

## The Purity of the Text of the Holy Quran.

### 8. Were any passages abrogated?

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

As I have said above, the majority of later Muhammadan theologians have admitted the theory of abrogation, but none of them ever considered it as destroying the purity of the Quranic text. The same commentators who treat many passages of the Quran as abrogated uphold the purity of the text of the Holy Quran in the most forcible words. When we examine their position closely, we do not find any inconsistency in it. The purity of the text of the Holy Quran is clearly established if it is proved that the text as the Holy Prophet left it at his death has not in any way been tampered with. Now the theory of abrogation recognises only that certain changes were made by the Holy Prophet in his life-time, and not that any change was made in the Holy Book after the Prophet's death. The question of abrogation does not, therefore, in any way interfere with the question of the purity of the text of the Holy Quran. We have clearly and conclusively shown that the text as left by the Holy Prophet was complete and arranged and that it was safe in the memo-

ries of the companions of the Holy Prophet, and that the same was afterwards collected in a volume by orders of the Holy Prophet's immediate successor. But it is sometimes asserted that passages might have been abrogated while the fact might not have been brought to the notice of Zaid at the time of the collection, or that Zaid might have been wrongly informed of the abrogation of certain passages which might not have been really abrogated. This objection I have already answered. If any passage was ever abrogated, the fact must have been as widely known among the companions as the fact of the revelation of a passage, for it was necessary that the same publicity which was given to the revelation of a passage should be given to its abrogation. Since therefore all the companions of the Holy Prophet assisted Zaid in the work of the collection of the Holy Quran, it could not have happened that abrogated passages might have found their way into the Quran or unabrogated ones might have been left out. The objection is a mere conjecture and no evidence is produced in support of the assertion. Only a contrary assertion would have been sufficient to refute it, but we have cited the clearest evidence which condemns it as false. There is nothing to show that any objection was ever advanced against the collection of Abu Bakr or the copies issued by Othman that they contained passages which had been abrogated or did not contain any that had not been abrogated.

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

Of these three classes of abrogated passages, we have no concern with the second, for we do not know nor do we need to know any thing about passages abrogated both in sense and in the letter. Such passages if there were any are admittedly not to be found in the Holy Quran and they contain no commandments which may be binding

upon us. With one exception tradition gives us no instance of any such passage and this I shall deal with when considering the other passages which are alleged to have been abrogated in sense but not in the letter. As regards the third class of abrogated passages, passages whose sense was retained, but the letter abrogated, no passage can be accepted as such unless we have for it the authority of the Holy Prophet and the unanimous testimony of the companions. In fact, if there were any passages belonging to this class; the companions should have preserved them with as much care as they preserved the text of the Holy Quran, for the commandments contained in them were as binding as those contained in the Quran. But since there is no such testimony of there being any passage belonging to this class, we have no need to enter into any discussion about them. Thus the only passages alleged to have been abrogated which it is necessary for us to enter into a detailed discussion upon are passages belonging to the first class; that is to say, passages which are said to be contained in the Holy Quran, but the commandments contained in which are said to be no more binding, because they are alleged to have been abrogated in sense. The following considerations while applying generally to all kinds of alleged abrogated passages apply in particular to this class, and the discussion of the question of abrogation will henceforth centre chiefly round passages belonging to this class.

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

Prophet, so we cannot take any word to have been abrogated unless we have the authority of the Holy Prophet himself for its abrogation. This shall be our first and foremost consideration in discussing the question of abrogation.

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

The third consideration to decide whether a verse was abrogated or not is whether its abrogation was as widely promulgated as its revelation in the first instance. It is recognised by the upholders of the theory of abrogation that only those verses could be abrogated which contained an order or prohibition. Now every such verse was made public at the time of its revelation. Hence if the verse was ever afterwards abrogated and thus the order or prohibition which it contained was revoked, it was necessary that the order relating to abrogation or revocation should have been published as widely as the verse itself, so that all the Muslims might come to know that the order or prohibition in the verse was no more binding. Apparently all the orders and prohibitions contained in the Holy Quran are binding unless in a particular instance the Holy Prophet himself declared to the contrary and unless such declaration was made known

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

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

traditions as accepted by Bukharee—

1. عن ابن عمر رضي الله عنهما أنه قرأ فدية طعام مسكين قال هي منسوخة  
 (بخارى • كتاب التفسير) “It is reported from Ibn-i-Omar that he  
 recited the verse in which occur the words *fidyatun ta'dm-o-miskeen*  
 (Ch. II, ver. 180), and said it was *mansookh*.”\*

2. عن رجل من أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال  
 أحسبه ابن عمرو أن تبدوا ما في أنفسكم وتخفوه قال نسختها لاية  
 (بخارى • كتاب التفسير) “It is reported by one of the  
 companions of the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessings  
 of God be upon him, (and the reporter adds, I think it was Ibn-i-  
 Omar) about the verse, ‘and whether you disclose what is in your  
 minds or conceal it, God will reckon with you for it’ (II : 284) that it  
 was abrogated by the verse which follows it,” referring to II : 286  
 which says, “God will not burden any soul beyond its power.”

