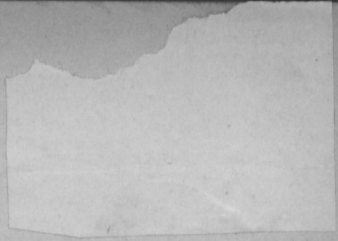


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FIFTH TO THE TENTH YEAR  
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MISSION OF MAHOMET.



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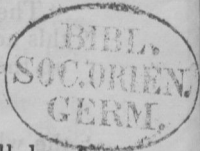




PROGRESS OF ISLAM, FROM THE FIFTH TO THE TENTH YEAR OF THE MISSION OF MAHOMET.

[FROM THE CALCUTTA REVIEW, NO. XLVIII.]

1. *Sîrat Wâckidi. Arabic MS.*
2. *Sîrat Hishâmi. Arabic MS.*
3. *Sîrat Tabari. Arabic MS.*



In the fifth year of the Mission of Mahomet, a small band of his followers emigrated, as we have seen, to Abyssinia, where they found a hospitable and secure retreat. But three months had not elapsed, when they again made their appearance in Mecca. Their return is linked with one of the strangest episodes in the life of the prophet. Hishâmi contents himself with saying that they came back because tidings reached them of the conversion of the Coreish. Wâckidi and Tabari give another story, of which the following is a close outline.

The aim of Mahomet had been the regeneration of his people. Of this he had miserably fallen short. The conversion of forty or fifty souls ill compensated for the alienation of the whole community; while the violent opposition of the most respected and influential chiefs vexed his heart. The prospect was dark; to the human eye hopeless. Sad and dispirited, the Arabian prophet longed for a reconciliation, and cast about in his mind how it could be effected.

“On a certain day, the chief men of Mecca, assembled in a group beside the Kaaba, discussed, as was their wont, the affairs of the city, when Mahomet appeared, and seating himself by them in a friendly manner, began to recite in their hearing the LIII. Sura. This chapter opens with a description of the first visit of Gabriel to Mahomet, and of a later vision of that angel, in which certain heavenly mysteries were revealed. It proceeds:—

*And see ye not Lât and Ozza,  
And Monât the third besides?*

“When he had reached this verse, the devil suggested an expression of the thoughts which for many a day had been working in his soul, and put into his mouth\* words of reconciliation and compromise, the revelation of which he had been longing for from God; † viz:—

*These are the exalted females,  
And verily their intercession is to be hoped for. ‡*

\* *Lit.*—“Cast upon his tongue,”—القي عالي لسانه

† *Tabari*, p. 140 القبي الشيطان علي لسبانه كماكان يحدث به نفسه و يتمي ان ياتي به قومه

These words, however, do not occur in the other tradition given by *Tabari* nor *Wâckidi*.

‡ تلك الغرائيق العلي وان شفاعتهم لترتجي (*Wâckidi*, p. 39; *Ta-*

“The Coreish were no less surprised than delighted ithw  
 ‘ this acknowledgment of their deities ; and as Mahomet wound  
 ‘ up the Sura with the closing words,—

*Wherefore bow down before the Lord, and serve Him ;—*

‘ the whole assembly prostrated themselves with one accord  
 ‘ on the ground and worshipped. The single exception was  
 ‘ Walid, the son of Mughira, who, unable from the infirmities  
 ‘ of age to bow down, took up a handful of earth and wor-  
 ‘ shipped, pressing it to his forehead.\*

“And all the people were pleased at that which Mahomet  
 ‘ had spoken, and they said ; *now we know that it is the Lord*  
 ‘ *alone who giveth life and taketh it away, who createth and sup-*  
 ‘ *porteth ; but these our goddesses make intercession with Him for*  
 ‘ *us ; and as thou hast conceded unto them a portion, we are content*  
 ‘ *to follow thee.* But their words disquieted Mahomet, and he  
 ‘ retired to his house. In the evening Gabriel visited him ; and  
 ‘ the prophet recited the Sura unto him : and Gabriel said,  
 ‘ *what is this that thou hast done ; thou hast repeated before the*  
 ‘ *people words that I never gave unto thee.* So Mahomet grieved  
 ‘ sore, and feared the Lord greatly, and he said, *I have spoken of*  
 ‘ *God that which He hath not said.* But the Lord comforted  
 ‘ His prophet,† and restored his confidence, and cancelled the  
 ‘ passage, and revealed the true reading thereof, (as it now  
 ‘ stands,) viz. :—

*And See ye not Lât and Ozza,  
 And Manât the third beside ?  
 What ! shall there be male progeny unto you, and female unto him ?  
 That were indeed an unjust partition !  
 They are nought but names, which ye and your Fathers have invented, &c.*

“Now when the Coreish heard this, they spake among  
 ‘ themselves, saying, *Mahomet hath repented the favorable mention*  
 ‘ *he made of the rank of our goddesses with the Lord ; he hath*

bari, p. 140 – 142.) The latter gives *ترتضي* throughout, the rendering of which  
 would be “whose intercession is pleasing unto God” (Sprenger has in this instance  
 quoted the MS. of Tabari incorrectly in his valuable *Notice of Tabari*, in the  
*Journal Asiatic Society*, 1850, No. II., page 129.) The unusual phrase *الغرائيق*  
 signifies delicate, swan-like.

\* The same is related of Abu Oheiba, i. e. (Sad, son of Al As., *Wâchidi*, p. 39.)

† Mahomet was consoled, tradition says, by the revelation of the verses fifty-three  
 and fifty four of Sura XXII., which signified that all former prophets had been  
 subject to the same evil suggestions of the devil ; but the Sura in which they stand  
 appears to have been revealed at a somewhat later period.

The verses are as follows : *and we have not sent before thee any Apostle, nor any  
 Prophet, but when he longed, Satan cast suggestions into his longing ; but God shall  
 cancel that which Satan suggesteth ; then shall God establish his revelations ; and God  
 is knowing and wise ;—that He may make that which Satan hath suggested a trial  
 unto those whose hearts are diseased and hardened, &c.*



‘ changed it, and brought other words in its stead. And the two  
 ‘ verses were in the mouth of every one of the unbelievers,  
 ‘ and they increased their malice, and stirred them up to per-  
 ‘ secute the faithful with still greater severity.’\*

Pious Mussulmans, scandalized at the lapse of their prophet into an idolatrous concession, would reject the whole story.† But the authorities are too strong to be impugned. It is hardly possible to conceive how, if not founded in fact, the tale could ever have been invented. Most stubborn of all, the fact remains, (and is admitted upon all hands,) that the first refugees did return about this time from Abyssinia, in consequence of the rumour that Mecca was converted; and the above narrative affords the only intelligible clue to the fact. But we need not adopt to the letter the exculpatory version of Mahometan tradition; nor seek in the interposition of Satan and Gabriel, an explanation of actions to be equally accounted for by the natural workings of the Prophet’s mind.

It is obvious that the lapse was no sudden event:—no concession that dropped from the lips unexpectedly or unawares, and was immediately withdrawn. The hostility of his people had long pressed upon the spirit of Mahomet, and in his inward musings (it is admitted even by orthodox tradition,) he had meditated the very expressions which, it is alleged, the devil prompted him to utter. Nor can we believe that the concession lasted but for a day. The reconciliation must, to outward appearance, have been complete and consolidated, and continued for some days at least, to allow of the report going forth and reaching the exiles in a shape to inspire them with confidence. We are warranted therefore in assuming a far wider base and more extensive action for the event, than are admitted by ex-parte tradition.

