five chapters in the middle of the Quran, Reni Israel, Al-Kahf, Ta Ha, Maryam and Anbiya, 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-i-Masud's arrangement of chapters was the same as in the copies made by the order of Osman, 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-i-Masud.

Two other persons are named as having followed a different arrangement of chapters in the collection of the Quran. These are Ubayy bin Kab and Ali. The case of the former may be disposed of at once, as there is no testimony worth the name which should show 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-i-Masud. But as I will show just now, if Ubayy ever entertained such opinion, he afterwards gave it up when he came to know the facts. Ali is said to have collected the chapters in the order of revelation, and there is a tradition stating that he did not rest after the Holy Prophet's death until he had collected the Quran, arranging its chapters in a chronological order. The authenticity of this tradition has been questioned, for that Quran was never handed down to posterity though Ali reigned as caliph immediately after Osman. Moreover there are traditions of a higher authority which do not give to Ali such credit. According to one tradition (see Fath-ul-Bari, p. 10) 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 to Quran." Therefore the tradition 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 contradicted by the second tradition whose evidence is corroborated by other historical facts, one of which is that even during his caliphate Ali never referred to or accepted a different copy of the Quran or a different arrangement of
its chapters. But besides this, there is another consideration which shows that neither Ali nor Ubayy followed any arrangement of chapters other than the one which was followed by Osman. Ubayy and Ali were among the men under whose directions the copies of the Quran were written, and therefore they had as much hand in giving us the present arrangement of chapters as Osman or any other companion.

There is one tradition more which may be mentioned in connection with the arrangement of chapters, as from it a contrary conclusion is sometimes drawn by mistake. Ibu-i-Abbas thus narrates this tradition: "I said to Osman what led you to put Al-Anfal (the eighth chapter) in juxtaposition with Baraat and you did not write between them the line bismilla-hirrahamanirrahim (the verse with which every chapter of the Quran commences), thus classing these two chapters with the seven long ones. Upon this question Osman 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-Anfal was one of the chapters revealed early at Medina, and Baraat 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 tradition, far from ascribing the arrangement of chapters to the judgment of Osman, 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 tradition, the Holy Prophet had "distinctly" told his companions where a verse or 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 eighth and the ninth chapters should be placed in juxtaposition. In fact, leaving the case of this one chapter, viz., the ninth, out of question, the tradition 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 tradition, does it follow from what is said in it that the Holy Prophet gave no directions at all as their arrangement. The chapter entitled Baraat (Immunity) 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 Baraat to be written without bismilla, the formula with which every chapter began. The two chapters, although known under two different names, were really parts of a single chapter. The first eighty verses of the Baraat were proclaimed to the assembled hosts in the days of pilgrimage, and this was the reason that the Baraat was regarded as a different chapter. Hence the Holy Prophet never told his companions distinctly that the Baraat was only a part of Al-Anfal, 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 Osman explained to Ibn-i 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, but as this subject requires a separate treatment, we need not refer to it here. The next point to be considered is that 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 Osman.

4. The Collection of the Quran.

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: "We verily will see to the collecting and the recital of it; when therefore We recite it, then follow thou the recital; afterwards verily it shall be Ours to make it clear to thee" (lxv: 17-19.) On another occasion the objection of the unbelievers as to the gradual revelation of the Holy Quran is thus met with: "And the unbelievers say, 'why has not the Quran been sent down to him all at once. We reveal it thus gradually that We may establish thy heart therewith, and We have put together and arranged well its parts" (xxv: 34.) 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. Any verse might be revealed at any time 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 tradition which describes the circumstances necessitating the collection of the Quran confirms the statement made above. The account is given by Zaid bin Sabit, the Holy Prophet’s amanuensis at Medina, and it has been preserved to us in an authentic tradition recorded in the Sahih Bukharee. Soon after the death of the Holy Prophet Abu Bakr had to send an expedition against the impostor Moseilma. A battle was fought at Yemama in which great carnage took place among the 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, Omar apprehended a great danger if more reciters fell in some other battle. Straight he went to Abu Bakr and advised him to give immediate orders for the collection of the written portions of the Quran into one volume. “Verily a great number of the reciters of the Quran have been slain in the battle of Yamama,” 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 he had shown to them. “How can I do a thing, replied Abu Bakr, “which Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, has not done.” “But,” urged Omar, that is the best course under the circumstances.” Abu Bakr was convinced after some discussion and Zaid was sent for. “Thus art,” 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 was 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, 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 tradition 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 verse had not been up to that time collected in one place. Secondly, it appears from the tradition that he 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 misgivings in the mind of Omar arose because he feared that as
many reciters had perished in the battle of Yamama, many others might be lost in some other battle. Hence he insisted upon a collection of the Quran which should have nothing to fear from the death of certain persons. From this it is clear that the original collection of the Quran with an arrangement of its chapters and verses was effected by the Holy Prophet himself, and Omar only desired to supplement the collection of the Quran in memories with a collection in writing. The tradition does not assert that the Quran had not been collected up to that time: on the other hand, it asserts that the Quran was safe in memories but that a written collection was needed in view of the possible loss of the reciters in a 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 tradition 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. Omar only feared loss of portions of the Quran by the loss of the remaining reciters in some other battle that might ensue. It was only a contingency: certain reciters who were alive at the time at which Omar was speaking might be lost in some future battle. Nothing had been lost up to the time, but something might be lost in the future if immediate steps were not taken for a collection in writing. To sum up, the tradition shows that the entire Quran was safe in the memories of the reciters, that Omar only desired to make a collection of the Quran in writing in addition to the collection existing in the memories of reciters and that nothing had been lost from the collection existing in memories when the collection in writing was undertaken. These are three important points which settle that the collection of the Quranic revelations in our hands does differ in any way from the collection existing in the life-time of the Holy Prophet, and that nothing was added to or lost from it at any time. It mut also be borne in mind that the tradition which settles these points one of the most authentic and trustworthy tradition and no one has ever questioned its truth.

We have now to explain what was meant by Abu Bakr when he said that he could not do a thing which had not been done by the Holy Prophet. Omar’s question related, not to the collection of the Quran, but to the collection of the Quran in writing, so that even if the reciters might perish, the Quran should still be safe. Now it is a fact admitted on all hands that though the complete Quran with a perfect arrangement of its chapters and verses existed in the safest of repositories, the memories of the companions of the Holy Prophet, the different writings containing different portions of the Quran had never been collected together and arranged. Nor could this be done so long as the Holy Prophet was alive. For whereas it was easy for the reciters to place any verse of any chapter revealed at a subsequent time in its proper place in that chapter as pointed out by the Holy Prophet, a complete volume could not admit of such a course. Hence the Holy Prophet did not order the collection of the different writings. Now Omar asked Abu Bakr to collect these writings and this was what
the Holy Prophet had not done, and therefore in the first instance Abu Bakr also refused to do it. His answer only covered the ground which Omar's demand did. It shows only the scrupulousness of the companions to interfere with the Divine revelation. But Omar's case was based on strong and sound reasoning and hence he argued it with Abu Bakr until the latter was convinced of the truth of what he said. Thus there is nothing in the tradition to show that the Holy Quran had not been collected up to the time of the incident. It only shows that the different writings had not been collected and arranged and that the complete Quran was entrusted only to the memories of men.

Another point to be elucidated in the tradition quoted above is the statement of Zaid as to the great difficulty which he thought he was likely to experience in the performance of the task with which he was entrusted. Indeed he thought that it would not have been more difficult for him if he had been asked to remove a mountain. What were his difficulties? A tradition related by Ibn-i-Abi-Daud makes it clear. "Omar 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 any body until two witnesses bore testimony" (Fath-ul-Bari, Vol. IX, page 12). This tradition shows, and the same may be inferred from the tradition under discussion, that the object of the collection undertaken in the time of the Abu Bakr was to collect 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. Zaid had not to search 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 the arrangement of the verses and chapters as followed in the recitation of the entire Quran from memory in obedience to the directions given by the Holy Prophet. That these writings were safe, it cannot be doubted. Everything relating to Divine revelation was preserved with the utmost care. The task was no doubt an arduous one and required hard labour and diligent search, and hence Zaid with a true appreciation of the difficulties before him said that it was equivalent to the removing of a mountain.

There are clear considerations showing that the service 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 the Abu Bakr and Omar was not to have a volume of the Holy Quran prepared by Zaid by writing down the Holy Book as recited by the reciters, but to prepare a book by collecting the original writings. Hence 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 had only to be made for writing. The words of Omar expressing a fear that much of the Quran might be lost, if the reciters fell in other fields as in that of Yemama, clearly imply that he was sure that no portion of the Holy Quran had been lost up to that time, and accordingly if the object of the new collection for which Omar 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 have Zaid in such a case considered the task to be as difficult as the removing of a mountain. Sufficient accuracy could have been obtained by having a few reciters gathered together and Zaid had only to write out the Holy Quran as dictated by them and approved by the companions. But Omar'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 tradition further tells us that Zaid actually followed this course. For after being convinced that Abu Bakr and Omar 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 Repentance in the possession of Abu Khuzaima Ansari and I did not find them in the possession of any body 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" in the tradition quoted above refer. Moreover memory had also to be resorted 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 Omar urged that the collection should be commenced whilst a large number of reciters was still alive, and it is for this reason that Zaid mentions that in collecting the writings he had to resort to memory, or "the hearts of men" as he puts it. The words do not indicate that he sought for some chapters from writings and for others from memory, for if he limited his enquiry 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 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 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 the lips of the Holy Prophet were still alive. The Quran as recited by the Holy Prophet was still fresh in the memories of the companions, and any tampering with the text could have been easily brought to notice. Thirdly, we find the companions so cautious even in reporting the words of the Holy Prophet that we cannot imagine that they could 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 outside prayers. It was impossible that any variation from the text as prevalent in the time of the Holy Prophet could 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 other and thus placed beyond the shadow of a doubt the accuracy of the text of the Holy Quran. Sixthly, there is no mention at all in any tradition whatever that any thing was left out of the collection made under the orders of Abu Bakr or that anything had been added to it which was not considered to be part of the Divine revelation. As Muir says, “We hear of no fragments, sentences, or words omitted by the compilers, nor of any that differed from the received edition. Any such would undoubtedly have been preserved and noticed in those traditional repositories which treasured up the minutest and most trivial acts and sayings of the Prophet.”

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. Unless there had been a complete agreement in the text as received through the two sources, memory and writing, the companions could never have been satisfied with the collection. The copy thus made remained, we are told, in the possession of Abu Bakr and after his death in that of Omar. After the latter’s death, the copy was transferred to the custody of Hafsa, the daughter of Omar 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 Osman 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 Osman, he deemed it necessary to circulate official copies transcribed by official scribes and suppress all those made by private persons either from the collection of Zaid or other writings still prevalent among them. An authentic tradition reported by Bukharee thus describes the circumstances: “Anas, son of Malik relates that there came to Osman, 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 Osman, ‘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 Osman 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 Osman, and he ordered Zaid bin Sabit and Abdulla bin Zubeir and Said-i-bin-il-As and Abdul Rahman bin Haris bin Hisham, and they made copies from the original copy. Osman also said to the three men who belonged to the Quresh, (Zaid only being a Medinite), ‘When you differ with Zaid in any thing concerning the Quran, then write it in the language of the Quresh, 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, Osman returned the original to Hafsa, and sent to every quarter one of the copies thus made, and ordered all other copies or leaves on which the Quran was written to be burned.”

The tradition states clearly the circumstances which led Osman to destroy all private copies 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 Armenia. 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 Qiara 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 slighter differences existing at that time, they might after the lapse of a few generations develop into more serious differences. What the differences exactly were it is difficult for us to say, but a reference to earlier anecdotes casts some further light upon the nature of these differences. We are told in authentic traditions 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 any body whom they heard reading any word of the Holy Quran in a different method. Thus Omar on one occasion heard Hisham pronouncing certain words of the Quran in a different method, and in great wrath dragged him to 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. But I do not wish to enter into details here as the subject of the various readings I intend to discuss under a separate heading. From what I have stated above, it will be seen that the permission to read any word in a different method was based on a necessity. The permission could be availed of only by those who on account of their being accustomed from their very childhood to pronounce certain words in a certain manner could not pronounce them in the pure dialect of the Quresh. 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 Quresh 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 language of the Quresh. Some of them may have even abused the permission and favored certain readings though they had no need for them. This evil seems to have spread at Kufa and it was to this that Huzaifa (in the tradition quoted above) referred when he was alarmed at the variation in the readings. According to certain traditions he strongly reproved those who took to peculiar readings some saying that they followed the reading of Ibn-i-Masood, others that of Abu Musa and others still of Ubayy-ibn-i-K'ab, whereas they could without any difficulty recite the Quran according to the original reading that is, in the dialect of Quresh. This conclusion is corroborated by an anecdote relating to a period earlier than the time of Osman. Omar was told that Ibn-i-Masood read *atta heen* instead of *hatta heen*. Now in the dialect of the Huzail and the Saqeeef *hatta* was pronounced *atta* (See Lane's Lexicon under the root *atta*) Ibn-i-Masood did not belong to either of these tribes, but he favoured a peculiar reading which had been permitted only because people belonging to certain tribes could not utter the word otherwise. When Omar was told that Ibn-i-Masood taught *atta* instead of *hatta*, the caliph wrote to him that the Quran was revealed in the language of the Quresh and that he should not read it in the dialect of the Huzail. The words of Omar as given in the tradition are: "Verily the Quran was revealed in the language of the Quresh and not in the dialect of the Huzail, so teach it thou to the people in the language of the Quresh and not in that of the Huzail." 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 evil which made Huzaifa and Osman have great apprehension as many traditions show, and the only remedy for it was that the variations for which there remained no need now should be entirely suppressed in reading as well as in writing and that the pure language of the Quresh in which the Quran had been revealed should be used by all.

The considerations and the anecdotes given above help us to understand the nature of the differences and the evil at which Huzaifa was alarmed, and to remove which was the object of Osman in destroying
all private copies of the Quran. The instruction which Osman gave to
the syndicate of the scribes further supports this conclusion. To the
members of the committee who belonged to the tribes of the Qureesh 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
Qureesh, for it is in their language that it was revealed." This direction
we are told was obeyed. Osman then went no further than Omar.
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 Omar 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 tradition also related by
Bukharee instead of "when you differ with Zaid in anything concerning
the Quran," we have the words, "when you differ with Zaid in an
Arabiyyat in the Arabiyyat of the Quran," the word Arabiyyat signifying
the Arabic language. The word clearly implies that by difference in
the tradition is meant difference in the method of pronouncing a word in
different dialects. Zaid did not belong to the tribe of the Qureesh and
hence where there was a difference in the manner of reading or writing
a word, the decision of the Qureesh members was to be accepted. The
only example of the difference alluded to has been preserved to us in a
tradition. On the authority of Ibn-i-Shahab, the same narrator as in
Bukharee's tradition, Tirmazi adds the following anecdote to a tradition
accepted and narrated by Bukharee, in which they differed on that
occasion as to tabut and tabuh. The Qureesh members said that it
was tabut and Zaid said that it was (tabuh). The difference was reported
to Osman and he directed them to write it (tabut) adding that the
Quran "was revealed in the dialect of the Qureesh." This anecdote
illustrates the nature of the differences at which Huzaifa was alarmed.
It shows that the differences whose removal was aimed at by Osman
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 were permitted
cessated to exist with the flux of large members of foreigners into the holy
religion of Islam, Osman 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 Osman differ from
the original collection made by Zaid in the time of Abu Bakr? The
tradition quoted above tells us that when variations of readings in the
distant parts of the kingdom were brought to the notice of Osman, 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 Omar. It was Zaid who
transcribed 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 Osman. To
remove any difference of dialect or variation in the mode of reading certain words that might possibly arise, Osman gave, no doubt, the orders that the reading of the Quresh should be adopted in preference to any other reading. But the only example of such variation that has been preserved to us in tradition is, if the anecdote be true, that Zaid read a word as tabuh, and the Quresh read it as tabut, and such importance was given to this trifling difference that the matter was reported to Osman for decision. There is no mention at all of any other departure having been made from the writing of Zaid in the copy of Hafsa. Hence we have conclusive testimony in our hands showing that the copies of the Quran made and circulated under the orders of Osman were exact and faithful copies of the original collection of Zaid. Again the message of Osman to Hafsa was: “Send us the copy of 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 Osman or in that of Ali when the Muslims had been divided into factions and that copy was still in the possession of Hafsa. The men who murdered in cold blood the aged and venerable prince 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 Osman were true and faithful copies of the original collection made by Zaid in the time of Abu Bakr.

Had the action of Osman 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. Huzafa, one of the learned companions, had come to him in all haste from distant Syria to request him that he should take immediate steps to put a stop to variations in readings, and this he could not do except by issuing official copies of the Holy Quran as collected by Abu Bakr and suppressing all private copies which were perhaps not made with sufficient care and contained any variation of reading. Nor did Osman take this step without consulting the companions. According to a report narrated by Ibn-i-Abi Daood through a chain of narrators which has been admitted as trustworthy (see Fath-ul-Bari, Vol IX, p. 16.) Ali said: “Do not say aught of Osman 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.” This anecdote shows that it was after consultation with the general body of the companions that Osman took any step. There are said to have been twelve members in the syndicate which superin-
tended transcription of copies. Among these were Zaid, Said, Ubbay, Anas bin Malik, Abdulla bin Abbas and others. It appears that originally there were four members only as the tradition in Bukharae tells us, but that others were added later on, perhaps because a larger number of copies than that imagined at first was required. Abdulla bin Masood was the only companion noted for his learning 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 for Medina. Abdulla lived at Kufa, and much delay would have been caused in the progress of the work if he had been included in the committee. And as Osman began his 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 bin S'ad said that he met many companions when Osman gave orders for burning all private copies of the Quran and they were all pleased with it and none of them took objection to it. In fact, Osman's apprehensions and those of the companions were not due, as the words of Ali reported in the above tradition show so much to the existence of variations in readings as to the differences resulting from these variations. Those who had newly entered into Islam were unaware of the circumstances as a result of which the Holy Prophet permitted certain variations in readings, and adopting the reading of a particular companion they were severe upon others who adopted a different reading, and thus the slight variations in the mode of reading certain words began to lead to great quarrels and controversies. Osman and the other companions saw that the people were falling into errors and making a wide departure from what the Holy Prophet intended to be the use of variations and they adopted the best way of remedying the evil.