3. عن ابن عباس قال كان المال للولد وكانت الوصية للوالدين  
 فنسخ الله من ذلك ما أحب فجعل للذكر مثل حظ الأنثيين وجعل  
 للابوين لكل واحد منهما السدس والثالث وجعل للمرأة الثلث والرابع  
 (بخارى • كتاب التفسير) “Ibn-i-Abbas is  
 reported to have said that at first the property left by the deceased  
 was for the sons while for the parents it was necessary that will  
 should be made : afterwards Almighty God abrogated as much  
 of it as He liked, and appointed for the male double the share of  
 the female and appointed for each of the parents one-sixth and one-  
 third, and appointed for the wife one-eighth and one-fourth, and for  
 the husband one-half and one-fourth.

4. ‘Ata, a disciple of Ibn-i-Abbas, stated that the verse appoint-  
 ing shares of the property of the deceased for his heirs abrogated so  
 much of the verse *والذين يتوفون منكم ويذرون أزواجا وصية*  
*as related to the giving of* *الأول غير خراج*  
 abode to the widow for one year.

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\*The word *nashh*, of which *mansookh* is a derivative, or abrogation, in the language of the early Muslims carries often a conception different from its ordinary meaning to which I shall refer later on when the meaning of the traditions speaking of *nashh* has been made clear.

عن ابن عباس و لكل جعلنا مولا لى قال و رثة و الذين عاقدت  
 ايما نكم كان المهاجرون لما قد موالا لمد ينة يرث المهاجري الا نصارى  
 دون ذوى رحمه للاخوة التى اذى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم  
 بينهم فلما نزلت و لكل جعلنا مولا لى نسخت (بخارى . كتاب التفسير)  
 "Ibn-i-Abbas said (when commenting upon iv : 37) the word *mawdli*  
 in, 'and for every one we have appointed *mawdli*,' means heirs :  
 (and commenting upon the latter portion of the same verse), 'and  
 those with whom you have joined right hands' (said), that when the  
 Refugees settled at Medina, one of the Refugees used to be an heir  
 to one of the Helpers on account of the brotherhood that the Holy  
 Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, had  
 established between them, but when it was revealed, 'and for every  
 one We have appointed *Mawdli* (heirs), that practice became *man-*  
*sookh*."

قال انس فقراءنا فيهم قرانا ثم ان ذ لك رفع بلغوا عنا قومنا  
 انا قد لقينا ربنا فرضى عنا وارضانا (بخارى . باب غزوة الرجيع)  
 Anas said (speaking of the seventy reciters of the Quran who were  
 murdered at the *Bir-i-Ma'una*), "and we read about them a reading  
 which was afterwards taken away, bear the news to our people,  
 that 'verily we have found access to the presence of our Lord, and  
 He is pleased with us and has given us cause to be pleased with  
 Him.'"

So far as the Bukharee is concerned, these are the few traditions  
 speaking of particular verses abrogated by others. Besides them, there  
 is a saying of Omar reported by Ibn-i-Abbas which runs as follows:—  
 عن ابن عباس قال عمر رضى الله عنه اقرؤنا ابى و اقضانا  
 على وانا لنذع من قول ابى وذاك ان ابيا يقول لا ادع شيئا سمعته  
 من رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم و قد قال الله تعالى ما ننسخ من  
 اية (و نلغها) "Ibn-i-Abbas reported that Omar said, 'verily Obayy is  
 the best reciter among us and verily we give up a reading of Obayy.'  
 The reason of this is that Obayy says he would not give up anything  
 which he heard from the Messenger of God, may peace and the  
 blessings of God be upon him, and verily God Almighty says, what-  
 ever *ayat* we abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, we bring one  
 better than it or one like it," referring to II-100.

These are all the traditions relating to *naskh* which I have been  
 able to find in the Bukharee, and as they are contained in a trust-

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

Now let us see to what conclusion the other considerations pointed out above lead. Does the unanimous testimony of the companions declare any verse to be abrogated? The answer to this question is in the negative, and thus the theory of abrogation fails in the light of this consideration also. In every one of the traditions quoted above, and the same is the case with other traditions of less reliability, there is only a single man who declares a verse to be abrogated, and he cannot cite the testimony of other companions in his support. No body can say that the verse was generally recognised by the companions as abrogated. Nor is the



assertion of one man as to the abrogation of a particular verse supported by the others. One man tells us that such and such verses were abrogated, another points out two or three entirely different verses which he considered to be abrogated, a third differs from either of the first two and so on. Can we accept any verse to have been actually abrogated on such meagre testimony if the expression of opinion by individual persons may at all deserve the name of testimony. The whole body of the companions agreed as to what was contained in the Quran and hence it is the testimony of the whole body that is required to establish that any part was abrogated, but since such testimony is wanting, the theory of the abrogation of Quranic verses has no legs to stand upon.