The religion of Mahomet appears, up to this point, to have been a spiritual system, of which Faith, and Prayer, and the

\* It has been explained in a note to the Article on the “*Sources for the Biography of Mahomet*,” (p. 56, Canon II. L.) that the whole story, as given above, has been omitted by Ibn Hishâm. But that it was contained in Ibn Ishâc’s works (which Ibn Hishâm professes to follow,) is evident from its being quoted by Tabari expressly from that author. See Sprenger’s Note in the *Calcutta Asiatic Journal*, where the original passages are quoted at length.

† This is admitted even by orthodox Mahometan writers. The author of the Biography *Mawâlib alladoniya*, shows, in opposition to the assertion that the story is heretical, that it rests on unexceptionable tradition, that the opposing authorities are groundless, being founded only on the suspicion that the facts are unlikely. Thus one objection is quoted, that had the lapse really occurred, great numbers of the Moslems must have become Apostates, which the author says is not just reasoning. The original passage may be consulted in Dr. Sprenger’s note in the *Asiatic Journal* above referred to.

inculcation of virtue, form the prominent features. Though the Kaaba and some of its rites may have been looked upon as founded by the patriarch Abraham, yet the existing worship was, as a whole, rejected by reason of its idolatry and corruption.\* But to this superstition, *with all its practices*, the people were obstinately wedded, and unless permission were given to join, more or less, the time-honoured institutions of Mecca with the true Faith, there was little hope of a general conversion. How far would the strong expediency of the case justify him to meet the prevailing system? How far was it the will of God to admit concession?

Was not the worship of the Kaaba, after all, a *Divine* institution? The temple was built at the command of God: the compassing of it symbolized the circling course of the heavenly bodies, and that again the obedience of all creation to the Deity. Love and devotion were nurtured by the kissing of the sacred corner-stone: the slaying of sacrifices, a pious rite in commemoration of Abraham's readiness to offer up his son, signified a like submission; † the pilgrimage to Arafat, the shaving of the head, &c., were all innocent, if not pious, in their tendency. But how shall he treat the images of the Kaaba, and the gross idolatry rendered to them? In their present mind the Coreish would never abandon these: but if (as they professed themselves ready,) they would acknowledge the one true God as the supreme Lord, and look to the images as symbolical only of his angels, what harm from their continuance? Incredible as the concession may appear, and utterly irreconcilable with his stand-point, Mahomet acceded to this arrangement, and consented to the idols as the representatives of heavenly beings, "whose intercession was to be hoped for" with the Deity. The hurried and garbled notices of tradition give no farther insight into the compromise, nor the mention of any safeguard that may have been stipulated by Mahomet against the abuses of idolatry: but it is certain that the arrangements, of whatever nature, gave perfect satisfaction to the chiefs and people, and produced a temporary union.

But Mahomet was not long in perceiving the inconsistency

\* We conclude this to have been the case, because in the portions of the Coran belonging to this period, the observances of the Kaaba are never referred to or inculcated, as they are frequently at a subsequent stage.

† Which of his sons Abraham prepared to sacrifice, is not specified in the Coran; and we are not at liberty to assume, with Mahometan Doctors, that their prophet meant Ishmael, nor even that he believed the place of sacrifice to have been the vicinity of Mecca. If, however, the current of ancient tradition already ran so, it is possible that Mahomet may have followed it, but without specification in the Coran, for fear of offending the Jews.

into which he had been betrayed. The people still worshipped not God, but the images. No reasoning upon his part, no concession upon theirs, could dissemble the galling fact, that the practice of idolatry continued as gross and rampant as ever.

His only safety now lay in disowning the concession. The devil had deceived him. The words of compromise were no part of the divine system received from God by his heavenly messenger. The lapse was thus remedied: the heretical verses spoken under delusion were cancelled, and others revealed in their stead, denouncing idolatry with irreconcilable hate, and rejecting the very idea of female angels, such as Lât and Ozza. Henceforward the prophet wages mortal strife with images in every shape; his system gathers itself up into a pure and stern theism, and the Coran begins to breathe (though as yet only in the persons of Moses and Abraham,) intimations of an iconoclastic revenge.\*

Ever after the intercession of idols is scouted as absurd; angels dare not to intercede with the Almighty,† how much less the idols, who

\* \* \* have no power over even the husk of a date stone;  
Upon whom if ye call, they hear not your calling,  
And if they heard they would not answer you;  
And in the Day of Judgment, they shall reject your deification of them.‡

The following passage, produced shortly after his lapse, shows how Mahomet refuted his adversaries, and adroitly turned against them their concession as to the Supreme Deity of God only:—

And if thou askest them who created the Heavens and the Earth, they will surely answer God.§ Say, what think ye then? If the Lord be pleased to visit me with affliction, can those beings on whom ye call besides God,—what! could *they* remove the visitation? Or if He visit me with mercy, could *they* withhold His mercy? Say, God sufficeth for me; on Him alone let those who put their trust, confide.||

However short his fall, Mahomet retained a keen sense of its disgrace, and of the danger which lay in parleying with his adversaries:—

And truly they were near tempting thee aside from what we revealed unto thee, that thou shouldest fabricate regarding Us a different revelation; and then they would have taken thee for their friend.

\* See Suras XXXVII., 92; XXI., 58; XX., 95.

† Sura LIII., 58., *et passim*.

‡ XXXV., 14; XLVI., 4.

§ See also Sura XLIII., 18; and other places in which the Meccans are represented as giving a similar reply.

|| Sura XXXIX., 38.



And if it had not been that we stablished thee, verily thou hadst nearly inclined unto them a little;

Then verily we had caused thee to taste both of the punishment of Life, and the punishment of Death;

Then thou shouldst not have found against Us any Helper.\*

Ever and anon we meet with a divine caution to the prophet, to beware lest he should change the words of inspiration out of a desire to deal gently with his people, or be deceived by the pomp and numbers of the idolaters, into following after them from the straight and narrow path indicated for him by God.†

But though Mahomet may have completely reassured his own convictions, and restored the confidence of his adherents, there is little doubt that the concession to idolatry, followed by a recantation so sudden and entire, seriously weakened his position with the people at large. *They* would not readily credit his excuse, that the words of error were "cast by the devil into the mouth of Mahomet."‡ Supposing it to be so, what faith was to be placed in the revelations of a prophet liable to such influences? The Divine author of a true revelation knows beforehand all that he will at any subsequent period reveal; *His* agent would never be reduced to the petty shift of retracting as a mistake what had once been given forth as a message from heaven. Such aspersions were triumphantly advanced by the adversaries of the Coran, and Mahomet could oppose to them only the simple reiteration of his own assurance; thus,—

And when We change one verse in place of another,  
[and God best knoweth that which He revealeth,  
They say, *Verily thou art plainly a Fabricator;*  
Nay; but the most of them understand not;  
Say, The Holy Spirit hath brought it down from thy Lord, &c.§

We have seen that it was the tidings of the reconciliation with the Coreish that induced the little band of emigrants, after a residence of two months|| in Abyssinia, to set out for Mecca. As they approached the city, a party of travellers from thence communicated the information that Mahomet had withdrawn his concessions, and that the Coreish had resumed their oppressive conduct. They consulted what they should

\* Sura XVII., 74—76.

† See Suras LXVIII., 8; XVIII., 28; XIII., 40; XXXIX., 15.

‡ See Sura XXII., 53, quoted in a note a few pages back.