Ibn-i-Masood, for the reason stated above, could not take any part in the supervision of the transcription of copies made under the orders of Osman and he is the only person who in some traditions 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 tradition is not true or Ibn-i-Masood, 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 Omar could not think of a better man than Zaid and they entrusted to him the task of collection. When Osman felt a similar need, he enquired of the companions as to who was best fitted for the task and who excelled others in the art of writing, and he was told that Zaid was 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-i-Masood was not therefore, in the 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-i-Masood 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 Omar with the work of collecting the Holy Quran from writings in manuscripts. It is strange that such remarks should have been made when nothing had to be done except transcription from an earlier original. But if the tradition be true, then its concluding words are sufficient to show that Ibn-i-Masood was really in error for we are told that “the most eminent companions disliked this remark of Ibn-i-Masood.” Moreover according to this tradition, Ibn-i-Masood did not find any fault with Osman. There are certain traditions of very doubtful authenticity which assert that Ibn-i-Masood had really refused to give up his copy of the Quran or to accept that sent by Osman, but these traditions have not been accepted by any reliable collector of traditions. Even supposing them, for the sake of argument, to be authentic, they do not throw any discredit upon the copies made under the orders of Osman. Ibn-i-Masood read certain words, we are told, in a manner different from that in which the Quresh read it, and even Omar had enjoined him to give up such readings. On that ground he may have refused to give his copy, but not a single other companion ever supported his views. They were free express what view they liked, but they all without any exception sided with Osman.

These considerations would leave no doubt in the mind of a person enquiring after truth that the copies circulated by Osman 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 Osman issued his copies, thousands of the companions were still living, and many of these such as Ubayy, Abdullah, son of Omar 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 the others might 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 Osman had given orders for making official copies of the Holy Quran, and if these had 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. The Quran was still their most precious treasure and they could not suffer a word of it to be change. They would have sooner given up their lives than permitted a tampering with the Quran. They were not only sincere and earnest in their professions, but they had also ample means to judge the correctness of the copies made under the orders of Osman. Anything left out from the Quran or anything added to it, would have been at once pointed out by hundreds of the companions. But even Ibn-i-Masud, with all the ill-will which he bore against Osman and Zaid, never pointed out a single word that had been altered by Osman or left out from the Quran or added to it. He only remonstrated that he should be allowed to retain his peculiar reading of certain words, an example of which has
been given in the word *hatta* which he pronounced *atta*, following the
dialect of the Huzail.

Osman then made no alteration in the Quran as it was collected
by Abu Bakr immediately after the death to the Holy Prophet. He
employed the same scribe that was employed before him Abu Bakr and
in his life-time by the Holy Prophet himself. He acted after consulta-
tion with the companions and secured the services of the most eminent
companions noted for their learning of the Quran to superintend the
work of transcription. The copies made by his orders were recognised
as true copies by the whole Muslim world. Nor could any alteration
in the copies alter the text as preserved in the memories of thou-
 sands of men. The bitterest foes of Osman, 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 sacrilegesous. Even during the reign of Ali no one pointed
out a word which had been omitted by Osman, and Ali is himself
stated to have transcribed copies of the Quran from the official copies
circulated by Osman.

As regards the copies in our hands, it is admitted by the bitter-
est enemies of Islam that the copies made by Osman have been
handed down to later generations entirely unaltered. The purity of
the text of the Quran is thus conclusively demonstrated. The collec-
tion of Abu Bakr was a faithful reproduction of the revelation as
reduced to writing in the presence of the Holy Prophet and agreed
every whit, in text as well as in arrangement, with the Holy Quran
as preserved in the memories of the companions; the copies circu-
lated by Osman were true and faithful copies of Abu Bakr’s collection,
and these copies have admittedly remained unaltered through the
thirteen hundred years that have since elapsed.

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6. **Answer to Objections.**

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 comprehen-
sive discussion of the subject to deal separately and at some length with the
few objections which are met with in Christian writings on the
Muhammadan 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 Osman 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 traditions 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 Mohammadan 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 Islam including the hostilest and the most recent of them. 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 "Mohammadanism" in the Encyclopedia Britannica, assert that Osman's copies of the Holy Quran were not complete because "some passages are evidently fragmentary." An intelligent reader would 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 an absurd assertion. 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 many 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 Zaid. The tradition 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. Just as by giving an example under a previous heading, I have shown that verses which are thought by the European critics to be entirely unconnected with each other have really a deep connection which a superficial reader is apt to miss, it can be shown in this case too that the so-called fragmentary passages are really expressions of exquisite beauty, and it is only a superficial knowledge of Arabic idiom that makes the European 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 Encyclopedia 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 traditions containing them will be fully enquired into. Here I wish only to draw the reader's attention to the poor weapons which are made use of to attack the purity of the text of the Holy Quran. We are willing to admit the weakness of our position if any critic can make any of the "detached pieces" which are met with in certain traditions so fit in with any of the alleged fragmentary passages that the whole may become a complete sentence. There is no doubt that if any portion of a chapter or any part of a passage was lost, and if tradition has preserved any lost passages or parts of passages, some of the pieces so preserved must so fit in with some of the pieces so preserved so fit in with some of the current "fragmentary passages" that the whole may seem to be naturally a complete sentence. But the fact is that none of the "detached pieces" can have any place where in the Holy Quran.

There is indeed an astonishing circumstance which makes all the objections summed up above clash with one another in such a manner that all of them are falsified by a single consideration. The theory is that some portions of the Quran were lost and in support of this are mentioned the circumstances of Osman's destruction of all copies other than his own, the existence of certain traditions mentioning certain passages alleged to have been once parts of the revelation, the fragmentariness of certain existing passages which have never been pointed out, and the contention of some Shiias that some passages favoring the claims of Ali were suppressed. Now after the step taken by Osman with regard to the issue of official copies of the Holy Quran and the destruction of all private copies, the alleged differences were either preserved or they were not. If the latter alternative is taken, then the traditions speaking of the "detached pieces" must be false and fabrications of after days. If the former alternative is taken, that is to say, some if not all the differences, along with the portions omitted in Osman's copies, were preserved, then the question arises how did the copies of the Quran containing such differences become extinct. But more of this will follow in a separate discussion of the second objection. Proceeding upon the supposition that reliable tradition has 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 objection? In other words, can they be regarded as parts of some fragmentary passages in the Holy Quran, or do they favor the higher pretensions advanced for Ali, the immediate successor of Osman? The answer to both these objections 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 traditions was never lost. The camp of the objectors is thus a house divided against itself, and if there
were no other evidence of their falsity, the self-contradictory nature of the evidence supplied by all of them combined would be sufficient to deal a death-blow to the various positions taken by the critics.

Take the second objection now. Osman 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 destroy or ordered to be destroyed, the greatest importance is attached to two, the copy of Obayy and the copy of Ibn-i-Mas'ud. Regarding the nature of the differences which these copies had with the official copies of Osman, I would take as representing sane hostile criticism at its best the opinion of the author of the article "Mohammadanism" in the Encyclopedia Britannica. Under the heading of "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 Obayy. 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 Obayy must have used original collection of Zaid. The same is true of the codex of Ibn-i-Mas'ud, of the which we have also a catalogue. It appears that the principle of putting the longer Suras before the shorter was more consistently carried out by him than by Zaid. He omits i, and the magic formulæ of cxiii. cxiv. Obay, on the other hand, had embodied two additional short prayers which we may regard as Mohammad'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 Osman'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 Osman'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 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 'Osman 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 for branding their opponents as infidels; when we consider all this, we must regard it as a strong testimony in favor of 'Osman'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 'Osman and his family.'

I have given these long quotations in order to enable the reader to realize the full force of the objection and the position of the critics. So far as I have read Christian writings on Islam in the English and the Urdu languages, the case is best represented in the above two paragraphs from a hostile point of view. But as I have said this opinion only represent same hostile criticism, for here in India we have from the Christian Missionaries or some "rice-and-curry Christians," much of criticism run mad, if it may at all deserve the name of criticism. Most the writings of native Crisisans are meant to please the padre sahib. An example of insane criticism is met with in an Urdu book recently published by a native Christian to which I have already referred in some previous issue. This author, the writer of the Tawil-ul-Quran, goes into spasms of rage over the claim of the Holy Quran for the purity of its text. He begins his history of the Quran" with these words:— "That the greater part of the Quran was lost and that what remained was arranged badly are matters which most critical judges have had to admit." And in support of this extravagant assertion he refers to a writing of another native Christian of the same type as himself, as if one or two "rice-and-curry Christian" of India were the only critical judges of the Holy Quran that the world ever produced. He also says that 'Osman's copy of the Quran was entirely opposed to all the copies of the Quran current at that time, and that copy was only a part of the Quran which was revealed to the Holy Prophet. He writes: "There is no exaggeration in saying that the carelessness which was shown towards the Quran in its early days and the disarrangement which it met with have never been the fate of any other book. The result was that the Quran which was collected by 'Osman has come to us unaltered, but the Quran which the Prophet had left was lost, and what remains is only a memorial (a portion to remind one of the existence) of the original: some disarranged parts which had the good fortune to escape the hand of destruction." The reader would easily see that the writer has made extravagant assertions which the testimony of his own saner co-religionists condemns as during falsehoods.

To return to the objection as regards the different codices, there are two points which must be discussed. It is admitted that substantially the copies of Ibn Mas'ud and Ubayy agreed with the copy of Osman 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 fact is that the text and the 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 with the copy of Osman were, according to the same writer, only on two points, viz., firstly, Obayy had in his copy two short prayers besides the known Suras and Ibn-i-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 Fatihah, and secondly, both had a certain number of readings differing from the copy of Osman. As to the wild assertions of the author of the Tawil-ul-Quran that Osman’s copy was different even from Abu Bakr’s collection or that Ali had a collection differing from all the others, I need not add anything to what has already been said under the previous headings. As I have shown, Osman only ordered official copies to be made under proper supervision from the original collection of Zaid made in the time of Abu Rakr, and Ali never had a separate collection; for, if he had one, there was nothing to prevent it from obtaining a circulation in the time of Abu Bakr or Omar or at least in his own caliphate, nor would he have assisted Osman, as reliable traditions show that he did, in the making and circulation of the official copies.

Accordingly we have only to see whether Ubayy and Ibn-i-Mas‘ud had their own copies, whether they differed from Osman’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 tradition showing that Ubayy had a copy of the Quran differing from the ordinary copies in circulation or that it had two short formulas of prayer added at the end as two more chapters of the Holy Quran. Traditions to this effect are mentioned by Jalal-ud-Din Sayooti in his Itqān, and accordingly the first thing we have to see is how far such traditions may be credited with trustworthiness. For this purpose, I will refer the reader to the concise but valuable and important work of Shah Abdul Aziz of Delhi on the principles of the reliability of traditions. This work is called the ‘Ujala Nafi‘ah and in the very beginning the learned author divides the works of tradition into four classes. In the first class which is the most reliable of all, he places the three leading works of tradition, the Muatta, the Sahih Bukharee and the Sahih Muslim. In the second class are placed Abu Daud, Tirmazi and Nasai, works which are considered to be second to the above in reliability. In the third class are placed traditional work whose authority as such has never been generally recognised, and among whose narrators are persons whose trustworthiness and truthfulness have been open to blame. It is in this class that the works of Tabrani, Tahawi and Baihaqi, the Mustadrak of Hakim and the Musnads of Ibn Maja, Darimi and some others are placed. In the fourth class of traditional works Jalal-ud-Din Sayooti whose Itqan affords to a prejudiced critic so much material is specially mentioned. Of the traditions of this class, Shah Abdul Aziz writes: “To the fourth class belong all those traditions 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 traditions one of two things must have happened: either the earlier collectors after enquiry 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 traditions of this class are not reliable. The whole stock of traditions on which Jalal-ud-Din Sayooti depends in his writings and pamphlets belongs to this class."

From the above the reader would see how far the Itqan may be relied upon when there is nothing to support its conclusions in reliable works of tradition. Nay, more than this Reliable traditions accredited by Bukharee and others contradict the traditions of the Itqan. There are some traditions with clearly state that Ubayy was one of the men whom Osman 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 traditions which show that even in the time of Abu Bakr he assisted in the work of collection. Indeed the writer in the Encyclopedia 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 formulae 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 Osman are defective for omitting them. There is not a single other person among more than a hundred thousand companions who supported Ubayy’s view. Even Ibn Mas’ud with his strange views some other questions did not share Ubayy’s view. 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 at once put right 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 of it obtained a wide publicity at the time of its revelation, and thus it had not one guardian or custodian, but hundreds of them. It is the collective testimony of the whole body of companions that settles the point. It is not a case of difference between Osman 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 the views of Ubayy. All this of course is based on the supposition that the tradition mentioned in the Itqan is true to fact which is really not the case as I have shown above.

We may, however, make this point clearer still by a reference to the words of the alleged additional chapters in Ubayy’s codex. The Itqan tells us that they were only two short formulas of prayers, the first and second running thus: “O God! Verily we seek Thy assistance and seek Thy protection and praise Thee well and we cast off and forsake
him who disobeys Thee. O God! Thee we worship and to Thee do we perform the Divinely appointed act of prayer and before Thee do we prostrate ourselves, and to Thee do we fly and Thee do we serve, and we hope to be taken into Thy mercy and we fear Thy punishment, for verily Thy punishment overtakes the unbelievers."

The Muslim reader would at once see that this is the (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 God! 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; verily he whom Thou befriendest is not disgraced: Blessed art Thou, our Lord! and High!" (vide Mishkat, chapter of Witr.) It is easy to see that the first and the second prayers are both contained in traditions of Holy Prophet, and have nothing to do with the Holy Quran. Early and later Muslims all used these formulas of prayer in their nightly prayers called the witr and the Holy Prophet taught them to do so. It was not, then, only this much 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. The Holy Prophet, tradition tells us, himself recited this formula of prayer in his prayers as did also his companions. They were recited not as ordinary Suras of Quran following the Fatihah or the opening chapter of the Quran, but they were specially recited as prayer formulas. Similarly other prayer formulas are recited in the prayers when standing or sitting or when prostrating and these are not verses of the Quran. If Obayy actually wrote down the two formulas in his copy of the Quran which we have very strong reasons to doubt, he made a mistake, probably 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 formulas in his prayers and who also themselves recited them knew it for a fact that they were not parts of the Divine revelation. Ubayy was clearly in error and he soon renounced it, for when Osman had the official copies made after consultation with all the companions, Ubayy who was himself one of supervisors recognised their authority. It was the consensus of the opinion of the companions which made Ubayy conscious of his error and having then seen that his view had neither authority nor reason on its side, he gave it up.

As regards the variety of certain readings, I leave the question for discussion under a separate heading, and proceed to discuss the alleged rejection by Ibn Mas'ud of the two concluding chapters, or as some add, of the opening chapter also. One this point Bukharae has only this much that some body said the to Ubayy that "Ibn Mas'ud said so and so" with reference to the Mu'aawizatan (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 the blessings of God be upon him, and he said to me that they were so read out to him and so he read." He said, "we say as the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said."** The wording of this tradition 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 traditions 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 siding with Osman, but we have it also on record that "not a single other companion followed Ibn Mas'ud in this opinion" (See Fath-ul Bari, under the tradition quoted above.) 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 and each objected to the opinion of the other on the point in 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 stood condemned by a concensus of the opinion of the whole body of companions.

Against Ibn Mas'ud's view there are other circumstances also. It is clear from many of the traditions that the two chapters objected to by Ibn Mas'ud were well-known to the companions as part of the Divine revelation. There are traditions which tell us that the Holy Prophet used to recite these two chapters in his prayers. Now it is an established fact that he always followed the recital of the Fatiha with some other portion of the Quran, but since these two chapters were so recited it follows conclusively that they were regarded as part of the Quran by the Holy Prophet. Ibn Mas'ud based his opinion on certain grounds but he was wrong. Both these chapters begin with the words, "Say, I seek refuge in the Lord," while the Holy Quran enjoins on one occasion (xvi: 100), "when thou readest the Quran, seek refuge in God." Ibn Mas'ud thought that since two chapters at the end gave the words in which refuge was to be sought in the Lord, they were meant only for that purpose. It was for this reason that he did not write them in his copy of the Quran. One tradition ascribes to him the words: "Verily the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said that they (the two chapters) taught men how to seek refuge in the Lord." But it does not follow from this commandment of the Holy Prophet that they were not part of the Quran, and the mistake made by Ibn Mas'ud becomes thus manifest. It has been suggested by Qazi Abu Bakr Baqilani, and Qazi 'Ayaz entertains the same view, that Ibn Mas'ud did not deny their being part of the Quran, but only objected to their being written in the

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* This tradition is narrated in Kitab i, Tul' sir and run thus:
same volume because he had not, probably, heard the Holy Prophet ordering them to be written down. It may be further mentioned that some of the traditions speaking of Ibn Mas'ud's views with regard to these two chapters describe him as "blotting them out" from his copy as if it were an afterthought on his part that these two chapters, should not be written in the Quran. Be that as it may, the conclusion is undeniable that Ibn Mas'ud's view was not supported by a single other companion, and accordingly his opinion standing thus condemned by the agreement of all the companions cannot have any weight, and must be rejected as erroneous. As regards his omission from his copy of the Quran of the Fatiha or the opening chapter, no reliable tradition bears testimony to it, and the only tradition speaking of it belongs to the fourth class of traditions referred to above. If the tradition be true, the error may have arisen from the circumstance that the Fatiha was looked upon as a kind of abridgment of the whole Quran. What weight we can give to the opinion of a single individual when an agreement of the whole body of companions declares it to be erroneous has already been pointed out. The question of the variety of readings, I leave for separate discussion as already stated.

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 such doubts as that he might have overlooked certain passages or embodied others into the Holy Book which were not meant for insertion therein. But as the concurrent testimony of numerous traditions received through different channels shows, Zaid was assisted in the task of collection by the whole body of companions whose assistance was available, both in the time of Abu Bakr and in that of Osman. In such a case it was impossible, when many of those who knew the whole of the Quran by heart, were still living, that any thing which the Holy Prophet had taught to his followers as being part of the Quran should have been overlooked, or any words which the Holy Prophet had not meant to be included in the Divine revelation should have found their way by mistake into it. Such an error could have been made by one man, but it could be easily rectified by the testimony of the reciters, the manuscripts written in the presence of the Holy Prophet and the companions who day and night heard the Holy Quran recited by the Holy Prophet and other reciters. We do not deny the possibility of error on the part of one or two individuals, but what we urge is that there were ample means for the correction of all possible errors. Zaid sought out the writings chapter by chapter, where complete chapters had been revealed, and verse by verse where separate verses revealed and he had the testimony of the reciters to corroborate that supplied by the writings. Had writing alone been trusted, it was possible that he should have missed a verse here or there, but he had with him the reciters, those who had committed to memory the whole of the Quran in the Holy Prophet's life-time, and accordingly he knew which verse had yet to
be sought in writing. He did not trust one or two reciters alone, for it was possible that some of them might make a mistake, and to correct such mistake, Zaid not only sought the evidence of the other reciters, but he was not satisfied until he had sought out the writing, for as a rule every verse of the Holy Quran was reduced to writing immediately after its revelation. These two mutually corroborative measures precluded all possibility of an error finding way into the collection or of any thing being overlooked. It was to the double test which Zaid applied to every verse of the Quran that he referred when he spoke of his collecting the Quran from writing and from memory. As regards abrogation, it has nothing to do with the subject in hand, and since it requires a rather lengthy treatment, I leave it for a separate discussion. In connection with the present subject this much might be added that if ever any passage was abrogated, the companions and especially the reciters could not remain ignorant of it.