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

## The Purity of the Text of the Holy Quran.

### 9. The Theory of Abrogation.

In this article I intend to discuss one by one the traditions related in the last article under the same heading. The first of them relates to the verses in which fasting is enjoined upon the Muslims. The tradition attributes to Ibn-i-Omar the statement that the words *مسكين* in II: 180 were abrogated. Salma bin Akwa is another companion who according to Bukharee stated that these words were abrogated. But Bukharee narrates a third tradition on the same point according to which Ibn-i-Abbas is reported to have said that the verse was not abrogated. The words in the Bukharee are ; قال ابن عباس ليست بمسوخة هو الشيخ الكبير والمرأة الكبيرة لا يستطيعان أن يصوما فليطعما من مكان مسكينه Ibn-i-Abbas said, "the verse is not *mansukh* (abrogated,) it is the old man and the old woman who cannot fast (that are meant in it), they ought to feed a poor man for each day." Abu Daud also reports two traditions from Ibn-i-Abbas in connection with this verse to the same effect as the tradition narrated in the Bukharee. According to one of these traditions, he is reported to have said : 'In the verse وعلى الذين يطيقونه فدية طعام مسكين there is permission for the old man and the old woman who can keep the fast (with the utmost difficulty and hardship) that they may not fast and may feed a poor man for every fast, and similarly there is per-

mission for the pregnant woman or for her who suckles her child when they fear (that the effect of fasting would be injurious to the fetus or the child.")

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

ed the error in the interpretation of the remaining sixteen. But a deep reflection even on these five shows that there has been error in interpreting them and that if we adopt the right interpretation the verses do not at all clash with others. Therefore before proceeding further with the proper subject, I will show that verses which have been declared to be abrogated because an interpretation was adopted which made them clash with other verses admit of other interpretations by adopting which they are found to be in consonance with other verses, and thus the last excuse for the theory of abrogation shall be broken.

We shall take first the verses occurring in the traditions quoted above. Regarding the first of these, I have already shown that Ibn-i-Abbas opposed the idea of its abrogation and showed that the actual meaning conveyed by it did not make it clash with any other verse and that that meaning was also in consonance with the practice of the Muslim world. The second tradition narrates that the same companion, Ibn-i-Omar, thought that the last verse of the second chapter of the Holy Quran abrogated the 284th verse of the same chapter. The bare translation of these two verses as given in any English translation will show that unless the word abrogation is used in a sense different from its ordinary significance, there is not the least ground for the supposition of abrogation in this case. The 284th verse says : "Whatever is in the heavens and in the earth is God's : and whether you disclose what is in your minds or conceal it, God will reckon with you for it; and whom He pleaseth will He forgive, and whom He pleaseth will He punish; for God is all-powerful." And the concluding verse of the chapter runs thus : "God does not burden any soul beyond its power. It shall enjoy the good which it has acquired, and shall bear the evil for the acquirement of which it laboured. O our Lord ! punish us not if we forget or unintentionally make a mistake; O our Lord ! and lay not on us a burden like that which Thou hast laid on those who have been before us ; O our Lord ! and lay not on us that which we have not the strength to bear : but forgive us and protect us and have mercy on us. Thou art our Protector : help us then against the unbelievers." It is alleged that the words "God does not burden any soul beyond its power" abrogated the words "whether you disclose

what is in your minds or conceal it, God will reckon with you for it." This is a manifest error and the two verses do not clash with each other even in their apparent sense. The most hideous of sins may be committed in the heart, but God who is the knower of the secrets of the heart will not leave it unpunished; this is what the former verse says. It is in human nature to forget and if a man forgetfully or unintentionally commits a fault, he is taught to pray to God that he may not be reckoned with for such fault: this is what is meant by the latter verse. In fact, if the former verse is declared to be abrogated, there would be difficulties in the interpretation of many verses. For instance, hypocrisy is a sin which may be concealed in the heart, yet it is condemned and declared to be punishable in verses revealed both before and after the verse under discussion. If that verse were really abrogated, then hypocrisy could not be declared to be a sin. There are many other sins which may be concealed in the heart but which are plainly declared to be punishable by the Holy Quran. The words, "God does not burden any soul beyond its power," which are said to abrogate the commandment contained in the previous verse, do not convey any such significance as the upholders of the theory of abrogation would attach to them. Words almost identical with these were revealed long before at Mecca and they occur three times in three different chapters all revealed at Mecca. They occur in vi: 153, vii: 40, and xxiii: 64 in the form لا نكلف نفسا و لا وسعها i.e., "We do not burden any soul beyond its power." Shah Waliullah has also stated in the Fauzul Kabir that this verse cannot be dealt with as abrogated. He says: "I say this is really a case of specifying what is general. The latter verse explains that by ما فى ا نفسم 'what is in your minds' is meant sincerity or hypocrisy and not حد يث ا النفس (i.e., the doubts which arise and disappear) over which a man has no control, for Almighty God does not lay on man a burden which it is not in his power to bear. The commentator Razi expresses the same opinion about the meaning of the verse under discussion and gives several reasons why the verse cannot be dealt with as abrogated. The author of Fath-ul-Bari, a commentary on the Bukharee, when commenting upon this tradition says that "*naskh* (abrogation) in this tradition may mean particularizing what is general, for earlier authorities very frequently use the word *naskh* (abrogation) in this

sense." Hence there is strong reason to believe that the verse under discussion is not abrogated and that it is an error to consider it as such. According to this interpretation of the word *naskh*, the meaning of the tradition would be that the injunction conveyed in the first verse was a general one, everyone to be reckoned with for what he concealed in his heart or did openly, and that it was particularized by the second which said that an error committed unintentionally would not be punished.