§ Sura XVI., 101.

|| They emigrated in Rajab, in the fifth year of Mahomet's mission, and remained in Abyssinia Shábân and Ramdhân. The worshipping and reconciliation with the Coreish, happened in Ramdhân; and the emigrants returned to Mecca in the following month, Shawwâl, of the same year. (*Wäckidi*, p. 39½.)

do, but soon resolved to go forward and visit their homes;— if things came to the worst, they could but again escape to Abyssinia. So they entered Mecca, each under the protection of a relative or friend.\*

The tidings brought by the emigrants of their kind reception by the Najâshy, following upon the late events, annoyed the Coreish, and the persecution became hotter than ever.† Wherefore Mahomet again recommended to his followers that they should take refuge in Abyssinia. The first party of the new expedition thither set out probably about the sixth year of the mission, and thereafter small bodies of converts, accompanied sometimes by their women and children, at intervals joined the exiles, until they reached (without calculating their little ones,) the number of 101. Of these eighty-three were men; and amongst the women, eleven were of Coreish descent, and seven belonged to other tribes. Thirty-three of the men, with eight women, (including Othmân and Rockeya, the daughter of Mahomet,) again returned to Mecca; but most of them eventually emigrated to Medina. The rest of the refugees remained in Abyssinia for several years, and rejoined Mahomet on his expedition to Kheibar, in the seventh year of the Hegira.‡

\* All but Abdallah ibn al Masûd, who is said to have had no patron or guardian, and to have again returned after a little to Abyssinia. (*Wâkidi*, p. 39½.)

† *Wâkidi*, *ibidem*.

‡ *Wâkidi*, p. 39½; *Hishami*, p. 92; *Tabari*, p. 129. Sprenger, though admitting that he thereby opposes all the early authorities, places the second emigration to Abyssinia later, viz., after the withdrawal of Mahomet and his followers into the *Shêb*, or quarter of Abu Tâlib, that is in the seventh year of the mission. His reason is that at the end of the sixth year there were not many more than fifty converts, whereas the second emigration to Abyssinia embraced as many as a hundred persons; and that it is not probable the number of Moslems should have thus doubled in a few months.

But the number of emigrants to Abyssinia is given at 100, as *the aggregate of all who from first to last proceeded thither*. They did not all set out at once, but as is distinctly said, in parties one after another, and probably at considerable intervals. The fact therefore that the total number exceeded 100, is not in the least inconsistent with the position that the first party was small, or that the whole of Mahomet's followers may not at the time have exceeded fifty.

*Hishâmi* (p. 114.), has mixed up the return of the thirty-three emigrants belonging to the *second* Abyssinian expedition, with the return of the whole of the emigrants of the first expedition consequent upon the lapse of Mahomet.

Of those who returned from the second expedition we may enumerate besides Othmân, Abu Hodzeifa; Abdallah ibn Jahsh; Otha; Zobeir ibn al Awvam; Musâb; Tuleib; Abd al Rahmân. These all emigrated with Mahomet to Medina. Several of the others were confined (as is alleged,) by their relatives, and thus prevented from joining Mahomet, till after the first battles. Abdallah ibn Soheil fled from the Coreish to Mahomet's army at the battle of Badr.

Sakrân was among those who returned from Abyssinia to Mecca, where he died. It was his widow Sauda, whom Mahomet first married after Khadija's death.

Othmân revisited Mecca, under the guardianship of Walid, son of Mughîra, the great enemy of Islâm.

—Although Mahomet himself was not yet forced to quit his native city, he was nevertheless exposed to indignity and insult, and the threatening attitude of his adversaries occasioned apprehension and anxiety. If, indeed, it had not been for the influence and steadfast protection of Abu Tâlib, it is clear that the hostile intentions of the Coreish would have imperilled the liberty, perhaps the life, of Mahomet. A body of their Elders\* repaired to the aged chief, and said:—*This Nephew of thine hath spoken opprobriously of our gods and our religion; and hath abused us as fools, and given out that our forefathers were all astray. Now, either avenge us thyself of our adversary; or (seeing that thou art in the same case with ourselves,) leave him to us that we may take our satisfaction.* But Abu Tâlib answered them softly and in courteous words; so they turned and went away. In process of time, as Mahomet would not change his proceedings, they went again to Abu Tâlib in great exasperation, and reminding him of their former demand, that he would restrain his nephew from his offensive conduct, added;—*and now verily we cannot have patience any longer with his abuse of us, our ancestors, and our gods; wherefore do thou either hold him back from us, or thyself take part with him, that the matter may be decided between us.* Thus they departed from him. And it appeared grievous to Abu Tâlib to break with his people, and be at enmity with them; neither did it please him to desert, and surrender, his nephew. Thus, being in straits, he sent for Mahomet, and having communicated the saying of the Coreish, proceeded earnestly;—*wherefore, save thyself and me also; and cast not upon me a burden heavier than I can sustain.* Mahomet was startled and alarmed; and imagined that his uncle, finding himself unequal to the task, had resolved to abandon him. But his high resolve did not fail him even at this trying and critical moment. He replied firmly. *If they brought the Sun to my right hand, and the Moon to my left, to force me from my undertaking, verily, I would not desist until the Lord make manifest my cause, or I perish in the attempt.* But the thought of his kind protector's desertion overcame him; he burst into tears, and turned to depart. Then Abu Tâlib called out,—“Son of my brother! Come back.” So he returned, and Abu Tâlib said; *Depart in peace, my nephew! and say whatsoever*

\* They consisted of Walîd ibn al Mughîra, Otba and Sheyba, sons of Rabia, Abu Jahl, Abu Sofîân, As ibn Wâil, &c. Probably the most violent of the opponents of Islam have been singled out, without much discrimination or authority, by the biographers, for this office.

*thou desirest; for, by the Lord! I will not, in any wise, give thee up for ever.\**

Wäckidi adds the further incident that Mahomet having that day disappeared, Abu Tâlib, apprehensive of foul play, made ready a band of Hâshimite youths, each armed with a dirk, and set out for the Kaaba. Meanwhile, he ascertained that Mahomet was safe in a house in Safa, and returned with his people home. On the morrow the aged Chief again made ready his party, and taking Mahomet with them, repaired to the Kaaba, where, standing before the assembly of the Coreish, he desired his young men to uncover that which they had by them; and, lo! in the hand of each was a sharp weapon. Then turning to the Coreish, he exclaimed, *By the Lord! Had ye killed him, there had not remained alive a man amongst you. You should have perished, or we had been annihilated.* The bold front of Abu Tâlib awed the Coreish, and repressed their insolence.†

Though the tendency of tradition is to magnify the insults of the unbelieving Meccans, yet apart from invective and abuse, we do not read of any personal injury or suffering sustained by Mahomet himself. A few of the inveterate enemies of Islam, (Abu Lahab among the number,) who lived close by his house, used spitefully to throw unclean and offensive things at the prophet, or upon his hearth, as he cooked his food. Once they flung into his house the entrails of a goat, which Mahomet putting upon a stick, carried to the door, and

\* We have chiefly here followed Hishâmi (p. 71) and Tabari (p. 124.) But at p. 123, the latter makes the noble speech of Mahomet to be a reply to his uncle at a time when the latter had said to him before the Coreish,—“Verily thy people ask of thee a reasonable thing, that thou leave off to abuse their gods, and they will leave off to abuse thee and thy God.” So Wäckidi, p. 38½.

There is some confusion as to the time when this scene occurred. There were probably several conferences ending in threats, and tradition has no doubt, amplified them. One of these is said to have occurred at Abu Tâlib's death-bed, several years later. The Coreish hearing that Abu Tâlib lay at the point of death, sent a deputation in order that some compact should be made to bind both parties after his decease; and they proposed that they should retain their ancient Faith, without abuse or interference from Mahomet, in which case they would not molest him in his. Abu Talib called Mahomet, and communicated to him the reasonable request. Mahomet replied, “Nay, but there is one word, which if ye concede, you will thereby conquer Arabia, and reduce Ajam under subjection.” “Good!” said Abu Jahl, “not one such word, but ten.” Mahomet replied;—“Then say,—*There is no God but the Lord*, and abandon that which ye worship beside him.” And they clapped their hands in rage;—“Dost thou desire, indeed, that we should turn our gods into one God? That were a strange affair!” And they began to say one to the rest, “This fellow is obstinate and impracticable. Ye will not get from him any concession that ye desire. Return, and let us walk after the faith of our forefathers, till God determine the matter betwixt us and him.” So they arose and departed. (*Hishâmi*, p. 136.)