We proceed now to consider the fourth objection relating to the existence of certain traditions 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 Encyclopedia Britanica calls them. That there are some traditions showing the existence of some such passages we admit, but that they are authentic or reliable we deny, though we are 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 traditions. Before considering each of these traditions separately, I would make some general remarks which would, I hope, help the reader in 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 left out from it. As regards the first of these points, no tradition, reliable or unreliable, authentic or fabricated, makes the assertion that any thing contained in the Holy Quran was not part of the Divine revelation in the life-time of the Holy Prophet, except the solitary tradition 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 clearly shown that Ibn Mas'ud was in error and that the whole body of the companions opposed him on this point. Ibn Mas'ud thought that these two chapters were meant only to be recited after any portion of the Holy Quran was recited and that, therefore, they could not be embodied in the written copy of the Quran, as some men thought of Bismilla, the opening formula of every chapter of the Quran, that it was only meant to begin with and was not a part of every chapter. It was exactly in this way that Ibn Mas'ud thought that the last two chapters should not be written along with the rest of the Divine revelation. But the opinion of a solitary person, especially when it is clearly seen to be based on a misconception of the real facts, cannot have any weight as against the unanimous testimony of all other companions based as that testimony is on their sure and certain knowledge. But besides this, there is no other tradition 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 it ways into it which could not be considered a part of it, and as the collection in our hands has been admittedly successful in this respect, it follows that such an enquiry was made. But the same searching enquiry 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 everything into the Holy Book which was a part of it. Such an enquiry 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 had. Had there been any carelessness it was as probable that anything should have been lost as that something should have been added. But 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 traditions, a method which is generally followed by all European critics. It is not the collective evidence of tradition on which conclusions are based in all cases, but sometimes when there is a pre-conceived idea or where there is a proneness to hostile criticism, a solitary tradition is made to yield a conclusion which contradicts the strongest historical testimony, however absurd such conclusion may be on the face of it. The fact is that it is not open to a critic to select any tradition from the great mass of traditions and to draw from it any conclusion which it can be made to yield. As we showed, some time ago, there is a large element of historical unreliability in many of the traditions, and it was only with great patience and diligent search that some of the collectors of traditions made collections of the more reliable and authentic ones. The chief place among these is occupied by Bukharee, and accordingly it is safest to resort to it where some traditions give rise to conflicting evidence. The first rule then which should be followed in interpreting tradition* is to distinguish reliable from unreliable traditions generally. Without this we can never be safe in drawing a conclusion from any tradition in the traditional lore. The second rule which should be followed, in the case of conflicting testimony afforded by certain traditions, 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 we shall now apply to the different traditions which are relevant to the question of the purity of the text of the Holy Quran. But before doing this, I will quote the traditions on which the objections are

* We are here considering the case of traditions conflicting with each other. If a tradition conflicts with the Quran, it must be at once rejected, for the authority of the Holy Quran rests on a far stronger basis than that of tradition.
based. I take them from one of the hostilest writings against Islam, the Tawil-ul-Quran whose author has taken great pains to collect all such traditions. They are as follows:

(a) In the Muslim, Kitāb-uz-Zakāt Abul Aswad reports the words of Abu Musa Ash'ari who said: "Verily we used to recite a Surat which we likened in length and warning to the Baraat, but I have forgot 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 (satisfy the desire) of the son of man except dust'; and we used to recite a Surat which we likened to one of the Musabbihat (the shorter chapters at the end of the Holy Quran) but I forgot it and now remember only this much, 'O ye who believe! who do you say what you do not do; verily 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 Kitab-ur-Riza, the following tradition is reported as having been related by Ayesha: "Verily 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 replaced by five acts of suckling, and the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, died and this was among what was recited of the Quran."

(c.) In the Muslim, Kitab-ul-Hudood, there is a report from ‘Abdulla, son of ‘Abbas, who quoted the words of Omar, son of Khattab, spoken while he sat in the pulpit: "Verily God raised Mohammad 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, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, stoned (the offenders), and after him we also stoned (them). But I fear that when time lengthens with the people, a sayer would say, 'verily we do not find stoning in the Book of God,' and thus they should go astray by forsaking an injunction which God has sent down; and verily stoning is truly in the Book of God a punishment for the person who commits adultery whether he is a man or woman, either after its having been proved by witnesses or by the woman’s conception, or the confession of the accused.

In the Abut Daoood, Kitab-ul-Hudood, the same tradition is thus related by the same narrator ‘Abdulla bin ‘Abbas, who said that Omar addressed the people saying: "Stoning is the punishment of those from among men and women who being married commit adultery when there is clear evidence or admission of crime, and by God, if people did not say that Omar has made an addition in the Book of God, I would have written it."
(d.) In the *Itqan*, Vol. II., page 30, Ayesha is reported to have said that there used to be recited two hundred verses in the chapter *Al-Ahzab* in the time of the Holy Prophet, but when Osman wrote the copies of the Quran, we could not get more of it than what we have now.

(e.) In the *Itqan* Vol. I, page 81 there is a report from Malik saying that "when the first part of it (the chapter entitled Repentance) dropped down, the *Bismillah* or the opening formula also dropped with it, from which it appears that it was like the Baqra in its length. And in the copy of Ibn Mas'ud there were 112 chapters for he did not write the *Mu'awwazt*ain (the last two chapters) and in the copy of Ubuyy there were 116 chapters, for he wrote at the end two chapters, *Hafid* and *Khala*.'

These are the five traditions on whose basis 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 there any traditions which contradict the conclusion that is sought to be drawn from the above-mentioned traditions? If there are, then the next point to be settled would be, which set of traditions is more reliable, on which side does the weight of evidence lie, and which is the conclusion which early practice and established historical facts confirm. From what has been already said on the reliability of traditions and the four classes of the collections of traditions, it is clear that the two last-mentioned traditions are so unreliable that they cannot have any claim upon our attention. It is in the *Itqan* that these traditions are met with and the *Itqan* is the work of Jalal-ud-Din Sayooti the material for whose writings, we are told in the "Principles of the Science of Traditions" is entirely drawn from traditions of the lowest value, traditions of which on trace is to be met with among the earlier generations. Such traditions cannot be depended upon even if their evidence is not contradicted by reliable traditions, for their own unreliability is sufficient to condemn them. Thus there remain the three traditions contained in the *Muslim*. In accordance with the first principle laid down above, let us now resort to the *Bukhara* and see if it supports any of these three narratives of *Muslim*, for it must be borne in mind that the *Bukhara* is our best and highest authority on tradition and so the *Muslim* world has regarded it ever since it became public. The *Sahih Bukhara*, according to the unanimous verdict of all learned Muslims, not only surpassed in authority and reliability all the collections which were made before it, but of the later collections none makes any approach to it in trustworthiness. If then any tradition in the *Muslim* or any other collection of traditions contradicts the *Bukhara*, we should without any hesitation reject such a tradition. In the present case, however, it is not the testimony of the *Bukhara* alone which contradicts the three traditions quoted above, but there is ample testimony in the *Muslim* and other collections themselves which contradicts them.

Let us take these three traditions separately and see how far they can be relied upon. The first traditions mentions an address of Abu Musa Ash'ari to certain reciters of Basrah to the effect that he and the other companions of the Holy Prophet used to recite two *Surats*, but that with
the exception of one passage of each of these Surats he had forgotten the whole. Both external and internal evidence supplied by the Muslim itself condemn the trustworthiness of this tradition. For external evidence we would consider first the chain of narrators on whose authority Muslim believed the tradition to be authentic. On referring to the chain of narrators as mentioned in the tradition we find Sawaid bin Sa'eed to be the immediate informer of Muslim, and much depends on the circumstance as to how far he can be relied upon. The Mian-ul-Itidal by Zahabi is the best and the most reliable work which criticises the narrators. Referring to this work we find a long article on Sawaid bin Sa'eed in which a few of the collectors of traditions 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 traditions which were not really his. Bukharee rejected his evidence as absolutely untrustworthy and so did most of the other collectors. From an anecdote related of him in the same work it also appears that he had a tendency towards Shiism, for we are told that when a person came to him with a book on the excellences of the companions, he placed Ali first and then Abu Bakr. 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 pronounced upon him the judgment that traditions narrated by him could not be accepted. Abu Daood judges him to be “worth nothing” while Ibn Habban tells us that he was accused of being a Zindeeq, or one who concealed unbelief and made an outward show of belief. With such a black record of Muslim’s immediate informer, it is not necessary to consider the question of the reliability of the other narrators of this tradition.

There is another kind of external evidence supplied by Muslim himself which also contradicts the testimony under discussion. Immediately preceding this tradition there are recorded in the Muslim four other traditions to the same effect with this exception 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 traditions, three men Yahya bin Yahya and Sa'eed bin Mansoor and Qutaiba bin Sa'eed, 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 would be seen that words reported to have been spoken by the Holy Prophet are exactly the same as related to be portion of a Surat in the tradition under discussion. Of the three men who vouched the truth and authenticity of this tradition two, viz., Sa’eed bin Mansur and Yahya, bin Yahya, are expressly mentioned in the critical work of Zahabi, the Mian-ul-Itidal, as being trustworthy, while of the third it is related that nothing is known about him. This tradition, therefore, stands on a far firmer basis than that under discussion
As against a single man who has been pronounced as 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 the word of Holy Prophet himself. Three other traditions 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 traditions 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 the utterance of these words.

If we turn to Muslim himself, we find that all the five traditions 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 tradition related by Suwaid bin Sa’eed who makes the passage in question a remnant of a lost chapter. He begins his chapter with the tradition reported by the three narrators, then follows it with three others none of which makes the passage in question a portion of the Quran, and then relates the tradition in dispute which, by placing it last, he himself hints to be the least creditable 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 relating to those traditions which he considers to be the more reliable ones. His words literally translated run as follows: “We have set this rule before ourselves that we should mention first those traditions which are freer from defects than others, and which on account of the reliability and righteousness of their narrators are purer...... And we follow traditions of this class with other tradition among whose narrators are men who cannot be relied upon to the same extent as narrators of the first class of traditions because they are not marked by the same degree of truthfulness and the same good memory.” These words clearly show that Muslim considered the tradition under discussion to be the least reliable of all, and hence we should not have the least hesitation in condemning it as false.

In order to make the falsity of the tradition under discussion still more clear, we will now consider the internal evidence afforded by it. In the first place, the style of the passage is remarkable. Any one who has any acquaintance with the Arabic language will see that the style of this passage has not the least resemblance with the style of the Holy Quran, and this consideration is alone sufficient to show that the passage in question never formed a part of the Holy Quran. Secondly, the words attributed to Abu Musa Ash’ari are a clear evidence of the falsity of the tradition. He is made to say, “We used to recite a Surat,” 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 should forget the whole of it, it was possible that Abu Musa Ash'ari should forget 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 Asha'ri brought it to the notice of Zaid in the time of Abu Bakr 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 Osman when a large number of companions was 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. And wonder of wonders that men who made long journeys for the sake of ordinary traditions made no inquiry about such long chapters of the Quran which Abu Musa had unfortunately forgotten! And how was it that Abu Musa himself who had forgotten these chapters did not care in the least for their recovery. In fact, the statements made in the tradition are too absurd to be believed by any sensible person for a single moment. Thus both external and internal evidence clearly show the tradition to be absolutely false and not the least evidence can be produced in support of its authenticity or truth. The mere fact that Muslim has recorded it in his collection is no evidences, though, as we have shown, even Muslim believed it to be the least creditable of all.

A detailed critical examination of the remaining two traditions would perhaps be tiresome and from what has already been written on one tradition, the reader can easily see how unreliable traditions of this sort are. It would, therefore, be sufficient to consider briefly the internal evidence which the remaining two traditions supply. According to one of these traditions Ayesha 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 ten was reduced to five, and that this was recited in the Quran at the death of the Holy Prophet. The statement attributed to Ayesha in the tradition gives us to understand clearly that the verse was recited by others than Ayesha also. In fact if there had been any such verse, it could not have remained unknown to the companions generally for it contained as injunction of daily application. On the other hand, it would have been the most well-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 mothers, it was of the utmost importance that every body should know which were the women marriage with whom was forbidden to him through foster relations. Hence the knowledge of the verse could not be limited to a single person
only. The collectors of traditions have laid down a principle that when an event should from the very circumstances of the case be such as ought to be known by a large number of people who all disclaim a knowledge of it, this is clear evidence of its fabrication. This principle is a very reasonable one, and it will be easily seen that judged by this principle the tradition relating to acts of suckling and attributed to Ayesha is a clear fabrications. As we have seen, such a verse should have been one of the most well-known of all verses. Up to the death of the Holy Prophet Ayesha 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. Ayesha herself never told the collectors that any such verse existed. Even at the time when Osman made transcripts Ayesha 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 ‘Umra 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 Ayesha knew anything of such a verse? As in the case of the tradition already discussed, there is further evidence in the traditions recorded by Muslim himself that no such verse was ever known to exist to any of the companions of the Holy Prophet. Ayesha as well as others are represented as reporting traditions 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. Nor can it be supposed that the verse was revealed on such questions being asked, for in such a case tradition should have clearly stated that such and such a revelation was received by the Holy Prophet on the question being asked. Therefore all considerations point to a fabrication of the tradition we are discussing.

The third tradition that remains may now be disposed of. In the case of this tradition we will first show that if the meaning which is sought to be drawn from it by hostile critics is its true significance, the words attributed to Omar could never have been spoken by him. The conclusion which is drawn from the words of Omar is that a passage regarding the punishment of adulterers and adultresses was known to Omar and the other companions to be a part of the Quran but that it was not met with in the Quran. Omar also said 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 that knowing as we do that Omar himself was the man who had the greatest hand in the collection of the Quran, and the copy made was in his possession during his caliphate, what was it that led to the omission of the passage? With regard to the passage in question, there can be only three suppositions: (1) Omar and the other companions agreed that the passage was a part of the Quran; (2) Omar held the opinion that it was a part of the Quran but the other companions rejected his view; and (3) Omar as well as the other companions agreed that the passage was not a part of the Quran. The first supposition is the only one which can lend and colour to the statements made by hostile critics. But the question is, if they all agreed,
who withheld them from placing the passage in the Holy Quran? This
supposition is therefore, evidently absurd. As regards the second
supposition there is no evidence at all that Omar's statement was contra-
dicted by any of the companions. But if it was actually contradicted,
Omar must have himself been convinced of his error for not finding any
support from any of the other companions. The case can stand only on
the third supposition, but, it would be asked, how can that supposition
be made to accord with the tradition, the two in fact looking like contra-
dictory statements. But such is not the case. A little reflection
would show that the tradition becomes quite meaningless if it does
not carry a significance tallying with the third supposition advanced
above. Omar is made to say first that when some time will have passed
away, people will begin to say that the injunction to stone adulterers
is not to be met with in "the Book of God," adding at the same time
that stoning is "truly in the Book of God" a punishment for the
adulterers and adulteresses. This a clear contradiction if the "Book of
God" is understood as meaning the Holy Quran, and the tradition is
therefore quite meaningless. But the contradiction is removed if a
wider significance is given to the words, "Book of God" or Kitab Ullah
used in the tradition. Kitab Ullah does not in fact necessarily mean
the "Book of God" taken literally or the Holy Quran, for in the Quran
itself the words are used to indicate the commandments of God or Divine
injunctions. See iv: 28 where Kitab Ullah-i-Ali-kum means "an
injunction or commandment of God to you" and not the Book of God.

It would be seen from the above that no reliability can be
attached to these traditions with the exception of the last which
bears a significance different from that which hostile critics
seek to draw from it. But it would be asked, how was it that
fabricated traditions 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 either by the zinدهeqs (men who
concealed unbelief and made an outward show of belief) or by the
Shiahs. In the case of one of these traditions the character of whose
first reporter has been laid bare, we have seen that he was
accused of being a zinدهeq and also inclined to Shiism. 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 yet been seen into. It was in
this way that false traditions derogatory to the dignity of Islam
found a currency and gained credit. It appears that the Shiahs had
especially a great hand in the fabricating of such traditions. At first
they gave only a preference to Ali's claims for caliphate. When
they were met with the argument that the Quran contained nothing
to support their claims, they then thought of accusing the early
caliphs or having omitted certain portions which favored Ali's claims.
The first step to give a currency to this belief was to give out certain
tradition of the kind we have been considering here. Though these
passages contained no reference to the priority of the claims of Ali,
yet there was no doubt that if a belief was produced that certain
passages were lost, the real purpose was gained. A collector here and,
there might have credited such reports on the supposition that such passages might have been abrogated but this does not prove either the theory of abrogation or that of omission of such passages from the Quran.

Supposing for the sake of argument, however, that the traditions we are considering are reliable, we have to see whether there is any evidence to contradict their conclusions, and if so, which is the side on which the weight of evidence lies. On the one hand we have, say, the evidence of Abu Moosa Ash'ari that two chapters were recited by the companions, but that he had forgotten them at the time when he mentioned this circumstance, and on the other hand we have the evidence of all the companions disclaiming all knowledge of any such chapter. No reciter of the Quran, no one who possessed any transcript of the Holy Book, had ever heard of it. Now 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 whose existence, if it ever existed, must have come in the knowledge of a very large number. Had there been the evidence of even two or three companions, a doubt could have arisen in the mind of the historian, but such a claim made on the evidence of a single companion when negatived by the evidence of thousands of better informed witnesses is the most preposterous claim that has ever been made. And what is true of this one tradition is true of every other tradition belonging to the same class. In each case we have the evidence of only one person who is not supported by a single other person. Abu Moosa Ash'ari asserts that two chapters were lost, there is no body else to support him; Ayesha asserts the loss of one verse, 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 the whole body of companions goes against him, and where Ubayy makes an assertion, Ibn Mas'ud's evidence along with that of all the rest of the companions contradicts him. In fact every report has only a single companion to support it. 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 traditions that every verse of the Quran was widely published at the time of its revelation and was secured in the memories of many reciters. The anecdote related at the end of the tradition speaking of Zaid's collection in the time of Abu Bakr, which is to the effect that a certain verse of the chapter entitled Bara'at was not found in the possession of any body except Abu Khuzaima, does not negative this conclusion, for as I have shown on a previous occasion it is the verse in writing that is meant there, as other traditions show that there was a considerable number of men who could recite the whole of the Quran from memory. In short the evidence of a single companion as against the unanimous testimony of all the others cannot carry any weight with any reasonable person.