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

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

I take now the fourth tradition which is rather a complicated

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



he says that Ibn-i-Abbas was of opinion that this verse, *viz.*, the verse speaking of bequeathal for a year's provision for the widow, abrogated the time-limit of four months and ten days prescribed by the first verse. And then he adds: "So she is at liberty to count the days of her waiting in whatever manner she likes, for Almighty God says that she should not be expelled from the house. If she likes she may count the days of her waiting (*i.e.*, one year) in her husband's house and have provision according to the will, or if she likes, she may leave the husband's home, as Almighty God says that there is no blame on you for what they do. Then came the law of inheritance and it abrogated the year's provision or living in the husband's home, so that she might count the days as she liked but she would have no provision."

It is difficult to follow Ata's argument. None of the verses implies the abrogation of the other. Firstly there is the period of waiting, '*iddat*,' of the widow before she can contract a marriage. According to the first of the verses quoted above it is four months and ten days, and no verse of the Quran has altered this. In a later *Sura*, the *Talaq* or "Divorce," it is further added that in the case of a widow who is with child, the new marriage cannot be contracted until after delivery, but it is easy to see that this new direction does not abrogate either of the injunctions contained in the second chapter in the verses quoted above. Nor has the limit of four months and ten days been abrogated by the verse speaking of bequeathal on the part of the husband for a year's residence in the same house. The period of waiting to contract a new marriage is not extended to one year by the latter verse: it is only a direction to the husband to make a bequest providing for a year's staying of the wife in his house. She is not thereby compelled to wait for a year: it is only a benefit conferred upon her. She is not precluded from marrying after the lapse of the period of four months and ten days prescribed by law, but if she likes to stay in her husband's house, she has a right to do so under the verse for a full year. Some commentators have asserted that it was the first verse which abrogated the second; that is to say, the period of waiting for a widow before being able to contract a marriage was according to them one year originally and this was abrogated by

the verse which made the limit four months and ten days. This is an error. The verse speaking of bequeathal for a year's provision imposes no obligation upon the widow and even allows her, as shown above, in clear words to leave the house. There is no mention at all in that verse that the woman must wait for one year. Neither is there any evidence to show that this verse was revealed before the other.

The second question is, did the law of inheritance revealed in the fourth chapter abrogate the law relating to bequeathal in favour of the widow for a year's residence in the house and enjoyment of certain benefits? There is no such indication anywhere in the Quran or in any saying of the Holy Prophet. No instance is mentioned of any case having come before the Holy Prophet in which his decision, directly or indirectly, led to the conclusion that he considered the year's provision for the widow to be abrogated by the law which gave her a fourth or an eighth part of the property of the deceased. On the other hand, that law contains the plain injunction that the fourth or the eighth part of the property to which the widow is entitled shall be taken after paying any bequests that the deceased husband may have bequeathed. But there is another and still more clear indication that the benefit conferred upon the widow by allowing her one year's residence in the house if she chose it was not taken away by any other injunction. Islamic law is markedly lenient towards the female sex and there are clear injunctions in the Holy Quran giving certain benefits to the women over and above what is due to them or what they can claim as of right. Now the verse speaking of bequest for the widow's benefit of one year's residence in the house and provision is followed immediately by a verse which confers a similar benefit upon the divorced wife. The 241st verse requires a provision for the widow as it says: "And such of you as die and leave wives should bequeath their wives a year's provision without causing them to quit their homes," and the 242nd verse requires a provision for the divorced wife: "And for the divorced women let there be a fair provision; this is a duty for the God-fearing." The word used in both cases is the same, *viz.*, ع *um* mata' which literally means anything useful and advantageous or the necessaries of life. Lane says:

“عَمَّا ع” for a divorced wife, *A provision of necessaries, such as food and clothing and household utensils or furniture.*” Now as the making of a fair provision in addition to her dowry is recommended for the divorced wife, so a provision for one year with residence in the house is recommended in favor of the widow in addition to her legal portion of the property of the deceased husband. It would be as illogical to draw from the injunction to pay the divorced wife her dowry a conclusion of the abrogation of the recommendation to make a fair provision for her as to make the law of inheritance which gives a fourth or an eighth portion of the property of the deceased to the widow abrogate the recommendation of a bequest in her favour for one year’s provision. The divorced wife has no claim on the husband beyond her dowry, but still it is recommended that a fair provision should be made for her, and the widow has no claim on the property of her deceased husband beyond the legal eighth or the fourth as he has or has no issue, but still there is a recommendation to the husband that he should bequeath in her favour a residence in the house for one year along with maintenance during this time. The two cases are on a par: the divorced wife has her dowry and a fair provision, and the widow has her dowry, the legal share and a provision for one year, the last mentioned benefit in each case depending upon the husband’s choice.