† *Hishâmi*, p. 135.



called aloud ;—" Ye children of Abd Menâf! What sort of neighbourly conduct is this?" Then he cast it forth into the street.\* Two or three centuries afterwards, a little closet, a few feet square, was still shown at the entrance of Khadija's house, where, under the ledge of a projecting stone, the prophet crouched down when he retired for prayer, to shelter himself from the missiles of his neighbours.† There is a legend (but ill sustained,) of actual violence once offered to Mahomet in public. As he passed through the court of the Kaaba, he was suddenly surrounded by the Coreish, who "leaped upon him as one man," and seized his mantle. But Abu Bakr stood manfully by him and called out ;—" Woe's me! Will ye slay a man who saith that *God is my Lord?*" So they departed from him.‡

In the sixth year of his mission, the cause of Mahomet was strengthened by the accession of two powerful citizens. These were HAMZA and OMAR.

The prophet was one day seated on the rising ground of Safa. Abu Jahl, coming up, accosted him with a shower of taunts and reproaches; but Mahomet answered not a word. Both left the place, but a slave girl had observed the scene.§ It chanced that shortly after, Hamza returned that way from the chase, his bow hanging from his shoulder (for he was a hunter of renown;) and the maid related to him with indignation the gross abuse of Abu Jahl. Hamza was at once the uncle and the foster-brother of Mahomet. His pride was offended, his rage kindled. He hurried on with rapid steps to the Kaaba, in the court of which was sitting Abu Jahl, with a company of the Coreish. Hamza rushed on him, saying ;—" *Ah! Hast thou been abusing him, and I follow his religion; there (raising the bow and striking him violently therewith,) return that if thou darest!*" The kinsmen of Abu Jahl started up to his rescue, but he motioned them away, saying, "Let him alone; for, indeed, I did revile his nephew shamefully." The profession of Islam, suddenly asserted by Hamza, in the passion of the moment, was followed up by the deliberate pledging of

\* *Hishâmi*, p. 134; *Tabari*, p. 148; *Wâchidi*, p. 38. Besides Abu Lahab, are mentioned Ockba, son of Abu Maït; Al Hakam, son of Ab ul As; Adî the Thackifite; and Ibu al Asad, the Handalite, as living close by, and annoying the prophet.

† *Tabari*, p. 67.

‡ *Hishâmi*, p. 77; *Tabari*, p. 131. It is related that Abu Bakr had his beard pulled that day in the scuffle to defend Mahomet, and Omm Kolthâm saw him return with an injury on the crown of his head.

§ The servant of the chief Abdallah ibn Jodâân, repeatedly mentioned before.



his faith to Mahomet, and a steady adherence ever after to his religion.\*

The conversion of Omar happened on this wise, at the close of the sixth year of Mahomet's mission, (A.D. 615-6.)† He was notorious for his enmity to Islam, and the harshness and violence with which he treated its professors. His sister Fâtima and her husband Saïd (a son of the "enquirer" Zeid,) were both converts, but secretly, for fear of the Coreish. While he was threatening certain believers, one hinted to Omar that he had better begin at home, with his sister and her husband. His wrath was aroused, and he proceeded forthwith to their house. They were listening to Sura XX., which the slave Khobâb recited to them from a manuscript. The persecutor drew near, and overheard the low murmur of the reading. At the noise of his steps, Khobâb retired into a closet. *What sound was that I heard just now?* exclaimed Omar, entering, angrily. "There was nothing," they replied. *Nay,* said he, swearing fiercely, *I hear that ye are renegades!* But what, Oh Omar!" interposed his brother-in-law, "may there not be truth in another religion than thine?" The question confirmed the suspicions of Omar, and being furiously exasperated, he sprang upon Saïd and kicked him. His sister flew to the rescue: in the struggle her face was wounded, and it began to bleed. In anger and distress she called out;—"Yes, we are converted; we believe in God and in His prophet; do unto us what thou pleasest." And when Omar saw her face covered with blood he was softened; and he asked to see the paper they had been reading. But his sister required that he should first cleanse himself; "for none," said she, "but the pure may touch it." So Omar arose and washed, and took the paper (for he could read;) and when he had decyphered a part thereof, he exclaimed,—*How excellent and how gracious is this discourse?* Then came forth Khobâb from his hiding place, and said, "Oh Omar! I trust that the Lord hath verily set thee apart for Himself, in answer to His prophet; it was but yesterday I heard him praying thus,—*Strengthen Islam, Oh God, by Ab ul Hakam (Abu Jahl) or by Omar!*" Then said Omar, "Lead me unto Mahomet, that I may make known unto him

\* *Hishâmi*, p. 78; *Tabari*, p. 135; *Wâchidi*, p. 179½. The latter mentions the facts very briefly, but adds the names of Adî, and Ibn al Asadi, to that of Abu Jahl, as having abused Mahomet. The conversion, he says, occurred after Mahomet's "entry into Arcam's house," in the sixth year of the Mission.

† It occurred in the month of Dzul Hajj, the last in the year. (*Wâchidi*, p. 232.) It is there noted that the believers at that date amounted in all to forty men and ten women; or by other accounts to forty-five men and eleven women.

my conversion." And he was directed to the house of Arcam. So Omar knocked at the door, and Hamza and others looked through a crevice, and, lo ! it was Omar. But Mahomet bade them let him in, and rising to meet him, seized his skirt and the belt of his sword, saying, "Wilt thou not refrain from persecuting, until the Lord send some calamity upon thee?" And Omar replied ;—" *Verily, I testify that thou art the prophet of God !*" And Mahomet was filled with joy, and called aloud, GREAT IS THE LORD !\*

These conversions were a real triumph to Mahomet ; Hamza and Omar both possessed, along with great bodily strength, an indomitable courage, and exercised much influence at Mecca.† The heroism of Hamza, in the cause of Islam, was so distinguished, that he earned for himself the title, familiar to the present day, of *the Lion of God*. Omar, when in an assembly, rose from his stature far above the people, as if he had been mounted. He was stout and fair, and somewhat ruddy. Impulsive and precipitate, his anger was easily aroused ; and men

\* *Allahu Akbar*, which exclamation is styled the *takbir*, and is used on occasions of surprise, or the unexpected occurrence of any great event.

Hishâmi has two versions ; one similar to that given in the text ; only it is stated that Omar was *on his way to slay Mahomet*, when he was diverted by an intimation of his sister's conversion. But this incident has probably been only thrown in to add to the romantic colouring of the story. Besides its inherent improbability, it appears inconsistent with the immediately previous declaration in Hishâmi, that Omar was "softened" when he saw the believers preparing to emigrate to Abyssinia, and said, "the Lord go with you." (*Hishâmi*, p. 103.)

The second version is entirely different. Here is Omar's own alleged account :—" I was far from the faith, and a man given to strong drink :—wanting companions one night, I repaired to the spirit-dealer's shop, but I did not find him. Then I said, *I will go unto the Kaaba and compass it six or seven times* ; and I found Mahomet praying there with his face towards Syria. Then I said, *what if I stay and hear what he is saying ; I will get me near unto him and listen, then I will startle and frighten him*. So I went up towards the black stone, and hid myself behind the Kaaba-curtain, and walked along softly between it and the wall, while the prophet was praying and repeating the Coran, till I reached right before him ;—there was nothing betwixt him and me but the curtain. And when I heard the Coran, my heart softened thereat, and I wept and was converted ; and when he had ended, I followed him on his way to his house, which was in the *Dâr al Wâckidâ* (now in the possession of Muâvia ; ) and as I made up upon him, he heard my steps and recognized me, and thought that verily I had come to trouble him, until I unfolded the truth. Then he praised God and said ;—*Verily, Oh Omar ! God hath directed thee*. And he touched my garment and prayed for me, that I might continue steadfast." (*Hishâmi*, pp. 106 and 107.)