The third criterion to judge of such traditions is to see how far early practice supports the conclusions to which they give rise. The Quran was the most valuable thing which the Muslims had in their
possession after the Holy Prophet, and every Muslim did not doubt his best to have it preserved and transmitted in all its purity to the next generation. Now supposing for the sake of argument that Osman arbitrarily suppressed certain copies, was it in his power to destroy every transcript of every verse or chapter in the possession of the widely spread community of the Muslims? Supposing he could seize the copies of such prominent men as Ibn Mas'ud how could he get hold of the numerous transcripts that must have been made from Ibn Mas'ud and others, for the practice of early Muslims shows that transcripts of the Holy Qur'an were extensively made? If any of the Muslims had therefore considered Osman's copy to be defective and he had in his possession any transcripts differing from it substantially he had no difficulty in keeping it hidden during the reign of Osman. In such a case, however, such copies would have become abundant as soon as 'Osman's power declined or at least during the reign of 'Ali who could not have any motive to continue the policy of Osman with regard to the suppression of variant copies. During the reign of Ali, therefore, many other copies would have come into circulation and even if he had not the courage to stop the circulation of Osman's copy he would have looked with favor upon the circulation of other copies. But the wonder is that even the men who murdered Osman did not interfere with the circulation of Osman's Copy of the Holy Quran, nor did they put into circulation a different edition or a new chapter or a single new verse. No, they did not even point out that a single word in the Divine revelation had been changed by Osman. When Osman's power ceased to exist or when he himself was murdered in cold blood by the insurgents, what hinderance was there then in the circulation of parts which Osman had suppressed. Even if the transcripts could by some extraordinary means be all destroyed, the words imprinted on the living tablets of hearts could not by an means in the power of a mortal be blotted out. It was simply impossible. The end of Osman's reign would have seen the circulation of all these parts which, it is alleged, had been suppressed by him, and such parts would no doubt have then been embodied in the copies of the Quran. But does history show any trace of any such thing? Not at all. With all their differences, different men and different sects have always used one and the same copy of the Quran. Had any different actually existed, it must have found its way into the copies of the Quran, but the use of the same Quran by sects which have sometimes had the deadliest designs against each other shows clearly that no difference actually existed.

With regard to the allegation of some Shiahs, it would be sufficient to quote a passage from Muir's "Life of Mohammad" who has raised and answered this objection. He writes:—

"Assuming, then, that we possess unchanged the text of Osman recension, it remains to inquire whether that text was an honest reproduction of Zaid's, with the simple reconcilement of unimportant variations. There is the fullest ground for believing that it was so. No early or trustworthy tradition throws suspicions upon Osman of tampering with the Quran in order to support his own claims. The
Shiahs, indeed, of later times pretend that Osman left out certain Suras or passages which favoured Ali. But this is incredible. When Osman’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 Osman 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 the Quran by heart as they had heard it originally delivered; and copies of any passages favouring Ali, had any 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. Farther, the party of Ali, immediately on Osman’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 no shadow of an objection against.”

The Shiahs, however, do not all believe that portions of the Holy Quran have been lost or that passages favoring Ali’s claims were intentionally omitted by Zaid or Osman. Most of them, on the other hand, admit that the Holy Quran has been handed down to us in all its purity. Such is the belief of the more learned Shiahs, while it is largely the ignorant masses that think that some portions have been lost. In the Tafsir Sa‘i, an important Shiah commentary on the Holy Quran, the author, Mulla Mohsin, thus denounces the ignorant Shiahs 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 religious injunctions, and the learned Muslims have taken the utmost pains for its protection, so that there is nothing relating to its vowel-points, its recital, its letters and its verses which they do not know. With such strong measures of protection and such faithful preservation of the Holy Book (by the Muslims) it cannot be supposed that any alteration or loss could take place” (p. 14.)

The learned author goes on to say:

“Verily 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 Abdullah bin Mas‘ud and Ubayy bin K‘ab and 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 and it was not
dispersed or scattered. It has been stated that those from among the Hashwia and Imamia sects (of the Shiahas) 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 of traditions who reported very weak and unreliable tradition.” After this, Mulla Mohsin quotes the opinions of several learned Shiahahs honored and respected by the whole Shiah 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 tradition whose trustworthiness has never been questioned by any Shiah. The tradition also supports the conclusion that the Holy Quran has come down to us without the alteration or loss of a single word letter.

The above quotations are sufficient to show that learned Shiah 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. In fact, it is easy to see that if, as is admitted on all hands, the Holy Quran could be handed known to us from the time of Osman without any alteration or loss during a long period of nearly thirteen hundred years with the Muslims spread in every country and in all corners of the world all agreeing upon one and the same book with no variation, not even so much as of a letter or a vowel-point, it is the height of absurdity to suppose that alteration or loss could take place in the thirteen years after the death of the Holy Prophet, when the Muslims were all yet in one place and many of those who knew the whole of the Quran by heart were still living. The circumstances which contributed to the preservation of the purity of the text and arrangement of the Holy Quran were present even in a greater degree in the early Muslim society. The companions of the Holy Prophet and the early Muslims all knew and believed that nothing had been lost from the Holy Quran. Bukharee tells us in a tradition the truth of which has never been questioned that when Ibn Abbas and Mohammad bin Hanfiah (Ali’s son by a wife belonging to the Hanafi tribe) were asked as to what the Holy Prophet had left after 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 Osman, for it was to these copies that the words “what is contained between the two boards” were first applied.

7. Differences of Readings.

Alleged differences of readings are said to interfere with the purity of the Quranic text in two ways. Certain readings which had been permitted by the Holy Prophet were suppressed by Osman and thus with their loss a portion of the original text was lost. This is one objection, and the other is that the variety of readings existing at the present time makes it difficult to decide with any degree of certainty as to which is the original or the authentic reading. These objections arise really out of a misconception of the significance of the
word “readings” when used with regard to the Quranic text, and out of a confusion between the meanings of harf and qiraat when used to denote “reading,” and accordingly it is necessary to enquire first into the true nature of the “difference of readings.”

In the first place it is important to bear in mind that the Arabic word used in the traditions to denote reading is harf. 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 traditions speaking of the variety of readings, as Lane himself adds: “So in the saying of Mohammad, (TA), The Quran has been revealed according to seven dialects, of the dialects of the Arabs: (A’ Obeyd, Az, Ith, K:) or this means, according to seven modes or manners, (Mgh, Msh,) of reading: whence “such a one reads in the manner of reading of Ibn Masood.” These quotations would show that the differences spoken of in certain traditions were only differences arising from the differences of dialects which necessitated the reading or expressing of certain words in a different manner by different tribes.

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

(1). Bukharee reports from Ibn ‘Abbas: The Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said, “Gabriel taught me to read the Quran according to one harf 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 reports the same tradition in the same words through a different chain of narrators, the original narrator being still Ibn Abbas, but the following words added: Ibn Shahab said, “It has been brought to my knowledge that the seven harfs (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, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, read it differently. So I brought him to the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him. 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 verily there were those before you who differed and they perished’.”

(3). Bukharee and Muslim report from Omar bin Khattab: ‘I heard Hisham bin Hakim bin Hizam read the chapter entitled Furqan in a manner different from that in which I read it, and it was the Holy Prophet himself, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, 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, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, and I said, ‘O Messenger of God,”
I have heard this man recite the chapter entitled Al-furqan in a manner different from that in which you taught me to read it. The Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, ordered me to release Hisham and then ordered him to recite the chapter. He read it in the manner in which I had heard him read it. The Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, 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. Verily 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 tradition reported by Muslim, Ubayy bin K'ab heard two persons read the Quran in a manner different from that in which he had been taught to read it. On his having brought 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 sent down 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 of more so that it might be easy for my people, and I was permitted to read it in seven dialects."

(5) Muslim reports another tradition from Ubayy bin K'ab to the following effect: The Prophet of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, was near the place, known as the pool of the Banu Ghaifar when Gabriel came to him and said, "Verily God commands thee to make thy people read the Quran in one dialects only." The Holy Prophet replied, "I crave the pardon of God and His forgiveness, for my people cannot bear this." The tradition tells us that the Holy Prophet continued to ask for permission of reading the Quran in other dialects until he was permitted to read it in seven dialects.

(6) Abu Daood 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, (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) Tirmazi reports the following tradition from Ubayy bin K'ab: The Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, was visited by Gabriel and he said to him. "O Gabriel, verily 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 Mohammad verily the Quran has been revealed in seven dialects."

These are the only important traditions 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 differences in the manner of reading or
pronouncing certain words. To make this point clearer, we would discuss the several points mentioned in them at some length. The first question is, can the time to which these traditions 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 revelations 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 would also settle the question of the text. One inference as to time can be drawn from the fifth tradition related 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 Bajai Qhafer." 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 Hijara. In one of the traditions reported by Bukharee, Hisham bin Hakim bin Hizam is mentioned as the person who surprised Omar by reading the Quran in a manner or dialect different from that in which Omar 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 Hijara 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 Omar could not have remained ignorant of it. Omar was the man who had made arrangements with another companion to remain alternately in the company of the Holy Prophet in order to be kept informed of every new revelation and every new circumstance, and with the close relation which he had with the Holy Prophet, it is inconsistent that he should have remained ignorant of the permission to read the Quran in dialects other than the pure idiom of the Quresh for any very long time, say a year or several months. None of the traditions, moreover names any of the earlier converts who should have read the Quran in a dialect different from the pure idiom of the Quresh 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. This show 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 readings were only such as were naturally necessitated by the flux 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 Quresh. Examples of these differences have already been given. The
Quresh say *hatta* (meaning until) while the Huzail pronounce the same word as *atta*, there being no difference in the significance of the two words. (See Lane's Lexicon which explains 'atta as being “a dial. var. of hatta of the dial. of Hudheyl and Thakeef”). Other variations of the same kind are *tilamun* instead of *Ta’lamun* as the tribe of Asad read it, *yasin* instead of *asin* in xlvii: 15, the reading of *hamsa* (one of the letters of alphabet) by the *Tamim* where the Quresh 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 (*vide* Fath ul-Bari, vol. ix, p. 21) that “the Holy Quran was first revealed in the language of the Quresh and such of the Arabs who were in their neighbourhood and spoke chaste Arabic idiom, then it was permitted to the other Arab tribes to read it in their own idioms to whose use they were habituated from their childhood and the 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 perceived 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.”

Most of the traditions quoted above point out the reason for which the permission was granted and in each case we find the reason to be in accordance with the view of the differences as advanced above. For instance, according to one of the traditions the Holy Prophet asked the angel to “make it easy” for his people showing that they experienced a difficulty in reading it otherwise. According to another he is made to say that his people “could not bear it,” in other words, all the Arab tribes could not read in one dialect. According to a third he pleads for his people saying that they were unlearned and among them were the old woman and the old man and the boy and the girl and the man who had never learned to read a book. Of course if they had been educated, they could have easily spoken the literary and chaste idiom of the Quresh, but as most of them were unlearned, it was very hard for them to utter every word in the manner of the Quresh. Hence they were permitted to read certain words according to their own dialect. We have also one tradition ending with the words, “therefore read it in the manner in which you find it easy to do so,” which shows that the permission to read the Quran in dialects other than that of the Quresh was meant to afford facility to certain people.

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 Omar or Abu Bakr and Ali. This leads to the same conclusion that we have arrived at above, viz., that the different readings were not different texts, but only different modes of pronouncing the same word in different 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 dialect of the Quresh whose idiom was regarded as the purest and most chaste of all Arabic idioms, to speak every word exactly as the Quresh 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 Quresh.

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 traditions 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 traditions that the expression of meaning by a synonymous word was allowed in certain cases. Such a case is exemplified in one tradition by the use of any of the words ta' al, halumma and (agbil) meaning "come thou." 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 varieties 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 tradition 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 should 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. Omar was about to stop Hisham in his prayers as the tradition 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 Omar. 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 differences 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. This is a fact which every right-minded critic must bear witness to. Hence it was that Omar was so impatient when he heard Hisham reading.
Another objection against the variety of readings being only a dialectal variety is that Hisham and Omar both belonged to the tribe of the Quresh and that hence the dialect of Hisham could not be different from that of Omar whereas tradition shows that there was difference between them. To understand this point it must be borne in mind that once the necessity of dialectal variation was recognised 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 spoke *atta* for *hatta* (meaning until), the latter pronunciation being that of the Quresh, but the Quresh could pronounce it in both ways and they had no aversion to either form of the word. Though they ordinarily spoke *hatta*, but they could also pronounce the word as *atta* as the case of Ibn Mas’ud shows who read *atta* *heen* instead of *hatta* *heen*. The Quresh seem to have had in fact the aptitude to speak freely in the dialects of the other Arabian tribes, the reason of this 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 Quresh took part. On account of their being guardians of the Ka’ba, the Quresh had to come into contact with every tribe and this intercourse had become more permanent by establishment of commercial relations. The intercourse had facilitated for them the utterance of certain words according to the peculiar modes of other tribes. Now Hisham became a Mussalman 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-Furqan*, which gave rise to the difference, from the Holy Prophet when the latter was teaching the same to some other tribe, and thus certain dialectic variations found their way into the recital of Hisham.

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 varieties of readings permitted belonged to one or other seven dialects. These varieties were very few, for had there been a greater number of varieties, authentic traditions would no doubt have preserved them in large numbers. The confusing of these dialectic varieties, with the readings which are mentioned in certain commentaries is a blunder of which none but an ignorant person can be guilty. The nature of these readings I will describe later on. But so far as the dialectic varieties permitted by the Holy Prophet, the *sab’at-i-ahruf* of the tradition, are concerned there are wonderfully few traces of them in traditions, showing that these varieties were actually very few. For if there had been a large number of them, there is no reason that tradition should not have preserved a good many of them. Osman’s action in not allowing the writing of these varieties in copies of the Holy Quran could not bring about their entire extinction for the numerous sayings of
the Holy Prophet were never written yet the minutest details have come down to us in reliable traditions. Indeed, as I have shown above, the regular intercourse of the Arab tribes with the Quresh and their commercial relations had let no difference of importance in their dialects, and the variations that existed were every few and unimportant. Hence the dialectic variations permitted in the readings of the Quran were also very few. The seven dialects in which the readings were permitted were those which were considered as the most chaste by the Arabs, and some authorities have named them, while according to others the number seven is not meant to convey a definite numerical significance, but to express only that some dialectic variation were permitted.

The above considerations clearly show that the variations did at no time form 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 purely of a local and a temporary nature. Almost the whole of the Quran had been revealed before the time that these variations were permitted. The more we ponder over them, the more are we convinced that these variations were only allowed for the facility of certain tribes and they did not in any way alter the text of the Holy Quran as it was originally revealed. The Holy Prophet himself never recited in his public prayers any portion of the Holy Quran in any dialect other than that of the Quresh, for if he had done so, men like Omar and Ubayy who said their five daily prayers with the Holy Prophet would not have found fault with dialectic variations as 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 Holy Prophet used in his public recitals and public prayers. Another evidences that the Holy Prophet intended only the dialect of the Quresh 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 variation witnessed no change. The text as it was written was still the same, i.e., in conformity with the dialect of the Quresh. 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. Perhaps one of the reasons, why Zaid was ordered by Abu Bakr and Omar to collect the Quran from the original writings made in the presence of the Holy Prophet and not to trust to memory alone was that they knew that the original writings were all free from dialectic variations, and therefore to avoid them and secure the pure text the safest course was to search those writings and copy them.

We are now in a position to consider the first of the objections stated in the beginning of this article. We have shown the true nature of the variations which were permitted by the Holy Prophet himself. We have also shown that these variations were meant to answer only a temporary need and that the Holy Prophet did not order them to be written nor did he ever use them when leading the public prayers. Nor do we find any
trace of any scribe having ever been directed by the Holy Prophet to note any of the variations. And in spite of the permission to use in oral recitation of the Holy Quran certain dialectal variations, the Quran was generally spoken of as having been revealed in the dialect of the Quresh only. We find Omar writing during his caliphate to Ibn-i-Mas'ud who then taught at Kufa not to teach the Quran according to the dialect of the Huzail for it was revealed in the dialect of the Quresh. This order was given by Omar on having heard that Ibn-i-Mas'ud taught the people to read atta, a dialectic variation, as used by the Huzail, of the word hattâ. Again when Osman ordered copies to be made from the collection of Zaid, he gave the express direction that when there was any difference as to the mode of writing a word it should be written according to the dialect of the Quresh, for the Quran was revealed in that dialect. Thus it appears that neither the Holy Prophet himself nor his eminent companions ever gave any importance to the dialectic variations nor did they ever consider them to have the effect of altering the text of the Holy Quran. Just as before the permission so after it the text was regarded only as one which remained unaltered during the whole ministry of the Holy Prophet and has remained pure and unaffected to this day.

From the above it becomes clear that Osman did not suppress any part of the text of the Holy Quran by disallowing the writing of the dialectal varieties, for these were never a part of the text. Whatever may be said of Osman's action, he cannot be said to have suppressed a part of the text of the Holy Quran by disallowing certain dialectical varieties. The text of the Holy Quran could not suffer any thing by losing that which never formed a part of it. Osman only followed the example of the Holy Prophet and his two predecessors in caliphate. The Holy Prophet had never ordered the variations to be written, nor did he ever use them in his public prayers. In the time of Abu Bakr when the necessity of having a complete copy of the Quran was felt, that Caliph gave orders for the search of original writings, so that no variation should find its way into the authentic copy. Coming to Omar we find him writing to Ibn Mas'ud not to teach the people the dialectal varieties of the Huzail. Osman, therefore, only followed the footsteps of his eminent and worthy predecessors. 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 hard for them to give up so soon 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 dialectal varieties. It was however brought to the knowledge of Osman that some people were teaching these dialectic variations to the new converts and not easily understand the true nature and differences and quarrels were the result. Osman's object was to put a
stop to such quarrels. The tradition which mentions these circumstances has been quoted under the sub-head of "The Collection of the Quran." It was for this reason that Osman ordered copies of the Quran to be made from the collection of Zaid as made in the time of Abu Bakar and all other copies to be destroyed. He knew that the collection made in the time of Abu Bakar was made with the utmost care and the original writings made in the presence of the Holy Prophet had all been gathered together after diligent search and that, therefore, that was the only copy which contained the pure and original text of the Holy Quran. Individuals teaching in distant centres were not so careful and had probably put into writing in their private copies certain dialectal varieties which in the life-time of the Holy Prophet they were permitted to recite orally. Hence it was to secure the purity of the text of the Holy Quran that other copies were ordered by Osman to be destroyed. It was a most judicious and most necessary step. Before his time even Omar had been obliged to prevent the unnecessary circulation of certain dialectic variations as in the case of Ibn Mas'ud. At all events Osman only prevented the writing of the dialectal variations, and we know it for a fact that even the Holy Prophet did not order their writing. Osman's action was, therefore, entirely in accordance with the wishes of the Holy Prophet. By the suppression of the writings containing dialectical varieties 'the text' of the Holy Quran did not lose anything but had its purity firmly established.

We may now consider the second objection referred to in the beginning of this article. It is alleged that the existence of certain readings which are to be met with in certain traditions 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 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 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 Mohammadans in countries situated farthest off from each other, there are Mohammadan people who have been separated from each other for long ages, there are Mohammadan 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. All that is claimed for the other readings is that some great man used to recite certain words in that manner. Even supposing such reports to be true, it does not follow that these readings were a divine revelation, not even that the reciters themselves considered their readings to be the Divine revelation. For if the reciters had actually recited them and considered them to be parts of the Divine revelation, there was nothing to hinder them from writing their copies of the Quran in the same manner. If temporal authority could not or did not interfere with their peculiar recitals, there is no reason to believe that it could or did interfere with these peculiar copies, and to-day we would 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.

