

, FIRST PART
THE SOURCES OF ISLAM

CHAPTER I THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

The original source¹ from which all principles and ordinances of Islām are drawn is the

How and when the Holy Qur'ān was revealed.

Holy Book called *al-Qur'ān*.² The name *Qur'ān* is frequently mentioned

1 Generally the sources are said to be four, the Qur'ān and the Sunna (or Ḥadīth) being called *al-adillat-al-qaṭ'iyya* or *absolutely sure arguments*, while *ijmā'* or *unanimous agreement* of the Muslim community and *qiyās* or *reasoning* are called *al-adillat-al-ijtihādiyya* or *arguments obtained by exertion*. But as *ijmā'* and *qiyās* are admittedly based on the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, the latter itself being only an explanation of the Holy Qur'ān, as I shall show later on, the Holy Qur'ān is actually the real foundation on which the whole superstructure of Islām rests, and being the only, absolute and final authority in every discussion relating to the principles and laws of Islām, it is perfectly right to say that the Holy Qur'ān is the sole source from which all the teachings and practices of Islām are drawn.

2. The word *Qur'ān* is an infinitive noun from the root *qara'a* which signifies primarily *he collected together things* (L.A.). It also signifies *he read* or *recited*, because in reading or reciting, letters and words are joined to each other in a certain order (R.). "According to some authorities, the name of this book *al-Qur'ān* from among the world Divine books is due to its gathering together in itself the fruits of all His books, rather its being a collection of the fruits of all the sciences, a reference to which is contained in the words, 'an explanation of all things'" (R.). It also means *a book that is or should be read*, containing a prophetic reference to its being "the most widely read book" (En. Br.) in the whole world. The Holy Qur'ān speaks of itself under various other names. It is called *al-Kitāb* (2 : 2) meaning *the Writing which is complete in itself*; *al-Furqān* (25 : 1) or *the Distinguisher between right and wrong and between truth and falsehood*; *al-Dhikrā*, *al-Taḥkīra* (15 : 9) or *the Reminder or a source of eminence and glory to man*; *al-Tanzīl* (26 : 192) or *the Revelation from on High*; *Aḥsan-al-Ḥadīth* (39 : 23) or *the Best Saying*; *al-Maw'īza* (10 : 57) or *the Admonition*; *al-Hukm* (13 : 37) or *the Judgment*; *al-Hikma* (17 : 39) or *the Wisdom*; *al-Shifā* (10 : 57) or *the Healing*; *al-Hudā* (72 : 13) or *the Guidance*; *al-Raḥma* (17 : 82) or *the Mercy*; *al-Khaiṛ* (3 : 103) or *the Goodness*; *al-Rūḥ* (42 : 52) or *the Spirit or the Life*; *al-Bayān* (3 : 137) or *the Explanation*; *al-Ni'ma* (93 : 11) or *the Blessing*; *al-Burhān* (4 : 175) or *the Argument*; *al-Qayyim* (18 : 2) or *the Maintainer*; *al-Muhaimin* (5 : 48) or *the Guardian*; *al-Nūr* (7 : 157) or *the Light*; *al-Ḥaqq* (17 : 81) or *the Truth*. Besides these it is mentioned by several other names; and there is also a large number of qualifying words applied to it. For instance, it is called

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

in the Book itself (2:185; 10:37, 61; 17:106, etc.) which also states, to whom, when, in what language, how, and why it was revealed. It was revealed to Muḥammad: "And (who) believe in what has been revealed to Muḥammad, and it is the very truth from their Lord" (47:2). It was revealed in the month of Ramadẓān on a certain night which thenceforward received the name of *Lailat-al-Qadr* or the Grand Night¹: "The month of Ramadẓān is that in which the Qur'ān was revealed" (2:185); "We revealed it on a blessed night" (44:3); "Surely We revealed it on the Grand Night" (97:1). It was revealed in the Arabic language: "So We have made it easy in thy tongue that they may be mindful" (44:58); "Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'ān that you may understand" (43:3). It was revealed in portions, every portion being written and committed to memory as soon as it was revealed, and the revelation of it was spread over twenty-three years of the Holy Prophet's life, during which time he was occupied solely with the reformation of a benighted world: "And it is a Qur'ān which We have made distinct so that thou mayest read it to the people by slow degrees, and We have revealed it revealing in portions" (17:106). (It was not the Prophet who spoke under the influence of the Holy Spirit; it was a Divine Message brought by the Holy Spirit or Gabriel,² and delivered in words to the Holy

Karīm (56:77) or *Honourable*; *Majīd* (85:21) or *Glorious*; *Ḥakīm* (36:2) or *Wise*; *Mubārak* (21:50) or *Blessed* (lit. a thing the goodness of which shall never be intercepted); *Mubīn* (12:1) or *the one making things manifest*; 'Aliyy (43:4) or *Elevated*; *Faṣl* (86:13) or *Decisive*; 'Aẓīm (39:67) or *of great importunce*; *Mukarram* or *Honoured*, *Marfū'* or *Exalted*, *Muṭahhara* or *Purified* (80:13, 14); *Mutashābih* (39:23) or *conformable in its various parts*.

1. The *Lailat-al-Qadr* or the Grand Night is one of the three nights in the month of Ramadẓān, 25th, 27th, or 29th, i. e., the night preceding any of these dates (Bu. 32:4). The Holy Prophet was, at the time when revelation first came to him, forty years of age.

2. It should be noted that the Holy Qur'ān uses the words Holy Spirit and Gabriel interchangeably. In one of the reports speaking of the first

THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

Prophet who delivered it to mankind } "And surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds, the Faithful Spirit has come down with it upon thy heart, that thou mayest be of the warners, in plain Arabic language" (26 : 192—195) ; "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel, surely he revealed it to thy heart by Allāh's command" (2 : 97) ; "The Holy Spirit has brought it down from thy Lord with the truth" (16 : 102).

revelation to the Holy Prophet the angel who brought the revelation is called *al-Nāmūs al-Akbar*, or, *the great Nāmūs*, and *Nāmūs* means *the angel who is entrusted with Divine secrets* (N.), the Divine secrets, of course, being the Divine messages to humanity sent through the prophets of God. The same report adds that it was the very same angel that brought revelation to Moses. Thus both the Holy Qur'ān and the reports make it clear that Divine revelation was brought to the Holy Prophet, as well as to the prophets before him, by the angel Gabriel who is also called the Holy Spirit or the Faithful Spirit or the great *Nāmūs*. This clears up all doubts as to what is meant by the Holy Spirit in Islām ; and in the mouths of the Old Testament prophets, as well as Jesus Christ, it carried exactly the same significance. It is true that there is not the same clarity here as in Islām, but it is equally true that the orthodox Christian conception of the Holy Spirit was quite unknown to the Jewish mind, and in this respect Jesus Christ was a staunch Jew, his terminology being taken in its entirety from the Jews. In the Old Testament terminology, the form used is the Spirit or the Spirit of God. In Ps. 51 : 11 and Is. 63 : 10, 11, the form used is Holy Spirit which is also the form adopted in the *Tālmūd* and *Midrāsh*. The Holy Ghost is peculiar to the New Testament writers. The Jews looked upon it as one of the created things ; it was among the ten things that were created on the first day (En. J.). The function of the Holy Spirit is thus described :

"The visible results of the activity of the Holy Spirit, according to the Jewish conception, are the books of the Bible, all of which have been composed under its inspiration. All the prophets spoke "in the Holy Spirit" ; and the most characteristic sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit is the gift of prophecy, in the sense that the person upon whom it rests beholds the past and the future. With the death of the last three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit ceased to manifest itself in Israel" (En. J.).

It is clear from this that the Jewish idea was that the Holy Spirit brought inspiration to the prophets, the only difference between this and the Islāmic conception being that the latter looks upon the very words of revelation as proceeding from a Divine source, while the former apparently regards the words as being those of the prophet speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ and his disciples used the word in exactly the same sense.

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

Though the Holy Qur'an was revealed piecemeal,

It is the highest form of revelation. as pointed out above, yet the entire revelation is one whole, delivered in one and the same manner. It is the word of God revealed through the Holy Spirit, that is, the angel Gabriel. Revelation, we are told in the Holy Qur'an, is granted to man in three forms: "And it is not for any mortal that Allāh should speak to him except by inspiring or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases" (42: 51). The first of these modes is called *wahy* which is used here in its literal sense of *al-isharat-al-sari'a* (R.), i. e., a hasty suggestion thrown into the mind of man, or *ilqā' fi-l-rau'*. This is really what is meant by a prophet or a righteous man speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit. In this case an idea is conveyed to the mind, and the subject to which it relates is illumined as if by a flash of lightning. It is not a message in words but simply an idea which clears up a doubt or a difficulty, and it is not the result of meditation.¹ The second mode is described as

Jesus' first experience of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove was the result of his baptism by John (Mt. 3:16) which seems to indicate its association with a certain stage in the spiritual development of man. The Holy Spirit did not descend upon him until he was baptised. The idea of a dove-like form is also met with in the Jewish literature. Moreover, Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as inspiring the righteous servants of God: "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?" (Mt. 22: 43); "For David himself said by the Holy Ghost" (Mk. 12: 36); the Holy Spirit is given to them that ask Him (Lk. 11: 13). Even the disciples' first experience of the Holy Spirit is a repetition of the old Jewish tradition. As there we find the Spirit coming with "a voice of a great rushing" (Ezk. 3: 12), so in the case of the disciples of Jesus "there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" (Acts 2: 2). Thus the Holy Spirit as conceived by Jesus and his disciples was the same as in the Old Testament prophets, which again is almost identical with its conception in Islām, and the orthodox Christian view of the Spirit as one of the three persons of the Godhead, co-eternal with God, is of later growth.

1. Rāghib suggests a slightly different interpretation. He makes *wahy*

THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

speaking from behind a veil. This refers to sights seen when asleep or in a state of trance; what we may call dreams (*ru'yā*) or visions (*kashf*). The third mode is that in which the messenger (*i. e.* the angel bearing the message) is sent to the recipient of the Divine revelation, and the Divine message is delivered in words, and this is the highest form of revelation. As already stated, the angel entrusted with the Divine message in words is Gabriel or the Holy Spirit, and this third mode of revelation is limited to the prophets of God only, that is to say, to men entrusted with important Divine

include not only an inspiration or a suggestion thrown into the mind, but also *taskhīr*, *i. e.*, making a certain thing follow a certain course in obedience to the laws of nature, an example of which is the revelation to the bee (16 : 68), and *manām*, *i. e.*, dreams. And the second form, *from behind a veil*, he looks upon as applying to the case of Moses to whom, it is thought, God spoke in a manner different from that in which He spoke to the other prophets, that is to say, He spoke to him being invisible to him. Now, as regards the revelation to the bee, it is a clear mistake, as the verse states only how God speaks to men. And the statement regarding the mode of revelation to Moses is also a mistake, for the Holy Qur'ān lays it down in plain words that revelation was granted to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad in the same form as it had been granted to the prophets before him including Moses : "Surely We have revealed to thee as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him" (4 : 163); and Moses is specially mentioned in this connection in v. 164. Hence the second mode, from behind a veil, refers to *ru'yā* or dreams and *kashf* or visions, because a certain sight is shown in this case which has a deeper meaning than that which appears on the surface. The dream or the vision carries with it a certain meaning, but that meaning is, as it were, under a veil and must be sought for behind that veil. The dreams mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān (ch. 12) are an illustration of this. Joseph saw the sun and the moon and the eleven stars making obeisance to him, and this signified his greatness and his insight into things. A king saw seven lean kine eat up seven fat ones, and the meaning was that seven years of famine and hardship would follow seven years of plenty and eat away the hoarded corn of the country. Hence God's speaking from behind a veil means His revealing certain truths in dreams or visions. In a saying of the Holy Prophet these are called *mubashsharāt* : "Nothing has remained of *nubuwwa*, *i. e.*, receiving news from God, except *mubashsharāt*." Being asked "what was meant by *mubashsharāt*," the Holy Prophet replied, "good visions" (Bu. 91 : 4). In this category are also included words which some righteous servants of God are made to utter or which they hear under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

messages to humanity, while the first two forms of revelation, which, compared with the peculiar revelation of the prophet, are lower forms, are common to prophets as well as those who are not prophets. For the delivery of the higher message which relates to the welfare of mankind, a higher form of revelation is chosen, a form in which the message is not simply an idea but it is clothed in actual words. The prophet's faculty of being spoken to by God is so highly developed that he receives the Divine messages, not only as ideas instilled into the mind or in the form of words uttered or heard under the influence of the Holy Spirit, but actually as Divine messages in words delivered through the Holy Spirit. In the terminology of Islam this is called *wahy matlūw*, or *revelation that is recited*, and the Holy Qur'an was from beginning to end delivered in this form to the Holy Prophet, as the quotations I have given from the Holy Book itself make abundantly clear. It does not contain any other form of revelation. It is in its entirety *wahy matlūw* or revelation recited to the Holy Prophet distinctly in words, and is thus wholly the highest form of Divine revelation.

As I have said above, the prophet also receives

Other forms of Divine revelation to men. the lower forms of Divine revelation.

For example, we are told in reports that before the higher message came to the Holy Prophet, that is to say, before he received the first Quranic revelation, he used to have visions as true and clear as day: "The first that came to the Messenger of Allah of revelations were good visions so that he did not see a vision but it came out true as the dawn of the day" (Bu. 1:1). The Prophet's hearing of certain voices as mentioned in Ḥadīth belongs to the same category, while the details of law as expounded by him, and as met with in the Sunna, belong to the first form of revelation,

THE HOLY QUR'AN

an idea instilled into the mind. This is called *wahy khafiyy* or *inner revelation*. In the lower forms, revelation is still granted to the righteous from among the followers of the Holy Prophet and even to others, for, as I will show later on, in the lowest form revelation is the universal experience of humanity. There is also a difference as to the method in which the different kinds of revelation are received. While the two lower forms of revelation involve but little change in the normal condition of a man, whether awake or asleep, and he is only occasionally transported to a state of trance, the highest form, which is that peculiar to the prophets, brings with it a violent change; it does, in fact, require a real passing from one world to the other while the recipient is in a state of perfect wakefulness, and the burden of revelation is not only felt by the recipient but it is also visible to those who see him.

The Holy Prophet's first experience of the higher

The Prophet's experience of revelation. revelation was while he was alone in the cave of Hirā. Before this he had, from time to time, seen visions, but when the angel came with the higher message, he found himself quite exhausted: "He (*i.e.* the Holy Spirit) seized me and squeezed me to such an extent that I was quite exhausted" and this was repeated thrice (Bu. 1:1). And even after he reached home, the effect of exhaustion was still upon him and he had to lie down on his bed covered over before he could relate what had befallen. It was an equally hard experience when the second message came to him after an interval of some months. And even afterwards the effect of the Spirit being upon him was so great that on the coldest of days perspiration would run down his forehead: "I saw", says 'Ā'ishā, his wife, "revelation coming down upon him in the severest cold, and when that condition

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

was over, perspiration ran down his forehead"¹ (Bu. 1:1). Another Companion relates that he was sitting with his leg happening to be under the leg of the Holy Prophet when revelation came down upon him, and the Companion felt as if his leg would be crushed under the weight (Bu. 8:12).

1. Some misdirected critics have represented this extraordinary experience of the coming of the revelation as an epileptic fit. The question is whether an epileptic could, when the fit came on, utter those grand religious truths which are met with in the Holy Qur'an, or indeed make any coherent statement at all; whether he could have the strong will which made the whole of Arabia at last bow down to the Prophet, or possess the unparalleled energy which we witness in every phase of the Holy Prophet's life, or the high morals which were his, or be the master of that magnetic virtue under whose influence a whole country could be purified of the grossest idolatry and superstition; whether hundreds of thousands of men possessing the Arabs' independence of character would have taken him for a leader whose orders were obeyed in the minutest details of life; or whether he could produce men of the will and character of Abū Bakr and 'Umar and thousands of others before whom mighty empires crumbled? The story of froth appearing from his mouth at the time of revelation is pure invention. Klein, writing in *The Religion of Islam* (p. 8), makes the following statement on the authority of Bukhārī: "Another tradition says that he roared before his mouth and he roared like a young camel". Now Bukhārī makes no such statement, either in the place referred to (Bu. 1:2) or anywhere else. Nor is anything of this kind contained in the *Mishkāt*. The only statements that are met with in Ḥadīth are similar to those quoted from Bukhārī. For instance, we have in *Muslim*: "When revelation came to the Holy Prophet, he appeared to be as it were in distress and turned pale in the face." And according to one report "when revelation came to the Holy Prophet, he would hang his head, and his Companions would do the same; and when that condition was over, he would raise up his head." All these statements and similar statements contained in other Ḥadīth collections, only show that the coming of the revelation brought a real change in the Holy Prophet which others also witnessed.