This tradition is utterly inconsistent with the other ; yet it contains details which have all the freshness and semblance of truth, and there is no *apparent* reason why it should have been fabricated. It is a strong example of the strange uncertainty of unsupported tradition.

The version in the text is evidently the correct one, and is given both by Hishâmi and Wâckidi, with some variations, which show that each had separate and independent authority for it. (*Hishâmi*, p. 103 ; *Wâckidi*, p. 231½.)

† For Hamza, *Hishâmi*, p. 78. For Omar, *Wâckidi*, p. 243.

feared him because of this uncertain and impetuous temper. At the period of his conversion he was but six-and-twenty,\* yet so great and immediate was the influence of his accession upon the spread of Islam, that from this era is dated the commencement of its open and fearless profession at Mecca. The Moslems no longer concealed their worship within their own houses, but with conscious strength and a bold front of defiance, assembled in companies about the Kaaba, performed their rites of prayer, and compassed the Holy House.† Their courage rose: dread and uneasiness seized the Coreish.

The Coreish, indeed, had cause for alarm. They were disquieted by the hospitable reception and encouragement of the refugees at the Abyssinian Court. An embassy of two of their chief men, laden with costly presents, had made a fruitless attempt to obtain their surrender.‡ What if the Najâshy should support them with an armed force, and seek to establish

\* "He was born four years before the great (last?) battle of *Al Fijjâr*, and was converted in Dzul Hajj, six years after the mission, aged twenty-six. His son Abd-Allah was then only six years old." (*Wâkidi*, p. 232.)

† *Wâkidi*, p. 232; *Hishâmi*, pp. 105—108.

‡ An account of this embassy is given by *Hishâmi*, (pp. 96—100) also briefly by *Tabari*, (p. 136.) the former is related by *Dr. Sprenger* in considerable detail, (p. 191.)

*Omm Salma* (the widow of one of the refugees, and afterwards married to *Mahomet*, states that the Coreish despatched *Abdallah ibn Abi Rabia*, and *Amr ibn al As*, with rare presents (including stores of precious leather,) for the *Najâshy*. They first gained over the courtiers; then they presented their gifts to the king, saying, that "certain fools amongst them had left their ancestral faith; they had not joined Christianity, but had set up a new religion of their own; they had therefore, been deputed by the Coreish to fetch them back." The courtiers supported their prayer, but the king said he would enquire farther into the matter in the presence of the accused. Now the refugees had agreed that they would not garble their doctrine, but, come what might, say nothing more nor less than their prophet had taught them. So on the morrow they were summoned into the royal presence, where were also the Bishops with their books open before them. The king enquired the cause of their separation. Then *Jâfar*, (*Mahomet's* uncle,) answered, in the name of all, "that they used to worship images, eat the dead, commit lewdness, disregard family ties and the duties of neighbourhood and hospitality, until that *Mahomet* arose a prophet;" and he concluded by describing his system, and the persecutions which had forced them to Abyssinia. On the king asking him to repeat any of the prophet's teaching, he recited *Sura Maryam*, (ch. xix., containing the births of *John* and *Jesus*, notices of *Abraham*, *Moses*, &c.) and the *Najâshy* wept until his beard became moist, and the Bishops wept so that their tears ran down upon their books, saying, "Verily, this Revelation and that of *Moses* proceed from one and the same source." And the *Najâshy* said to the refugees, "Depart in peace, for I will never give you up."

Next day, it is added, *Amr* endeavoured to entrap them into a declaration regarding *Jesus* that would be offensive to the king; but the latter fully concurred in their doctrine, that *Jesus* was nothing more than "a servant of *God*, and *His* *Apostle*; *His* *Spirit* and *His* *word*, placed in the womb of *Mary*, the immaculate *Virgin*." So the Meccan embassy departed in bad case.

The above story is no doubt intended to meet the passages that the Jews and Christians wept for joy on hearing the *Coran* because of its correspondence with their own Scriptures. See *Sura XVII*, 108: *XXVIII*. 53. A similar tale has

a Christian or reformed Faith at Mecca, as one of his predecessors had done in Yemen? Apart even from foreign aid, there was ground for apprehension at home. The Moslem body no longer consisted of oppressed and despised out-casts, struggling for a weak and miserable existence. It was rather a powerful faction, adding daily to its strength by the accession of influential citizens. It challenged an open hostility. The victory of either party involved the annihilation of the other.

Influenced by such fears, the Corèish sought to stay the progress of secession from their ranks, by utterly severing the party of Mahomet from social and friendly communication with themselves. On the other hand, Abu Tâlib was supported in his defence of Mahomet by all his brothers (excepting Abu Lahab,) and by the descendants generally of his grandfather Hâshim, whether converts to Islam or not.\* The religious struggle now merged into a civil feud between the Hâshimites and the rest of the Coreish; and there were not wanting long-rooted political associations to add bitterness to the strife.

To secure their purpose, the Coreish entered into a confederacy against the Hâshimites,—*that they would not marry their*

been invented for the Bishops of Najrân, and also of an embassy of Christians from Abyssinia, who visited Mahomet at Mecca. (*Hishâmi*, p. 124.) So that not much reliance can be placed on this part of the narrative.

Two other incidents are related of the Najâshy. One, that while the refugees were at his court, he was attacked by a claimant of the Throne. The refugees were so concerned for the result, that they sent Zobeir (then quite a youth) over the Nile on an inflated skin, to watch the battle, and when he returned with tidings that the Najâshy had discomfited his adversary, they rejoiced greatly.

The Abyssinians are said to have risen up against their king for the favor he showed to the Mussulman doctrine. So the Najâshy put into his pocket a scrap inscribed with the Mahometan creed, and when his people desired him to say, "that Jesus was the Son of God" he responded (putting his hand upon his pocket,) "Jesus never went beyond *this*,"—apparently agreeing in what they said, but inwardly referring to the scrap!—A childish story.

Mahomet is said to have regarded him as a convert, and to have accordingly prayed for him at his death. A light is also related to have issued from his tomb.

There is probably a basis of truth for the general outline given in this note, but it would be difficult to draw a probable line between the real and the fictitious parts of it. Had the leaning towards Mahometan doctrine been really so great in Abyssinia, as is here represented, we should have heard more of its inhabitants in the troublous times that followed Mahomet's decease.

\* *Wâkidi*, p. 40; *Hishâmi*, p. 72. Abu Tâlib summoned the house of Hâshim to consult as to the defence of their kinsman Mahomet. All agreed to stand by him but Abu Lahab. Abu Tâlib was charmed with the noble spirit of his relative, and recited a Casida (preserved by Ibn Ishâc,) in praise of the family. The verses, however, conclude with an eulogy on Mahomet as the chief and most noble of the stock,—a sentiment which Abu Tâlib, not a convert to Islam, was not likely to have uttered. The Casida is evidently spurious, at least in part.

women; nor give their own in marriage to them; would sell nothing to them nor buy aught from them;—that all dealings with them should cease. The ban was carefully committed to writing, and sealed with three seals. When all had bound themselves by it, the sheet was hung up in the Kaaba, and religious sanction thus given to its provisions.\*

The Hāshimites were unable to withstand the violent tide of public opinion which thus set in against them; and apprehensive perhaps that it might be only the prelude of open attack, or of blows in the dark still more fatal, they retired into the secluded quarter of the city, known as the *Sheb*† of Abu Tālib. It was formed by one of the defiles or indentations, where the projecting rocks of Abu Cobeis pressed upon the northern outskirts of Mecca. It was entered on the city side by a low gateway, through which a camel passed with difficulty. On all other sides it was detached by buildings and cliffs from the town.‡

\* *Wāckidi*, p. 39½, 40; *Tabari*, p. 137; *Hishāmi*, p. 108. Mansūr, son of Akrama, wrote the document; and the hand with which he wrote it (*at the prayer, adds Hishāmi, of Mahomet*) withered and dried up. Hishāmi states also that it was he who suspended the deed in the Kaaba. Wāckidi however gives another tradition, according to which it was never put in the Kaaba at all, but remained in the custody of Omm al Jalās, an aunt or cousin of Abu Jahl.