Let us now consider the nature of the readings. It should be borne in mind that the readings of which traces are met with in certain reports and commentaries are not identical with the dialectal variations permitted by the Holy Prophet though they may contain some of the latter. It is a great error to confuse the two. But this error has been committed by some owing to the confusion arising from the circumstance that the various readings were considered to be seven which number corresponded with the seven dialectal varieties. So far as I have pondered over this subject, the various readings may be dealt with under the following heads. Firstly, there are the dialectal variations. Osman could not stop their recitation. Though, therefore, these varieties ceased to affect a wider circle, they could not at once come to 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 readings now existing 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 is a mere conjecture. Indeed it does not concern us to know which readings may be brought under this head, for as we have seen their meaning is never been considered parts of the text of the Quran. Secondly, there are differences by the number of waas (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 dialectal variations there may have been some revelations in whose case an optional reading differing from the text which has been safely preserved to us may have been permitted. Readings belonging to this class can only be accepted on the highest authority and the trustworthiness of the tradition 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 tradition in explaining the meaning of the text. Fourthly, a number of readings has 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 a part of the text of the Holy Quran. The copies of the Quran we possess are free from all such mistakes as has been shown above, for the greatest care was taken by Abu Bakr and Osman 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 Osman had sent the official copies to 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 right 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 their 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 that persons who believed a certain reading to the true reading and followed the same in their prayers or in teaching the Quran to others should not introduce these readings 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 should have at least in oral recitation become permanent, and we would 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 would have 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 who can recite the Quran from the most distant places and they will be found to be following the same one text, the text that we have in our copies. Hence we cannot believe that at some earlier time different readings were followed by different, reciters in 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 to preserve the text, so that the possible want of dots and vowel-points in the copies of Osman should 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 lifetime 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 the reciters and thus there were 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 traditions 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 tabi'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 a companion or an earlier authority does not show that it is part of the Divine revelation. But the one point which is certain and which is the only point which is practically needed to be settled 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, so far as I have pondered over the circumstances, I think that they were 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 followed when the Holy Quran was recited on any important occasions, as for instance in public prayers, or when by transcribing copies of its permanence was meant to be given to it. An example would better serve my purpose. The Fatihah is one of the chapters which is repeated by every Muslim at least thirty-two times a day in his five daily prayers. It is a short chapter of seven very short verses, and there is no doubt that the companions had heard it so often repeated by the Holy Prophet that not the least doubt as to any word or letter of it could be entertained. But even in this chapter a number of readings is given. For instance, take the word malike in the phrase Malik-i-Yaum-id-din (Lord of the Day of Judgment). Other readings of this word are said to be Malik and Malaka, the first meaning ‘King,’ and the second, ‘he became the Lord.’ If we adopt the first reading the meaning would be King of the Day of Judgment which is the same as the Lord of the Day of Judgment. By adopting the second reading the meaning become, ‘He became the Lord of the day of judgment.’ Thus the varieties of readings are only possible alternatives as suggested by this or that authority by adopting which no change was caused in the significance. No sensible person would
hold that in such a short chapter repeated so often every day, the Muslims had at any time any doubt as to how the Holy Prophet himself read this or that word or as to what was the text. This example would serve to show that the large number of alleged readings has nothing at all to do with the text of the Holy Quran.

The above discussion conclusively settles the true significance of the word “readings” when applied to the Holy Quran and the true nature of such readings. The term reading does by no means imply here what it generally implies. The existence of a reading generally makes the text uncertain but not so in the case of the Holy Quran. No differences, no error or imperfection exists in the manuscripts of the Quran and they are all unanimous as to the text of the Holy Book. The readings arose from circumstances which did not affect the text in the slightest degree and that text remains as pure and unaltered to this day as if not a single reading existed. In fact the term reading in this case has a significance totally different from that which it conveys when applied to other codices, as for instance to the codices of the Jewish or the Christian scriptures. The copies of the Quran throughout the world are free from all differences, errors, imperfections, interpolations or wilful corruption, and they have ever remained free from all these defects during the thirteen centuries that have elapsed since the first promulgation of Islam.

8. Were any passages abrogated?

The theory of the abrogation of certain passages in the Holy Quran is recognised by the great majority of later Mohammadan theologians, especially the commentators of the Holy Quran, and accordingly I shall deal with this subject from two different points of view. By explaining the position of those, however, who have recognised abrogation in the Quran, I do not recognise its truth or consider my own position to be in any way weak. My object in giving this explanation is to show that, even if the theory of abrogation is admitted, the question of the purity of the text of the Holy Quran is not in any way affected. The question of abrogation shall therefore be discussed simply on its merits, and not in relation to any effect upon the purity of the Quranic text, for whether abrogation of passages in the Quran is demonstrated to be true or untrue, the purity of the text as the Holy Prophet left it at his death is not impaired in the least.

As I have said above, the majority of later Mohammadan theologians have admitted the theory of abrogation, but none of them ever considered it as destroying the purity of the Quranic text. The same commentators who treat many passages of the Quran as abrogated uphold the purity of the text of the Holy Quran in the most forcible words. When we examine their position closely, we do not find any inconsistency in it. The purity of the text of the Holy Quran is clearly established if it is proved that the text as the Holy Prophet left it at his death has not in any way been tampered with. Now the theory of abrogation recognises only that certain changes were made by the Holy Prophet in his life-time, and not that any change was made in the Holy Book after the Prophet’s death.
The question of abrogation does not, therefore, in any way interfere with the question of the purity of the text of the Holy Quran. We have clearly and conclusively shown that the text as left by the Holy Prophet was complete and arranged and that it was safe in the memories of the companions of the Holy Prophet, and that the same was afterwards collected in a volume by orders of the Holy Prophet's immediate successor. But it is sometimes asserted that passages might have been abrogated while the fact might not have been brought to the notice of Zaid at the time of the collection, or that Zaid might have been wrongly informed of the abrogation of certain passages which might not have been really abrogated. This objection I have already answered. If any passage was ever abrogated, the fact must have been as widely known among the companions as the fact of the revelation of a passage, for it was necessary that the same publicity which was given to the revelation of a passage should be given to its abrogation. Since therefore all the companions of the Holy Prophet assisted Zaid in the work of the collection of the Holy Quran, it could not have happened that abrogated passages might have found their way into the Quran or unabrogated ones might have been left out. The objection is a mere conjecture and no evidence is produced in support of the assertion. Only a contrary assertion would have been sufficient to refute it, but we have cited the clearest evidence which condemns it as false. There is nothing to show that any objection was ever advanced against the collection of Abu Bakr or the copies issued by Osman that they contained passages which had been abrogated or did not contain any that had not been abrogated.

These brief remarks are sufficient to show that even admitting the theory of abrogation to be true, the purity of the text of the Holy Quran is not in any way affected. But the more important question before us is, are there really any passages which have been abrogated? Theologians who have admitted the theory of abrogation tell us that there are three kinds of abrogated passages; (1) passages abrogated in sense but retained in the letter in the Holy Quran; (2), passages abrogated both in sense and in the letter; and (3), passages of which the sense is retained though they are abrogated in the letter.

Of these three classes of abrogated passages, we have no concern with the second, for we do not know nor do we need to know any thing about passages abrogated both in sense and in the letter. Such passages if there were any are admittedly not to be found in the Holy Quran and they contain no commandments which may be binding upon us. With one exception tradition gives us no instance of any such passage and this I shall deal with when considering the other passages which are alleged to have been abrogated in sense but not in the letter. As regards the third class of abrogated passages, passages whose sense was retained, but the letter abrogated, no passage can be accepted as such unless we have for it the authority of the Holy Prophet and the unanimous testimony of the companions. In fact, if there were any passages belonging to this class, the companions should have preserved them with as much care as they preserved the text of the Holy Quran; for the commandments contained in them were as binding as those contained in the Quran. But since there is no
such testimony of there being any passage belonging to this class, we have no need to enter into any discussion about them. Thus the only passages alleged to have been abrogated which it is necessary for us to enter into a detailed discussion upon are passages belonging to the first class; that is to say, passages which are said to be contained in the Holy Quran, but the commandments contained in which are said to be no more binding, because they are alleged to have been abrogated in sense. The following considerations while applying generally to all kinds of alleged abrogated passages apply in particular to this class, and the discussion of the question of abrogation will henceforth centre chiefly round passages belonging to this class.

The most important consideration which settles the question of abrogation is whether the abrogation of passages, to whatever class they may belong, rests on the authority of the Holy Prophet or any body else. Every word of the Holy Quran has come down to us from the Holy Prophet: the companions heard it recited by him and the scribes had it dictated to them by him. Not a single word can be or was ever accepted as part of the Quran which could not be traced to the Holy Prophet as having been recited and dictated by him. Hence not a single word could be abrogated except by the authority of the Holy Prophet. If such authority is wanting, we are bound to declare the abrogation itself as null and void. As we can not accept any word to be part of the Quran unless we have for it the authority of the Holy Prophet, so we cannot take any word to have been abrogated unless we have the authority of the Holy Prophet himself for its abrogation. This shall be our first and foremost consideration in discussing the question of abrogation.

The second consideration which settles the question of abrogation is, whether the abrogated verses can be pointed out with the same certainty as those which form part of the Holy Quran. That which forms part of the Quran is known to be such by the whole Muslim world, and upon it there has been an agreement of all the Mohammadians of every generation. Now whether a verse is abrogated in the letter or in sense only, there ought to be an agreement similar to the agreement with which it is accepted as Divine revelation. If the whole body of companions declared a verse to be part of the Holy Quran, and their unanimous voice does not declare it to have been abrogated in the letter or in sense, the dissentient voice of one or two companions that it was abrogated cannot be accepted, for abrogation of a verse ought to stand on as high and reliable an authority as its acceptance as part of the Divine revelation. Accordingly with respect to every verse which is alleged to have been abrogated, we shall have to see whether the alleged abrogation is based on the unanimous testimony of the companions similar to the testimony which we have for its inclusion in the Quran.

The third consideration to decide whether a verse was abrogated or not is whether its abrogation was as widely promulgated as its revelation in the first instance. It is recognised by upholders of the theory of abrogation that only those verses could be abrogated which contained an order or prohibition. Now every such verse
was made public at the time of its revelation. Hence if the verse was ever afterwards abrogated and thus the order or prohibition which it contained was revoked, it was necessary that the order relating to abrogation or revocation should have been published as widely as the verse itself, so that all the Muslims might come to know that the order or prohibition in the verse was no more binding. Apparently all the orders and prohibitions contained in the Holy Quran are binding unless in a particular instance the Holy Prophet himself declared to the contrary and unless such declaration was made known to all the Muslims, because the knowledge of it concerned them all. It would perhaps be alleged as against this criterion of the abrogation of a verse that public announcement of abrogation was not necessary when the order or prohibition given in a later verse contradicted the order or prohibition contained in a previous verse, for the former abrogated the latter by implication. But this is absurd. In the first place the Holy Quran was not being arranged in the order of revelation so that it may be known with certainty which verse was revealed first and which afterwards and thus which was the nasikh (the one that abrogated) and which mansookh (the one that was abrogated). If abrogation was only to be known by implication, then all the facts whose knowledge was necessary to decide which verse abrogated the other should have been preserved with the utmost care. But as no such facts have been preserved, it follows that abrogation of a verse was only to be decided on the authority of an announcement made at the time. Secondly, every person did not and could not know the whole of the Quran. Therefore every Mohammedan could not be expected to know by comparing one verse with another as to which of them was abrogated by the other. Thirdly, even if it be supposed that every man knew or was expected to know the whole of the Quran, he could not be in a position to decide which verse contradicted the other, because such decision required a sound knowledge not only of the Quran but also of the Arabic idiom. Fourthly, all men could not agree upon the same interpretation of the verses. It is a fact that the verses which have been considered by one person to have been abrogated because he thought that their significance clashed with that of others have been reconciled by other authorities with the verses with which they were thought to be inconsistent. In fact, if the theory of abrogation is based upon the supposed clashing of the significance of two verses and I will show later on that this is a fact, it has no basis to stand upon, for in that case it rests on the authority of individual opinion and not on that of Divine revelation, and the opinion of any number of persons cannot abrogate Divine revelation according to the plainest principles of the Islamic law.

We will now read the traditions speaking of abrogated verses in the light of the above considerations. Below is given a list of such traditions as accepted by Bukhārī—

1. "It is reported from Ibn-i-Omar that he recited the verse in which occur the words fidyatun ta'ām-o-miskeen (Ch. II, ver. 180), and said it was mansookh."*
2. "It is reported by one of the companions of the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, (and the reporter adds, I think it was Ibn-i-Omar) about the verse, ‘and whether you disclose what is in your minds or conceal it, God will reckon with you for it’ (II: 284) that it was abrogated by the verse which follows it," referring to II: 286 which says, "God will not burden any soul beyond its power."

3. "Ibn-i-Abbas is reported to have said that at first the property left by the deceased was for the sons while for the parents it was necessary that will should be made: afterwards Almighty God abrogated as much of it as He liked, and appointed for the male double the share of the female and appointed for each of the parents one-sixth and one-third, and appointed for the wife one-eighth and one-fourth, and for the husband one-half and one-fourth.

4. 'Ata, a disciple of Ibn-i-Abbas, stated that the verse appointing shares of the property of the deceased for his heirs abrogated so much of the verse as related to the giving of abode to the widow for one year.

5. "Ibn-i-Abbas said (when commenting upon iv: 37) the word mawali in, ‘and for every one we have appointed mawali,’ means heirs: (and commenting upon the latter portion of the same verse), ‘and those with whom you have joined right hands’ (said), that when the Refugees settled at Medina, one of the Refugees used to be an heir to one of the Helpers on account of the brotherhood that the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, had established between them, but when it was revealed, ‘and for every one We have appointed Mawali (heirs), that practice became mansookh’.

6. Anas said (speaking of the seventy reciters of the Quran who were murdered at the Bir-i-Ma‘una, "and we read about them a reading which was afterwards taken away, bare the news to our people that ‘verily we have found access to the presence of our Lord, and He is pleased with us and has given us cause to be pleased with Him.’"

So far as the Bukharaee is concerned, these are the few traditions speaking of particular verses abrogated by others. Besides them, there is a saying of Omar reported by Ibn-i-Abbas which runs as follows:—

"Ibn-i-Abbas reported that Omar said, ‘verily Obayy is the best reciter among us and verily we give up a reading of Obayy. The reason of this is that Obayy says he would not give upon anything which he heard from the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, and verily God Almighty says, whatever ayat we abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, we bring one better than it or one like it," referring to II-100.

These are all traditions relating to naskh which I have been able to find in the Bukharaee, and as they are contained in a trustworthy collection of traditions, we have no need to enter into a discussion on their reliability. All that we have to see here is what are the conclusions to which these traditions give rise when read in the light of the considerations suggested above. The first question is, ‘is any one of
the traditions traced to the Holy Prophet? The reader will see that such is not the case. Ibn-i-Abbas and Ibn-i-Omar are the two persons on whose authority these traditions rest, with one exception (the sixth) which is an entirely different case as it is apparently the case of a verse abrogated both in sense and in the letter. In none of the traditions we are told that it was the Holy Prophet who pronounced any verse to be abrogated. This is not true only of the traditions narrated in the Bukhārī but of all traditions relating to ṉasḵ. In not a single case is the Holy Prophet made to say that such and such a verse had been abrogated. This is very remarkable, and the circumstance casts a flood of light on the discussion relating to ṉasḵ. The Holy Prophet never said that any verse was abrogated, for if he had said so tradition would have preserved his word. It is either Ibn-i-Abbas or Ibn-i-Omar who pronounces a verse to be abrogated but neither of them had any authority to declare as abrogated verses which had been revealed to the Holy Prophet. As nothing can be accepted to be a part of the Quran unless it rests on the authority of the Holy Prophet, so nothing can be accepted to have been abrogated unless there is for it the authority of the Holy Prophet. But as not a single tradition tells us that the Holy Prophet ever told any of his companions that a certain verse had been abrogated, we are bound to reject the theory of the abrogation of Quranic verses on the very first consideration.

Now let us see to what conclusion the other considerations pointed out above lead. Does the unanimous testimony of the companions declare any verse to be abrogated? The answer to this question is in the negative, and thus the theory of abrogation fails in the light of this consideration also. In every one of the traditions quoted above, and the same is the case with other traditions of less reliability, there is only single man who declares a verse to be abrogated, and he cannot cite the testimony of other companions in his support. No body can say that the verse was generally recognised by the companions as abrogated. Nor is the assertion of one man as to the abrogations of a particular verse supported by the others. One man tells us that such and such verse were abrogated, another points out two or three entirely different verses which he considered to be abrogated, a third differs from either of the first two and so on. Can we accept any verse to have been actually abrogated on such meagre testimony if the expression of opinion by individual persons may at all deserve the name of testimony. The whole body of the companions agreed as to what was contained in the Quran and hence it is the testimony of the whole body that is required to establish that any part was abrogated, but since such testimony is wanting, the theory of the abrogated of Quranic verses has no legs to stand upon.

Our third consideration is, was the order relating to abrogation of a verse promulgated as widely as the first revelation of that verse? Here too the answer is in the negative, so far as the traditions speaking of ṉasḵ are concerned. In fact, as we have already seen, no order was at all given by the Holy Prophet that any verse of the Holy Quran had been abrogated. Had there been a Divine revelation telling the
Holy Prophet that any verse had been abrogated, it was his duty to make it as widely known as the verse itself, because the presumption in the case of every word of the Holy Quran was that it was binding. It is utterly absurd to suppose that a law was promulgated and made binding upon all the Muslims and its violation was threatened with severe punishment, yet it was annulled without any information of it being given to those who were enjoined to act upon it. But as it is certain that knowledge of the abrogation of any verse was not given by the Holy Prophet to any body, the evident conclusion is that no verse was abrogated. So long as there is not the same certainty concerning the abrogation of a verse as there is with regard to its revelation, a certainty which is not at all met with in the traditions speaking of naskh, no verse can be treated as actually abrogated. And I will just now show that it was actually the individual opinion of a companion which made him declare a verse as abrogated in a peculiar sense, and this opinion was the result of the interpretation of a certain verse in a certain manner, that very interpretation being in some cases rejected by another companion.


In this article I intend to discuss one by one the traditions related in the last article under the same heading. The first of them relates to the verses in which fasting is enjoined upon the Muslims. The tradition attributes to Ibn-i-Omar the statement that the words in II; 180 were abrogated. Salma bin Akwa is another companion who according to Bukharee stated that these words were abrogated. But Bukharee narrates a third tradition on the same point according to which Ibn-i-Abbas is reported to have said that the verse was not abrogated. The words in the Bukharee are; Ibn-i-Abbas said, "the verse is not mansukh (abrogated,) it is the old man and the old woman who cannot fast (that are meant in it), they ought to feed a poor man for each day." Abu Daud also reports two traditions from Ibn-i-Abbas in connection with this verse to the same effect as the tradition narrated in the Bukharee. According to one of these traditions, he is reported to have said: In the verse there is permission for the old man and the old woman who can keep the fast (with the utmost difficulty and hardship) that they may not fast and may feed a poor man for every fast, and similarly there is permission for the pregnant woman or for her who suckles her child when they fear (that the effect of fasting would be injurious to the fetus or the child.)."