Another misconception may also be removed here. When the Holy Prophet related his first experience to his wife Khadija, he added the words: "Surely I have fear regarding myself, *laqad khafstu 'alā nafsī*" (Bu. 1:1). Some critics have misunderstood these words as meaning that the Prophet feared he was possessed by an evil spirit; and a rather foolish story from Ibn Hishām as to Khadija's taking off the veil and the angel disappearing (which is without the least foundation and against all historical facts of the Prophet's life) is narrated in support of it. The story seems to me a foolish one, inasmuch as the

THE HOLY QUR'AN

The next question is as to the nature of the revelation itself. Harith, son of Hisham, once enquired of the Holy Prophet, how revelation came to him, and the reply was: "It comes to me sometimes as the ringing of a bell and this is hardest on me, then he leaves me and I remember from him what he says; and sometimes the angel comes in the shape of a man and he talks to me and I remember what he says" (Bu. 1 : 1). These are the only two forms in which the Quranic revelation came to the Holy Prophet. In both cases the angel came to the Holy Prophet and was seen by him; in both cases he delivered a certain message in words which the Holy Prophet at once committed to memory. That is the essence of the whole question. The only difference between the two cases was that in one case the angel appeared in the shape of a human being and uttered the words in a soft tone as one man talks to another; in the other case, it is not stated in what form the angel came, but we are told that the words were uttered like the ringing of a bell, that is to say, in a harsh, hard tone, which made it a heavier task for the Prophet to receive them. But still it was the angel who brought the message, as is shown by the use of the personal pronoun *he* in the

angel appeared to the Holy Prophet in the solitude of Hira, and not in the presence of Khadija. A cursory glance at the words quoted above would show that they could not possibly bear any such interpretation. The Holy Prophet knew for certain that he had a message from on High for the reformation of a fallen humanity; all that he feared was lest he should not succeed in bringing about the desired reformation. That was how Khadija understood it, as she immediately comforted him: "Nay, by Allah, Allah will never bring thee to grief; surely thou dost good to thy relatives, and bearest the burden of the weak, and earnest for others that which they have not got, and art hospitable to guests and givest help when there is real distress" (Bu. 1 : 1). The faithful wife who had known him intimately for fifteen years enumerated these great virtues in him, as a testimony that a man of such high character could not fail in accomplishing the task which was entrusted to him, the task of uplifting a fallen humanity.

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

first part of the report. In both cases the Prophet was transported, as it were, to another world, and this transportation caused him to go through a severe experience which made him perspire even on a cold day, but this experience was harder still when the deliverer of the message did not appear in human shape and there remained no affinity between the deliverer and the recipient. But whether the angel appeared in human shape or not, whether the message was delivered in a hard or soft tone, the one thing certain is that it was a message delivered in words; and therefore the Quranic revelation is entirely one message delivered in one form. And we must not forget that the Holy Prophet often received the message while sitting with his Companions, but they never saw the angel nor ever heard the words of revelation,¹ though the message sometimes came to the Prophet in sounds like the ringing of a bell. It was, therefore, with other than the ordinary human senses that the Holy Prophet saw the angel and heard his words, and it was really the granting of these other senses that is called transportation to another world.

Though the Holy Qur'ān was revealed in portions, yet it is a mistake to suppose that it remained long in that fragmentary condition. As its very name implies, it was a book from the first, and though it could not be complete until the last verse was revealed, it was never without some form of arrangement. There is the clearest testimony

Arrangement of the Qur'ān.

1. There is only one report which seems to convey the idea that the Companions who were sitting with the Holy Prophet once saw Gabriel in human shape, but that incident is not related in connection with a Quranic revelation. A certain man, according to that report, whom no one recognized, came to the Holy Prophet and asked him several questions about *īmān*, *Islām* and *īhsān*, and lastly, when the Hour would come. He then disappeared mysteriously and the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "That was Gabriel who came to teach you your religion" (Bu. 2 : 37). These words might mean that the answers given by him were of Gabriel's teachings, not that the man who put the questions was Gabriel.

THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

internal as well as external, that every single verse or part of a verse and every chapter that was revealed had its own definite place in the Holy Book.¹ The Holy Qur'ān is itself clear on this point: "And those who disbelieve say: Why has not the Qur'ān been revealed to him all at once? Thus, that We may establish thy heart by it, and We have arranged it well in arranging" (25 : 32). The arrangement of the Qur'ān was thus a part of the Divine scheme. Another verse showing that the collection of the Holy Book was a part of the Divine scheme runs thus: "Surely on Us devolves the collecting of it and the reciting of it" (75 : 17); from which it appears that just as the Holy Qur'ān was recited by the Holy Spirit to the Holy Prophet, in like manner, the collecting together of the various parts was effected by the Holy Prophet under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. History also bears testimony to the truth of this statement, for not only are there numerous anecdotes showing that this or that portion of the Qur'ān was put to writing under the orders of the Holy Prophet, but we are clearly told by 'Uthmān, the third Caliph, that every portion of the Holy Book was written and given its specified place, at the bidding of the Holy Prophet: "It was customary with the Messenger of Allāh (may peace and the blessings of Allāh be upon him) that when portions of different chapters were revealed to him, and when any verse was revealed, he called one of those persons who used to write the Holy Qur'ān² and said to him: Write

1. This subject has been fully dealt with in the preface to my English Translation of the Holy Qur'ān with Text and Commentary, and also in a separate booklet, in the Holy Qur'ān series, *Collection and Arrangement of the Holy Qur'ān*.

2. Among those whom the Holy Prophet used to summon to write down portions of the Holy Qur'ān immediately after their revelation are mentioned the names of Zaid ibn Thābit, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Zubair, Ubayy, Ḥanzala, 'Abd-Allāh ibn Sa'd, 'Abd-Allāh ibn Arqam, 'Abd-Allāh ibn Rawḥa, Sharḥubail, Khālid and Abān, sons of Sa'd, and

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

this verse in the chapter where such and such verses occur" (AD. 2:121; Aḥ. 1:57, 69). Thus the whole Qur'ān was arranged by the Holy Prophet himself, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, if we bear in mind the use that was made of the Holy Qur'ān, we cannot for an instant entertain the idea that the Holy Qur'ān existed without any arrangement of its verses and chapters in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. It was not only recited in prayers but committed to memory and regularly recited to keep it fresh in the mind. Now if an arrangement of verses and chapters had not existed, it would have been clearly impossible either to recite it in public prayers or to commit it to memory. The slightest change in the place of a verse by an Imām leading the prayers would at once call forth a correction from the audience, as it does at the present day. Since no one could take the liberty of changing a word or the place of a word in a verse, no one could change a verse or the place of a verse in a chapter; and so the committing of the Holy Qur'ān to memory by so many of the Companions of the Holy Prophet, and their constant recitation of it, would have been impossible unless a known order was followed. The Holy Prophet could not teach the Holy Qur'ān to the Companions nor the Companions to each other, nor could the Prophet or anyone else lead the public prayers, in which long

Mu'aiqab (FB. IX, p. 19). At Madīna, Zaid ibn Thābit was chiefly called upon to do this work, and in his absence any of the other amanuenses would take his place, and this was the reason why Zaid was chosen to collect the Quranic writings in the time of Abū Bakr, and again to do the work of transcription in the time of 'Uthmān. At Makka in the earliest days, there were Abū Bakr, 'Alī, Khadīja, wife of the Holy Prophet, and others who wrote down the portions revealed. The Holy Prophet took the greatest care to have a writer and writing material with him under all conditions, and even when he had to fly for his life to Madīna, he had still writing material with him (Bu. 63:45).

THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

portions of the Holy Book were recited, without following a known and accepted order.

The Holy Qur'ān thus existed in a complete and Complete written ordered form in the memories of copies of the Qur'ān. men in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, but no complete written copy of it existed at the time, nor could such a copy be made while the Holy Prophet was still alive and still receiving revelations. But the whole of the Qur'ān in one arrangement was safely preserved in the memories of men who were called *qurrā* or reciters. It happened, however, that many of the reciters fell in the famous battle of Yamāma, in the caliphate of Abū Bakr, and it was then that 'Umar urged upon Abū Bakr the necessity of compiling a standard written copy, so that no portion of the Holy Qur'ān should be lost even if all the reciters should die. And this copy was compiled, not from the hundreds of copies that had been made by individual Companions for their own use, but from the manuscripts written under the direction of the Holy Prophet himself, and the arrangement followed was that of the oral recitation as followed in the time of the Holy Prophet. Thus a standard written copy was prepared which was entrusted to the care of Ḥafṣa, wife of the Holy Prophet and daughter of 'Umar (Bu. 66 : 3). But still no arrangement had been made for securing the accuracy of the numerous copies that were in circulation. This was done by 'Uthmān who ordered several copies to be made of the copy prepared in the time of Abū Bakr, and these copies were then sent to the different Islamic centres so that all copies of the Qur'ān made by individuals should be compared with the standard copy at each centre.

Thus Abū Bakr ordered a standard copy to be Standardization of the prepared from the manuscripts Holy Qur'ān written in the presence of the Holy

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

Prophet, following the order of chapters which was followed by the reciters under the directions of the Holy Prophet, and 'Uthmān ordered copies to be made from this standard copy. If there was any variation from that standard copy, it went no further than this that where the Quraish wrote a word in one way and Zaid wrote it in another way, 'Uthmān's order was to write it as the Quraish wrote it. This was because Zaid was a Madinite while his colleagues were Quraish. Here is an account of what took place :

“Anas son of Mālik relates that Ḥudhaifa came to 'Uthmān, and he had been fighting along with the people of Syria in the conquest of Armenia and along with the people of 'Irāq in Azerbaijan, and was alarmed at their variations in the mode of reading (the Qur'ān), and said to him, 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 'Uthmān sent word to Ḥafṣa, asking her to send him the Qur'ān in her possession, so that they might make other copies of it and then send the original copy back to her. Thereupon Ḥafṣa sent the copy to 'Uthmān, and he ordered Zaid ibn Thābit and 'Abd-Allāh ibn Zubair and Sa'id ibn al-'Āṣ and 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ḥārith ibn Hishām, and they made copies from the original copy. 'Uthmān also said to the three men who belonged to the Quraish (Zaid only being a Madinite), Where you differ with Zaid in anything concerning the Qur'ān write it in the language of the Quraish, for it is in their language that it was revealed. They obeyed these instructions, and when they had made the required number of copies from the original copy, 'Uthmān returned the original to Ḥafṣa, and sent to every quarter one of the copies thus made, and ordered all other copies or leaves on which the Qur'ān was written to be burned” (Bu. 66 : 3).

THE HOLY QUR'AN

As to what these differences were, some light is thrown on the point by Tirmidhī making the following addition to this report: "And they differed on that occasion as to *tabut* and *tabuh*. The Quraish members said that it was *tabut* and Zaid said that it was *tabuh*. The difference was reported to 'Uthmān and he directed them to write it *tabut*, adding that the Qur'an was revealed in the dialect of the Quraish." It would be seen from this that these differences of reading or writing were very insignificant, but as the Companions of the Holy Prophet believed every word and every letter of the Holy Qur'an to be the revealed word of God, they gave importance even to the slight difference in writing and referred it to the Caliph. It may be added here that Zaid was chiefly called upon by the Holy Prophet at Madīna to write down the Quranic revelations, and the word *tabut* occurs in a Madīna chapter (2 : 248). Zaid had written it *tabuh* as the Madinites did, but as the Quraish wrote it *tabut*, 'Uthmān restored the Quraishite form. This incident further shows that Ḥafṣa's copy contained the manuscripts written in the presence of the Holy Prophet. These two reports furnish conclusive proof that if there was any difference between 'Uthmān's standard copy and the collection made by Abū Bakr, it was a difference only as to the mode of writing certain words ; there was no change of words, no change of verses and no change in the order of chapters.

A few words may be added as to the so-called Differences of differences of readings in the readings. Holy Qur'an. There were slight differences in the spoken language of different tribes, the language of the Quraish being the model for the literary language. Now the Holy Qur'an was revealed in the

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

dialect of the Quraish, the literary language of Arabia. But when towards the close of the Holy Prophet's life people from different Arabian tribes accepted Islām in large numbers, it was found that they could not pronounce certain words in the idiom of the Quraish, being habituated from childhood to their own idiom, and it was then that the Holy Prophet allowed them to pronounce a word according to their own peculiar idiom. This was done only to facilitate the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān. The written Qur'ān was one; it was all in the chaste idiom of the Quraish, but people belonging to other tribes were allowed to pronounce it in their own way, and the permission was intended only for those people.¹

There may have been certain revelations in which an optional reading was permitted. Readings belonging to this class can only be accepted on the most unimpeachable evidence, and the trustworthiness of the ḥadīth containing such reading must be established beyond all doubt. But even these readings do not find their way into the written text which remains permanently one and the same. Their value is only explanatory; that is to say they only show what significance is to

1. Some examples of these variations may be given here. *Ḥattā* (meaning *until*) was pronounced 'attā by the Hudhail; *ta'lamūn* (meaning *you know*) was pronounced *ti'lamūn* by the Asad; the Tamim read *hamṣa*, one of the letters, where the Quraish did not. In one report the meaning is made clear where the following words are added from the lips of the Holy Prophet: "Therefore recite it in the manner in which you find it easy to do so" (Bu. 66 : 5) In other words, the Holy Prophet allowed a reader to pronounce a word in the way he found it easiest. In the proper sense of the word, these dialectic variations would not be readings at all. In exceptional cases, a person who could not pronounce a certain word, may have been allowed to substitute its equivalent. But even that would not be a case of a variant reading, since it was merely a permission granted to a particular individual, and such variations never found their way into the written text of the Holy Qur'ān.

THE HOLY QUR'AN

be attached to the word used in the text ; they are never at variance with the text. They are known to very few even of the learned, to say nothing of the general readers of the Holy Book, and are considered to have the value of an authentic ḥadīth in explaining the meaning of a certain word occurring in the text. Thus the so-called different readings were either dialectic variations, which were never meant to be permanent and, intended only to facilitate the reading of the Qur'an in individual cases, or explanatory variations which were meant to throw light on the text. The former ceased to exist with the spread of education in Arabia, and the latter have still the same explanatory value as they originally had.

Random reports that a certain verse or chapter, not to be met with in the Holy Qur'an, have no value at all as against the conclusive and collective testimony which establishes the purity of the text of the Holy Qur'an. These reports were in some cases fabricated by enemies who sought to undermine the authority of the religion of Islam.¹ In other cases, they may have been the mistaken conception of this or that narrator. However that may be, it is necessary to weigh the evidence as to whether or not a certain verse formed part of the Quranic text.

1. For instance, Muslim mentions a report ascribing to Abū Mūsā the statement that there was a certain chapter of the Holy Qur'an, likened in length and force to the 9th chapter, of which only a single passage was all that he remembered. Now the *Misān al-'Iḍāḥ*, a critical inquiry about the narrators of the reports, shows that Suwaid, the immediate informer of Muslim, was a *sindeeq*, (i.e., one who conceals unbelief and makes an outward show of belief), and, therefore, the report, as its very subject-matter shows, is a clear invention. The four other reports speaking of similar passages, not met with in the text of the Holy Qur'an, may be relegated to the same class.

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

It is a fact that every verse of the Holy Qur'ān was, when revealed, promulgated and made public; it became a part of the public prayer and was repeated day and night to be listened to by an audience of hundreds. When the written manuscripts of the Holy Qur'ān were first collected into one volume in the time of Abū Bakr, and later on when copies were made from that original in the time of 'Uthmān, there was the unanimous testimony of all the Companions that every verse that found a place in that collection was part of the Divine revelation. Such testimony of overwhelming numbers cannot be set aside by the evidence of one or two, but as a fact, all reports quoted as affecting the purity of the text ascribe a certain statement to only one man, and in not a single case is there a second man to support that assertion. Thus when Ibn Mas'ūd makes an assertion to this effect, Ubayy's evidence, along with that of the whole body of Companions, goes against him; and when Ubayy makes a like assertion, Ibn Mas'ūd's evidence along with that of the rest of the Companions goes against him. Thus there is not a single assertion impugning the purity of the Quranic text for which even one witness can be produced.¹

1. In many cases even internal evidence would show that the report was not credible. For example, one report ascribes the following statement to 'Ā'isha: "The chapter of the Confederates (ch. 33) consisted, at the time of the Prophet, of two hundred verses: when 'Uthmān wrote the *Muṣḥaf*, he was only able to collect of it what it contains." 'Ā'isha could never have spoken these words, as she knew too well that 'Uthmān never collected the *Muṣḥaf*; he had only directed the making of copies from Ḥāfiṣa's *Muṣḥaf*. The false notion that 'Uthmān collected the Holy Qur'ān is of later growth, and this affords the surest testimony that this report is a mere invention. Similarly, the words ascribed to 'Umar regarding the stoning of the adulterer are a fabrication. He is reported to have said: "If I were not afraid that people would say, 'Umar has added something to the Book of God, I should write it down in the Qur'ān'" (AD. 37: 23). This assertion is self-contradictory.

THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

That certain verses of the Holy Qur'ān are abrogated

The theory of abro- by others is now an exploded theory.
gation.

The two passages on which it was supposed to rest refer, really, to the abrogation, not of the passages of the Holy Qur'ān but, of the previous revelations whose place the Holy Qur'ān has taken. The first verse is contained in the chapter *al-Nahl*—a Makka revelation—and runs thus: "And when We change one message for another message,¹ and Allāh knows best what He reveals, they say, Thou art only a forger" (16 : 101). Now it is a fact admitted on all hands that details of the Islamic law were revealed at Madīna, and it is in relation to these details that the theory of abrogation has been broached. Therefore a Makka revelation would not speak of abrogation. But the reference in the above verse is to the abrogation, not of the Quranic verses, but of the previous Divine messages or revelations, involved by the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān. The context shows this clearly to be the case, for the opponents are here made to say that the Prophet was a forger. Now the opponents called the Prophet a forger, not because he announced the abrogation of certain verses of the Holy Qur'ān, but because he claimed that the Holy Qur'ān was a Divine revelation which had taken the place of previous revelations. Their contention was that the Qur'ān was not a revelation at all: "Only a mortal teaches him" (16 : 103). Thus they called the whole of the Qur'ān a forgery and not merely a particular verse of it. The

If it was really part of the Qur'ān, why should people say that 'Umar had added to the Book of God.