† Sprenger (p. 194) holds that this movement was prior to, and independent of, the league of the Coreish (p. 189.) But both Hishāmi and Wāckidi distinctly connect the entry into Abu Tālib's quarter, and the ban, as the effect with its cause. And this is indeed the only intelligible statement of the facts.

‡ شَعْب *Sheb* signifies a *defile, glen, ravine*. Thus the converts from Medina made their assignation to meet Mahomet in a glen, *Sheb*, leading into the valley of Mina, and the next day the enraged Coreish repaired to the *Sheb* of the Medina pilgrims, or the valley in which they were encamped, (*Wāckidi*, p. 42½.) The valley at Ohod, out of which Talha saved Mahomet, is termed *Sheb*. (*Wāckidi*, p. 221; *Hishāmi*, p. 262; *Tabari*, p. 375) where the top or exit from the valley is called فَمُ الشَّعْبِ "mouth of the Sheb." Amr and his companion in their expedition to assassinate Abu Sofiān, tied up their camels in one of the defiles (*Sheb*) near Mecca. (*Hishāmi*, p. 451; *Tabari*, p. 405.) So the end of a pass requiring to be guarded in the expedition of *Dzat al Rika*, is called "*fam al Sheb*." (*Tabari*, p. 427.) Before Cussey brought the Coreish into Mecca, they are said to have inhabited "the heights and defiles (*Sheb*), of the surrounding hills." (*Tabari*, p. 29.; *Cnf. C. de Perceval*, Vol. II. p. 478.)

The several quarters of Mecca skirting the foot of Abu Cobeis, are still distinguished by the name *Sheb*: thus we have the *Sheb Amir*, the *Sheb Maulad* (quarter in which Mahomet was born;) and the *Sheb Ali*. The latter was probably comprised in the *Sheb* of Abu Tālib. (*Burkhardt's Arabia*, pp. 123, 128.) "On the East-side, towards the mountain, and partly on its declivity, stands the quarter called *Shab Aly*, adjoining the *Shab el Moled*: here is shown the venerated place of Aly's nativity. Both these quarters called *Shab* (i. e., rock,) are among the most ancient parts of the town, where the Koreysh formerly lived: they are even now inhabited principally by Sherifs, and do not contain any shops. The houses are spacious and in an airy situation." (*Idem*, p. 124.)

It was into one of these quarters of the city, situated in a defile, having behind it the steep ascent of the hill, and so built as to be inaccessible on all sides,

On the first night of the first month of the seventh year of the mission, the Hâshimites, including Mahomet and his family, retired into the quarter of Abu Tâlib, and with them followed also the descendants of Al Muttalib, the brother of Hâshim. Abu Lahab alone, instigated by his hatred of the prophet, went forth to the other party. Rigorously was the ban of separation put in force. The Hâshimites soon found that they were cut off from their supplies of corn and the necessaries of life. They were not strong enough to send forth a caravan of their own; if parties of foreign merchants passed through, the Coreish instigated them to withhold their commodities, except at a most exorbitant price;\* the Coreish themselves would sell nothing to them; and a great scarcity necessarily ensued. No one ventured forth from the Sheb, except at the season of pilgrimage, when all enmities throughout Arabia were hushed, and Mahomet and his party were free to join securely in the ceremonies.† For two or three years, the attitude of both parties remained unaltered, and the failing stock of the Hâshimites, replenished only by surreptitious and occasional supplies, reduced them to want and distress. The citizens could hear the voices of the half-famished little ones crying within the Sheb. Many hearts were softened at the sight of such hardships, and regretted the hostilities which gave rise to them. Among these, and the relatives of the isolated families, were found some who ventured, in spite of the threats of the Coreish, from time to time, to introduce at night, by stealth, provisions into the quarter of Abu Tâlib. Hishâm ibn Amr used to conduct a camel laden with corn cautiously into the *Sheb*, and make over the burden to the

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except by a narrow entrance towards the city, that the Hâshimites retired. These particulars enable us to understand the account of Hakîm striking his camel to make it bend and enter the narrow defile, (فم الشعب) and the voices of the wailing children being heard from the parts of the city adjoining, but divided from, the Sheb.

Weil has misapprehended the meaning of the term Sheb, and makes it a fortified castle *outside* Mecca. "Hielt es Abu Talib für gerathen, ihn mit einem Theile der Gläubigen aus Mekka zu entfernen, und in ein Wohlbefestigtes Schloss zu bringen." (*Mohammed*, p. 61.) So in his *Einleitung*, (p. 9.)

\* This is from Sprenger, but he does not give his authority. p. 194.

† *Wâchidi*, p. 40. It is not clear whether this retirement was voluntary on the part of the Hâshimites, arising from their own alarm, or was directly forced upon them by the threats and menaces of the Coreish. Although they did not come forth from the *Sheb* into the city, they might still, we may conceive, issue from the quarter of Abu Tâlib, by clambering up the hill, and so getting out into the country: but they would be unable to procure supplies in this way.



hungry inmates.\* Hakîm, a grandson of Khuweilid, was also in the habit, though sometimes exposed to peril in the attempt, of carrying supplies to his aunt Khadija.†

Though the sympathies of many were called forth by the sufferings of the Hâshimites, the cause of Islam itself did not advance during the period of this weary seclusion, which had its full and expected effect in cutting off the mass of the people from the personal influence of Mahomet and of his converts. The efforts of the prophet must needs have been confined to the conversion of his own noble clan, who, though unbelievers in his mission, had resolved to defend his person; and to the strengthening of his previous converts in the faith. Accordingly, we find in the Coran at this period, directions from God to retire from the unbelievers, and confine his preaching to his near kinsmen, and to the faithful;—

\* \* \* Verily they are a rebellious People;  
Wherefore turn from them, and thou shalt not be blamed;  
And admonish; for admonition profiteth, the Believers.‡

Invoke with God no other god, lest thou be of those consigned to torment;  
And preach unto thy Relatives, those that be of nearer kin;  
And conduct thyself gently unto the Believers that follow thee;  
And if they disobey thee, Say, *I am free from that which ye do.*  
And put thy trust in Him that is glorious and merciful.§

\* Hishâm belonged to the Bani Lowey, but he was a uterine brother of Fazîla, a Hâshimite:—"now this man used to go with a camel to the children of Hâshim and Muttalib, by night, and when he approached the entrance to their quarters

(قم الشعب) he would let down the nose string of the camel from its head, and striking it on the side, would make it enter the *Sheb*; then he made over to them the corn wherewith it was laden." (*Hishâmi*, p. 118.)

† "The Hâshimites remained in this position for two or three years, till they became helpless: Not an article reached them, but covertly and by stealth from such of the Coreish as were actuated by motives of propinquity. On one occasion, Abu Jahl met Hakîm, grandson of Khuweilid, and with him, a slave carrying wheat for his aunt Khadija. Abu Jahl stopped him, and swearing at him, threatened that if he would not desist, he would disgrace him in Mecca. Abul Bokhari came up and sought to quiet Abu Jahl, saying, that it was natural and right for Hakîm to take food for his aunt. Abu Jahl would not listen, but fell upon Hakîm, who, however, got the better of him, and forced him to retire kicked and wounded." (*Hishâmi*, p. 109.)