There is another tradition regarding the same verses which throws a good deal of light on the question of abrogation as well as on that of the purity of the text of the Holy Quran. It is a report by Ibn Zubair and the tradition is mentioned by Bukharee: “I said to Othman,” Ibn Zubair is made to say, “the verse, ‘those of you who die and leave wives’ has been abrogated by another verse, why hast thou then written it in the Quran? Othman replied; ‘O son of my brother, I cannot change anything that is in the Quran.’” Now both the verses which we have been discussing begin with the same words “those of you who die and leave wives,” and accordingly the tradition itself does not give us any indication as to which was the verse which Ibn Zubair referred to as being abrogated. But the Bukharee gives us such an indication as the heading under which it narrates this tradition is the 235th verse which runs thus: “Those of you who die and leave

wives, their wives should wait for four months and ten days, and when they have reached this their term, you shall not be answerable for the way in which they dispose of themselves in a befitting way: and God is cognizant of what you do," and therefore unless there is a clear indication to the contrary, the verse spoken of in the tradition shall be taken to be no other than the verse mentioned in the heading. Ibn Zubair, therefore, thought that this verse which enjoined the widow to wait for four months and ten days before contracting a new marriage was abrogated by some other verse which evidently could be no other than the verse which recommends a bequest of a year's provision in the widow's favour. Ibn Zubair probably misunderstood the meaning of the latter verse thinking perhaps that it extended the period of waiting for the widow to one year. The fact is that, as I have shown above, there is nothing in the two verses which should make the one clash with the other. The one contains an injunction to the widow that her period of waiting before contracting a new marriage is four months and ten days, and the other contains a recommendation to the husband for making bequest in favour of the widow that after his death she may be allowed to live in his house for one year with maintenance during that period. Therefore it does not really matter much which verse Ibn Zubair thought to be abrogated by the other. Now mark Othman's reply. He said in plain words that he could not change anything that was in the Quran, thus indicating that abrogation could only rest on the authority of the Holy Prophet, and no change could be brought about in the Holy Quran by the opinion of any other person. Othman made Ibn Zubair understand that nothing which was declared by the Holy Prophet to be part of the Quran could be changed by any body after him. He could not exclude a certain verse from the Quran because some person thought that it was abrogated when the Holy Prophet had declared it to be a part of the Divine revelation. Othman's reply shows further how careful he himself was in his dealing with the Holy Book. He tells us clearly that he could not change a single word. Such was the attitude of his mind when he ordered copies of the Quran to be made from the collection of Abu Bakr.

We have now disposed of the five traditions which are con-

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

We shall now take the only tradition which, it is thought, has preserved a verse abrogated both in sense and in the letter. The reporter of this tradition is Anas who, when speaking of the seventy reciters of the Quran who were murdered by treachery by the unbelievers at *Bir Mauna*, says: "And we read about them a reading which was afterwards taken away, 'Bear this news to our people, that verily we have found access to the presence of our Lord; and He is pleased with us and has given us cause to be pleased with Him.'" What has really made some men think the passage quoted above to be an abrogated passage of the Holy Quran, abrogated in sense as well as in the letter, is the use of the word *quran* in this passage. A confusion between the two words *quran* and *Al-Quran* (the latter word signifying literally *the Quran*) has caused the error. *Al-Quran* is the Quran or the book revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him. The word *quran* is an infinitive noun derived from *qara* which means reading or reciting, and accordingly it means anything which is read or recited. When *Al-Quran* came to signify the Holy Book, the use of the word *quran* to signify any other reading became infrequent. In the tradition quoted above the word *quran* is used to denote simply something which was read, because it is the word *quran* that is used there and not *Al-Quran*. Bukharee himself took the word *quran*

used in the tradition as meaning a reading and not *the Quran*. This is clear from the fact that he does not mention the tradition under any heading relating to the Quran, such as commentary of the Quran, or the excellence of the Quran, or the collection of the Quran, and so on, but only under a heading which draws attention to a particular incident in the life of the Holy Prophet, viz., the treacherous murder of seventy of his companions. But, it would be asked, if the word *quran* is used in that sense in the tradition, why is the passage spoken of as having been "taken away." What is meant, of course, is that its reading was afterwards discontinued and the reason of this is not difficult to seek. Such passages read generally like the passages of the Holy Quran would have ultimately led to their confusion with the passages of the Holy Quran and hence their recitation was disallowed.

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

words were after this frequently repeated by the companions, and may have even been taken by some body to be a part of the Divine revelation and hence the Holy Prophet forbade their reading. Nothing more than this is stated by the tradition.

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

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



of it, and settles once for all that there is no abrogated passage in the Holy Quran.