1. The word *āya* occurring here means originally *a sign*, and hence it comes to signify *an indication* or *evidence* or *proof*, and is used in the sense of a *miracle*. It also signifies *risāla* or *a Divine message* (T.A.). The word is frequently used in the Holy Qur'ān in its general sense of a Divine message or a Divine communication, and is, therefore, applicable to a portion of the Holy Qur'ān or to any previous revelation. It carries the latter significance here as the context clearly shows.

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

theory of abrogation, therefore, cannot be based on this verse which speaks only of one revelation or one law taking the place of another.

The other verse which is supposed to lend support to the theory is 2 : 106 : "Whatever communication We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one like it."¹ A reference to the context will show that the Jews or the followers of previous revelations are here addressed. Of these it is said again and again : "We believe in that which was revealed to us ; and they deny what is besides that" (2:91). So they were told that if one revelation was abrogated, it was only to give place to a better. And there is mention not only of abrogation but also of something that was forgotten. Now the words "or cause to be forgotten" cannot refer to the Holy Qur'ān at all, because no portion of the Holy Book could be said to have been forgotten so as to require a new revelation in its place. There is no point in supposing that God should first make the Holy Prophet forget a verse and then reveal a new one in its place. Why not, if he really had forgotten a verse, remind him of the one forgotten? But even if we suppose that his memory ever failed in retaining a certain verse (which really never happened), that verse was quite safely preserved in writing, and the mere failure of the memory could not necessitate a new revelation. That the Prophet never forgot what was recited to him by the Holy Spirit is plainly stated in the Holy Qur'ān : "We

1. Sale's translation of the words is misleading and has actually deceived many writers on Islām who had no access to the original. He translates the words *nunsi-hā* as meaning *We cause thee to forget*. Now the text does not contain any word meaning *thee*. The slight error makes the verse mean that Almighty God had caused the Holy Prophet to forget certain Quranic verses; whereas the original does not say that the Prophet was made to forget anything but clearly implies that the world was made to forget.

THE HOLY QUR'AN

shall make thee recite, so thou shalt not forget" (87: 6). History also bears out the fact that he never forgot any portion of the Quranic revelation. Sometimes the whole of a very long chapter would be revealed to him in one portion, as in the case of the sixth chapter which extends over twenty sections, but he would cause it to be written down without delay, and make his Companions learn it by heart, and recite it in public prayers, and that without the change of even a letter; notwithstanding the fact that he himself could not read from a written copy; nor did the written copies, as a rule, remain in his possession. It was a miracle indeed that he never forgot any portion of the Qur'an, though other things he might forget, and it is to his forgetfulness in other things that the words *except what Allah pleases* (87: 7) refer. On the other hand, it is a fact that parts of the older revelation had been utterly lost and forgotten, and thus the Holy Qur'an was needed to take the place of that which was abrogated, and that which had been forgotten by the world.

"The ḥadīth speaking of abrogation are all weak"

Ḥadīth on abrogation.

says Ṭabṛasī. But it is stranger still that the theory of abrogation has been accepted by writer after writer without ever thinking that not a single ḥadīth, however weak, touching on the abrogation of a verse, was traceable to the Holy Prophet. It never occurred to the upholders of this theory that the Quranic verses were promulgated by the Holy Prophet, and that it was he whose authority was necessary for the abrogation of any Quranic verse; no Companion, not even Abū Bakr or 'Alī, could say that a Quranic verse was abrogated. The Holy Prophet alone was entitled to say so, and there is not a single ḥadīth to the effect that he ever said so; it is always some Companion or a later authority to whom such views are to be traced. In most cases where a report

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

is traceable to one Companion who held a certain verse to have been abrogated, there is another report traceable to another Companion to the effect that that verse was not abrogated.¹ It shows clearly that the opinion of one Companion as to the abrogation of a verse would be questioned by another Companion. Even among later writers we find that there is not a single verse on which the verdict of abrogation has been passed by one without being questioned by another ; and while there are writers who would lightly pass the verdict of abrogation on hundreds of verses, there are others who consider not more than five to be abrogated, and even in the case of these five the verdict of abrogation has been seriously impugned by earlier writers.

The theory of abrogation has in fact arisen from a misconception of the use of the word *naskh* by the Companions of the Holy Prophet. When the significance of one verse was limited by another, it was sometimes spoken of as having been abrogated (*nusikhat*) by that other. Similarly when the words of a verse gave rise to a misconception, and a later revelation cleared up that misconception, the word *naskh* was metaphorically used in connection with it, the idea underlying its use being, not that the first verse was abrogated, but that a certain conception to which it had given rise was abrogated.²

1. Some examples may be noted here. 2 : 180 is held by some to have been abrogated while others have denied it (IJ-C) ; 2 : 184 is considered by Ibn 'Umar as having been abrogated while Ibn 'Abbās says it was not (Bu) ; 2 : 240 was abrogated according to Ibn Zubair while Mujāhid says it was not (Bu.). I have taken these examples only from the second chapter of the Holy Qur'an.

2. Many instances of this may be quoted. In 2 : 284, it is said " whether you manifest what is in your minds or hide it, Allāh will call you to account for it ; " while according to 2 : 286, " Allāh does not impose on any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability." A report in *Bukhārī* says that one of the Companions of the Holy Prophet, probably 'Abd-Allāh ibn 'Umar, held the opinion that the first verse was abrogated (*nusikhat*) by the second.

THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

Earlier authorities admit this use of the word : " Those who accept *naskh* (abrogation) here (2 : 109) take it as meaning *explanation* metaphorically " (RM.I, p. 292); and again : " By *naskh* is meant metaphorically, explaining and making clear the significance " (*ibid.*, p. 508). It is an abrogation but not an abrogation of the words of the Holy Qur'an; rather is it the abrogation of a misconception of their meaning. This is further made clear by the application of *naskh* to verses containing statement of facts (*akhbār*), whereas, properly speaking, abrogation could only take place in the case of verses containing a commandment or a prohibition (*amr* or *nahy*). In

What was meant by *naskh* (abrogation) in this case is made clear by another detailed report given in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad. According to this report when 2 : 284 was revealed, the Companions entertained an idea which they had never entertained before (or according to another report, they were greatly grieved) and thought that they had not the power to bear it. The matter being brought to the notice of the Holy Prophet, he said : " Rather say, We have heard and we obey and submit," and so God inspired faith in their hearts. As this report shows, what happened was this, that some Companion or Companions thought that 2 : 284 imposed a new burden on them, making every evil idea which entered the mind without taking root or ever being translated into action, punishable in the same manner as if it had been translated into action. 2 : 286 made it plain that this was not the meaning conveyed by 2 : 284, since according to that verse, God did not impose on man a burden which he could not bear. This removal of a misconception was called abrogation (*naskh*) by Ibn 'Umar.

It may be added that there is nothing to show that 2 : 286 was revealed later than 2 : 284. On the other hand, the use of the words *we have heard and we obey* by the Holy Prophet to remove the wrong notion which some Companions entertained—these very words occur in 2 : 285—shows that the three verses, 284, 285, and 286 were all revealed together, and hence the abrogation, in the ordinary sense of the word, of one of them by another is meaningless. There are other instances in which a verse revealed later is thought to have been abrogated by a previous verse. But how could a later verse be abrogated by a previous one? Or what point can there be in giving an order which was cancelled before it was given? If, on the other hand, the word *naskh* is taken to mean the placing of a limitation upon the meaning of a verse, or the removal of a wrong conception attached to it, no difficulty would arise, for even a previous verse may be spoken of as placing a limitation upon the meaning of a later verse or as removing a wrong conception arising therefrom.

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

the ordinary sense of the word there could be no *naskh* (abrogation) of a statement made in the Word of God, as that would suggest that God had made a wrong statement first and then recalled it. This use of the word *naskh* by the earlier authorities regarding statements¹ shows that they were using the word to signify the removal of a wrong conception regarding, or the placing of a limitation upon, the meaning of a certain verse. At the same time, it is true that the use of the word *naskh* soon became indiscriminate, and when any one found himself unable to reconcile two verses, he would declare one of them to be abrogated by the other.

The principle on which the theory of abrogation is based is unacceptable, being contrary to the plain teachings of the Holy Qur'an. A verse is considered to be abrogated by another when the two cannot be reconciled with each other; in other words, when they appear to contradict each other. But the Holy Qur'an destroys this foundation when it declares in plain words that no part of the Holy Book is at variance with another: "Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an, and if it were from any

Basis of abrogation.

1. One example of one statement being spoken of as abrogated by another is that of 2 : 284, 286 (for which see the previous foot-note). Another is furnished by 8 : 65, 66, where the first verse states that in war the Muslims shall overcome ten times their numbers, and the second, after referring to their weakness at the time—which meant the paucity of trained men among them and their lack of the implements and necessaries of war—states that they shall overcome double their numbers. Now the two verses relate to two different conditions and they may be said to place a limitation upon the meaning of each other, but one of them cannot be spoken of as abrogating the other. In the time of the Holy Prophet when the Muslims were weak, when every man, old or young, had to be called upon to take the field, and the Muslim army was but ill-equipped, the Muslims overcame double, even thrice their numbers; but in the wars with the Persian and Roman empires, they vanquished ten times their number. Both statements were true; they only related to different circumstances and the one placed a limitation upon the meaning of the other, but neither of them actually abrogated the other.

THE HOLY QUR'AN

other than Allāh, they would have found in it many a discrepancy" (4 : 82). It was due to lack of meditation that one verse was thought to be at variance with another; and hence it is that in almost all cases where abrogation has been upheld by one person, there has been another who being able to reconcile the two, has repudiated the alleged abrogation.

It is only among the later commentators that we meet with the tendency to augment the number of verses thought to have been abrogated, and by some of these the figure has been placed as high as five hundred. Speaking of such Sayūṭī says in the *Itqān* : "Those who multiply (the number of abrogated verses) have included many kinds—one kind being that in which there is neither abrogation, nor any particularization (of a general statement), nor has it any connection with any one of them, for various reasons. And this is as in the word of God : 'And spend out of what We have given them' (2 : 3) ; 'And spend out of what We have given you' (63 : 10); and the like. It is said that these are abrogated by the verse dealing with zakāt, while it is not so, they being still in force" (It. II, p. 22). Sayūṭī himself brings the number of verses which he thinks to be abrogated down to twenty-one (*ibid.* p. 23), in some of which he considers there is abrogation, while in others he finds that it is only the particularization of a general injunction that is effected by a later verse ; but he admits that there is a difference of opinion even about these.

A later writer, however, the famous Shāh Walī Allāh of India, commenting on this verdict on five verses. in his *Fauz al-Kabīr* says that abrogation cannot be proved in the case of sixteen out of Sayūṭī's twenty-one verses, but in the case

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

of the remaining five he is of opinion that the verdict of abrogation is final. These five verses are dealt with below :

(1) 2 : 180 : "Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relations, according to usage." As a matter of fact, both Baidzāwī and Ibn Jarīr quote authorities who state that this verse was not abrogated; and it is surprising that it is considered as being abrogated by 4 : 11, 12, which speak of the shares to be given "after the payment of a bequest he may have bequeathed or a debt," showing clearly that the bequest spoken of in 2 : 180 was still in force. This verse in fact speaks of bequest for charitable objects which is even now recognized by Muslims to the extent of one-third of property.

(2) 2 : 240 : "And those of you who die and leave wives behind, (making) a bequest in favour of their wives of maintenance for a year without turning them out." But we have the word of no less an authority than Mujāhid that this verse is not abrogated: "Allāh gave her (*i.e.* the widow) the whole of a year, seven months and twenty days being optional, under the bequest; if she desired she could stay according to the bequest (*i.e.* having maintenance and residence for a year), and if she desired she could leave the house (and remarry), as the Qur'an says: 'Then if they leave of their own accord, there is no blame on you'" (Bu. 65 : 39). This verse, therefore, does not contradict v. 234. Moreover, there is proof that it was revealed after v. 234, and hence it cannot be said to have been abrogated by that verse.

(3) 8 : 65 : "If there are twenty patient ones of you, they shall overcome two hundred, etc." This is said to have been abrogated by the verse that follows it :

THE HOLY QUR'AN

“For the present Allāh has made light your burden and He knows that there is weakness in you, so if there are a hundred patient ones of you, they shall overcome two hundred.” That the question of abrogation does not arise here at all is apparent from the words of the second verse which clearly refers to the early times when the Muslims were weak, having neither munitions of war nor experience of warfare, and when old and young had to go out and fight; while the first verse refers to a later period when the Muslim armies were fully organized and equipped.

(4) 33 : 52 : “It is not allowed to thee to take women after this.” This is said to have been abrogated by a verse which was apparently revealed before it : “O Prophet! We have made lawful to thee thy wives ” (33 : 50). The whole issue has been turned topsy-turvy. As I have said before, a verse cannot be abrogated by one revealed before it. Apparently what happened was this. When 4 : 3 was revealed, limiting the number of wives to four, should exceptional circumstances require, the Prophet was told not to divorce the excess number, and this was effected by 33 : 50 as quoted above; but at the same time he was told not to take any woman in marriage after that, and this was done by 33 : 52.

(5) 58 : 12 : “O you who believe ! when you consult the Apostle, then offer something in charity before your consultation; that is better for you and purer; but if you do not find, then surely Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful.” This is said to have been abrogated by the verse that follows : “Do you fear that you will not be able to give in charity before your consultation? So when you do not do it, and Allāh has turned to you mercifully, then keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate.” It is not easy to see how one of these injunctions

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

is abrogated by the other, since there is not the slightest difference in what they say. The second verse merely gives further explanation to show that the injunction is only in the nature of a recommendation, that is to say, a man may give in charity whatever he can easily spare, zakāt (or the legal alms) being the only obligatory charity.

Thus the theory of abrogation falls to the ground on all considerations.

The rule as to the interpretation of the Qur'an is thus given in the Holy Book itself : "He it is Who has revealed the Book to thee; some of its verses are decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are allegorical. As for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is allegorical; seeking to mislead and seeking to give it their own interpretation; but none knows its interpretation except Allāh, and those well-grounded in knowledge say, We believe in it, it is all from our Lord; and none do mind except those having understanding" (3: 6). In the first place, it is stated here that there are two kinds of verses in the Holy Qur'an, namely the decisive and the allegorical—the latter being those which are capable of different interpretations. Next we are told that the decisive verses are the basis of the Book, that is, that they contain the fundamental principles of religion. Hence whatever may be the differences of interpretation, the fundamentals of religion are not affected by them, all such differences relating only to secondary matters. The third point is that some people seek to give their own interpretation to allegorical statements and are thus misled. In other words, serious errors arise only when a wrong interpretation is placed on words which are susceptible of two meanings. Lastly, in the concluding words,

THE HOLY QUR'AN

a clue is given as to the right mode of interpretation in the case of allegorical statements: "It is all from our Lord." That is to say, there is no disagreement between the various portions of the Holy Book. This statement has in fact been made elsewhere also, as already quoted (see 4:82). The important principle to be borne in mind in the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an, therefore, is that the meaning should be sought from within the Qur'an, and never should a passage be interpreted in such a manner that it may be at variance with any other passage, but more especially with the basic principles laid down in the decisive verses. This principle, in the words of the Holy Qur'an, is followed by "those well-grounded in knowledge."¹ The following rules may therefore be laid down:

1. The subject of the interpretation of the Quranic verses is very appropriately dealt with in the opening verses of the third chapter which begins with a discussion with the followers of Christianity, for, it must be borne in mind, that it is on a wrong interpretation of certain allegorical statements that the fundamental principles of Christianity are actually based. The basic doctrine of the religion of all the prophets in the Old Testament is the Unity of God, but there are a number of prophecies couched in allegorical language having reference to the advent of Christ. The Christians, instead of interpreting these in accordance with the clear words of the principle of Divine Unity, laid the foundations of Christianity on the metaphorical language of the prophecies, and thus by neglect of the true rule of interpretation were misled to such an extent as to ignore the very essentials of the religion of the prophets. Christ was believed to be God on the strength of metaphorical expressions, and the doctrine of the Trinity thus became the basis of a new religion. The epithet "son of God" was freely used in Israelite literature, and was always taken allegorically. The term occurs as early as Gen. 6:2 where the "sons of God" are spoken of as taking the daughters of men for wives. It occurs again in Job 1:6 and 38:7, and good men are no doubt meant in both places. In Ex. 4:22 and many other places, the Israelites are spoken of as the children of God: "Israel is my son, even my first born." The expression is used in the same metaphorical sense in the Gospels. Even in the fourth Gospel, where the Divinity of Christ is looked upon as finding a bolder expression than in the synoptics, Jesus Christ is reported as saying in answer to those who accused him of blasphemy for speaking of himself as the son of God: "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If He called them

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

1. The principles of Islām are enunciated in decisive words in the Holy Qur'ān; and, therefore, no attempt should be made to establish a principle on the strength of allegorical passages, or of words susceptible of different meanings.