Stories tending to the abasement of Abu Jahl are related by the traditionists with such evident zest, that they are to be received by us with caution.

‡ Sura LI., 55.

§ Sura XXVI., 212. "Conduct thyself gently,"—literally, *lower thy wings*.

واخفض جناحك The same expression is used in Sura XV., 88:—

Stretch not forth thine eyes unto the provision which we have given unto several of them, neither be covetous thereof:  
But behave with gentleness (*lower thy wings*,) unto the Believers,  
And say; Verily, I am a plain Preacher.

And publish that which thou art commanded, and withdraw from the Idolaters.  
Verily, We shall suffice for thee against the scoffers, those that set up with God other gods; but they will shortly know;  
But do thou praise thy Lord with thanksgiving, and be among the Worshipers:—  
And serve thy Lord until that Death (*or the certainty*) overtake thee.

The exemplary bearing of Mahomet under these trying circumstances, and the spirit of clanship uniting all that shut themselves up with Abu Tâlib, no doubt secured to the prophet the general countenance of the Hâshimites, and may have helped to add followers from their ranks. But the period of confinement contributed probably no other result.

The pilgrimage alone afforded Mahomet a wider field. That interval of universal security was turned to careful account, as well now as before the ban, in visiting and exhorting the various tribes that flocked to Mecca and the adjacent fairs. The prophet used thus to visit the assemblages at Okâtz, Mujanna, and Dzul Majâz, as well as the encampments at Mecca and Minâ. He warned them against idolatry; invited them to the worship and service of the One God; promised them not only paradise hereafter, but prosperity and domination upon earth, if they would believe.\* But no one responded to his call. Abu Lahab would follow after him, saying, *Believe him not, he is a lying renegade!*† And the tribes replied to Mahomet in sore and taunting words;—*thine own kindred and people should know thee best; wherefore, then, do they not believe and follow thee?* So the prophet, repulsed and grieved, would look upwards, and thus make his complaint unto God:—*Oh Lord, if Thou willedst, it would not be thus!*‡ But the prayer seemed to pass unheeded.

We propose in conclusion to notice the character of the Suras, about twenty in number, assignable to the period reviewed in this paper.§

\* *Hishâmi*, p. 139; *Wâckidi*, p. 41. *Tabari*, p. 155.

Wâckidi mentions Mahomet's frequenting the three fairs stated in the text, every year. There is some foreshadowing of the victories of Islam in his supposed address, which rather throws doubt upon his having made any promise of worldly domination at this time. This was the alleged drift of his preaching: "*Ye People! Say, THERE IS NO GOD BUT THE LORD. Ye will be benefitted thereby. Ye will gain the rule of all Arabia, and of Ajam (foreign lands,) and when ye die ye will reign as kings in Paradise.*"

The Tribes whom he thus addressed are detailed both by Hishâmi and Wâckidi, and include the Bani Kalb, Kinda, Harb, Odzra, Khassafa, Sâsâh, Ghassâm, Hanîfa; from the last of which he is related to have received the worst rebuff of all.

There would be numerous Christians and Jews at the fairs, though they did not attend the Meccan pilgrimage.

† "And behind him there followed a squint-eyed man, fat, having flowing locks on both sides, and clothed in raiment of fine Aden stuff; and when Mahomet had finished his preaching, he would begin to address them, saying, that *this fellow's only object was to draw them away from their gods and Jinn, to his fancied revelations, wherefore follow him not, neither listen unto him.* And who should this be, but his uncle Abdâl Ozza, Abu Lahab." (*Hishâmi*, p. 140.)

‡ *Wâckidi*, p. 41½.

§ The Suras of this period are probably as follows: (The sequence of the first



The new and leading feature in these chapters is the close connection now springing up between Mahomet and the Jewish religion.

The Pentateuch is constantly mentioned as a Revelation from God to Moses. The object of the Coran is to attest the divine origin of it and of the succeeding Scriptures.\* Those Scriptures contain clear evidence of the truth of the Coran, and of the mission of Mahomet.† Jewish witnesses are appealed to in proof that the New Dispensation is foretold in the Old Testament, and that the Coran is in close conformity with the contents of their sacred books.

The confident reference which Mahomet makes to the testimony of the Jews and of their Scriptures, is very remarkable. Some of that people, we may not doubt, imperfectly instructed perhaps in their own books and traditions, encouraged Mahomet in the idea that he might be, or even positively affirmed that he was, *that Prophet whom the Lord their God should raise up unto them of their brethren*. His profound veneration for the Jewish Scriptures, to the implicit observance of which it was believed that he had pledged himself in the Coran, would lull the apprehension of the Israelites, and draw them kindly towards him. "If this man," they would say, "hold firmly by the Law and the Prophets, and seek fervently the guidance of the God of our fathers, he will not go astray. Peradventure, the Lord willeth through him to lead the Heathen Arabs unto salvation. Nay! What if (we erring in our interpretations,) this prove the very Messiah, sprung from the seed of Abraham? In any wise let us wait, watching the result; and meanwhile encourage him in the love of the Word of God, and the seeking of His face in prayer."

forty-one has been given in former papers.) 42, LXVII.; 43, LIII.; 44, XXXII.; 45, XXXIX.; 46, LXXIII.; 47, LXXIX.; 48, LIV.; 49, XXXIV.; 50, XXXI.; 51, LXIX.; 52, LXVIII.; 53, XLI.; 54, LXXI.; 55, LII.; 56, L.; 57, XLV.; 58, XLIV.; 59, XXXVII.; 60, XXX.; 61, XXVI.; 62, XV.; 63, LI.

\* See Suras XLVI., 12, 30; XXXVII., 38; XXXII. 24; X., 37, 93; VI., 93, *et passim*. The Coran is described as a book sent "to attest the preceding Scriptures." So the Jews and Christians (severally and together, but more especially at this period, the former) are styled, "those to whom the Scriptures have been given." (كتاب, ذكر, علم, &c.) It was thus the whole preceding Scriptures,

the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms, and subsequently the Gospel, which Mahomet continually described himself as sent to "attest," "confirm," "fulfil."

† Sura XXVI., 195. "The Coran is borne witness to in the former Scriptures," &c.

All rejoiced in the Jewish tendencies patent in his mind.\* But some going farther bore a direct and unequivocal testimony to his mission.† It could have been to nothing short of such witness that he referred, when he said;—*they unto whom We have given the Scripture recognize the prophet, as they do their own children*;‡ and—

Verily this is a Revelation from the Lord of Creation;  
The Faithful Spirit hath descended with it  
Upon thy heart, that thou mightest be a Warner,  
In the tongue of simple Arabic.  
And verily it is in the former Scriptures;  
Was it not a Sign unto them that the learned among the Children of Israel recognized it?  
And if we had revealed it to a Foreigner,  
And he had recited it unto them, they had not believed.§

SAY; What think ye, if this Revelation be from God, and ye reject it, and a Witness from amongst the Children of Israel hath witnessed unto the like thereof, and hath believed, and ye turn away scornfully? Verily, God doth not direct the erring folk.||

Whether the "Witness," and other Jewish supporters of Mahomet were amongst his professed followers, perhaps the slave-adherents of Islam; or were casual visitors at Mecca from Israelitish tribes; or finally, resident Jews at Medina (with the inhabitants of which city the Prophet was on the point of establishing friendly relations,) we cannot do more than conjecture.