As I said in the beginning, the upholders of the theory of abrogation mention three classes of abrogated passages, *viz.*, passages abrogated in sense but not in the letter, passages abrogated in the letter but not in sense, and passages abrogated both in sense and in the letter. The first class represents passages which are found in the Quran, but the injunctions or prohibitions contained in which are said to be no more binding because they were abrogated by other passages. The existence of any such passage is impossible according to the tradition we are now considering, and all the reliable traditions which are supposed to contain references to such passages have been satisfactorily explained. As regards the second class of passages, the supposition is on its very face absurd. A passage abrogated in the letter but not in sense means a passage the commandment contained in which remains in force but the words are annulled. This is meaningless. If the injunction must remain in force, what is meant by saying that the words have been annulled? If it is meant that the words formed a part of the Quran in the first instance and were read as part of it but that their reading was disallowed afterwards though the Muslims were still required to act upon them, it will still have to be asked, what were the reasons which necessitated this course or what were the benefits which were calculated to accrue from it? Were the words in which the commandment was first revealed not fit to be contained in a Divine revelation? No upholder of the theory of abrogation would answer that question in the negative. In fact, no sensible person would be guilty of such self-contradiction as that which is involved in the allegation that the words of a Divine revelation were not fit to be included in a Divine revelation. But no other reason can be ascribed. And what were the advantages which were to accrue from this course? We cannot hit upon any, the slightest advantage. On the other hand, immense harm would be the result of such a course. So long as a commandment was contained in the Holy Quran, it enjoyed the best means of its preservation and transmission to the future generations, but when without any reason the commandment was excluded from the Holy Book it was certainly in danger of being lost or tampered with. If there had

really been any necessity of adopting such a course which no body has ever explained or if there had actually been any advantages which have never been made known or which could not be made known, then at least the Holy Prophet would have ordered a different collection of all such commandments to be made not only for their preservation, but also to let his followers know that those commandments though not contained in the Quran were part of the Quran. Not only no such collection was made or ordered to be made, but there is not even a single passage mentioned in any reliable tradition that may have belonged to this class. Thus like the passages abrogated in sense but not in the letter, we have no evidence of the existence of passages abrogated in the letter but not in sense.

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

of certain martyrs who were put to death for no other fault except that they professed Islam.

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

says, 'Whatever *ayat* We abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one like it.'

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

The next question is, what relation had the verse quoted by Omar to the discontinuing of certain dialectal varieties? The verse speaks of abrogation, whether it is an abrogation of words or verses revealed or commandments given by God to the Muslims or any people before them. I shall refrain from entering here into any discussion on that point. But it must be borne in mind that inferences were and can be drawn from verses which were revealed for some other purpose. In fact, the need of drawing an inference was only felt when there was no verse directly bearing upon the subject, and accordingly the slightest hint or the remotest reference to a subject was regarded as sufficient for drawing an inference. All that we have to show, therefore, is that an inference could be drawn from the verse quoted above to the effect that certain readings could be given up when there was no need for them. I have already stated the conditions under which different readings arising from dialectal varieties were permitted by the Holy Prophet at a time

when different Arabian tribes began to accept Islam in large numbers towards the close of his ministry. As I have shown at length in a previous article, these people were unable to utter certain words according to the dialect of the Quresh, and many of them being old men who did not know reading or writing, it was very hard for them to recite the Quran exactly as it was revealed immediately on their conversion. Under these conditions a permission was granted to utter certain words according to certain dialectal varieties. Evidently, being granted under particular conditions, the permission was to cease when the conditions ceased to exist. By the time of Omar, Islam had gained numerous adherents beyond Arabia and even the Arab tribes had by that time learned to accommodate themselves to the idiom of the Quresh, and thus the necessity for dialectal varieties had to a great extent ceased to exist. But certain of the companions, as Obayy and Ibn Masood, still persisted in continuing the use of some of these dialectal varieties. In pointing out their error Omar drew his inference from a Quranic verse, and in fact most of the inferences drawn by the companions were based on the Holy Quran. The verse to which the Caliph referred spoke of abrogation. Now abrogation does not necessarily mean annulling a law by a later act, but even when a law is promulgated for a particular time or under particular circumstances and it naturally ceases to have any effect when that time has elapsed or when those circumstances have ceased to exist, the law is declared to be *mansookh* or abrogated. In this sense the word *naskh* is largely used. Now Omar's contention was that when the Holy Quran plainly declared that a commandment could be abrogated as was said in the hundredth verse of the second chapter which he quoted, the dialectal varieties for which further need had ceased to exist could also be discontinued. This was the inference which Omar drew from the verse he quoted in support of his assertion. The relation of the verse with the tradition is thus clear.

The occurrence of the words *علي (قضا نا* or "Ali is the best judge among us" has also caused some trouble in connection with the true interpretation of the tradition. If the matter referred to in the tradition was simply the continuance or discontinuance of certain dialectal varieties, was not the phrase that "Ali is the best judge

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

There is another consideration which lends support to the conclusion arrived at above. While we meet with not a single passage containing an injunction in any tradition whatever which should be expressly declared to have once formed a part of the Holy Quran and to have been abrogated afterwards because the injunction contained in it was changed, we have strong and conclusive proof of dialectal variations having been permitted at first but disallowed afterwards. Thus undeniable facts show the truth of the meaning I have adopted, while they point out the baselessness of the opposite view with regard to the meaning of the tradition. Had Omar really meant that he was omitting passages from the Quran which had

been abrogated, how could have all traces of those passages been altogether obliterated? Even, therefore, if we consider Omar as meaning that certain passages could be abrogated, there is not the least evidence to show that any passage was really abrogated, and this is what was required to be proved. We need not enter into any discussion as to whether any passage could or could not be abrogated for the point we want to prove is that no passage was actually abrogated, and that is at any rate established beyond the shadow of a doubt.

*To be concluded.*

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## The Purity of the Text of the Holy Quran.