2. The explanation of the Qur'ān should in the first place be sought in the Qur'ān itself; for, whatever the Qur'ān has stated briefly, or merely hinted at, in one place, will be found expanded and fully explained elsewhere in the Holy Book itself.

3. It is very important to remember that the Holy Qur'ān contains allegory and metaphor along with what is plain and decisive, and the only safeguard against being misled by what is allegorical or metaphorical is that the interpretation of such passages must be strictly in consonance with what is laid down in clear and decisive words, and not at variance therewith.

4. When a law or principle is laid down in clear words, any statement carrying a doubtful significance, or a statement apparently opposed to the law so laid down, must be interpreted subject to the principle enunciated. Similarly, that which is particular must be read in connection with and subject to more general statements.

In this connection I have only to add that Ḥadīth also affords an explanation of the Holy Qur'ān but a ḥadīth can only be accepted when it is reliable and

Value of Ḥadīth and commentaries in interpreting the Qur'ān.

gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God? (Jn. 10:34-36). It is thus clear that even in the mouth of Jesus the term "son of God" was a metaphorical expression, and by taking it literally the Church has destroyed the very foundations of religion. It is to this fundamental mistake of Christianity that the Holy Qur'ān refers by giving the rule for the interpretation of allegorical verses in a discussion of the Christian religion.

THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

not opposed to what is plainly stated in the Qur'ān. As regards commentaries, a word of warning is necessary against the tendency to regard what is stated in them as being the final word on interpretation, since by so doing the great treasures of knowledge which an exposition of the Holy Qur'ān in the new light of modern progress reveals are shut out, and the Qur'ān becomes a sealed book to the present generation. The learned men of yore all freely sought the meaning of the Qur'ān according to their lights, and to the present generation belongs the same right to read it according to its own lights. It must also be added that though the commentaries are valuable stores of learning for a knowledge of the Holy Qur'ān, the numerous anecdotes and legends with which many of them are filled can only be accepted with the greatest caution and after the most careful sifting. Such stories are mostly taken from the Jews and the Christians, and on this point I would refer the reader to my remarks under the heading "Reports in Biographies and Commentaries" in the next chapter, where I have shown that the best authorities have condemned most of this material as Jewish and Christian nonsense.

The Holy Qur'ān is divided into 114 chapters, each of which is called a *sūra* meaning Divisions of the Holy Qur'ān. literally *eminence* or *high degree* (R.), and also *any degree of a structure* (LL.). The chapters are of varying length, the longest comprising one-twelfth of the entire Book. All the chapters, with the exception of the last thirty-five, are divided into sections (*rukū'*), each section dealing generally with one subject, and the different sections being inter-related to each other. Each section contains a number of verses (*āya*, meaning originally a *sign* or a *communication from God*). The

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

total number of verses is 6,240,¹ or including the 113 *Bismillah* verses with which the chapters open, 6,353.² For the purpose of recitation, the Holy Qur'an is divided into thirty equal parts, each of which is called a *juz'* (meaning *part*), every part being again sub-divided into four equal parts. Another division is into seven *mansils* or *portions*, which is designed for the completion of the recital of the Holy Qur'an in seven days. These divisions have nothing to do with the subject-matter of the Holy Book.

An important division of the Holy Qur'an relates Makka and Madina to the Makka and Madina sūras.

After being raised to the dignity of prophethood, the Holy Prophet passed 13 years at Makka, and was forced then to fly with his Companions to Madina where he spent the last ten years of his life. Out of the total of 114 chapters, into which the Holy Qur'an is divided, 92 were revealed during the Makka period and 22 during the Madina period,³ but the Madina chapters, being generally longer, contain about one-third of the Holy Book. In arrangement, the Makka revelation is intermingled with that of Madina; the number of Makka and Madina chapters following each other alternately being 1, 4, 2, 2, 14, 1, 8, 1, 13, 3, 7, 10, 48. On referring to the subject-matter of the Makka and Madina revelations, we find the following three broad features distinguishing the two groups of chapters. Firstly, the Makka revelation deals chiefly with faith in God and is particularly devoted to grounding the Muslims in that faith, while the Madina revelation is chiefly intended to

1. There existed a slight difference in the numbering of verses in the different centres of learning, Kūfa readers counting them 6,239, Bagra 6,204, Syria 6,225, Makka 6,219, Madina 6,211. But this is a difference of computation only, some readers marking the end of a verse where others do not.

2. Every chapter of the Holy Qur'an begins with the *Bismillāh* verse except the ninth.

3. Ch. 110 was revealed at Makka during the Farewell pilgrimage and therefore belongs to the Madina period.

THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

translate that faith into action. It is true that exhortations to good and noble deeds are met with in the Makka revelation, and in the Madīna revelation faith is still shown to be the foundation on which the structure of deeds should be built, but, in the main, stress is laid in the former on faith in an Omnipotent and Ominpresent God Who requites every good and every evil deed, and the latter deals chiefly with what is good and what is evil, in other words, with the details of the law. The second feature distinguishing the two revelations is that while that of Makka is generally prophetic, that which came at Madīna deals with the fulfilment of prophecy. Thirdly, while the Makka revelation shows how true happiness of mind may be sought in communion with God, that of Madīna points out how man's dealing with man may also be a source of bliss and comfort to him. Hence a scientific arrangement of the Qur'ān must of necessity rest on the intermingling of the two revelations, the blending of faith with deeds, of prophecy with the fulfilment of, prophecy, of Divine communion with man's relation to and treatment of man. It may be added here that the idea that the proper arrangement of the Qur'ān should be in chronological order is a mistaken one. Most of the sūras were revealed piecemeal, and hence a chronological order of revelation would destroy the sūra arrangement altogether. Take, for example, the very first chapter chronologically, the 96th in the present order. While its first five verses are undoubtedly the first revelation that came to the Prophet, the rest of the chapter was not revealed before the fourth year of his ministry. Similarly with the second chapter in the present arrangement; while the major portion of it was revealed in the first and the second years of the Hijra, some verses were revealed as late as the closing days of the Prophet's life. Chronological order is, therefore, an impossibility.

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

That the Holy Qur'ān occupies a place of eminence

The place of Qur'ān in Arabic literature which has not in world literature. fallen to the lot of any other book goes without saying; but we may say more and assert with confidence that the place so occupied has not been attained at any time by any book anywhere. For what book is there in the whole history of the human race that has not only through thirteen long centuries remained admittedly the standard of the language in which it is written, but has also originated a world-wide literature? The best books only half as old as the Holy Qur'ān are no longer the standard for the language of to-day of the language in which, respectively, they were written. The feat accomplished by the Holy Qur'ān is simply unapproached in the whole history of the written word. It transformed a dialect spoken in a very limited area of a forgotten corner of the world into a world-wide language which became the mother-tongue of vast countries and mighty empires, and produced a literature which is the basis of the culture of powerful nations from one end of the world to the other. There was no literature, properly speaking, in Arabic before the Holy Qur'ān; the few pieces of poetry that did exist never soared beyond the praise of wine or woman, or horse or sword, and can hardly be called literature at all. It was with the Qur'ān that Arabic literature originated, and through the Qur'ān that Arabic became a powerful language spoken in many countries and casting its influence on the literary histories of many others. Without the Qur'ān, the Arabic language would have been nowhere in the world. As Dr. Steingass says :

“ But we may well ask ourselves, what would in all probability have become of this language without Muḥammad and his Qur'ān? This is not at all an idle and desultory speculation. It is true the Arabic language

THE HOLY QUR'AN

had already produced numerous fine specimens of genuine and high-flown poetry, but such poetry was chiefly, if not exclusively, preserved in the memory of the people Moreover poetry is not tantamount to literature Divided among themselves into numerous tribes, who were engaged in a perpetual warfare against each other, the Arabs, and with them their various dialects, would more and more have drifted asunder, poetry would have followed in the wake, and the population of Arabia would have broken up into a multitude of clans, with their particular bards, whose love- and war-songs enterprising travellers of our day might now collect

“ It seems, then, that it is only a work of the nature of the Qur'an which could develop ancient Arabic into a literary language.....

“ But not only by raising a dialect, through its generalization, to the power of a language, and by rendering the adoption of writing indispensable, has the Qur'an initiated the development of an Arabic literature; its composition itself has contributed two factors absolutely needful to this development : it has added to the existing poetry the origins of rhetoric and prose

“ But Muhammad made a still greater and more decisive step towards creating a literature for his people. In those sūras, in which he regulated the private and public life of the Muslim, he originated a prose, which has remained the standard of classical purity ever since ” (Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam*, art. Qur'an, pp. 528, 529).

There are other considerations which entitle the Holy Qur'an to a place of eminence to which no other book can aspire. It throws a flood of light on all the fundamentals of religion, the existence and unity of God, the reward of good and evil, the life after death, Paradise and Hell, revelation, etc. This subject has been fully dealt with in the second part of this book. But in addition to expounding

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

to us the mysteries of the unseen, it offers a solution of the most difficult problems of this life, such as the distribution of wealth, the sex-problem, and all other questions on which depends in any degree the happiness and advancement of man. And the value of this copiousness of ideas is further enhanced when it is seen that it does not confront man with dogmas but gives reasons for every assertion made, whether relating to the spiritual or the physical life. There are hundreds of topics on which it has enriched the literature of the world, and whether it be discussing questions relating to spiritual existence or to physical life here on earth, it follows an argumentative course and convinces by argument and not by dogma.

More wonderful still is the effect which the Holy Qur'ān has produced. The transformation wrought by its influence is unparalleled in the history of the world. An entire change was wrought in the lives of a whole nation in an incredibly short time, that is to say, a period of no more than twenty-three years. The Qur'ān found the Arabs worshippers of idols, unhewn stones, trees and heaps of sand, yet in less than a quarter of a century the worship of the One God ruled the whole land and idolatry had been wiped out from one end of the country to the other. It swept all superstitions before it and, in their place, gave the most rational religion the world could dream of. The Arab who had been wont to pride himself on his ignorance had, as if by a magician's wand, been transformed into the lover of knowledge, drinking deep at every fountain of learning to which he could gain access. And this was directly the effect of the teaching of the Qur'ān, which not only appealed to reason, ever and again, but declared man's thirst for knowledge to be insatiable. And along with superstition went the deepest vices of the Arab, and in their place the Holy Book put a burning desire for the best and noblest deeds in the

THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

service of humanity. Yet it was not the transformation of the individual alone that the Holy Qur'an had accomplished; equally was it a transformation of the family, of society, of the very nation itself. From the war-like elements of the Arab race, the Holy Qur'an welded a nation, united and full of life and vigour, before whose onward march the greatest kingdoms of the world crumbled as if they had been but toys before the reality of the new faith. Thus the Holy Qur'an effected a transformation of humanity itself, a transformation material as well as moral, an awakening intellectual as well as spiritual. There is no other book which has brought about a change so miraculous in the lives of men.

To this position of the Qur'an in world literature, European writers on the Qur'an testimony is borne by even the most biased European writers. I quote but a few of them :

"The style of the Koran is generally beautiful and fluentand in many places, especially where the majesty and attributes of God are described, sublime and magnificent He succeeded so well, and so strangely captivated the minds of his audience, that several of his opponents thought it the effect of witchcraft and enchantment" (Sale, *Preliminary Discourse*, p. 48).

"That the best of Arab writers has never succeeded in producing anything equal in merit to the Qur'an itself is not surprising" (Palmer, Intro. p. lv).

"The earliest Mekka revelations are those which contain what is highest in a great religion and what was purest in a great man" (Lane's *Selections*, Intro. p. cvi).

"However often we turn to it, at first disgusting us each time afresh, it soon attracts, astounds, and in the end enforces our reverence..... Its style, in accordance with its contents and aim, is stern, grand,

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

terrible—ever and anon truly sublime..... Thus this book will go on exercising through all ages a most potent influence” (Goethe—Hughes’ *Dictionary of Islam*, p. 526).

“We may well say the Qur’an is one of the grandest books ever written..... Sublime and chaste, where the supreme truth of God’s unity is to be proclaimed; appealing in high-pitched strains to the imagination of a poetically-gifted people where the eternal consequences of man’s submission to God’s holy will, or of rebellion against it, are pictured; touching in its simple, almost crude, earnestness, when it seeks again and again encouragement or consolation for God’s messenger, and a solemn warning for those to whom he has been sent, in the histories of the prophets of old: the language of the Qur’an adapts itself to the exigencies of everyday life, when this everyday life, in its private and public bearings, is to be brought in harmony with the fundamental principles of the new dispensation.

“Here therefore its merits as a literary production should, perhaps, not be measured by some preconceived maxims of subjective and æsthetic taste, but by the effects which it produced in Muḥammad’s contemporaries and fellow-countrymen. If it spoke so powerfully and convincingly to the hearts of his hearers as to weld hitherto centrifugal and antagonistic elements into one compact and well-organized body, animated by ideas far beyond those which had until now ruled the Arabian mind, then its eloquence was perfect, simply because it created a civilized nation out of savage tribes, and shot a fresh woof into the old warp of history” (Steingass—Hughes’ *Dictionary of Islam*, pp. 527, 528).

“From time beyond memory, Mecca and the whole peninsula had been steeped in spiritual torpor. The

THE HOLY QUR'AN

slight and transient influences of Judaism, Christianity, or philosophical inquiry, upon the Arab mind had been but as the ruffling here and there of the surface of a quiet lake; all remained still and motionless below. The people were sunk in superstition, cruelty, and vice..... Their religion was a gross idolatry; and their faith the dark superstitious dread of unseen beings..... Thirteen years before the Hegira, Mecca lay lifeless in this debased state. What a change had those thirteen years now produced!..... Jewish truth had long sounded in the ears of the men of Medina; but it was not until they heard the spirit-stirring strains of the Arabian Prophet that they too awoke from their slumber, and sprang suddenly into a new and earnest life" (Muir's *Life of Mahomet*, pp. 155, 156).

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

"It was the one miracle claimed by Mohammed—his 'standing miracle' he called it: and a miracle indeed it is" (Bosworth Smith's *Mohammed*, p. 290).

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

"The Qorân is unapproachable as regards convincing power, eloquence, and even composition..... And to it was also indirectly due the marvellous development of all branches of science in the Moslim world" (*Ibid*, pp. 8, 9).

The Egyptian '*Ulama* have held that the Holy Qur'an should not be translated into any language, but this position is

Translation of the Holy Qur'an

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

clearly untenable. The Holy Book is plainly intended for all the nations ; it is again and again called "a reminder for all the nations" (68 : 52; 82 : 27, etc.), and the Holy Prophet is spoken of as "a warner for the nations" (25 : 1). No warning could be conveyed to a nation except in its own language, and the Holy Qur'an could not be spoken of as a reminder for the nations unless its message was meant to be given to them in their own language. The translation of the Holy Qur'an into other languages was, therefore, contemplated by the Holy Book itself. And translations have actually been done into many languages by Muslims themselves. A Persian translation of the Holy Qur'an is attributed to Shaikh Sa'di, while another rendering into Persian was the work of the famous Indian saint, Shah Wali Allāh, who died over 150 years ago. Translations were made into Urdū by other members of Shah Wali Allāh's family, Shah Rafi' al-Din and Shah 'Abd al-Qadir, while many more have been added recently. Translations also exist in the Pushto, Turkish, Javan, Malayān, Gujrati, Bengalee, Hindi and Gurmukhi languages, and one has also been undertaken into Tamil. "The first translation attempted by Europeans was a Latin version translated by an Englishman, Robert of Retina, and a German, Hermann of Dalmatia. This translation, which was done at the request of Peter, Abbot of the Monastery of Clugny, A. D. 1143, remained hidden nearly 400 years till it was published at Basle, 1543, by Theodore Bibliander, and was afterwards rendered into Italian, German, and Dutch..... The oldest French translation was done by M. Du Ryer (Paris, 1647). A Russian version appeared at St. Petersburg in 1776..... The first English Qur'an was Alexander Ross's translation of Du Ryer's French version (1649-1688). Sale's well-known work first appeared in 1734..... A translation

THE HOLY QUR'AN

by the Rev. J. M. Rodwell.....was printed in 1861.
.....Professor Palmer, of Cambridge, translated the
Qur'an in 1880' (Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam*, p. 523).

Recently the Aḥmadiyya Anjuman Iṣḥā'at Islām, Lahore, has undertaken the work of the translation of the Holy Qur'an into European languages. The English edition first appeared in 1917, and the Dutch translation appeared in 1935, while the German has also been completed.

CHAPTER II

SUNNA OR ḤADĪTH

(Sunna or Ḥadīth is the second and undoubtedly secondary source from which the teachings of Islām are drawn. (Sunna literally means *a way or rule or manner of acting or mode of life*, and *ḥadīth*, *a saying conveyed to man either through hearing or through revelation*.¹ In its original sense, therefore, Sunna indicates the doings and Ḥadīth the sayings of the Holy Prophet; but in effect both cover the same ground and are applicable to his actions, practices, and sayings, Ḥadīth being the narration and record of the Sunna but containing, in addition, various prophetic and historical elements. There are three kinds of Sunna. It may be a *qaul*—a saying of the Holy Prophet which has a bearing on a religious question, a *fi'l*—an action or a practice of his, or a *taqrir*—his silent approval of the action or practice of another.) We have now to consider to what extent can teachings of Islām, its principles and its laws, be drawn from this source. Any student of the Qur'an will see that the Holy Book generally deals with the broad principles or essentials of religion, going into details in very rare cases. The details were generally supplied by the Holy Prophet himself, either by showing in his practice how an

1. Hence the Holy Qur'an is also spoken of as *ḥadīth* (18:6; 39:23). The word *sunna* is used in the Holy Qur'an in a general sense, meaning *a way or rule*. Thus *sunnat al-awwalīn* (8:38; 15:13; 18:55; 35:43) means *the way or example of the former people*, and is frequently used in the Holy Qur'an as signifying God's way of dealing with people, which is also spoken of as *sunnat-Allāh* or God's way. Once, however, the plural *sunan* is used as indicating the ways in which men ought to walk: "Allāh desires to explain to you, and to guide you into the ways (*sunan*) of those before you" (4:26).