The difference between Ibn-i-Abbas and Ibn-i-Omar as to whether a verse was abrogated or not settles conclusively that the opinions of the companions on this point were not based on the authority of the Holy Prophet or the Divine revelation, but on their own interpretation of certain verses in a certain manner. Ibn-i-Omar interpreted the verse in one way and thought that it was abrogated; Ibn-i-Abbas interpreted it in another manner and said that it was not abrogated, thus rejecting the opinion of Ibn-i-Omar. It follows from this that the alleged abro-
gation of verses depended only on a person's interpretation of a particular verse in a particular manner and not on any other authority whatever. And since every word of the Quran is a Divine revelation and it is accepted only on the authority of the Holy Prophet, we cannot accept the theory of the abrogation of the Quranic verses merely because some companion thought that a certain verse was abrogated. And as Ibn-i-Abbas pointed out the error of Ibn-i-Omar in interpreting the verse under discussion, any body else is at liberty to point out the error of any person who adopts a peculiar interpretation of a verse and on the basis of that interpretation considers it to be abrogated. From this it is clear that those persons who have thought certain verses to be abrogated have thought so merely because they adopted an interpretation of a verse which made it clash with some other verse and which interpretation was therefore not right. Already learned theologians have shown the errors of such interpretations. Persons who undertook to write commentaries upon the Holy Quran made the theory of abrogation a device for getting out of a difficulty, and some of them declared hundreds of verses to have been abrogated. Wrong interpretations of verses were adopted and then because they clashed with other verses of the Holy Quran, they were declared to be abrogated. For some time the commentators seem to have vied with one another in declaring the Quranic verses to be abrogated, and the evil became widespread. Their errors were so manifest that even Jalad-ud-Din Sayooti rejected the theory of abrogation in all verses but twenty-one. In more recent times Shah Wali Ullah wrote that only five out of these twenty-one verses could be declared to be abrogated and he showed the error in the interpretation of the remaining sixteen. But a deep reflection even on these five shows that there has been error in interpreting them and that if we adopt the right interpretation the verses do not at all clash with others. Therefore before proceeding further with the proper subject, I will show that verses which have been declared to be abrogated because an interpretation was adopted which made them clash with other verses admit of other interpretations by adopting which they are found to be in consonance with other verses, and thus the last excuse for the theory of abrogation shall be broken.

We shall take first the verses occurring in the traditions quoted above. Regarding the first of these, I have already shown that Ibn-i-Abbas opposed the idea of its abrogation and showed that the actual meaning conveyed by it did not make it clash with any other verse and that that meaning was also in consonance with the practice of the Muslim world. The second tradition narrates that the same companion, Ibn-i-Omar, thought that the last verse of the second chapter of the Holy Quran abrogated the 284th verse of the same chapter. The bare translation of these two verses as given in any English translation will show that unless the word abrogation is used in a sense different from its ordinary significance, there is not the least ground for the superposition of abrogation in this case. The 284th verse says: "Whatever is in the heavens and in the earth is God's: and whether you disclose what is in your minds or conceal it, God will reckon with you for it; and whom He pleaseth will He forgive, and whom He pleaseth will He punish: for God is all-powerful." And the concluding verse of the chapter runs thus:
"God does not burden any soul beyond its power. It shall enjoy the good which it has acquired, and shall bear the evil for the acquirement of which it laboured. O our Lord! punish us not if we forget or unintentionally make a mistake; O our Lord! and lay not on us a burden like that which Thou hast laid on those who have been before us; O our Lord! and lay not on us that which we have not the strength to bear: but forgive us and protect us and have mercy on us. Thou art our Protector: help us then against the unbelievers." It is alleged that the words "God does not burden any soul beyond its power" abrogated the words "whether you disclose what is in your minds or conceal it, God will reckon with you for it." This is a manifest error and the two verses do not clash with each other even in their apparent sense. The most hideous of sins may be committed in the heart, but God who is the knower of the secrets of the heart will not leave it unpunished; this is what the former verse says. It is in human nature to forget and if a man forgetfully or unintentionally commits a fault, he is taught to pray to God that he may not be reckoned with for such fault: this is what is meant by the latter verse. In fact, if the former verse is declared to be abrogated, there would be difficulties in the interpretation of many verses. For instance, hypocrisy is a sin which may be concealed in the heart, yet it is condemned and declared to be punishable in verses revealed both before and after the verse under discussion. If that verse were really abrogated, then hypocrisy could not be declared to be a sin. There are many other sins which may be concealed in the heart but which are plainly declared to be punishable by the Holy Quran. The words, "God does not burden any soul beyond its power," which are said to abrogate the commandment contained in the previous verse, do not convey any such significance as the upholders of the theory of abrogation would attach to them. Words almost identical with these were revealed long before at Mecca and they occur three times in three different chapters all revealed at Mecca. They occur in vi: 153, vii: 40, and xxiii: 64 in the form i.e., "We do not burden any soul beyond its power." Shah Wali Ullah has also stated in the Fauzul Kabir that this verse cannot be dealt with as abrogated. He says: "I say this is really a case of specifying what is general. The latter verse explains that by 'what is in your minds' is meant sincerity or hypocrisy and not (i.e., the doubts which arise and disappear) over which a man has no control, for Almighty God does not lay on man a burden which it is not in his power to bear. The commentator Razi expresses the same opinion about the meaning of the verse under discussion and gives several reasons why the verse cannot be dealt with as abrogated. The author of Fath-ul-Bari, a commentary on the Bukharaee, when commenting upon this tradition says that "naskh (abrogation) in this tradition may mean particularizing what is general, for earlier authorities very frequently use the word naskh (abrogation) in this sense." Hence there is strong reason to believe that the verse under discussion is not abrogated and that it is an error to consider it as such. According to this interpretation of the word naskh, the meaning of the tradition would be that the injunction conveyed in the first verse was a general one, everyone to be reckoned with for what he concealed in his heart or did openly, and that it was particularized by the second.
which said that an error committed unintentionally would not be
punished.

In the third tradition Ibn-i-Abbas is made to say that at first the
property left by the deceased was for the sons while the parents could
only take a share under the will of the deceased, but that a part of it
was abrogated afterwards by the verses in the chapter entitled “Women”
by which stated portions were to be given to heirs. The words of the
tradition clearly show that it was not any verse of the Holy Quran
which Ibn-i-Abbas declared to be abrogated but a certain practice
prevailing in the days of ignorance. According to the law of inheritance
in the days of ignorance, the son inherited the property while the
daughters were totally excluded. In fact, the law governing inheritance
in the days of ignorance was that only those persons inherited who
fought on behalf of the tribe. Islam at its appearance did not bring
about an utter change in all the institutions or a revolution of the social
system, but gradually and one by one it eradicated the evils prevailing
in Arabia. Therefore in the earlier days the Muslims followed the old
Arab practice and this they continued to do until a clear law was given
to them in the chapter entitled the “Women.” When the verses giving
rights of inheritance to the females along with the males were revealed,
some of the companions asked the Holy Prophet in surprise: “Shall we
give half the inheritance to the little girl and she does not ride the horse
or repel the enemy?” In short, it was the old Arab practice of excluding
the female sex from inheritance to whose abrogation Ibn-i-Abbas
referred in the tradition under discussion and not to any verse of the
Holy Quran, and thus the abrogation spoken of in this tradition has
nothing to do with the abrogation of the Quranic verses. But the
tradition casts light on the fact that the word naskh (abrogation) was
used by the companions of the Holy Prophet in a very broad sense.

In the fifth tradition narrated above, Ibn-i-Abbas is again our
authority. He tells us that when the Muhajirs (refugees) settled at
Medina, a Muhajir used to inherit an Ansaree (helper or Muslim resident
of Medina) on account of the brotherhood which the Holy Prophet had
established between them, but when the verse “And for every one
We have appointed heirs,” the 33rd verse of the fourth chapter, was
revealed, this was abrogated. Here again as in the last tradition the
abrogation spoken of is really the abolition of a practice which was
not based on any verse of the Holy Quran but on an ancient usage.
When the Holy Prophet fled to Medina with his companions, he made
every one of the Muslim residents of Medina who were thenceforward
known as Ansar receive one of the Muhajirs (the refugees from Mecca)
as a brother, and thus a brotherhood was established between every
two Muslims, one from among the Muhajirs and the other from among
the Ansar. The tie of brotherhood thus established was so effective
and strong that the one inherited the other, as if he were a natural
heir to the deceased. This practice was based on the ancient Arab
usage according to which any two men could enter into an agreement
that the one should inherit the other on his death. This usage was
considered to apply to the brotherhood formed between the Muhajirs
and the Ansar, and for some time Muslim practice conformed to it.
But soon afterwards it was abolished by the Holy Quran as the tradition tells us. The verse referred to says: “And for every one We have appointed heirs of what parents and relatives leave. And as for those with whom you have joined right hands in contract (referring to the brotherhood spoken of in this tradition), give them their portions.” As to what was meant by giving them “their portions,” the tradition explains in the following words: “And as for those with whom you have joined your right hands in contract give them their portions of assistance and gift and kindly advice; they were not to inherit but something may be left to them by will.” Thus the tradition does not tell us that any verse of the Holy Quran was abrogated but that a practice borrowed by the Muslims from ancient Arab usage was abolished.

I take now the fourth tradition which is rather a complicated case exemplifying the theory of abrogation. The 234th verse of the second chapter of the Holy Quran runs thus: “If those of you who die leave wives, they must wait for four months and ten days, and when they have reached this term you shall not be answerable for the way in which they dispose of themselves in a befitting way. And God is cognizant of what you do.” Then again the 241st verse of the same chapter says: “And as for those of you who die and leave wives: a bequestal for their wives of provision for one year without causing them to quit their homes; but if they quit them of their own accord, then no blame shall attach to you for any disposition they may make of themselves in a befitting way.” And the verse which gives a share to the widow in the property of the deceased runs thus: ”And for your wives is one-fourth of what you leave if you have no children, but if you have children then for them is one-eighth of what you leave, after paying any bequests that you may bequeath or debts.” Of these three verses it is thought by some that they clash with one another and accordingly it is asserted that the injunctions contained in some of them were abrogated by those contained in others. Now let us take the tradition as given in the Bukhâree at length. First of all there is the report of Mujahid, a famous disciple of Ibn-i-Abbas, who says speaking of the first verse which says that the wife must wait for four months and ten days before contracting a new marriage: “This was the prescribed limit which it was necessary to observe; then Almighty God sent down the verse which says, ‘as for those of you who die and leave wives: a bequestal for their wives of provision for one year without causing them to quit their homes.’ Thus Almighty God made the year complete for her by adding to the prescribed limit seven months and twenty days by way of bequestal; if she liked, she stayed according to the bequestal, and if she liked she quitted the house. This is clear from what is said in the verse that she should not be made to quit her home, but if she quitted it of her own accord, the heirs were not to be blamed for it. And the observance of the prescribed limit, (i.e., four months and ten days) remained necessary as before.” Such was the opinion of Mujahid who thought that neither of the first two verses abrogated the other, but then comes in ‘Ata, another famous disciple of Ibn-i-Abbas and he says that Ibn-i-Abbas was of opinion that this verse, viz., the verse speaking of bequestal for a year’s provision for the widow, abrogated the time-limit of four months and ten days prescribed by the
first verse. And then he adds: “So she is at liberty to count the days of her waiting in whatever manner she likes, for Almighty God says that she should not be expelled from the house. If she likes she may count the days of her waiting (i.e., one year) in her husband’s house and have provision according to the will, or if she likes, she may leave the husband’s home, as Almighty God says that there is no blame on you for what they do. Then come the law of inheritance and it abrogated the year’s provision or living in the husband’s home, so that she might count the days as she liked but she would have no provision.”

It is difficult to follow Ata’s argument. None of the verses implies the abrogation of the other. Firstly there is the period of waiting, ‘iddat,’ of the widow before she can contract a marriage. According to the first of the verses quoted above it is four months and ten days, and no verse of the Quran has altered this. In a later Sura, the Talaq or “Divorce,” it is further added that in the case of a widow who is with child, the new marriage cannot be contracted until after delivery, but it is easy to see that this new direction does not abrogate either of the injunctions contained in the second chapter in the verses quoted above. Nor has the limit of four months and ten days been abrogated by the verse speaking of bequeathal on the part of the husband for a year’s residence in the same house. The period of waiting to contract a new marriage is not extended to one year by the latter verse: it is only a direction to the husband to make a bequest providing for a year’s staying of the wife in his house. She is not thereby compelled to wait for a year: it is only a benefit conferred upon her. She is not precluded from marrying after the lapse of the period of four months and ten days prescribed by law, but if she likes to stay in her husband’s house, she has a right to do so under the verse for a full year. Some commentators have asserted that it was the first verse which abrogated the second; that is to say, the period of waiting for a widow before being able to contract a marriage was according them one year originally and this was abrogated by the verse which made the limit four months and ten days. This is an error. The verse speaking of bequeathal for a year’s provision imposes no obligation upon the widow and even allows her, as shown above, in clear words to leave the house. There is no mention at all in that verse that the woman must wait for one year. Neither is there any evidence to show that this verse was revealed before to other.

The second question is, did the law of inheritance revealed in the fourth chapter abrogate the law relating to bequeathal in favour of the widow for a year’s residence in the house and enjoyment of certain benefits? There is no such indication anywhere in the Quran or in any saying of the Holy Prophet. No instance is mentioned of any case having come before the Holy Prophet in which his decision, directly or indirectly, led to the conclusion that he considered the year’s provision for the widow to be abrogated by the law which gave her a fourth or an eighth part of the property of the deceased. On the other hand, that law contains the plan injunction that the fourth or the eighth part of the property to which the widow is entitled shall
be taken after paying any bequests that the deceased husband may have bequeathed. But there is another and still more clear indication that the benefit conferred upon the widow by allowing her one year's residence in the house if she chose it was not taken away by any other injunction. Islamic law is markedly lenient towards the female sex and there are clear injunctions in the Holy Quran giving certain benefits to the women over and above what is due to them or what they can claim as of right. Now the verse speaking of bequest for the widow's benefit of one year's residence in the house and provision is followed immediately by a verse which confers a similar benefit upon the divorced wife. The 241st verse requires a provision for the widow as it says: "And such of you as die and leave wives should bequeath their wives a year's provision without causing them to quit their homes," and the 242nd verse requires a provision for the divorced wife: "And for the divorced women let there be a fair provision: this is a duty for the God-fearing." The word used in both cases is the same, viz., mata which literally means anything useful and advantageous or the necessaries of life. Lane says: "for a divorced wife, A provision of necessaries, such as food and clothing and household utensil or furniture." Now as the making of a fair provision in addition to her dowry is recommended for the divorced wife, so a provision for one year with residence in the house is recommended in favor of the widow in addition to her legal portion of the property of the deceased husband. It would be as illogical to draw from the injunction to pay the divorced wife her dowry a conclusion of the abrogation of the recommendation to make a fair provision for her as to make the law of inheritance which gives a fourth or an eighth portion of the property of the deceased to the widow abrogate the recommendation of a bequest in her favour for one year's provision. The divorced wife has no claim on the husband beyond her dowry, but still it is recommended that a fair provision should be made for her, and the widow has no claim on the property of her deceased husband beyond the legal eighth or the fourth as he has or has no issue, but still there is a recommendation to the husband that he should bequeath in her favour a residence in the house for one year along with maintenance during this time. The two cases are on a par: the divorced wife has her dowry and a fair provision, and the widow has her dowry, the legal share and a provision for one year, the last mentioned benefit in each case depending upon the husband's choice.

There is another tradition regarding the same verses which throws a good deal of light on the question of abrogation as well as on that of the purity of the text of the Holy Quran. It is a report by Ibn Zubair and the tradition is mentioned by Bukhāre: "I said to Osman," Ibn Zubair is made to say, "the verse, 'those of you who die and leave wives' has been abrogated by another verse, why hast thou then written it in the Quran? Osman replied, 'O son of my brother, I cannot change anything that is in the Quran.'" Now both the verses which we have been discussing begin with the same words "those of you who die and leave wives," and accordingly the tradition itself does not give us
any indication as to which was the verse which Ibn Zubair referred to as being abrogated. But the Bukhārī gives us such an indication as the heading under which it narrates this tradition is the 235th verse which runs thus: “Those of you who die and leave wives, their wives should wait for four months and ten days, and when they have reached this their term, you shall not be answerable for the way in which they dispose of themselves in a befitting way: and God is cognizant of what you do,” and therefore unless there is a clear indication to the contrary, the verse spoken of in the tradition shall be taken to be no other than the verse mentioned in the heading. Ibn Zubair, therefore, thought that this verse which enjoined the widow to wait for four months and ten days before contracting a new marriage was abrogated by some other verse which evidently could be no other than the verse which recommends a bequest of a year’s provision in the widow’s favour. Ibn Zubair probably misunderstood the meaning of the latter verse thinking perhaps that it extended the period of waiting for the widow to one year. The fact is that, as I have shown above, there is nothing in the two verses which should make the one clash with the other. The one contains an injunction to the widow that her period of waiting before contracting a new marriage is four months and ten days, and the other contains a recommendation to the husband for making bequest in favour of the widow that after his death she may be allowed to live in his house for one year with maintenance during that period. Therefore it does not really matter much which verse Ibn Zubair thought to be abrogated by the other. Now mark Osman’s reply. He said in plain words that he could not change anything that was in the Qurān, thus indicating that abrogation could only rest on the authority of the Holy Prophet, and no change could be brought about in the Holy Qurān by the opinion of any other person. Osman made Ibn Zubair understand that nothing which was declared by the Holy Prophet to be part of the Qurān could be changed by any body after him. He could not exclude a certain verse from the Qurān because some person thought that it was abrogated when the Holy Prophet had declared it to be a part of the Divine revelation. Osman’s reply shows further how careful he himself was in his dealing with the Holy Book. He tells us clearly that he could not change a single word. Such was the attitude of his mind when he ordered copies of the Qurān to be made from the collection of Abu Bakr.

We have now disposed of the five traditions which are considered to furnish evidence that there are passages in the Holy Qurān which are abrogated in sense. We have shown that according to two of these traditions it was an earlier practice which was abrogated by a passage of the Qurān, and in the others either the word abrogation is used in a peculiar sense, viz., the particularizing of what is general, or it is only a misconception of the true meaning of a verse, which making it apparently clash with some other verse led some persons to think that it was abrogated. This much, of course, is conclusively established that in not a single case does the authority for abrogation rest on the word of the Holy Prophet. It is the individual opinion of the narrator of the tradition that the verse was abrogated, and there is no tradition stating.
that the Holy Prophet ever declared a verse of the Quran to have been abrogated. Ibn Abbas and Ibn Omar are mainly responsible for such opinions, and as we have seen one of them contradicted the other in some cases.