### 10.—The theory of Abrogation.

We have shown so far that there is not a single saying of the Holy Prophet lending any support to the existence of abrogated passages in the Quran or showing that any passage which once formed a part of the Holy Quran was afterwards excluded from the Holy Book. There are, no doubt, certain traditions in which it is related that certain companions thought that some passages met with in the Holy Quran were abrogated, but these were only their individual views, not supported by the other companions and in some cases even rejected by them. We will now consider what the Holy Quran says about abrogation. As I have already said, there are only two verses which are cited by the upholders of abrogation in the Quran in support of their assertion. The first of these verses runs thus : *ما ننسخ من آية أو ننسها نأت بخير منها أو مثلها* (لم تعلم ان : ما ننسخ من آية أو ننسها نأت بخير منها أو مثلها) "Whatever *ayat* We abrogate or cause it to be



forgotten, We bring one better than it or one like it" (II:100.) The second verse reads thus : *والله اعلم بما ينزل قالوا إنما أنت مفتر بل أكثرهم لا يعلمون* "And when We change, one *ayat* for another, and God knows best what He sends down they say, thou art only a fabricator. Nay, but most of them have no knowledge" (xvi: 103).

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

word *ayat* in the two places under discussion is not correct.

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

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

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

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

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

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

103. "Many of those to whom the book was given would like to bring you back to unbelief after you have believed out of selfish envy, even after the truth has been clearly shown to them. Forgive

them then, and shun them till God comes with His decree. Truly God has power over all things."

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

that commandments and passages of the Holy Quran should have been abrogated every day by the Holy Prophet but not a single trace of them should have been left in any tradition.

Having thus disposed of the *Shan-i-Nazool* (the occasion of the revelation) of the verse under discussion, we shall now translate it by reading it in the light of the context. The verse immediately preceding it speaks of the Jews in particular who are also mentioned in the previous verses as rejecting the Divine revelation saying that they believed in what had been revealed to them (meaning the Israelite prophets) and refused to believe in what was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him. It is of these thoughts of theirs that mention is made in the 99th verse which says that "they do not wish that any good should be sent down to you." The Arabic word translated "good" is *خير* *khair*, which here means revelation, and so also the word *رحمت* *rahmat*, which has been translated as meaning grace. In fact, when it is said that "God singles out for His grace whom He wills," it is meant that He chooses for His revelation whom He likes. The commentators are all agreed upon this and the context also shows the truth of this meaning. What the *Ahl-i-Kitab* disliked was not the idea of Divine revelation itself, but the idea that a revelation should be granted to the Holy Prophet Muhammad. As Razi tells us, "they disliked that a revelation should be sent down to you," meaning the Arabs who were of the children of Ishmael and not of the children of Israel to which tribe they themselves belonged.

It is to the circumstances related in the above paragraph that the hundredth verse of the second chapter refers. It is in fact another reply to the objection of the Jews as related in the previous verse. Why another revelation was sent down, and why was a law containing new commandments promulgated? This question was still to be answered. In the previous verse they were told that Almighty God had not set any limits as to the tribes or people to whom He should reveal His word, for the Israelites thought that revelation could not be granted to any person outside the chosen people of Israel. That was an error and they were told that God sent down His revelation upon whomsoever He liked. But then a belief in the

new revelation required that the new Law should be acted upon and this involved an abrogation of the law of Moses. Hence they were told that Almighty God did not abrogate laws in vain, and here we have the verse under discussion: "Whatever *ayat* We abrogate or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one like it." The meaning is now clear: the verse refers to the abrogation of the previous laws and commandments which were abrogated by the Law of the Quran. Some of the commandments given in the Holy Book were like the commandments given before and this the Quran itself tells us on several occasions, as for instance in this very chapter: يا ايها الذين امنوا كتب عليكم الصيام كما كتب على الذين من قبلكم "O believers! fasting is enjoined upon you as it was enjoined upon those before you." But in the case of most other teachings, it was a change for the better that was brought about by the Holy Quran, and it is to this change that the verse gives prominence by stating it first.

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

Is this significance of the word *ayat* in accordance with Arabic idiom? Our answer to this question is that certainly it is. I have quoted above Lane's Lexicon showing that the word *ayat* means a warning, or a message or communication sent from one person to another or a collection of words of the Book of God. Any one of these significances of the word *ayat* would do. In fact, the use of the word *ayat* as meaning a verse of any of the previous books is

very extensive, and that significance attached to the word *ayat* as used in this verse of the Holy Quran solves the whole difficulty. The people of the Book who are addressed in these verses in particular are told that no verse has been abrogated but there has been given in its place one better than it or one like it. Why should they then reject the Holy Quran? It contains nothing which is inferior to what is contained in the previous books, and those who accept those books can not reject the Quran.