SUNNA OR ḤADĪTH

injunction shall be carried out, or by giving an explanation in words.

The Sunna or Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet was not, as is generally supposed, a thing whereof the need may have been felt after his death, for it was as much needed in his lifetime. The two most important religious institutions of Islām, for instance, are prayer and zakāt ; yet when the injunctions relating to prayer and zakāt were delivered, and they are repeatedly met with both in Makka and Madīna revelations, no details were supplied. *Aqīmu-l-ṣalāta* (keep up prayer) is the Qurānic injunction, and it was the Prophet himself who by his own actions gave the details of the service. *Ātu-l-zakāta* (pay the alms) is again an injunction frequently repeated in the Holy Qur'an, yet it was the Holy Prophet who gave the rules and regulations for its payment and collection. These are but two examples ; but since Islām covered the whole sphere of human activities, hundreds of points had to be explained by the Holy Prophet by his example in action and word, while on the moral side, his was the pattern which every Muslim was required to follow (33 : 21). The man, therefore, who embraced Islām stood in need of both the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna.)

The transmission of the practices and sayings of the Holy Prophet from one person to another, thus became necessary during the Prophet's lifetime. In fact, the Holy Prophet himself used to give instructions with regard to the transmission of what he taught. Thus when a deputation of the tribe of Rabī'a came to wait upon him in the early days of Madīna, the Prophet concluded his instructions to them with the words : "Remember this and report it to those whom you have left behind" (MM. 1 : 1-i). Similar were his instructions in another case : "Go back to your people and teach them these things"

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

(Bu. 3 : 25). There is another report according to which on the occasion of a pilgrimage, the Holy Prophet, after enjoining on the Muslims the duty of holding sacred each other's life, property and honour, added: "He who is present here should carry this message to him who is absent" (Bu. 3 : 37). Again, there is ample historical evidence that whenever a people embraced Islām, the Holy Prophet used to send to them one or more of his missionaries who not only taught them the Holy Qur'an but also explained to them how the injunctions of the Holy Book were to be carried out in practice. It is also on record that people came to the Holy Prophet and demanded teachers who could teach them the Qur'an and the Sunna: "Send us men to teach us the Qur'an and the Sunna." And the Companions of the Holy Prophet knew full well that his actions and practices were to be followed, should no express direction be met with in the Holy Qur'an. It is related that when Mu'adh ibn Jabal, on being appointed Governor of Yaman by the Holy Prophet, was asked how he would judge cases, his reply was, "by the Book of Allah." Asked what he would do if he did not find a direction in the Book of Allah, he replied, "by the Sunna of the Apostle of Allah" (AD. 23 : 11). The Sunna was, therefore, recognized in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet as affording guidance in religious matters.

The popular idea in the West that the need for Writing of Hadith in Sunna was felt and the force of Prophet's lifetime. law given to Hadith after the death of the Holy Prophet¹ is falsified by the above

1. Thus Muir writes in his introduction to the *Life of Mahomet*: "The Arabs, a simple and unsophisticated race, found in the Coran ample provisions for the regulation of their affairs, religious, social and political. But this aspect of Islam soon underwent a mighty change. Scarcely was the Prophet buried when his followers issued forth from their barren

SUNNA OR ḤADĪTH

facts. Nor was the preservation of what the Prophet did or said an after-thought on the part of the Muslims, for the Companions of the Holy Prophet while translating into practice most of his sayings endeavoured also to preserve them in memory as well as on paper. The need of the Sunna, its force as law, and its preservation are all traceable to the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. A special importance was, from the first, attached to his sayings and deeds which were looked upon as a source of guidance by his followers. They were conscious of the fact that these things must be preserved for future generations; hence they not only kept them in their memory but even resorted to pen and ink for their preservation. Abū Huraira tells us that when one of the Anṣār complained to the Holy Prophet of his inability to remember what he heard from him, the Prophet's reply was that he should seek the help of his right hand (referring to the use of pen) (Tr. 39: 12). This ḥadīth exists in many forms. Another well-known report is from 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Amr: "I used to write everything that I heard from the Holy Prophet, intending to commit it to memory. (On some people taking objection to this) I spoke about it to the Prophet who said, Write down, for I only speak the truth"

Peninsula resolved to impose the faith of Islam upon all the nations of the earth.....Crowded cities, like Cufa, Cairo, and Damascus, required elaborate laws for the guidance of their courts of justice : widening political relations demanded a system of international equity..... All called loudly for the enlargement of the scanty and naked dogmas of the Revelation..... The difficulty was resolved by adopting the Custom ('Sunnat') of Mahomet; that is, his sayings and his practice, as supplementary of the Coran..... Tradition was thus invested with the force of law, and with something of the authority of inspiration" (p. xxix). And even a recent writer, Guillaume, writes in the *Traditions of Islam* : "While the prophet was alive he was the sole guide in all matters whether spiritual or secular. Hadith, or tradition in the technical sense, may be said to have begun at his death" (p. 13).

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

(AD. 24:3). This ḥadīth is very well-known and exists in thirty different forms with small difference. Yet again, there is another report from Abū Huraira: "None of the Companions preserved more ḥadīth than myself, but 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Amr is an exception, for he used to write and I did not write" (Bu. 3:39). Anas ibn Mālik states that Abū Bakr wrote down for him the laws regarding alms (Bu. 24:39). 'Alī had also a saying of the Prophet with him in writing (Bu. 3:39). In the year of the conquest of Makka, the Holy Prophet delivered a sermon on the occasion of a man being killed by way of retaliation for some old grievance. When the sermon was finished, one from among the people of Yaman came forward and requested the Holy Prophet to have it written down for him, and the Prophet gave orders to that effect (Bu. 3:39). These reports show that while generally Ḥadīth was committed to memory, it was occasionally, when there was need for it, reduced to writing. The last-mentioned incident affords the clearest testimony that, whatever the Companions heard from the lips of the Holy Prophet, they tried to keep in their memory, for how else could an order be given for the writing of a sermon which had been delivered orally.

It is, however, a fact that the sayings of the Holy Prophet were not generally written, and memory was the chief means of their preservation. The Holy Prophet sometimes objected to the writing down of Ḥadīth. Abū Huraira is reported to have said: "The Prophet of God came to us while we were writing Ḥadīth and said, What is this that you are writing? We said, Ḥadīth which we hear from thee. He said, What! a book other than the Book of Allah?" Now the disapproval in this case clearly shows fear lest Ḥadīth be mixed up with the Holy Qur'an, though there was nothing essentially

SUNNA OR ḤADĪTH

wrong in writing down Ḥadīth, nor did the Holy Prophet ever forbid its being done. On the other hand, as late as the conquest of Makka, we find him giving orders himself for the writing down of a certain ḥadīth at the request of a hearer. He also wrote letters, and treaties were also put down in writing, which shows that he never meant that the writing of anything besides the Qur'ān was illegal. ¶ What he feared, as the report clearly shows, was that if his sayings were written down generally like the Qur'ān, the two might get confused together, and the purity of the text of the Holy Qur'ān be affected.

Nor was memory an ~~unreliable~~ means for the preservation of Ḥadīth, for the Holy Qur'ān itself was safely preserved in the memory of the Companions of the Holy Prophet in addition to being committed to writing. In fact, had the Holy Qur'ān been simply preserved in writing, it could not have been handed down intact to future generations. The aid of memory was invoked to make the purity of the text of the Qur'ān doubly sure. The Arab had a wonderfully retentive memory, and he had to store up his knowledge of countless things in his memory. It was in this safe custody that the beautiful poetry of the pre-Islamic days had been kept alive and intact. Indeed, before Islām, writing was but rarely resorted to, and memory was chiefly relied upon in all important matters. Hundreds and even thousands of verses could be recited from memory by one man, and the reciters would also remember the names of the persons through whom those verses had been transmitted to them. Aṣma'ī, a later transmitter, says that he learned twelve thousand verses by heart before he reached his majority ; of Abū Dzamdzam, Aṣma'ī says that he recited verses from a hundred poets in a single sitting ; Sha'bī

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

says that he knew so many verses by heart that he could continue repeating them for a month ; and these verses were the basis of the Arabic vocabulary and even of Arabic grammar. Among the Companions of the Holy Prophet were many who knew by heart thousands of the verses of pre-Islamic poetry, and of these one was 'A'isha, the Prophet's wife. The famous Bukhārī trusted to memory alone for the retention of as many as six hundred thousand ḥadīth¹ and many students corrected their manuscripts by comparing them with what he had only retained in his memory.

The first steps for the preservation of Ḥadīth were Collection of Ḥadīth: thus taken in the lifetime of the first stage. Holy Prophet,¹ but all his followers were not equally interested in the matter, nor had all equal chances of being so. Everyone had to work for his living, while on most of them the defence of the Muslim community against overwhelming odds had placed an additional burden. There was, however, a party of students called the *Ashāb al-Suffa* who lived in the mosque itself, and who were specially equipped for the teaching of religion to the tribes outside Madina. Some of these would go to the market and do a little work to earn livelihood; others would not care to do even that. Of this little band, the most famous was Abū Huraira, who would remain in the Prophet's company at all costs, and store up in his memory everything which the Holy Prophet said or did. His efforts were, from

1. Thus Guillaume writes in the *Traditions of Islam*: "The hadith last quoted do not invalidate the statements that traditions were written down from the mouth of the prophet; the extraordinary importance attached to every utterance of his would naturally lead his followers who were able to write to record his words in order to repeat them to those who clamoured to know what he had said; and there is nothing at all in any demonstrably early writing to suggest that such a practice would be distasteful to Muhammad" (p. 17).

SUNNA OR ḤADITH

Munabbah and 'Abd-Allāh ibn Salām and others. Commentaries on the Holy Qur'an were soon filled with these stories of theirs. And in such like matters, the reports do not go beyond them, and as these do not deal with commandments, so their correctness is not sought after to the extent of acting upon them, and the commentators take them rather carelessly, and they have thus filled up their commentaries with them" (Mq. I, p. 481, ch. *'Ulum al-Qur'an*).

Shāh Walī Allāh writes in a similar strain: "And it is necessary to know that most of the Israelite stories that have found their way into the commentaries and histories are copied from the stories of the Jews and the Christians, and no commandment or belief can be based upon them" (Hj. p. 176, ch. *l'tiṣam bi-l-Kitāb*).

In fact, in some of the commentaries, the reports cited are puerile nonsense. Even the commentary of Ibn Jarīr, with all its value as a literary production, cannot be relied upon. Ibn Kathīr's commentary is, however, an exception, as it contains chiefly the Ḥadīth taken from reliable collections.

Yet another thing to beware of in a discussion on Story-tellers. Ḥadīth is the mixing up of Ḥadīth with stories related by story-tellers.

As in every other nation, there had grown up among the Muslims a class of fable-mongers whose business it was to tickle the fancies of the masses by false stories. These were either taken up from the Jews, Christians and Persians, with whom the Muslims came in contact, or they were simply concocted. The professional story-tellers were called the *quṣṣās* (pl. of *qāṣṣ*, and derived from *qāṣṣa*, meaning *he related a story*), and they seem to have sprung up early, for as Rāzī says, the Caliph 'Alī ordered that whosoever should relate the story of David as the story-tellers (*quṣṣās*) relate it (the

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

reference being to the story taken from the Bible as to David having committed adultery with Uriah's wife), should be given 160 stripes, that being double the punishment of the ordinary slanderer (Rz. VII, p. 187, 38 : 21-25). This shows that the story-teller had begun his work even at that early date, but then it must be remembered that the story-teller was never confounded with the reporter of Ḥadīth, even by the ignorant masses. His vocation, being of a lower status, was necessarily quite distinct. Ḥadīth was regularly taught in schools in the different centres, as I have already shown, and its teachers were in the first instance well-known Companions of the Holy Prophet, such as Abū Huraira, Ibn 'Umar, 'Ā'isha, whose place was later on taken by equally well-known masters of Ḥadīth from among the *Ṭābi'in* (the successors of the Companions). No story-teller, whose sphere of action was limited to some street corner, where he might attract the attention of passers-by and perhaps gather round him a few loiterers, could aspire even to approach a school of Ḥadīth. As a writer quoted by Guillaume (on p. 82 of his book) says : " They collect a great crowd of people round them : one Qāṣṣ stations himself at one end of the street and narrates traditions about the merits of 'Alī, while his fellow stands at the other end of the street exalting the virtues of Abū Bakr. Thus they secure the pence of the Nāṣibī as well as the Shī'i, and divide their gains equally afterwards." It is difficult to believe that such beggars and braggarts could be mistaken for reporters of Ḥadīth by any sensible person ; yet even scholars like Sir William Muir and other famous Orientalists often try to confound the two, and speak of these stories as though they had some connection with Ḥadīth. Even if it be true that some of them have found a place in certain commentaries, whose authors had a love for the curious and gave but scant heed to the sifting of truth from error, the

SUNNA OR ḤADĪTH

Muḥaddithīn, that is, the collectors of Ḥadīth, would never dream of accepting a story from such a source. They knew the story-tellers and their absurdities well enough, and indeed so scrupulous were they in making their selections that they would not accept a report if one of the reporters was known ever to have told a lie or fabricated a report¹ in a single instance. This much every European critic of Ḥadīth must needs admit; how then could such people accept the puerile inventions of the street story-teller who, it was well-known, followed his vocation merely and openly for the few coins it might bring. That there are some incredible stories even in the collections of Ḥadīth is perfectly true, but they are so rare that not the least discredit can justly be thrown on the collections themselves on that account, the reason for their existence being something quite different.

Among all European critics, almost without exception, there is a prevalent idea that the European criticism of Ḥadīth. Muslim critics of Ḥadīth have never gone beyond the transmission line, and that the subject-matter of Ḥadīth has been left quite untouched. Suggestions have also been made that even the Companions of the Holy Prophet were at times so unscrupulous as to fabricate Ḥadīth, while it should be common knowledge that the strictest Muslim critics of the transmitters are all agreed that when a ḥadīth is traced back to a Companion of the Holy Prophet, its authenticity has been placed beyond all question. In the chapter on 'Criticism of Hadith by Muslims,' Guillaume makes the suggestion that Abū Huraira was in the habit

1. In the *Sharḥ Nukhbat al-Fikr*, Ibn Ḥajar, while speaking of *ṭa'n* (i.e. accusation against a transmitter), says that if a transmitter is shown to have told a lie in transmitting a ḥadīth, or even if he is accused of having told a lie, he is discredited (p. 66).

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

of fabricating ḥadīth:—

“A most significant recognition within hadith itself of the untrustworthiness of guarantors is to be found in Bukhārī. Ibn ‘Umar reports that Muhammad ordered all dogs to be killed save sheep-dogs and hounds. Abū Huraira added the word *au zar’in*; whereupon Ibn ‘Umar makes the remark, ‘Abū Huraira owned cultivated land!’ A better illustration of the underlying motive of some hadith can hardly be found” (Tr. Is., p. 78).

The word *zar’in* in the above quotation means *cultivated land*, and the suggestion is that Abū Huraira added this word for personal motives. In the first place, Abū Huraira is not alone in reporting that dogs may be kept for hunting as well as for keeping watch over sheep or tillage (*sar*). Bukhārī reports a ḥadīth from Sufyān ibn Abī Zubair in the following words: “I heard the Messenger of Allāh, may peace and the blessings of Allāh be upon him, saying, Whoever keeps a dog which does not serve him in keeping watch over cultivated land or goats, one *qirat* of his reward is diminished every day. The man who reported from him said, Hast thou heard this from the Messenger of Allāh? He said, Yea, by the Lord of this Mosque” (Bu. 41:3). Now this report clearly mentions watch dogs kept for sheep as well as those kept for tillage, but not dogs kept for hunting, which the Holy Qur’ān explicitly allows (5:4). Abū Huraira’s report in the same chapter, preceding that cited above, expressly mentions all these kinds, watch dogs for sheep or tillage and dogs for hunting, which only shows that Abū Huraira had the more retentive memory. And as for Ibn ‘Umar’s remark, there is not the least evidence that it contained any insinuation against Abū Huraira’s integrity. It may be just an explanatory remark, or a suggestion that Abū Huraira took care to preserve that part of the saying, because he himself had to keep watch dogs for his

SUNNA OR ḤADĪTH

cultivated land. With all the mistakes that Abū Huraira may have made in reporting so many ḥadīth, no critic has ever yet questioned his integrity; in fact, critics are unanimous in maintaining that no Companion of the Holy Prophet ever told a lie. Thus Ibn Ḥajar says: "The Ahl Sunna are unanimous that all (the Companions) are '*adul*, i.e. truthful" (Iṣ. I, p. 6). The word '*adala*, as used regarding transmitters of reports, means that there has been no intentional deviation from the truth, and this is not due merely to the respect in which the Companions are held, for the critics of the transmitters of Ḥadīth never spared any one simply because he held a place of honour in their hearts.

