

To this I would add a few words from a *Shi‘ah* commentator of the Holy Qur‘ān, Mullā Muḥsin, who says in his *Tafsīr Ṣāfi*:

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

The learned author goes on to say:

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

#### **Dr. Mingana’s Leaves.**

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

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

inexperienced hands, as the text given by Dr. Mingana clearly shows; for instance

writing  $\text{اعرض}$  instead of  $\text{اعرضن}$  :  $\text{اضل}$  instead of  $\text{اضلل}$  :  
 $\text{ينالوا}$  instead of  $\text{ينلوا}$  :  $\text{قرن}$  instead of  $\text{قران}$  :  
 $\text{بركنا}$  instead of  $\text{بركنا}$  :  $\text{اذنا}$  instead of  $\text{اذاننا}$  ,

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