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

One more point may be explained before taking up the other verse. It is stated that new verses or commandments are given in place of old ones which are either abrogated or caused to be forgotten. What is meant by verses or commandments which are caused to be forgotten? It is stated that since another reading of *نَسِىَ* (we cause it to be forgotten) is *نَسِىَكَ* (we cause thee to forget it), therefore only passages of the Quran are meant here, for of the previous laws or books, which the Holy Prophet never committed to memory, it could not be said that Almighty God caused him to forget them. Now this reading is not mentioned in any reliable tradition as one that was permitted by the Holy Prophet and accordingly we cannot accept it so as to modify the plain meaning of the words of

the revelation. The reading itself even if it is possible to trace it to any of the companions might be nothing more than that companion's peculiar view. The mere existence of a reading does not justify its acceptance as has already been stated. Nor can we take it as explaining the meaning of the text unless there is the clearest testimony that it was permitted by the Holy Prophet. Besides this, if we accept this reading as explaining the true significance of the text, our position will be virtually this that Almighty God at first revealed a verse to the Holy Prophet, then immediately made him forget it and then instead of revealing again the same verse to him revealed another verse in its place which was like it. It is ridiculous to think that any such thing ever happened. There is no trustworthy tradition showing that any verse of the Holy Quran was thus irretrievably lost from the Holy Prophet's memory. If, however, we take the word *ayat* in a general sense, there is no difficulty of this sort, for the previous laws had lost many of their injunctions on account of their not having been preserved with sufficient care through long ages that elapsed since their revelation. These were the commandments which had been lost from the memories of men, and in the new and perfect code of law which was given to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, they were replaced by better or similar laws according to circumstances.

We come now to the other verse which is cited as supporting the existence of abrogated passages in the Holy Quran. It is the 103rd verse of the sixteenth chapter of the Holy Quran and I quote it here along with the two verses which follow it.

103. "And when We change one *ayat* for another, and God knows best what He reveals, they say, thou art only a fabricator. Nay, but most of them have no knowledge.

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

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

... Now the changing of one *ayat* for another may mean the

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

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



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

If we take into consideration the verses immediately following the verses under discussion, we arrive at the same result. In the verses under discussion occur the words "and God knows best

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

The next verse bears out the same conclusion. The false assertion of the unbelievers that a person taught the Holy Prophet did not relate to alleged abrogating verses but to the Quran itself. Thus the subject matter of all these verses is the same. The Holy Prophet announced that Almighty God had sent upon him a new revelation which supplanted all old revelations and abrogated previous laws and practices. This is meant by saying that Almighty God had changed one *ayat* for another. The unbelievers said that what the Holy Prophet gave out was no revelation but his own fabrication. In response to this they were told that their allegations were based only on ignorance, that the revelation which they called a fabrication was brought down upon him by the Holy Spirit, and that this was evident from the wholesome influence which it produced upon the Muslims by making them firm in their faith under the heaviest afflictions and trials which they were made to suffer at the hands of their opponents, and from the glad tidings which it gave them of a triumphant future, because none but God

could announce such wonderful prophecies of the future at a time of such helplessness and weakness. I have quoted only three verses, but any one who reads the whole of the *ruku'* (section) which begins with the verse under discussion will be able to see for himself that it deals only with the objection of the unbelievers who called the Holy Quran a fabrication and has nothing to do with the abrogation of the verses of the Holy Quran.

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

could not. Thus arose a mistake which was not only left uncorrected by the later generations, but which was greatly aggravated by ingenious commentators of the Holy Quran.

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

There is one more conception of *naskh* (abrogation) that must be stated. It sometimes happened that a person drew a wrong inference from a verse of the Holy Quran. Later on when another verse was revealed which made clear the meaning of the first verse and thus removed the error, the person whose error was thus rectified spoke of that verse as having abrogated the previous one though it only annulled an error and removed a misconception. Ibn-i-Taimia, a famous Imam, supports this view in his work *Al-furqan*. He writes (see pages 20, 21) : *وَكَانُوا يَسْمُونَ مَا عَارَضَ الْآيَةَ نَاسِخًا لَهَا : فَالنِّسْخُ عَذْدُ هِمَّ اسْمُ كُلِّ مَا يَرْفَعُ دَلَالَةَ الْآيَةِ عَلَى مَعْنَى بَاطِلٍ وَأَنْ كَانَ ذَلِكَ الْمَعْنَى لَمْ يَرِدْ بِهَا وَأَنْ كَانَ لَا يَدُلُّ عَلَيْهِ ظَاهِرُ الْآيَةِ بَلْ قَدْ وَفَّقَ فُهْمَهُ مِنْهَا. قَوْمٌ يَسْمُونَ مَا رَفَعَ ذَلِكَ الْآيَةَ لَهَا مَعْنَى نَاسِخًا* "And they used to describe what appeared to contradict a verse as abrogating it. So *naskh* (abrogation) with them is a general name for any thing that might remove an error in the meaning of a verse though such meaning was never intended by that verse and though the apparent significance of the verse might not lend any support to the wrong conception. (Even if the verse was to be taken in its apparent sense), but some people

understood it to convey a different sense, the term *naskh* or abrogation was applied to denote anything which removed the doubt or the misconception." As examples of the term *naskh* being applied to the removal of such misconceptions, the same author quotes the verses mentioned in some of the traditions as having abrogated others. These remarks would suffice, I hope, to give the reader a clear conception of the theory of abrogation, and with this discussion, I bring to a close the article on the "Purity of the Text of the Holy Quran."

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