Further on in the same chapter Guillaume asserts that independent thinkers in the second and third century not only questioned the authority of Ḥadīth altogether, but derided the very system:

"However, there was still a large circle outside the orthodox thinkers who rejected the whole system of hadith. They were not concerned to adopt those which happened to fit in with the views and doctrines of the doctors, or even with those which might fairly be held to support their own view of life. So far from being impressed by the earnestness of the traditionists who scrupulously examined the *isnād*, or by the halo of sanctity which had gathered round the early guarantors of tradition, the independent thinkers of the second and third centuries openly mocked and derided the system as a whole and the persons and matters named therein" (Tr. Is., p. 80).

And as evidence in support of these sweeping statements, he adds:

"Some of the most flagrant examples of these lampoons will be found in the Book of Songs, where indecent stories are cast into the form in which tradition was customarily handed down to posterity" (Tr. Is., p. 80).

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

Thus the "independent thinkers" who rejected the system of Ḥadīth and "openly mocked and derided the system as a whole" are only the lampooners mentioned in the concluding portion of the paragraph. The *Aghānī*,¹ the Book of Songs, which is referred to as if it were a collection of lampoons directed against Ḥadīth, is an important collection of ballads by the famous Arabian historian, Abu-l-Faraj 'Alī ibn Ḥusain, commonly known as Iṣfahānī (born in 284 A. H.). I am at a loss to understand why the learned author of the *Traditions of Islam* should look upon it as an attempt to mock and deride the system of Ḥadīth. There may be some indecent stories connected with these songs, but the presence of such stories does not alter the essential character of the work which is in the nature of an historical collection.² Neither in the book itself nor in any earlier writing is there a word to show that the collection was made in a spirit of mockery; and as to the fact that with the songs collected are given the names of those through whom the songs were handed down, that was the common method adopted in all historical writings and collections of the time, as may be readily seen by reference to the historical writings of Ibn Sa'd, or Ibn Jarīr; and it was chosen not to insult the method of transmission of Ḥadīth but simply on account of its historical value. Guillaume has also mentioned the names of two great Muslim thinkers, Ibn

1. *The Encyclopædia of Islām* speaks of the *Aghānī* in the following words: "His chief work, which alone has been preserved, is the great *Kutūb al-Aghānī*; in this he collected the songs which were popular in his time, adding the accounts of their authors and their origin which appeared of interest to him With every song there is indicated, besides the text, the an according to the musical terminology to these are added very detailed accounts concerning the poet, often also concerning composers and singers of both sexes. In spite of its unsystematic order this book is our most important authority not only for literary history till into the third century of the Hidjra, but also for the history of civilization" (Art. Abu 'l-Faradī)

2. There are indecent stories in some of the books of the Bible, but still the Bible does not cease to have a sacred character.

SUNNA OR ḤADĪTH

Qutaiba and Ibn Khaldūn in this connection, but they neither rejected the Ḥadīth system as a whole, nor ever mocked or derided that system or the persons and matters mentioned therein. Ibn Qutaiba rather defended the Qur'an and Ḥadīth against scepticism, and Guillaume has himself quoted with approval Dr. Nicholson's remarks that "every impartial student will admit the justice of Ibn Qutayba's claim that no religion has such historical attestations as Islam—*laysa li-ummatin mina 'l-umami asnādun ka-asnādihim*" (Tr. Is., p. 77) The Arabic word *asnād* used in the original, and translated as historical attestations, is the plural of *sanad* which means *an authority*, and refers especially to the reporters on whose authority Ḥadīth is accepted. Thus Ibn Qutaiba claims for Ḥadīth a higher authority than any other history of the time, and the claim is admitted by both Nicholson and Guillaume. In the *Encyclopædia of Islām* it is plainly stated that Ibn Qutaiba "defended the Qur'an and Tradition against the attacks of philosophic scepticism." Ibn Khaldūn, too, never attacked Ḥadīth itself, and his strictures are applicable only to stories which have generally been rejected by the Muḥaddithīn.

There is no doubt that the collectors of Ḥadīth attached the utmost importance to the trustworthiness of the narrators. Canons of criticism of Ḥadīth as accepted by Muslims. As Guillaume says: "Inquiries were made as to the character of the guarantors, whether they were morally and religiously satisfactory, whether they were tainted with heretical doctrines, whether they had a reputation for truthfulness, and had the ability to transmit what they had themselves heard. Finally, it was necessary that they should be competent witnesses whose testimony would be accepted in a court of civil law" (Tr. Is., p. 83). More than this, they tried their best to find out that the report was traceable to the Holy Prophet

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

through the various necessary stages. Even the Companions of the Holy Prophet did not accept any ḥadīth which was brought to their notice until they were fully satisfied that it came from the Holy Prophet. But the Muḥaddithīn went beyond the narrators, and they had rules of criticism which were applied to the subject-matter of Ḥadīth. In judging whether a certain ḥadīth was spurious or genuine, the collectors not only made a thorough investigation regarding the trustworthiness of the transmitters but also applied other rules of criticism which are in no way inferior to modern methods.) Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz has summarized these rules in the '*Ujala Nafi'a*', and according to them a report was not accepted under any of the following circumstances:

1. If it was opposed to recognized historical facts.
2. If the reporter was a Shī'a and the ḥadīth was of the nature of an accusation against the Companions of the Holy Prophet, or if the reporter was a Khārijī and the ḥadīth was of the nature of an accusation against a member of the Prophet's family. If, however, such a report was corroborated by independent testimony, it was accepted.
3. If it was of such a nature that to know it and act upon it was incumbent upon all, and it was reported by a single man.
4. If the time and the circumstances of its narration contained evidence of its forgery.¹

1. An example of this is met with in the following incident related in *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān*. Hārūn al-Rashīd loved pigeons. A pigeon was sent to him as a present. Qādzi Abu-l-Bakhtari was sitting by him at the time, and to please the monarch he narrated a ḥadīth to the effect that there should be no betting except in racing or archery or flying of birds. Now the concluding words were a forgery, and the Caliph knew this. So when the Qādzi was gone, he ordered the pigeon to be slaughtered, adding that the fabrication of this portion of the ḥadīth was due to that pigeon. The collectors of Ḥadīth on that account did not accept any ḥadīth of Abu-l-Bakhtari.

SUNNA OR ḤADĪTH

5. If it was against reason¹ or against the plain teachings of Islām.²

6. If it mentioned an incident, which, had it happened, would have been known to and reported by large numbers, while as a matter of fact that incident was not reported by any one except the particular reporter.

7. If its subject-matter or words were *rakik* (i. e. unsound or incorrect); for instance, the words were not in accordance with Arabic idiom, or the subject-matter was unbecoming the Prophet's dignity.

8. (If it contained threatenings of heavy punishment for ordinary sins or promises of mighty reward for slight good deeds)

9. If it spoke of the reward of prophets and messengers to the doer of good.

10. If the narrator confessed that he fabricated the report.

Similar rules of criticism are laid down by Mullā 'Alī Qārī in his work entitled *Maudzu'at*, and by Ibn al-Jauzī for which see the *Fath al-Mughīth*, as well as by Ibn Ḥajar for which see *Nuzhat al-Nazar*.

In addition to these rules of criticism, which I think leave little to be desired, there is another very important test whereby the trustworthiness of Ḥadīth may be judged, and it is a test the application whereof was commanded by the Holy Prophet himself. "There will be narrators," he is reported to have said, "reporting

The Qur'ān as the greatest test for judging Ḥadīth.

the trustworthiness of Ḥadīth may

be judged, and it is a test the application whereof was

commanded by the Holy Prophet himself. "There will

be narrators," he is reported to have said, "reporting

the trustworthiness of Ḥadīth may

be judged, and it is a test the application whereof was

1. " Ibn 'Abd al Barr (d. 463) and Al Nawawi (d. 676) do not hesitate to assail traditions which seem to them to be contrary to reason or derogatory to the dignity of the prophet " (Tr. Is., p. 94).

2. Examples of this are the ḥadīth relating to *Qadzū 'Umrī*, i. e., going through the performance of the *rak'as* of daily prayers on the last Friday in the month of *Ramadzān* as an atonement for not saying prayers regularly, or the ḥadīth which says, Do not eat melon until you slaughter it.

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

Ḥadīth from me, so judge by the Qur'ān; if a report agrees with the Qur'ān, accept it; otherwise, reject it." The genuineness of this ḥadīth is beyond all question, as it stands on the soundest basis.¹ That Ḥadīth was in vogue in the time of the Holy Prophet is a fact admitted by even European critics, as I have already shown, and that the authority of the Qur'ān was higher than that of Ḥadīth appears from numerous circumstances. "I am no more than a man," the Prophet is reported to have said according to a very reliable ḥadīth, "When I order you anything respecting religion receive it, and when I order anything about the affairs of the world, I am no more than a man" (MM. 1: 6-i). There is another saying of his: "My sayings do not abrogate the word of Allāh, but the word of Allāh can abrogate my sayings" (MM. 1: 6-iii). The ḥadīth relating to Mu'adh which has been quoted elsewhere,² places the Holy Qur'ān first, and after that Ḥadīth. 'Ā'ishā used to repeat a verse

1. A ḥadīth, however sound the statement it contains and however great the authority on which it is based, is readily condemned as a fabrication by European critics when it does not suit their canons of criticism. Thus Guillaume, after quoting the well-known ḥadīth, which is reported by a very large number of Companions—so large that not the least doubt can be entertained as to its genuineness—"Whoever shall repeat of me that which I have not said, his resting-place shall be in hell," remarks: "A study of the theological systems of the world would hardly reveal a more nerve attempt to tread the *ṣirāṭu-l-mustaḳīm*" (Tr. Is., p. 79). Referring to the same ḥadīth, the same author remarks: "In order to combat false traditions they invented others equally destitute of prophetic authority" (Tr. Is., p. 78). Such irresponsible remarks ill befit a work of criticism. The genuineness of this ḥadīth is beyond all doubt, and it has been accepted as such by collectors of reports. It cannot be denied that there are theological systems whose basic principles are the concoctions of pious men, but in Islām the very details are matters of history, and "pious lies" could not find here any ground whereon to prosper.

2. On being appointed Governor of Yaman, Mu'adh was asked by the Holy Prophet as to the rule by which he would abide. "By the law of the Qur'ān," he replied. "But if you do not find any direction therein," asked the Prophet. "Then I will act according to the Sunna of the Prophet," was the reply. And the Holy Prophet approved of it (AD. 23: 11).

SUNNA OR ḤADĪTH

of the Holy Qur'an on hearing words from the mouth of the Holy Prophet when she thought that the purport of what the Prophet said did not agree with the Holy Qur'an. The great Imām Bukhārī quotes a verse of the Holy Qur'an whenever he finds one suiting his text, before citing a ḥadīth, thus showing that the Qur'an holds precedence over Ḥadīth, and by common consent of the Muslim community, the *Bukhārī*, which is considered to be the most trustworthy of all collections of Ḥadīth, is looked upon as *asahḥ al-kutubi ba'da Kitāb-Allah*, or the most reliable of books *after* the Book of God. This verdict of the community as a whole is proof enough that even if the *Bukhārī* disagrees with the Qur'an, it is the *Bukhārī* that must be rejected and not the Book of God. And as has already been stated at the commencement of this chapter, Ḥadīth is only an explanation of the Qur'an and hence also the Qur'an must have precedence over the Ḥadīth. And last of all, both Muslim and non-Muslim historians are agreed that the Holy Qur'an has been handed down intact, every word and every letter of it, while Ḥadīth cannot claim that purity, as it was chiefly the substance of sayings that was reported. All these considerations show that the saying that Ḥadīth must be judged by the Holy Qur'an is quite in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Prophet, and there is really no ground for doubting its genuineness. Even if there were no such ḥadīth, the test therein suggested would still have been the right test, because the Holy Qur'an deals with the principles of the Islamic law while Ḥadīth deals with its details, and it is just and reasonable that only such details should be accepted as are in consonance with the principles. Again, as the Prophet is plainly represented in the Holy Qur'an as not following "augh save that which is revealed" to him (6 : 50 ; 7 : 203 46:9), and as not disobeying a word of that which

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

was revealed to him (6:15; 10:15), it follows clearly that if there is anything in Ḥadīth which is not in consonance with the Holy Qur'an, it could not have proceeded from the Prophet and hence must be rejected.

But the question arises: Did all the collectors of

How far did the Muḥ-addithīn apply these tests.

Ḥadīth pay equal regard to the above canons of criticism? It is pretty clear that they did not. The

earliest of them, Bukhārī, is, by a happy coincidence, also the soundest of them. He was not only most careful in accepting the trustworthiness of the narrators of Ḥadīth, but he also paid the utmost attention to the last of the critical tests enumerated above, namely, the test of judging Ḥadīth by the Qur'an. Many of his books and chapters are headed by Quranic verses, and occasionally he has contented himself with a verse of the Qur'an in support of his text. This shows that his criticism of Ḥadīth was not limited to a mere examination of the guarantors as every European critic seems to think, but that he also applied other tests. The act of criticism was, of course, applied mentally and one should not expect a record of the processes of that criticism in the book itself. So with the other collectors of Ḥadīth. They followed the necessary rules of criticism but were not all equally careful, nor did they all possess equal critical acumen or experience. Indeed, they sometimes intentionally relaxed the rules of criticism, both as regards the examination of the narrators and the critical tests. They also made a distinction between ḥadīth relating to matters of jurisprudence and other ḥadīth, such as those having to do with past history or with prophecies, or with other material which had no bearing on the practical life of man. We are clearly told that they were stricter in matters of jurisprudence than in other ḥadīth. Thus Baihaqī

SUNNA OR ḤADĪTH

says in the *Kitāb al-Madkhal*: "When we narrate from the Holy Prophet in what is allowed and what is prohibited, we are strict in the chain of transmission and in the criticism of the narrators, but when we relate reports on the merits of people, and about reward and punishment, we are lax in the line of transmission and overlook the defects of the narrators." And Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal says: "Ibn Ishāq is a man from whom such reports may be taken, *i.e.*, those which relate to *sīra* (life of the Prophet), but when the question is about what is allowed and what is forbidden, we have recourse to a (strong) people like this, and he inserted the fingers of one hand amid those of the other," conjoining the hands, and thus pointing to the strength of character of the transmitters.

It must, however, be admitted that most of the collectors of Ḥadīth paid more attention to the investigation of the narrators than to the other critical tests, and they were justified in this, for their object was to produce reliable collections of Ḥadīth, and, therefore, their first concern was to see that the ḥadīth could be authentically traced back to the Holy Prophet through a trustworthy chain of narrators. This part of the criticism was the more essential, as the longer the chain of narrators, the more difficult would it have been to test their reliability. Other tests could be applied to any ḥadīth at any time, and the lapse of a thousand years could in no way affect the value of these tests, but the passing away of another century would have rendered the task of the examination of the chain of narrators so difficult as to be for all practical purposes impossible. Hence the collectors of Ḥadīth rightly focussed their attention on this test. Nor did the work of collecting the Ḥadīth close the door to further criticism. The Muḥaddithin contented themselves with

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

producing collections reliable in the main, and left the rest of the work of criticism to future generations. They never claimed faultlessness for their works; even Bukhārī did not do that. They exercised their judgments to the best of their ability, but they never claimed, nor does any Muslim claim on their behalf, infallibility of judgment. In fact, they had started a work which was to continue for generation after generation of the Muslims. If possible, a hundred more canons of criticism might be laid down, but it would still be the judgment of one man as to whether a certain ḥadīth must be accepted or rejected. Every collection is the work of one Muḥaddith, and even if ninety-nine per cent. of his judgments are correct, there is still room for the exercise of judgment by others. The Western critic errs in thinking that infallibility is claimed for any of the collections of Ḥadīth, and that the exercise of judgment by a certain Muḥaddith precludes the exercise of judgment by others as to the reliability of a report.

We must also remember that however much the collectors of Ḥadīth might have differed in their judgments as to the necessity for rigour in the rules of criticism, they set to work with minds absolutely free from bias or external influence. They would lay down their lives rather than swerve a hair's breadth from what they deemed to be the truth. Many of the famous Imāms preferred punishment or jail to uttering a word against their convictions. The fact is generally admitted as regards the Umayyad rule. As Guillaume says: "They laboured to establish the sunna of the community as it was, or as it was thought to have been, under the prophet's rule, and so they found their bitterest enemies in the ruling house" (Tr. Is., p. 42). The independence of thought of the great Muslim divines under the Abbaside rule had not deteriorated

SUNNA OR ḤADĪTH

in the least. They would not even accept office under a Muslim ruler: "It is well-known," says Th. W. Juynboll in the *Encyclopædia of Islām*, "that many pious, independent men in those days deemed it wrong and refused to enter the service of the Government or to accept an office dependent on it" (p. 91).