We shall now take the only tradition which, it is thought, has preserved a verse abrogated both in sense and in the letter. The reporter of this tradition is Anas who, when speaking of the seventy reciters of the Quran who were murdered by treachery by the unbelievers at Bir Mauza, says: "And we read about them a reading which was afterwards taken away, 'Bear this news to our people, that verily we have found access to the presence of our Lord; and He is pleased with us and has given us cause to be pleased with Him." What has really made some men think the passage quoted above to be an abrogated passage of the Holy Quran, abrogated in sense as well as in the letter, is the use of the word quran in this passage. A confusion between the two words quran and Al-Quran (the latter word signifying literally the Quran) has caused the error. Al-Quran is the Quran or the book revealed to the Holy Prophet Mohammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him. The word quran is an infinitive noun derived from qara which means reading or reciting, and accordingly it means anything which is recited. When Al-Quran came to signify the Holy Book, the use of the word quran to signify any other reading became infrequent. In the tradition quoted above the word quran is used to denote simply something which was read, because it is the word quran that is used there and not Al-Quran. Bukharee himself took the word quran used in the tradition as meaning a reading and not the Quran. This is clear from the fact that he does not mention the tradition under any heading relating to the Quran, such as commentary of the Quran, or the excellence of the Quran, or the collection of the Quran, and so on, but only under a heading which draws attention to a particular incident in the life of the Holy Prophet, viz., the treacherous murder of seventy of his companions. But, it would be asked, if the word quran is used in that sense in the tradition, why is the passage spoken of as having been "taken away." What is meant, of course, is that its reading was afterwards discontinued and the reason of this is not difficult to seek. Such passages read generally like the passages of the Holy Quran would have ultimately led to their confusion with the passages of the Holy Quran and hence their recitation was disallowed.

The tradition quoted above has, therefore, nothing to be with abrogation of the passages of the Holy Quran. Even if we suppose for the sake of argument that the word quran used in the tradition is synonymous with Al-Quran and that it means a passage of the Quran, the tradition does not supply any evidence of abrogation in the Holy Quran having actually taken place. The tradition does not say that the Holy Prophet had declared that passage to be part of the Holy Quran or that he had ordered it to be written in the Quran. What happened, might be no more than this that somebody took that passage to be a passage of the Holy Quran and that might be what Anas meant but the Holy Prophet forbade its reading as a passage of the Quran. Unless the tradition
told us in clear words that the Holy Prophet himself stated the passage to be part of the Holy Quran, we could not take it to be as such, and would ascribe the opinion of any companion who thought so to be the result of a misunderstanding which was removed by the Holy Prophet forbidding the reading of the passage. The fact is that when seventy reciters of the Holy Quran were treacherously put to death by the unbelievers, the Holy Prophet described to his companions the state of their life after death in these expressive words of which they themselves were the utterers in that state: "Bear the news to our people that verily we have found access into the presence of our Lord, and He is pleased with us and has given us cause to be pleased with Him." These words were after this frequently repeated by the companions, and may have even been taken by some body to be a part of the Divine revelation and hence the Holy Prophet forbade their reading. Nothing more than this is stated by the tradition.

That the tradition we are discussing does not mention a case of abrogation of the Holy Quran is shown by other circumstances. When a person is enjoined to do a thing or prohibited from doing a thing, abrogation of such injunction or prohibition would mean that the order was no more binding upon him. But the passage under discussion contains no order or prohibition, and accordingly the question is, what was meant by abrogation in such a case? The passage only describes the condition in after-life of those who had departed from this world. Had that condition changed? Certainly not. What could abrogation mean then? According to the upholders of the theory of abrogation in the Quran, an order or prohibition was first given under certain circumstances which was afterwards abrogated and a new order or prohibition given in its place, for the state of society in the first instance required one order, while its changed condition afterwards required another. Unless, therefore, there was a change in the condition of those whose state in life after death was described in the passage, it could not be abrogated. But as any change of their state is impossible, the allegation that the passage describing that state is abrogated is utterly absurd. Nor are we told what new passage or verse of the Holy Quran abrogated it, for according to both the verses of the Holy Quran on which it is sought to establish the theory of the abrogation of Quranic passages, it is necessary that a new ayat should be given in place of the old one. One of the said verses says: "Whatever ayat We abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one like it," and the other says "And when We changed one ayat in place of another, the unbelievers said, 'verily, thou art an impostor'" Hence no passage can be taken to be abrogated even according to the contention of the upholders of the theory of abrogation unless the passage which took its place is pointed out, and as neither the tradition under discussion nor anybody else has ever pointed out any passage which was revealed in place of that given in the tradition, we are bound to reject any inference of abrogation that may be drawn from the tradition we are considering.

There remains now only one tradition which so far from upholding the existence of abrogated passages in the Quran deals a death-blow
to the contentions of the upholders of that theory. That tradition has already been quoted, and for the present discussion, I will give its translation again. It runs thus: Ibn-i-Abbas reported that Omar said, "verily Obayy is the best reciter among us and Ali is the best judge among us, and verily we give up a reading of Obayy. The reason of this is that Obayy says he would not give up anything which he heard from the Messenger of God may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, and verily Almighty God says, 'whatever ayat We abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one like it'." According to this tradition, Omar and the other companions gave up certain readings which Obayy did not give up and their reason for doing so was the hundredth verse of the second chapter which is quoted at the end of the tradition. Now without considering what it was that they gave up and Obayy did not, it is clear from the tradition that what was regarded as abrogated by Omar and the other companions was actually given up; that is to say, it no more formed a part of the Quran, nor was it read or recited as such. Obayy is the only companion who according to the tradition continued to read it, but the whole body of the companions was opposed to him on this question though he was admitted to be the best reciter. From this tradition it follows conclusively that if anything was ever abrogated it did not find its way into the Holy Quran and is not contained in the Holy Book, and Omar and the other companions knew it for a fact. The tradition cannot bear any other meaning. All those traditions, therefore, in which any of the companions is mentioned as holding the opinion that a certain passage met with in the Holy Quran was abrogated, must be interpreted in such a manner as not to clash with the tradition we are now discussing. I have already explained all such traditions and shown that either they do not refer to abrogated passages in the Quran at all, or if they do, they state only individual opinions of certain companions which were due to a misconception of the meaning of certain passages and such errors were in certain cases pointed out even by some of the other companions. This tradition corroborated those conclusions which were arrived at independently of it, and settles once for all that there is no abrogated passage in the Holy Quran.

As I said in the beginning, the upholders of the theory of abrogation mention three classes abrogated passages, viz., passages abrogated in sense but not in the letter, passages abrogated in the letter but not in sense, and passages both in sense and in the letter. The first class represents passages which are found in the Quran, but the injunctions or prohibitions contained in which are said to be no more binding because they were abrogated by other passages. The existence of any such passage is impossible according to the tradition we are now considering, and all the reliable traditions which are supposed to contain references to such passages have been satisfactorily explained. As regards the second class of passages, the supposition is on its very face absurd. A passage abrogated in the letter but not in sense means a passage the commandment contained in which remains in force but the words are annulled. This is meaningless. If the injunction must remain in force, what is meant by saying that the words
have been annulled? If it is meant that the words formed a part of
the Quran in the first instance and were read as part of it but that
their reading was disallowed afterwards though the Muslims were still
required to act upon them, it will still have to be asked, what were the
reasons which necessitated this course or what were the benefits which
were calculated to accrue from it? Were the words in which the
commandment was first revealed not fit to be contained in a Divine
revelation? No upholder of the theory of abrogation would answer
that question in the negative. In fact, no sensible person would be
guilty of such self-contradiction as that which is involved in the allega-
tion that the words of a Divine revelation were not fit to be included
in a Divine revelation. But no other reason can be ascribed. And what
were the advantages which were to accrue from this course? We cannot
hit upon any, the slightest advantage. On the other hand, immense
harm would be the result of such a course. So long as a commandment
was contained in the Holy Quran, it enjoyed the best means of its preser-
vation and transmission to the future generations, but when without
any reason the commandment was excluded from the Holy Book it
was certainly in danger of being lost or tampered with. If there had
really been any necessity of adopting such a course which no body has
ever explained or if there had actually been any advantages which have
never been made known or which could not be made known, then at
least the Holy Prophet would have ordered a different collection of all
such commandments to be made not only for their preservation, but also
to let his followers know that those commandments though not contained
in the Quran were part of the Quran. Not only no such collection was
made or ordered to be made, but there is not even a single passage
mentioned in any reliable tradition that may have belonged to this class.
Thus like the passages abrogated in sense but not in the letter, we have
no evidence of the existence of passages abrogated in the letter but not
in sense.

There remains now only the third class of alleged abrogated passages
to be considered. We are told that there were passages which were
abrogated both in sense and in the letter, that is to say the command-
ments contained in them were annulled and the passages ceased to form
a part of the Holy Quran. Certain circumstances, it is alleged, might
have necessitated the revelation of certain injunctions, or prohibitions
but any change in the conditions or advancement in the state of the
society might have required a change in those injunctions or prohibi-
tions, and thus new passages containing new commandments might
have taken the place of old ones. We need not discuss the tenability
or reasonableness of this position so long as proof of the assertion
is not given. It is not sufficient to say that there might have been
such passages or such circumstances, but it should be proved on the
basis of trustworthy traditions that there were actually some passages
which were first declared by the Holy Prophet to be part of
the Holy Quran and afterwards abrogated by the same authority and
expunged from the written copies of the Holy Book. But reliable
tradition is quite silent on this point and it does not mention a single
such instance. The only passage which is considered by some to have
belonged to this class has been quoted and discussed above where it has been shown that passage which was never declared to be part of the Holy Quran by the Holy recipient of Divine revelation contains no order or prohibition, but is a description of the state of life after death of certain martyrs who were put to death for no other fault except that they professed Islam.

The last-mentioned tradition, however, which furnishes conclusive evidence against the existence of abrogated passages in the Holy Quran is thought to afford proof of the existence of the passages of the third class, passages which at first formed part of the Quran, but being abrogated afterwards both in sense and in the letter were excluded from the Holy Book. This conclusion is drawn from the words of Omar who according to the report of Ibn Abbas said that certain readings of Ubayy were given up in obedience to what was said in the hundredth verse of the second chapter which says: “Whatever ayat We abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one like it.” The meaning of this verse I intend to discuss in a separate article which will follow the present and in which the question of what the Holy Quran says on abrogation shall be fully dealt with. The question here is, what did Omar mean by saying that certain readings—the word in original is qaul or saying—of Ubayy were given up, and what inference did he draw from the verse which he quoted in support of his assertion? I have translated the word qaul as meaning a reading though it generally means only a saying. My reason for this is that the same tradition as narrated in the Bukharee and elsewhere has the word qiraat or lahn instead of qaul, and both these words mean only a reading. The word meaning reading is contained in the report of Ibn Khalad and the word which also means a reading or a dialect is contained in the report of Sadaqah, this latter report being accredited by Bukharee who mentions it in his collection in the chapter entitled “The Reciters from among the companions of the Holy Prophet.” As narrated there it is in the following words: Ibn Abbas reported that Omar said: “Ubayy is the best reciter among us and we do not accept certain modes of Ubayy’s pronunciation of words and Ubayy says, ‘I received it from the mouth of the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, and I will not give it up for anything.’ Almighty God says, “Whatever ayat We abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one like it.”

The combined evidence of the three traditions settles it conclusively that Omar was referring only to the various readings which arose from differences of pronunciation by the different tribes or the dialectal varieties. We have already seen that there are some traditions which attribute some differences of readings to Ubayy and Ibn Masood, and it was to these that Omar referred. Traditions have also been quoted showing that Omar had ordered the dialectal varieties to be given up, and these traditions support the present conclusion. Ubayy was the best reciter but he refused to give up certain readings which he had heard from the Holy Prophet whereas the other companions all agreed that there was no need any more for such readings. Hence the tradition
speaks only of giving up certain readings which, as we have already shown, were only insignificant differences in the modes of the pronunciation of certain words or dialectal varieties of a trivial nature. Hence this tradition does not support the conclusion that any passages were abrogated and excluded from the Holy Quran; it only shows that Ubayy stuck to certain readings which the other companions thought it necessary to discontinue.

The next question is, what relation had the verse quoted by Omar to the discontinuing of certain dialectal varieties? The verse speaks of abrogation, whether it is an abrogation of words or verses revealed or commandments given by God to the Muslims or any people before them. I shall refrain from entering here into any discussion on that point. But it must be borne in mind that inferences were and can be drawn from verses which were revealed for some other purpose. In fact, the need of drawing an inference was only felt when there was no verse directly bearing upon the subject, and accordingly the slightest hint or the remotest reference to a subject was regarded as sufficient for drawing an inference. All that we have to show, therefore, is that an inference could be drawn from the verse quoted above to the effect that certain readings could be given up when there was no need for them. I have already stated the conditions under which different readings arising from dialectal varieties were permitted by the Holy Prophet at a time when different Arabian tribes began to accept Islam in large numbers towards the close of his ministry. As I have shown at length in a previous article, these people were unable to utter certain words according to the dialect of the Quresh, and many of them being old men who did not know reading or writing, it was very hard for them to recite the Quran exactly as it was revealed immediately on their conversion. Under these conditions a permission was granted to utter certain words according to certain dialectal varieties. Evidently, being granted under particular conditions, the permission was to cease when the conditions ceased to exist. By the time of Omar, Islam had gained numerous adherents beyond Arabia and even the Arab tribes had by that time learned to accommodate themselves to the idiom of the Quresh, and thus the necessity for dialectal varieties had to a great extent ceased to exist. But certain of the companions, as Obayy and Ibn Masood, still persisted in continuing the use of some of these dialectal varieties. In pointing out their error Omar drew his inference from a Quranic verse, and in fact most of the inferences drawn by the companions were based on the Holy Quran. The verse to which the Caliph referred spoke of abrogation. Now abrogation does not necessarily mean annulling a law by a later act, but even when a law is promulgated for a particular time or under particular circumstances and it naturally ceases to have any effect when that time has elapsed or when those circumstances have ceased to exist, the law is declared to be mansookh or abrogated. In this sense the word nashkh is largely used. Now Omar’s contention was that when the Holy Quran plainly declared that a commandment could be abrogated as was said in the hundredth verse of the second chapter which he quoted, the dialectal varieties for which further need had ceased to exist could also
be discontinued. This was the inference which Omar drew from the verse he quoted in support of his assertion. The relation of the verse with the tradition is thus clear.

The occurrence of the words “Ali is the best judge among us” has also caused some trouble in connection with the true interpretation of the tradition. If the matter referred to in the tradition was simply the continuance or discontinuance of certain dialectal varieties, was not the phrase that “Ali is the best judge among us” totally irrelevant? It will be seen that in one of the reports which Bukharae accepts this phrase is omitted, but we need not rely upon this omission. We sometimes see in traditions that a fact is mentioned along with another though the two had the remotest relation to each other. In the present case for instance, if no other connection could be proved, it was a sufficient reason for mentioning the two facts together that they noticed two of the most prominent deeper qualifications of two companions. But there clearly appears to be a relation. Obayy, the tradition says, was the best reciter of the Quran, but only this circumstance was not sufficient to entitle him to have every reading included in the Quran. Such a thing could be decided by those only whose qualifications of judgment were the highest of all. Such a person was Ali who according to some traditions possessed a very nice judgment in drawing inferences from the Holy Quran. It was for this reason that he was spoken of by Omar as the best judge in dealing with the Holy Quran, and therefore as in the case under consideration, a difference arose as to whether or not continuance of certain readings was necessary, the opinion of Obayy though he was the best reciter was rejected in favour of Ali’s judgment because in judgment the highest qualifications were possessed by Ali. Ali’s opinion was, therefore, the same with regard to the omission of certain readings as that of Omar and in fact in the time of Omar as well in that of O-man, all the companions agreed upon this. Obayy also concurred in this opinion in the time of Osman, and if there was any dissentient voice after that, it was the voice of Ibn Masooj.

There is another consideration which lends support to the conclusion arrived at above. While we meet with not a single passage containing an injunction in any tradition whatever which should be expressly declared to have once formed a part of the Holy Quran and to have been abrogated afterwards because the injunction contained in it was changed, we have strong and conclusive proof of dialectal variations having been permitted at first but disallowed afterwards. Thus undeniable facts show the truth of the meaning I have adopted, while they point out the baselessness of the opposite view with regard to the meaning of the tradition. Had Omar really meant that he was omitting passages from the Quran which had been abrogated, how could have all traces of those passages been altogether obliterated? Even, therefore, if we consider Omar as meaning that certain passages could be abrogated, there is not the least evidence to show that any passage was really abrogated, and this is what was required to be proved. We need not enter into any discussion as to whether any
passage could or could not be abrogated for the point we want to prove is that no passage was actually abrogated, and that is at any rate established beyond the shadow of a doubt.

10.—The theory of Abrogation.

We have shown so far that there is not a single saying of the Holy Prophet lending any support to the existence of abrogated passages in the Quran or showing that any passage which once formed a part of the Holy Quran was afterwards excluded from the Holy Book. There are, no doubt, certain traditions in which it is related that certain companions thought that some passages met with in the Holy Quran were abrogated, but these were only their individual views, not supported by the other companions and in some cases even rejected by them. We will now consider what the Holy Quran says about abrogation. As I have already said, there are only two verses which are cited by the upholders of abrogation in the Quran in support of their assertion. The first of these verses runs thus: “Whatever ayat We abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one like it,” (II: 100.) The second verse reads thus: “And when We change, one ayat for another, and God knows best what He sends down they say, thou art only a fabricator. Nay, but most of them have no knowledge,” (xvi: 103).

No other verse of the Holy Quran is cited in support of the assertion that abrogation has taken place in the Quranic verses. In both the verses quoted above there is mention of an ayat being abrogated or an ayat being changed, and the word ayat I have left untranslated as its meaning is the chief point in the controversy. Ayat according to the highest authorities on Arabic lexicology means a sign or a warning or a message or communication sent from one person or party to another, or a collection of words of the Book of God, or a portion of the Quran after which a suspension of speech is approvable; or a portion of the Quran denoting any statute, or ordinance, of God, whether it be (what is generally termed) an ayat, (i.e., a verse,) or a chapter (sura), or an aggregate and distinct portion of the latter. The question is, what does the word ayat mean in the two verses quoted above? The upholders of abrogation in the Holy Quran think that the word ayat in these places means only a verse of the Holy Quran. Supposing this to be the true significance, we shall proceed to consider what the two verses mean. Both of these verses speak of one ayat being revealed in place of another, so that the old verse was replaced by new. Hence even supposing that ayat in these two places means only a verse of the Holy Quran, the only conclusion that follows is that the abrogation of a passage in the Holy Quran meant only its being replaced by another passage, and hence that in the Quran that we have in our hands there does not exist a single abrogated passage. If any passage was ever abrogated, it has no place in the Holy Quran, and accordingly we must resort to trustworthy traditions for the evidence of its existence. But as we have already shown in a previous article on the same subject there is not a single tradition showing that any verse or passage which once formed a part of the Holy Quran was afterward removed from the Holy Book. Hence if
tradition shows anything it shows that the meaning attached to the word *ayat* in the two places under discussion is not correct.

Another objection to the correctness of the meaning attached above to the word *ayat* is that the context does not bear it out. Take the verse in the second chapter. The preceding verse speaks of the enmity of the Jews and shows the error of their belief that a revelation could not be granted to any person outside the chosen people of Israel, while the verses following it deal with a similar subject. The other verse which is said to bear on the subject of abrogation is the opening verse of a new *ruku* (section) of the sixteenth chapter, and immediately following it are verses which show that the Quran was not a fabrication of the Prophet, but that it had been brought down by the Holy Spirit. Thus there is nothing in the context on both these occasions which should show that by the abrogation of *ayat* is meant the abrogation of a Quranic verse.

We would now proceed to discuss what is the correct meaning that can be attached to the word *ayat* to make the two verses tally with the context in each case. For this purpose it will be necessary to quote the original verses preceding and following the verses under discussion. We take the hundredth verse of the second chapter first. The five verses, from the 99th to the 103rd verse read thus:

99. “The unbelievers among the people of the Book, and among the idolaters, do not wish that any good should be sent down to you from your Lord: but God singles out for His grace whom He wills, for God is of great bounty and grace.

100. “Whatever *ayat* We abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one like it. Knowest thou not that God has power over all things?

101. “Knowest thou not that the dominion of the heavens and of the Earth is God’s? And that you have neither friend nor helper save God?

102. “Would you ask your Apostle as of old it was asked of Moses? But he who has exchanged faith for unbelief has erred from the right way.

103. “Many of those to whom the book was given would like to bring you back to unbelief after you have believed out of selfish envy, even after the truth has been clearly shown to them. Forgive them then, and shun them till God comes with His decree. Truly God has power over all things.”

The commentators who think that some passages of the Holy Quran were abrogated tell us that the occasion of the revelation of the verse under discussion was that the Jews taunted the idea of abrogation and that the verse was meant as a reply to their taunts. A tradition, which however has no place in any trustworthy collection, is cited in support of this assertion and it is to the following effect: “The Jews taunted the Muslims and said, Do you not see Mohammad; he gives his companions one commandment and then gives them a prohibition against it
and gives a commandment against the first, and he says one thing to-day and turns from it to-morrow.” It is really on the basis of this tradition that the verse is thought to speak of the abrogated verses of the Holy Quran, but as is the case with many traditions relating to the occasions of the revelation of particular verses, the tradition seems to have been fabricated to lend colour to a particular meaning. That the Jews taunted the Mohammadans for believing that one commandment could be abrogated by another would appear to the clearly absurd when it is borne in mind that the Jews themselves were believers in the doctrine of abrogation. Supposing that the Muslims also believed in the abrogation of one commandment by another, it is not clear how the Jews could taunt them when they themselves held the same belief. Rodwell in a footnote to the translation of this verse says that “the doctrine of abrogation is taught in the Talmud,” and this is the book from which most of the Jewish doctrines are drawn. And as the tradition itself is based upon the alleged taunts of the Jews, we have reason to believe that it is a mere fabrication. Even if the Mohammadans believed in abrogation, the Jews could not taunt them, for they themselves believed in the same doctrine. Again, the tradition tells us that abrogation in the Quran was so frequent that commandments were given one day and abrogated the other. Had this been the case, we should have had many traditions speaking of passages that were abrogated by the Holy Prophet. But as a matter of fact not a single tradition contains the statement that any passage of the Holy Quran was ever abrogated by the Holy Prophet. This consideration also shows that the statement made in the tradition is false, for it is not possible that commandments and passages of the Holy Quran should have been abrogated every day by the Holy Prophet but not a single trace of them should have been left in any tradition.

Having thus disposed of the Shan-i-Nazool (the occasion of the revelation) of the verse under discussion, we shall now translate it by reading it in the light of the context. The verse immediately preceding it speaks of the Jews in particular who are also mentioned in the previous verses as rejecting the Divine revelation saying that they believed in what had been revealed to them (meaning the Israelite prophets) and refused to believe in what was revealed to the Holy Prophet Mohammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him. It is of these thoughts of theirs that mention is made in the 99th verse which says that “they do not wish that any good should be sent down to you.” The Arabic word translated “good” is khair, which here means revelation, and so also the word rahmat, which has been translated as meaning grace. In fact, when it is said that “God singles out for His grace whom He wills,” it is meant that He chooses for His revelation whom He likes. The commentators are all agreed upon this and the context also shows the truth of this meaning. What the Ahl-i-Kitab disliked was not the idea of Divine revelation itself, but the idea that a revelation should be granted to the Holy Prophet Mohammad. As Razi tells us, “they disliked that a revelation should be sent down to you,” meaning the Arabs who were of the children of Ishmael and not of the children of Israel to which tribe they themselves belonged.
It is to the circumstances related in the above paragraph that the hundredth verse of the second chapter refers. It is in fact another reply to the objection of the Jews as related in the previous verse. Why another revelation was sent down, and why was a law containing new commandments promulgated? This question was still to be answered. In the previous verse they were told that Almighty God had not set any limits as to the tribes or people to whom He should reveal His word, for the Israelites thought that revelation could not be granted to any person outside the chosen people of Israel. That was an error and they were told that God sent down His revelation upon whomsoever He liked. But then a belief in the new revelation required that the new Law should be acted upon and thus involved an abrogation of the law of Moses. Hence they were told that Almighty God did not abrogate laws in vain, and here we have the verse under discussion: "Whatever ayat we abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, we bring one better than it or one like it." The meaning is now clear: the verse refers to the abrogation of the previous laws and commandments which were abrogated by the Law of the Quran. Some of the commandments given in the Holy Book were like the commandments given before and this the Quran itself tells us on several occasions, as for instance in this very chapter: "O believers! Fasting is enjoined upon you as it was enjoined upon those before you." But in the case of most other teachings, it was a change for the better that was brought about by the Holy Quran, and it is to this change that the verse gives prominence by stating it first.

To make this point clearer, I may refer to the nature of the Mosaic Law. This law which was based on a Divine revelation was partly of a universal nature and partly of a temporary and local nature. In other words, there were in it certain commandments which could be observed by all men at all times and there were others which were necessitated by the peculiar condition of the Israelites and the circumstances under which they were placed. Hence the new Law as given in the Quran retained some of the old commandments while it gave better injunctions in place of others. This is in fact true of all laws which abrogate previous ones, and hence the verse under discussion does not speak particularly of this or that law, but makes a general statement to the effect that whenever a commandment is abrogated by Almighty God, one better than it or one like it is always brought in its place.

Is this significance of the word ayat in accordance with Arabic idiom? Our answer to this question is that certainly it is. I have quoted above Lane’s Lexicon showing that the word ayat means a warning, or a message or communication sent from one person to another or a collection of words of the Book of God. Any one of these significances of the word ayat would do. In fact, the use of the word ayat as meaning a verse of any of the previous books is very extensive, and that significance attached to the word ayat as used in this verse of the Holy Quran solves the whole difficulty. The people of the Book who are addressed in these verses in particular are told that no verse has been abrogated but there has been given in its place one better than it or one like it. Why should they then reject the Holy Quran? It contains
nothing which is inferior to what is contained in the previous books, and those who accept those books can not reject the Quran.

The verses that follow bear out this interpretation. They show that the Ahl-i-Kitab are particularly addressed in these verses. The verse that immediately follows the verse under discussion indicates the necessity of a universal law for all people and all ages. "Knowest thou not that the kingdom of earth and heavens is God's."? The Jews, as I have already said, thought that Divine revelation could only be granted to the Israelites as they were the chosen people but they were told that God was not only their God, but He was the God of all men, the God of earth and heavens, and hence He bestowed His favours upon all and gave a law that was meant to be a guidance for the whole world and not like the Israelite law for the Israelites alone. If any meaning other than the one I have pointed out above is adopted, no reason can be given for saying that in the place of an abrogated ayat is given one which is either better than the abrogated one or like it, for it is absolutely meaningless to say that one verse of the Holy Quran was abrogated to be replaced by another like it.

One more point may be explained before taking up the other verse. It is stated that new verses or commandments are given in place of old ones which are either abrogated or caused to be forgotten. What is meant by verses or commandments which are caused to be forgotten? It is stated since another reading of (we cause it to be forgotten) is (we cause thee to forget it), therefore only passages of the Quran are meant here, for of the previous laws or books, which the Holy Prophet never committed to memory, it could not be said that Almighty God caused him to forget them. Now this reading is not mentioned in any reliable tradition as one that was permitted by the Holy Prophet and accordingly we cannot accept it so as to modify the plain meaning of the words of the revelation. The reading itself even if it is possible to trace it to any of the companions might be nothing more than that companion’s peculiar view. The mere existence of a reading does not justify its acceptance as has already been stated. Nor can we take it as explaining the meaning of the text unless there is the clearest testimony that it was permitted by the Holy Prophet. Besides this, if we accept this reading as explaining the true significance of text, our position will be virtually this that Almighty God at first revealed a verse to the Holy Prophet, then immediately made him forget it and then instead of revealing again the same verse to him revealed another verse in its place which was like it. It is ridiculous to think that any such thing ever happened. There is no trustworthy tradition showing that any verse of the Holy Quran was irretrievably lost from the Holy Prophet’s memory. If, however, we take the word ayat in a general sense, there is no difficulty of this sort, for the previous laws had lost many of their injunctions on account of their not having been preserved with sufficient care through long ages that elapsed since their revelation. These were the commandments which had been lost from the memories of men, and in the new and perfect code of law which was given to the Holy Prophet Mohammad they were replaced by better or similar laws according to circumstances.
We come now to the other verse which is cited as supporting the existence of abrogated passages in the Holy Quran. It is the 103rd verse of the sixteenth chapter of the Holy Quran and I quote it here along with the two verses which follow it.

103. “And when We change one ayat for another, and God knows best what He reveals, they say, thou art only a fabricator. Nay, but most of them have knowledge.

104. “Say, the Holy Spirit has brought it down with truth from thy Lord that He may make firm those who have believed, and as a guidance and glad tidings to the Muslims.

105. “We verily also know that they say, surely a person teaches him. But the tongue of him at whom they hint is foreign, while this Quran is in the plain Arabic.”

Now the changing of one ayat for another may mean the changing one verse or one commandment for another, but the context shows that it does not mean the changing of one verse or commandment of the Quran for another. In the case of the verse already discussed, we were told that the verse speaking of abrogation was revealed because of the taunts of the Jews on the abrogation of certain Quranic passages. I have already shown the inaccuracy of this report, but in the case of the verse we are now discussing its inaccuracy is clearer still. The sixteenth chapter of the Holy Quran was revealed at Mecca and consequently the verse under discussion shall have to be presumed to have been revealed there also. Now there were no Jews at Mecca and therefore there could be no such taunts either. Therefore it can be declared with certainty that the verse was not revealed on any particular occasion which should have demanded the revelation of a verse speaking of abrogation in the Quran.

In the first place, take the verse itself. What it says is that when God changed one ayat (verse or commandment) for another, the unbelievers said that it was a fabrication. Now we know it for a fact that the unbelievers called the Holy Quran a fabrication when its revelation was announced by the Holy Prophet, and did not wait till an occasion arose, if it ever did, for the abrogation of a commandment contained in the Holy Quran or for the change of one Quranic verse for another. Had it been true that the unbelievers did not call the Quran a fabrication until an instance of abrogation had occurred in the Quran itself, the passage should have no doubt been taken as indicating a change of one verse or commandment of the Quran for another. But as it is absolutely certain that the Quran was from the first pronounced to be a fabrication by the unbelievers, it is also clear that the change of verse or commandment spoken of in the verse was not a change of a verse or commandment of the Quran, but a change of some previous verse or commandment for a verse or commandment of Holy Quran. The statement that one verse or commandment was changed for another was in fact equivalent to saying that a new revelation or law was sent to replace the old laws and usages. The unbelievers were offended not because a commandment of the
Holy Quran was at any time abrogated but because the law of the Quran claimed to supersede all formed laws and usages.

There is another important point which must be borne in mind. The chapters revealed at Mecca generally contain dissertations on the Unity of God and prophecies of the future of the Holy Prophet and Islam, and there are very few injunctions or prohibitions contained in them. The whole law almost entirely revealed at Medina. Hence there could possibly be no abrogation at Mecca. Only the Unity of God was preached there, the necessity of Divine revelation was dwelt upon, and prophecies of the ultimate triumph of the Holy Prophet and the Muslims over their powerful enemies were repeatedly announced. Prayers were also enjoined at Mecca at an early date but the whole of the law relating to fasts, alms, pilgrimage, marriage and divorce, inheritance, prohibition of intoxicating liquors and gambling, &c., was given at Medina, and consequently if the laws once given were ever afterwards abrogated, they could only be abrogated at Medina during the latter part of the Holy Prophet's ministry. The traditions in which abrogations of certain verses is spoken of all relate to the verses revealed at Medina, and similarly the five verses which Shah Wali Ullah considers to have been abrogated, the abrogation of other verses being considered by him to be untrue, were also revealed at Medina. Thus even if there was any abrogation of the Quranic verses at Medina, there was certainly none at Mecca, and the verse under discussion could not therefore refer to such abrogation. This consideration makes the meaning of the verse very clear. The changing of one verse or commandment could not mean the changing of a Quranic verse or commandment, for the verses or commandments which are declared to have abrogated previous verses or commandments had not been revealed up to that time. The word ayat, therefore, in this verse does not mean a Quranic verse or commandment, but an injunction which was acted upon previous to the revelation of and which was abrogated by, the Holy Quran. Besides the considerations upon which we decided the meaning of the word ayat in the other verse under discussion, that is to say the hundredth verse of the second chapter, this consideration also applies to it, for that verse was revealed at an early date at Medina when very few injunctions and prohibitions of the Islamic law had been revealed.

If we take into consideration the verses immediately following the verses under discussion, we arrive at the same result. In the verses under discussion occur the words "and God knows best what He reveals" and in the next verse we are told that the Holy Spirit has brought it down "that he may make firm those who have believed and as a guidance and glad tidings to the Muslims." Now if by the verse we are discussing the changing of one verse of the Quran for another or abrogation of the Quranic verses is meant, all these descriptions must apply to the verses which abrogated existing verses and not to the whole Quran. But if by the changing of one verse for another is meant the revelation of the Holy Quran itself in the place of previous revelations or prevailing customs and usages, then the descrip-
tions must apply to the Holy Quran itself. Now it does not require any demonstration to show that such descriptions as the making firm of the hearts of the faithful and being a guidance and glad tidings to the Muslims do not and cannot apply to a few verses abrogating others existing in the Holy Quran, but to the whole of the Quran, and we meet with such descriptions of the Holy Quran in many other places. Again, the word it which occurs in this verse,—"the Holy Spirit has brought it down with truth from thy Lord."—cannot refer to abrogating verses but to the Holy Quran, while in the first verse it is the ayat which replaces another.

The next verse bears out the same conclusion. The false assertion of the unbelievers that a person taught the Holy Prophet did not relate to alleged abrogating verses but to the Quran itself. Thus the subject matter of all these verses is the same. The Holy Prophet announced that almighty God had sent upon him a new revelation which supplanted all old revelations and abrogated previous laws and practices. This is meant by saying that Almighty God had changed one ayat for another. The unbelievers said that what the Holy Prophet gave was not a revelation but his own fabrication. In response to this they were told that their allegations were based only on ignorance, that the revelation which they called a fabrication was brought down upon him by the Holy Spirit, and that this was evident from the wholesome influence which it produced upon the Muslims by making them firm in their faith under the heaviest afflictions and trials which they were made to suffer at the hands of their opponents, and from the glad tidings which it gave them of a triumphant future, because none but God could announce such wonderful prophecies of the future at a time of such helplessness and weakness. I have quoted only three verses, but any one who reads the whole of the ruku' (section) which begins with the verse under discussion will be able to see for himself that it deals only with the objection of the unbelievers who called the Holy Quran a fabrication and has nothing to do with the abrogation of the verses of the Holy Quran.

Thus we have conclusively shown in this and the preceding articles that the theory of 'abrogation in the Holy Quran' does not find any support either from the Holy Quran or from any saying of the Holy Prophet. But it may still be asked, how are we to explain the occurrence of that idea in certain sayings of the companions of the Holy Prophet? That they did not draw these ideas from the Prophet himself is clear from the fact that in none of the traditions is the idea traced to the Holy Prophet which the report would not have otherwise omitted to mention. The idea seems to have been borrowed from the abrogation of the previous laws or usages by the Holy Quran itself. In some of the traditions quoted in a previous article on this subject, we have seen that where a usage prevailing in Arabia before the advent of Islam was annulled by a Quranic law, the companions called it an abrogation, for it must be borne in mind that in the early days of Islam and so long as injunctions relating to particular subjects were not revealed, the Muslims acted only upon certain commandments of the previous laws or certain usages of the Arabs. The law of the Holy
Quran was revealed by degrees and it gradually replaced all old laws and usages. The observance of some of these laws and usages by the Muslims identified them with such laws and usages in the minds of some of the companions, and hence the thought that as some laws and usages practised by the Muslims were abrogated by the Holy Quran, the laws and usages given by Holy Quran could also be abrogated under certain circumstances, and consequently when one of them was unable to reconcile one verse of the Holy Qur'an with another he thought that one of them was abrogated by other. This is the reason that we find that a verse which was considered by one companion to be abrogated was declared by the other not to be so, because the latter was able to effect a reconciliation which the former could not. Thus arose a mistake which was not only left uncorrected by the later generations, but which was greatly aggravated by ingenuous commentator of the Holy Quran.

It must, however, be added that the word *naskh* (abrogation) is very extensively used in the early Islamic religious literature in a sense entirely differing from its ordinary significance of annulling or making void. It is the sense of particularizing a general idea. The author of the *Fath-ul-Bari* says when commenting upon the concluding verses of the second chapter: “And it is probable that by *naskh* (abrogation) in the tradition may be meant *talbis* or the particularizing of a general idea, for the earlier authorities use the word *naskh* in that sense very extensively.” A similar remark is made by the same author in commenting upon another tradition. Taken in this sense there is no objection at all to the opinions expressed in certain traditions by certain companions, for none of the injunctions is made void but each holds good under particular circumstances.

There is one more conception of *naskh* (abrogation) that must be stated. It sometimes happened that a person drew a wrong inference from a verse of the Holy Quran. Later on when another verse was revealed which made clear the meaning of the first verse and thus removed the error, the person whose error was thus rectified spoke of that verse as having abrogated the previous one though it only annulled an error and removed a misconception. Ibn-i-Taimia, a famous Imam, supports this view in his work *Al-furqan*. He writes (see pages 20, 21): “And they used to describe what appeared to contradict a verse as abrogating it. So *naskh* (abrogation) with them is a general name for anything that might remove an error in the meaning of a verse though such meaning was never intended by that verse and though the apparent significance of the verse might not lend any support to the wrong conception. (Even if the verse was to be taken in its apparent sense), but some people understood it to convey a different sense, the term *naskh* or abrogation was applied to denote anything which removed the doubt or the misconception.” As examples of the term *naskh* being applied to the removal of such misconceptions, the same author quotes the verses mentioned in some of the traditions as having abrogated others. These remarks would suffice, I hope, to give the reader a clear conception of the theory of abrogation, and with this discussion, I bring to a close the article on the “Purity of the Text of the Holy Quran.”