Ibn Hajar has dealt with different classes of Ḥadīth in the *Sharḥ Nukhbat al-Fikr* at great length. The most important division of Ḥadīth is into *mutawātir* (continuous) and *aḥād* (isolated). A ḥadīth is said to be *mutawātir* (lit. *repeated successively* or *by one after another*) when it is reported by such a large number that it is impossible that they should have agreed upon falsehood, so that the very fact that it is commonly accepted makes its authority unquestionable. To this category belong ḥadīth that have been accepted by every Muslim generation down from the time of the Holy Prophet.¹ The *mutawātir* ḥadīth are accepted without criticizing their narrators. All other ḥadīth are called *aḥād* (pl. of *aḥād* or *wahīd* meaning *one, i.e., isolated*). The *aḥād* are divided into three classes, *mashhūr* (lit. *well-known*), technically ḥadīth which are reported through more than two channels at every stage; *‘azīz* (lit. *strong*), that is, ḥadīth that are not reported through less than two channels; and *gharīb* (lit. *strange* or *unfamiliar*), namely ḥadīth in whose link of narrators there is only a single person at any stage. It should be noted that in this classification the condition as to the ḥadīth being narrated by more than two or two or less than two persons at any stage applies only to the three generations

1. There is a difference of opinion as to the number of reporters of the *mutawātir* ḥadīth, some considering four to be the minimum required, others five or seven or ten, others still raising it still further to forty or even seventy. But the commonly accepted opinion is that it is only the extensive acceptance of a ḥadīth which raises it to the rank of *mutawātir*.

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

following the Companions of the Holy Prophet, *i.e.*, the *tabi'un* or *atbā'al-tabi'in*, or *atbā'u atbā'il-tabi'in*. Of the two chief classes of ḥadīth, the *mutawātir* and the *aḥad*, the first are all accepted so far as the line of transmission is concerned, but the latter are further sub-divided into two classes, *maqbul* or those which may be accepted, and *mardūd*, or those which may be rejected. Those that are *maqbul*, or acceptable, are again sub-divided into two classes, *ṣaḥīḥ* (lit. *sound*), and *ḥasan* (lit. *fair*). The condition for a ḥadīth being *ṣaḥīḥ* or sound is that its narrators are *'adl* (men whose sayings and decisions are approved or whom desire does not deviate from the right course), and *tamm al-dzabt* (guarding or taking care of ḥadīth effectually); that it is *muttaṣil al-sanad*, *i.e.*, that the authorities narrating it should be in contact with each other, so that there is no break in the transmission; that it is *ghairu mu'allal* *i.e.*, that there is no *'illa* or defect in it; and that it is not *shādhdh* (lit. *a thing apart from the general mass*), *i.e.*, against the general trend of Ḥadīth, or at variance with the overwhelming evidence of other ḥadīth. A ḥadīth that falls short of this high standard, and fulfils the other conditions but does not fulfil the condition of its narrators being *tamm al-dzabt* (guarding or taking care of ḥadīth effectually), is called *ḥasan* or fair. Such a ḥadīth is regarded as *ṣaḥīḥ* or sound when the deficiency of effectual guarding is made up for by the large number of its transmitters. A *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth is accepted unless there is stronger testimony to rebut what is stated therein. I have already said that it is recognized by the Muḥaddithīn that a ḥadīth may be unacceptable either because of some defect in its transmitters, or because its subject-matter is unacceptable. Thus Ibn Ḥajar says that among the reasons for which a ḥadīth may be rejected is its subject-matter. For example, if a

SUNNA OR ḤADĪTH

ḥadīth contradicts the Holy Qur'ān or recognized Sunna or the unanimous verdict of the Muslim community or common-sense, it is not accepted. As regards defects in transmission, a ḥadīth is said to be *marfū'* when it is traced back to the Holy Prophet without any defect in transmission, *muttaṣal* when its *isnād* is uninterrupted, *mauqūf* when it does not go back to the Prophet, *mu'an'an* (from '*an* meaning *from*) when it is linked by a word which does not show personal contact between two narrators, and *mu'allaq* (suspended) when the name of one or more transmitters is missing (being *munqaṭa'* if the name is missing from the middle, and *mursal* if it is from the end)

CHAPTER III.

IJTIHĀD OR EXERCISE OF JUDGMENT.

Ijtihād is the third source from which the laws of Islām are drawn. The word itself is derived from the root *jahd* which means *exerting oneself to the utmost or to the best of one's ability*, and Ijtihād, which literally conveys the same significance, is technically applicable to *a lawyer's exerting the faculties of mind to the utmost for the purpose of forming an opinion in a case of law respecting a doubtful and difficult point (LL.)*.

Reasoning or the exercise of judgment, in theological Value of reason as well as in legal matters, plays a recognized. very important part in the religion of Islām, and the value of reason is expressly recognized in the Holy Qur'an. It appeals to reason again and again, and is full of exhortations like the following: "Do you not reflect?" "Do you not understand?" "Have you no sense?" "There are signs in this for a people who reflect;" "There are signs in this for a people who understand;" and so on. Those who do not use their reasoning faculty are compared to animals, and are spoken of as being deaf, dumb and blind:

"And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out to that which hears no more than a call and a cry: deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand" (2 : 171).

"They have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear; they are as cattle, nay, they are in worse error" (7 : 179).

IJTIHĀD

“ The vilest of animals, in Allāh's sight, are the deaf and the dumb, who do not understand ” (8 : 22).

“ Or dost thou think that most of them do hear or understand ? They are simply as cattle ; nay, they are straying farther off from the path ” (25 : 44).

And while those who do not exercise their reason or judgment are condemned, those who do it are praised :

“ In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, there are surely signs for men of understanding : Those who remember Allāh standing and sitting and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth ” (3 : 189,190).

The Qur'an does recognize revelation as a source of knowledge higher than reason, but at the same time admits that the truth of the principles established by revelation may be judged by reason, and hence it is that it repeatedly appeals to reason and denounces those who do not use their reasoning faculty. It also recognizes the necessity of the exercise of judgment in order to arrive at a decision : “And when there comes to them news of security or fear, they spread it abroad ; and if they had referred it to the Apostle and to those in authority among them, those among them who can *search out the knowledge* of it would have known it ” (4 : 83). The original word for the italicized portion is *yastanbitun* from *istinbat*, which is derived from *nabat al-bi'ra*, meaning *he dug out a well and brought forth water*. The *istinbat* of the jurist is derived from this, and it signifies the searching out of the hidden meaning by his *ijtihad* and is the same as *istikhrāj*, i.e., analogical deduction (TA.). The verse thus recognizes the principle of the exercise of the judgment which is the same as Ijtihad, and though the occasion on which it is mentioned is a particular one, the principle recognized is a general principle.

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

Ijtihād or the exercise of the judgment is expressly recognized in Ḥadīth as the means by which a decision may be arrived at when there is no direction in the Holy Qur'ān or Ḥadīth. The following ḥadīth is regarded as the basis of Ijtihād in Islām: "On being appointed Governor of Yaman, Mu'ādh was asked by the Holy Prophet as to the rule by which he would abide. He replied, 'By the law of the Qur'ān.' 'But if you do not find any direction therein,' asked the Prophet. 'Then I will act according to the Sunna of the Prophet,' was the reply. 'But if you do not find any direction in the Sunna,' he was again asked. 'Then I will exercise my judgment (*ajtahidu*) and act on that,' came the reply. The Prophet raised his hands and said: 'Praise be to Allāh Who guides the messenger of His Apostle as He pleases'" (AD. 23 : 11). This ḥadīth shows not only that the Holy Prophet approved of the exercise of judgment, but also that his Companions were well aware of the principle, and that Ijtihād by others than the Prophet was freely resorted to when necessary, even in the Prophet's lifetime.

It is a mistake to suppose that the exercise of judgment to meet the new circumstances only came into vogue with the four great Imāms whose opinion is now generally accepted in the Islamic world. The work had begun, as already shown, in the Prophet's lifetime, since it was impossible to refer every case to him. After the Prophet's death, the principle of Ijtihād obtained a wider prevalence, and as new areas of population were added to the material and spiritual realm of Islām, the need of resorting to Ijtihād became greater. Nor did the Khalīfa, the Commander of the Faithful, arrogate all authority to himself. He had a council to which every

IJTIHĀD

important case was referred, and the decision of this council by a majority of votes was accepted by the Khalifa as well as by the Muslim public. Thus Sayūṭī writes in his *History of the Caliphs* in the chapter relating to Abū Bakr (sec., *his knowledge*) on the authority of Abu-l-Qāsim Baghwī reporting from Maimūn son of Mihrān :

“ When a case came before Abū Bakr, he used to consult the Book of Allāh; if he found anything in it by which he could decide, he did so; if he did not find it in the Book, and he knew of a sunna of the Messenger of Allāh, he decided according to it; and if he was unable to find anything there, he used to question the Muslims if they knew of any decision of the Holy Prophet in a matter of that kind, and a company of people thus gathered round him, every one of whom stated what he knew from the Prophet, and Abū Bakr would say, Praise be to Allāh Who has kept among us those who remember what the Prophet said; but if he was unable to find anything in the Sunna of the Prophet, he gathered together the heads of the people and the best of them and consulted them, and if they agreed upon one opinion (by a majority) he decided accordingly ” (T Kh. p. 40).

It is true that it was not exactly a legislative assembly in the modern sense, but the nucleus of a legislative assembly can clearly be seen in this council which decided all important affairs and, when necessary, promulgated laws. It was also supreme in both religious and temporal matters. The same rule was followed by ‘Umar who resorted to Ijtihād very freely, but took care always to gather the most learned Companions and consult with them. When there was a difference of opinion, that of the majority was made the basis of decision. Besides this council, there were great

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

individual teachers, such as the Lady Ā'ishā, Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn 'Umar and other great mujtahids of the day, whose opinion was highly revered. Decisions were given and laws made and promulgated subject only to the one condition that they were neither contrary to the Holy Qur'an nor to the Sunna of the Prophet. And decisions of those earlier jurists were followed by the later jurists so long as they were not in disagreement with the Book of God and the Sunna of His Apostle.

In the second century of Hijra arose the great jurists who codified the Islamic law according to the need of their time.

Imām Abū Ḥanīfa

The first of these, and the one who claims the allegiance of the greater part of the Muslim world, was Abū Ḥanīfa Nu'mān ibn Thābit who was born at Baṣra in 80 A. H. (699 A. D.), being a Persian by descent. His centre of activity, however, was at Kūfa, and he passed away in 150 A. H. (767 A. D.). The basis of his analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) was the Holy Qur'an, and he accepted Ḥadīth only when he was fully satisfied as to its authenticity; and as the great collectors of Ḥadīth had not yet commenced the work of collection, and Kūfa itself was not a great centre of that branch of learning, naturally Imām Abū Ḥanīfa accepted very few ḥadīth, and always resorted to the Holy Qur'an for his juristic views. Later on when Ḥadīth was collected and became more in vogue, the followers of the Ḥanafī system, as Abū Ḥanīfa's school of thought was called, introduced into it more ḥadīth. Imām Abū Ḥanīfa had two famous disciples, Imām Muḥammad and Imām Abū Yūsuf, and it is mostly their views of the great master's teaching that now form the basis of the Ḥanafī system. Abū Ḥanīfa was a man of highly independent character and when, towards the close of his life, the then Muslim Government wanted to win him over to its side, he

IJTIHĀD

preferred imprisonment to an office which would have interfered with his independence of thought. On one occasion, he was flogged for eleven days consecutively, receiving ten strokes every day. His system is not only the first in point of time but is also that which claims allegiance from the great majority of Muslims, and a development of which on the right lines would have resulted in immense benefit to the Muslim world. (It was he who first directed attention to the great value of *qiyās* or analogical reasoning in legislation. He also laid down the principle of equity, whereby not only could new laws be made, but even logical conclusions could be controverted when they proved to be inequitable. He recognized the authority of customs and usages, and both exercised and inculcated independence of judgment to such an extent that he and his followers were called *ahl al-ra'y* (upholders of private judgment) by the followers of other schools.

(Imām Mālik ibn Anas was born at Madīna in the year 93 A.H. (713 A.D.), and worked and died there at the age of eighty-two. He limited himself almost entirely to the ḥadīth which he found in Madīna, relating more especially to the practice which prevailed there, and his system of jurisprudence is based entirely on the traditions and practices of the people of Madīna. He was scrupulously careful in giving judgment, and whenever he had the least doubt as to the correctness of his decision, he would say, "I do not know." His book, the Muwaṭṭā, though a comparatively small collection of Ḥadīth, and limited only to the ḥadīth and practices of the people of Madīna, is the first work of its kind, and one of the most authoritative.)

(The third Imām, Abū 'Abd-Allah Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, was born in Palestine in the year 150 A. H. (767 A. D.).

Imām Shāfi'ī.

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

He passed his youth at Makka but he worked for the most part in Egypt, where he died in 204 A. H. In his day he was unrivalled for his knowledge of the Holy Qur'an, and took immense pains in studying the Sunna, travelling from place to place in search of information. He was intimately acquainted with the Ḥanafī and the Malikī systems, but that which he himself founded was based largely on Ḥadīth, as distinguished from the Ḥanafī system which was founded on the Holy Qur'an and made very little use of Ḥadīth. Over the Malikī system, which is also based on Sunna, it had this advantage that the Ḥadīth made use of by Shāfi'i was more extensive, and was collected from different centres, while Imām Malik contented himself only with what he found at Madīna.)

(The last of the four great Imāms was Aḥmad ibn Imām Aḥmad. Ḥanbal who was born at Baghdād in the year 164 A. H. and died there in 241. He too made a very extensive study of Ḥadīth, his famous work on the subject—the Musnad of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal—containing nearly thirty thousand ḥadīth. This monumental compilation, prepared by his son 'Abd-Allāh, was based on the material collected by the Imām himself. In the Musnad, however, as already remarked, ḥadīth are not arranged according to subject-matter but under the name of the Companion to whom a ḥadīth is ultimately traced. But though the Musnad of Aḥmad contains a large number of ḥadīth, it does not apply those strict rules of criticism favoured by men like Bukhārī and Muslim. It was indeed only an arrangement according to subject-matter that made a criticism of Ḥadīth possible, and the Musnads, in which ḥadīth relating to the same matter were scattered throughout the book, could not devote much attention to the subject-matter, and were not even sufficiently strict in scrutinizing the line of transmission. Accordingly, the Musnad of

IJTIHĀD

Aḥmad cannot claim the same reliability as regards its material as can the collections of the Muḥaddithīn. From the very nature of his exertions, it is evident that Imān Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal made very little use of reasoning and as he depended almost entirely on Ḥadīth, the result was that he admitted even the weakest ḥadīth. I would thus appear that from the system of Abū Ḥanīfa who applied reasoning very freely and sought to deduce all questions from the Holy Qur'an by the help of reason, the system of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal is distinguished by the fact that it makes the least possible use of reason and thus there was a marked falling off in the last of the four great Imāms from the high ideals of the first so far as the application of reason to matters of religion is concerned. Even the system of Abū Ḥanīfa himself deteriorated on account of the later jurists of that school not developing the master's high ideal, with the consequence that the world of Islām gradually shut the door of Ijtihād upon itself, and stagnation reigned in the place of healthy development.)

The four Imāms, who are accepted by the entire
Different methods of formulating new laws. Sunni world of Islām, are thus agreed in giving to Ijtihād a very important place in legislation, and the Shi'as attached to it an even greater importance. Ijmā', of which I shall speak later and which means really the Ijtihād of many, and Ijtihād are thus looked upon as two more sources of the Islamic law along with the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna, though only the latter two are regarded as *al-adillat-al-qat'iyya* or absolute arguments or authorities, the former two being called *al-adillat-al-ijtihādiyya* or argument obtained by exertion. The sphere of Ijtihād is a very wide one, since it seeks to fulfil all the requirements of the Muslim community which are not met with expressly

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

in the Holy Qur'an and the Ḥadīth. The great mujtahids of Islām have endeavoured to meet these demands by various methods, technically known as *qiyās* (analogical reasoning), *istiḥsān* (equity), *Istiṣlah* (public good), and *istidlāl* (inference). Before proceeding further, a brief description of these methods may be given to show how new laws are evolved by adopting them.¹

The most important of these methods, and the one which has almost a universal sanction, is *qiyās* which means literally *measuring by* or *comparing with*, or *judging by comparing with, a thing*, while the jurists apply it to "a process of deduction by which the law of a text is applied to cases which, though not covered by the language, are governed by the reason of the text" (MJ.). Briefly it may be described as reasoning based on analogy. A case comes up for decision, which is not expressly provided for either in the Holy Qur'an or in Ḥadīth. (The jurist looks for a case resembling it in the Holy Qur'an or in Ḥadīth, and, by reasoning on the basis of analogy, arrives at a decision. (Thus it is an extension of the law as met with in the Holy Qur'an and Ḥadīth, but it is not of equal authority with them, for no jurist has ever claimed infallibility for analogical deductions, or for decisions and laws which are based on *qiyās*;) and it is a recognized principle of Ijtihād that the mujtahid may err in his judgment. Hence it is that so many differences of juristic deductions exist even among the highest authorities. (From its very nature the *qiyās* of one generation may be rejected by a following generation.

1. Sir 'Abd al-Raḥīm has very ably dealt with this subject in his *Muhammadian Jurisprudence* where he has referred to original authorities. I am indebted to him for the material used here.

IJTIHĀD

Istihsān which literally means *considering a thing to be good or preferring it*, is in the technology of the jurists *the exercise of private judgment, not on the basis of analogy, but on that of public good or the interests of justice*. According to the Ḥanafī system, when a deduction based on analogy is not acceptable, either because it is against the broader rules of justice, or because it is not in the interests of the public good, and is likely to cause undue inconvenience to those to whom it is applied, the jurist is at liberty to reject the same, and to adopt instead a rule which is conducive to public good, or is in consonance with the broader rules of justice. This method is peculiar to the Ḥanafī system, but owing to strong opposition from the other schools of thought, it has not, even in that system, been developed to its full extent. The principle underlying it is, however, a very sound one and is quite in accordance with the spirit of the Holy Qur'an. There is, moreover, less liability to error in this method than in far-fetched analogy, which often leads to narrow results opposed to the broad spirit of the Holy Qur'an. In the system of Imām Mālik, a similar rule is adopted under the name of *istiṣlāḥ* which means *a deduction of law based on considerations of public good*.

Istidlāl literally signifies *the inferring of one thing from another*, and the two chief sources recognized for such inferences are customs and usages, and the laws of religions revealed before Islām. It is recognized that customs and usages which prevailed in Arabia at the advent of Islām, and which were not abrogated by Islām, have the force of law. On the same principle, customs and usages prevailing anywhere, when not opposed to the spirit of the Quranic teachings or not expressly forbidden by the Qur'an, would be admissible, because, according to a

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

well-known maxim of the jurists, "permissibility is the original principle," and therefore what has not been declared unlawful is permissible. In fact, as a custom is recognized by a vast majority of the people, it is looked upon as having the force of *Ijmā'*, and, hence, it has precedence over a rule of law derived from analogy. The only condition required is that it must not be opposed to a clear text of the Holy Qur'an or a reliable *ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet. The Ḥanafī law lays special stress on the value of customs and usages. It is thus laid down in *Al-Ashbah wa-l-Nazā'ir*: "Many decisions of law are based on usage and customs, so much so that it has been taken as a principle of laws" (M.J.). As regards laws revealed previous to Islām, opinion is divided. According to some jurists, all such laws as have not been expressly abrogated have the force of law even now, while according to others they have not. According to the Ḥanafī system, those laws of the previous religions are binding which have been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an without being abrogated.

The word *Ijmā'* is derived from *jam'* which means *collecting or gathering together*, and *ijmā'* carries the double significance of *composing and settling a thing which has been unsettled* and hence *determining and resolving upon an affair*, and also *agreeing or uniting in opinion* (LL.). In the terminology of the Muslim jurists, *Ijmā'* means a consensus of opinion of the mujtahids, or an agreement of the Muslim jurists, of a particular age on a question of law.¹ This agreement is inferred in three ways; firstly, by *qaul* (word), *i.e.* by recognized mujtahids expressing an opinion on the point in question; secondly, by *fi'l* (deed), *i.e.* when there is unanimity in practice;

1. For the material under this head I am indebted to Sir 'Abd al-Raḥīm.

IJTIHĀD

and thirdly by *sukūt* (silence), *i.e.* when the mujtahids do not controvert an opinion expressed by one or more of them. It is generally held that *Ijmā'* means the consensus of opinion of mujtahids only, and those who are not learned in law do not participate in it, but some are of opinion that *Ijmā'* means the agreement of all Muslims, infants or lunatics only being excluded.) There is a difference of opinion as to whether *Ijmā'* is confined to a particular place or to one or more particular generations. Imām Mālik based his *Ijtihād* on the consensus of opinion of Madīna people. Theoretically such a limitation is untenable, as learned men were not confined to Madīna, and were sent out to outlying parts of the country even in the Prophet's lifetime. (The more generally received opinion is that men of all places must be included.) Again, the Sunnī schools of thought exclude the Shi'a mujtahids from the purview of *Ijmā'*, and *vice versa*. The Shi'as further hold that only the descendants of 'Alī and the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima are the proper persons to make an *Ijtihād*. Among the Sunnīs, some jurists are of opinion that *Ijmā'* is restricted only to the Companions of the Holy Prophet, others extending it to the next generation or the *Ṭabī'in*, but the general opinion is that *Ijma'* is not confined to any one generation, nor to any one country, and therefore only the consensus of opinion of all the mujtahids of all countries in any one age is an effective *Ijmā'*, and this is almost an impossibility.

There is considerable difference of opinion as to whether an effective *Ijmā'* is formed by a majority of the mujtahids or by the agreement of the entire body of them. The majority of the jurists require the unanimity of opinion of all the jurists of a particular age, but important jurists have held the opposite view. Even the majority hold that if there is an overwhelming preponderance of mujtahids holding a certain view,

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

that view is valid and binding, though not absolute (*Mkh.* II, p. 35; *JJ.* III, p. 291). *Ijmā'* is said to be complete when all the mujtahids of a particular age have come to an agreement on a certain question, though according to some it is necessary that all these mujtahids should have passed away without changing their opinion on that question. Some go still further and assert that no *Ijmā'* is effective unless it is shown that no jurist born in that age has expressed a contrary opinion.

When *Ijmā'* is established on a point, its effect is that no single jurist is permitted to re-open it, unless some jurist of the age in which the *Ijmā'* came about had expressed a different view. One *Ijmā'* may, however, be repealed by another *Ijmā'* in the same age or in a subsequent age, with this reservation that the *Ijmā'* of the Companions of the Holy Prophet cannot be reversed by any later generation (*KA.* III, p. 262). Views differ as to whether or not, when there is disagreement on a question among the Companions of the Holy Prophet, an *Ijmā'* upholding one view or the other is debarred. The fact that even a Companion may have made an error in forming a judgment is admitted on all hands, and therefore technically there can be no objection to an *Ijmā'* which goes against the opinion of a Companion.

Two more points have to be elucidated in order to realize the full force of *Ijmā'*. From what has been stated above, it would seem that a very large number of mujtahids would be needed for a valid *Ijmā'*. It is however held that if three, or even two, mujtahids take part in deliberating on a question, the *Ijmā'* is valid, while one jurist is of opinion that if in any particular age there is only one jurist, his solitary opinion would have the authority of *Ijmā'*. And now we come to the most important question. What is the authority

IJTIHĀD

on which Ijmā' is to be based? According to the four great Imāms, Ijmā' may be based on the Holy Qur'an or on Ḥadīth or on analogy. The Mu'tazilas however hold that Ijmā' cannot be based on isolated ḥadīth or on analogy (JJ. III, p. 396). They, and some others, hold that as Ijmā' is absolute, the authority on which it is based must also be absolute.

It will thus be seen that it is a mistake to call Ijmā' is only Ijtihād on Ijmā' an independent source of a wider basis. the laws of Islām. It is essentially Ijtihād, with this distinction that it is Ijtihād on which all or the majority of the mujtahids of a certain generation are agreed. It is even admitted that, barring the Ijmā' of the Companions, the Ijmā' of one generation of Muslims may be set aside by the Ijmā' of another generation. The fact is, however, that if Ijmā' is taken to mean the consensus of opinion of all the mujtahids of a certain generation of Muslims, it has never been practicable after perhaps the early days of the Companions of the Holy Prophet. The Muslims, having spread far and wide and living, as they did, in distant places, could not all be occupied with the discussion of a certain question at one and the same time. Even in one country the same question need not occupy the attention of all the mujtahids simultaneously. There is, however, no denying the fact that if many mujtahids are agreed on a certain question, their opinion would carry greater weight than that of a single one, but even the opinion of many, or of all, is not infallible. Ijmā' after all is only Ijtihād on a wider basis, and like Ijtihād it is always open to correction.

I may add here that the sense in which the word To differ with majority. Ijmā' is commonly used nowadays is quite erroneous, for it is taken to mean the opinion of the majority, and it is generally thought that it is a sin on the part of a Muslim to differ

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

with the views of the majority. But honest difference of opinion, instead of being a sin, is called a mercy by the Holy Prophet, who is reported to have said: "The differences of my people are a mercy" (J.S. p. 11). Difference of opinion is called a mercy, because it is only through encouraging difference of opinion that the reasoning faculty is developed, and the truth ultimately discovered. There were many differences of opinion among the Companions of the Holy Prophet, and there were also matters on which a single man used to express boldly his dissent from all the rest. For example, Abū Dharr was alone in holding that to have wealth in one's possession was a sin. His opinion was that no one should amass wealth, and that immediately one came into possession of it, he must distribute it to the poor. All the other Companions were opposed to this view, yet the authority of Ijma' was never quoted against him, nor did anyone dare say that he deserved to go to Hell for this difference of opinion with the whole body of Companions (IS. T. IV: 1, p. 166). Ijtihād, on the other hand, is encouraged by a saying of the Holy Prophet, which promises reward even to the man who makes an error in Ijtihād: "When the judge gives a judgment and he exercises his reasoning faculty and is right, he has a double reward, and when he gives a judgment and exercises his reasoning faculty and makes a mistake, there is a reward for him" (MM. 17: 3—i).

Later jurists speak of three degrees of Ijtihād, though there is no authority for this Ijtihād. in either the Qur'an or the Ḥadīth or in the writings of the great Imāms. These three are *Ijtihād fi-l-shar'*, *Ijtihād fi-l-madhhab*, *Ijtihād fi-l-masā'il*, or exercise of judgment in legislation, in a juristic system, and in particular cases. The first kind of Ijtihād, exercise of judgment in the making of new laws, is

IJTIHĀD

supposed to have been limited to the first three centuries and, practically, it centres in the four Imāms who, it is thought, codified all law and included in their systems whatever was reported from the Companions and the *Tabi'in*, i.e., the generation next to the Companions. Of course, it is not laid down in so many clear words that the door of Ijtihād for making laws is closed after the second century of Hijra, but it is said that the conditions necessary for a mujtahid of the first degree have not been met with in any person after the first four Imāms, and it is further supposed that they will not be met with in any person till the Day of Judgment. These conditions are three, a comprehensive knowledge of the Qur'ān in its different aspects, a knowledge of the Sunna with its lines of transmission, text and varieties of significance, and a knowledge of the different aspects of *qiyās* (reasoning) (KA. IV, p. 15). No reason is given why these conditions were met with only in four men in the second century of Hijra, and why they were not met with in any person among the Companions of the Holy Prophet or in the first century or after the second century. It is an assertion without a basis. The second degree of Ijtihād is said to have been granted to the immediate disciples of the first four Imāms. Imām Abū Yūsuf and Imām Muḥammad, the two famous disciples of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa, belong to this class, and their unanimous opinion on any point must be accepted, even if it goes against that of their master. The third degree of Ijtihād was attainable by later jurists who could solve special cases that came before them, which had not been decided by the mujtahids of the first two degrees, but such decisions must be in absolute accordance with the opinion of the greater mujtahids. The door of such Ijtihād is also supposed to have been closed after the sixth century of Hijra. And at present, it is said, there can be only *muqallidīn* or those

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

who follow another in what he says or does, firmly believing him to be right therein, regardless of proof or evidence. They may only quote a *fatwā* from any of the earlier authorities, or when there are differing opinions of the earlier juriconsults they can choose one of them, but they cannot question the correctness of what a mujtahid has said. Thus Ijtihād which was never considered to be an absolute authority by the great Imāms or their immediate disciples is now practically placed on the same level with the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna, and hence no one is considered to be fit to make Ijtihād.

But it is a mistake to suppose that the door of Ijtihād was closed after the four Imāms mentioned above. It is quite clear that the free exercise of judgment was allowed by the Holy Qur'an, while both the Qur'an and the Hadīth explicitly allowed an *istinbāt*, and it was on the basis of these directions that the Muslim world continued to exercise its judgment in making laws for itself. The Companions of the Holy Prophet made use of it even in the Prophet's lifetime, when it was not convenient to refer a matter to him personally; and after his death, as new circumstances arose, new laws were made by the majority of the Khalifa's council and new decisions given by the learned among the Companions; the *Tabi'un* added up to the knowledge of the Companions; and each succeeding generation, not satisfied with what the previous one had achieved, freely applied its judgment. The second century saw the four great luminaries appear on the horizon of Ijtihād, and the appearance of these great mujtahids, one after another, each evidently dissatisfied with what his predecessor had achieved, is another conclusive argument that Islām permitted human judgment to be exercised freely to meet new circumstances. Imām Mālik was not content with

IJTIHĀD

what his great predecessor Abū Ḥanīfa had accomplished, nor Shāfi'ī with what his two predecessors had done; and in spite of the three having practically exhausted the well of jurisprudence, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal gave to a world, whose thirst for knowledge was ever on the increase, the result of the application of his own judgment. The great mujtahids not only applied their judgment to new circumstances, but they also differed in their principles of jurisprudence, which shows that no one of them considered the others infallible. If they were not infallible then, how did they become infallible after so many centuries when the mere lapse of time necessitated new legislation to meet new requirements? That the Holy Prophet opened the door of Ijtihād is only too clear, that he never ordered it to be closed after a certain time is admitted on all hands; but even the great Imāms never closed that door. Neither Imām Abū Ḥanīfa, nor Mālik, nor Shāfi'ī, nor yet Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal ever said that no one after him shall be permitted to exercise his own judgment, nor did any one of them claim to be infallible; neither does any book on the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl*) lay down that the exercise of a man's own judgment for the making of new laws was forbidden to the Muslims after the four Imāms, nor yet that their Ijtihād has the same absolute authority as the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna. Ijtihād was a great blessing to the Muslim people; it was the only way through which the needs of the succeeding generations and the requirements of the different races merging into Islām could be met. Neither the Holy Prophet, nor any of his Companions, nor any of the great mujtahids of Islām, ever said that Muslims were forbidden to apply their own judgment to new circumstances and the everchanging needs of a growing community after a certain time; nor has any one of them said, what in fact no one could say,

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

that no new circumstances would arise after the second century. What happened was that the attention of the great intellects of the third century was directed towards the collection and criticism of Ḥadīth. On the other hand, the four Imāms rose so high above the ordinary jurists that the latter were dwarfed into insignificance, and the impression gained ground gradually that no one could exercise his judgment independently of the four Imāms. This impression in its turn led to limitations upon Ijtihād and the independence of thought to which Islām had given an impetus. Being thus restrained by a false impression, the intellect of Islām suffered a heavy loss and, the increasing demand of knowledge being brought to a stand-still, stagnation and ignorance took its place.

The Holy Qur'an expressly recognizes independence

Independence of thought recognized for every Muslim. of opinion for one and all, and requires that absolute obedience be given only to God and His Apostle.

It says: "O you who believe! obey Allāh and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allāh and the Apostle" (4 : 59). This verse speaks first of obedience to those in authority, the *ulu-l-amr*, along with the obedience to the Apostle, and then mentions disputes which, it says, must be settled by referring them to God and His Apostle. The omission of the *ulu-l-amr* from the latter portion of the verse shows clearly that the *quarrel* here spoken of relates to differences with the *ulu-l-amr*, and in the case of such a difference the only authority is the authority of God and the Apostle, or the Qur'an and the Ḥadīth. Every authority in Islām, whether temporal or spiritual, is included in *ulu-l-amr*, and independence of thought for every Muslim is thus recognized by allowing him to differ with all except the Qur'an

IJTIHĀD

and the Ḥadīth. The Companions of the Holy Prophet, the Muḥaddithīn, the four Imāms and the jurists being thus included in *ulu-l-amr*, must be obeyed ordinarily, but to differ with any one or all of them, when one has the authority of the Qur'an and the Ḥadīth, is expressly permitted. And since the ultimate test of the correctness of Ḥadīth is the Qur'an itself, the conclusion is evident that Islām allows independence of thought subject only to one thing, that the principles laid down in the Qur'an are not contravened.

It will thus be seen that any Muslim community has the right to make any law for itself, the only condition being that such law shall not contravene any principle laid down by the Holy Qur'an. The impression prevailing in the Muslim world at present that no one has the right, even in the light of the new circumstances which a thousand years of the world's progress have brought about, to differ with the four Imāms is entirely a mistaken one. The right to differ with the highest of men below the Prophet is a Muslim's birthright, and to take away that birthright is to stifle the very existence of Islām. Under present circumstances, when conditions have quite changed and the world has been moving on for a thousand years, while the Muslims have more or less stagnated, it is the duty of Muslim states and Muslim peoples to apply their own judgment to the changed conditions, and find out the ways and means for their temporal salvation. In fact, the closing of the door on the free exercise of judgment, and the tendency to stifle independence of thought which took hold of the Muslim world after the third century of Hijra, was condemned by the Holy Prophet himself who said: "The best of the generations is my generation, then the second and then the third, then will come a people in which there is no good" (KU. VI, 2068). And

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

again: "The best of this community (*umma*) are the first of them and the last of them; among the first of them is the Apostle of Allāh, and among the last of them is Jesus, son of Mary,¹ and between these is a crooked way, they are not of me nor am I of them" (KU. VI, 2073).

The three generations in the first ḥadīth refer to three centuries, the first century being the century of the Companions, since the last of the Companions died at the end of the first century after the Prophet, the second being that of *Ṭabi'in* and the third that of *Atba'al-ṭabi'in*. And, as a fact, we find that while independence of thought was freely exercised in the first three centuries, and even the immediate followers of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa, Muḥammad and Abū Yūsuf, did not hesitate to differ with their great leader, rigidity became the rule thereafter with only rare exceptions. The time when independence of thought was not exercised is, therefore, denounced by the Holy Prophet himself, as the time of a crooked company.

1. By Jesus, son of Mary, is meant the Messiah who was promised to the Muslims, as he is plainly called *imānu-kum min-kum*, i.e. "your Imām from among yourselves" (Bu. 60:49).