But whoever the Jewish friends of Mahomet may have been, it is evident that amongst them were men possessing a knowledge—rude and imperfect perhaps, but comprehensive—of the outlines of Jewish history and tradition; and that these supplied the material for the Scriptural stories, which, distorted by rabbinical fable, and embellished or parodied by the prophet's fancy, begin to form a chief portion of the Coran. The mixture of truth and fiction, of graphic imagery and of childish inanity, the repetition over and again of the same tale in stereotyped expressions, and the elaborate, and too patent effort to strike an analogy between himself and the former prophets, by putting the speech of his own day into their lips and those of their pretended opposers, surprise and at last fatigue the patient reader of the Coran.

\* "Those unto whom we have given the Book rejoice for that which hath been revealed unto thee." (*Sura XIII.*, 39.)

† See Suras XXXIV., 6; X., 93; VI., 14; XXVIII., 53; XVII., 102, 108; XIII., 45.

‡ Or "recognize the Coran." (*Sura VI.*, 20.)

§ *Sura XXVI.*, 191—198.

|| *Sura XLVI.*, 10, "unto the like thereof," that is to its conformity with the Old Testament.



For those who have not studied the revelation of Mahomet, the following examples may be required to illustrate our meaning :

God created Adam of clay. The angels were commanded to fall down and worship him.\* The devil, alleging his nobler formation of fire, refused, and so fell.† When sentenced, he threatened God that he would seduce His new-created subject ; and, in tempting him to eat of the forbidden tree, he fulfilled his threat.‡ To the facts of Abel's history, is added the Jewish fiction, that God, by sending a raven to scratch the earth, indicated to Cain that the corpse should be buried under ground.§ But it would be a vain and unprofitable task to follow Mahomet through his labyrinth of truth, discrepancy, and fiction,—his tales of Abraham, who brake the idols of his people, and miraculously escaped the fire into which the Tyrant cast him :||

\* Compare Ps. xcvii. 7. Hebrews i. 6. "When he bringeth the first-born into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him."

† "His Ministers a flaming fire." (*Ps. civ. 4., Heb. i. 7.*)

‡ Sura II., 11—26, XX., 113 ; XXXVIII., 70. The first of these passages may be quoted as a fair specimen of the Scripture—legendary style.

And verily We created you, then fashioned you, then We said unto the Angels, *Fall down and worship Adam*; and they worshipped all, excepting Eblis, who was not of the worshippers;—He said, *What hindereth thee that thou worshippes not when I command thee?* he answered, *[I am better than he, Thou createdst me of Fire, and Thou createdst him of clay ;* He said, *Get thee down from Heaven ; it shall not be given thee to behave arrogantly therein ;* *[get the hence, verily, thou shalt be amongst the Despicable.* He said, *Respice me unto the Day when (all) shall be raised.* He said, *Verily, thou art of the number respited.*

He said, *Now, for that Thou hast caused me to fall, I will lie in wait for them in the straight* *[path ;*

*Then I will fall upon them from before and from behind, and from their right hand and* *[from their left, and Thou shalt not find the most part of them thankful.*

He said, *Depart from hence, despised and driven off: for those of them that shall follow thee,* *[—verily, I will fill hell with you together !*

*And thou, Adam, dwell thou and thy Wife in Paradise, and eat from whatever quarter ye* *[will, but approach not this Tree, lest ye become of the number of the Transgressors !*

And the Devil tempted them both that he might discover that which was hidden from them of their *[Nakedness ;*

And he said, *Your Lord hath only forbidden you this Tree, lest ye should become Angels, or* *[become Immortal.*

And he swore unto them, *Verily, I am unto you one that counselleth good.* And he misled them by ambitious Desire ; and when they had tasted of the Tree, their Naked-*[ness appeared unto them, and they began to sew together upon themselves the leaves of*

*And their Lord called unto them, What ! did I not forbid you this Tree, and say unto you* *[that Satan was your manifest Enemy ?*

They said, *Oh, our Lord ! We have injured our own Souls, and if Thou forgivest us not,* *[and art not merciful unto us, we shall be numbered amongst the Damned.*

He said, *Get ye down, the one of you an Enemy to the other ; and there shall be unto you on* *[the Earth an habitation and a provision for a season:*

He said, *Therein shall ye live, and therein shall ye die, and from thence shall ye be taken* *[forth.*

The expression penultimate verse seems to be taken from Genesis iii. 15. "And I will put enmity," &c.

§ Sura V., 33. Cuf Geigers *Was hat Mahommed aus Judenthume*, p. 103, where he quotes R. Elieser, Kap. 21, for the Jewish tradition to the same effect. But in Jewish tradition the raven shows the mode of burial to Adam, in the Coran to Cain, the murderer.

|| Sura XXI., 52, &c. See the quotations from the Jewish Commentator Rabbah, of similar legends, in Geiger, (p. 124.)



of the angel's visit, when "Sarah laughed" at the promise of a son, and the Patriarch vainly pleading for Sodom, was told that though Lot would be saved, his wife was predestined to destruction;\* of Abraham's sacrifice of his son being ransomed by "a noble victim;"† of Joseph, in envy of whose beauty the Egyptian ladies cut their hands with knives;‡ of Jacob, who when the garment of Joseph was cast over him by the messengers from Egypt, recovered his long lost sight;§ of Mount Sinai held over the terrified Israelites to force their acceptance of the law; of the seventy, who, when upon the same mount struck dead, were quickened to life again;|| of David, whom the mountains joined in singing the praises of God; and of Solomon, for whose gigantic works the genii were forced to labour at his bidding; of the genii, who brought the throne of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon in "the twinkling of an eye," and of the lap-wing that flew to her with the royal summons;¶ of the Jews who broke the Sabbath, and were changed into apes.\*\* Some points in the sacred history are the subject of special amplification and frequent rehearsal. Such are the favourite topics of the history of Moses, the catastrophe of the flood, and the overthrow of Sodom, through which the Arabian prophet would deal forth exhortation and warning to the Meccans, and to which he is ever recurring with a wearisome reiteration. The reader who has patience and interest sufficient for the tedious detail, will gain the best conception of it from the Coran itself. If a specimen be desired, the history of Moses in Suras XX. and XXVIII. will give a fair idea of the rest.

To acquire so minute a knowledge of considerable portions of the Jewish Scriptures, to assimilate these to his former materials, and to work them up into the elaborate and often extensively rhythmical Suras, which begin now to extend to a considerable length, it was necessary to devote much time and

\* Sura XI., 69; XV., 50. XXVII., 58, &c.

† XXXVII., 84. Which son is not specified in the Coran.

‡ Sura XII. Mahomet makes Joseph to have been inclined towards Potiphar's wife, and only saved from impending sin by a Divine interposition, (Sura XII., 25.) So the Rabbin Jochanan, (*Geiger*, p. 142.) The ladies' cutting their hands is also mentioned in the *Sepher Hayyashar*. (*ibid.*)

§ Sura XII., 93-96.

|| Sura II., 55, 63, 93; IV., 153; VII., 172. For the analogous rabbinical legend, see *Geiger*, p. 165.

¶ Sura XXVII., 16-45; XXXIV., 10-14; XXXVIII., 18, 42. For the Jewish legends of similar nature, see *Geiger*, pp. 185-187.

\*\* Sura VII. 164.



careful study. The revelation is no longer the spontaneous and impassioned eloquence of a burning Faith, but the tame and laboured result of ordinary composition. For this end many a midnight hour must have been stolen from sleep,—though ostensibly devoted to prayer and recitation of God's word. To such employment may we attribute such references as this—

Oh thou that art wrapped up?  
 Arise during the Night, excepting a small portion thereof:  
 A Half of it, or diminish therefrom a little,  
 Or increase therefrom. And recite the Coran with well measured recitation.  
 Verily, We shall inspire thee with weighty words.  
 Verily, the hours of Night are the best for fervent Maceration, and distinct Utterance.  
 Truly by Day thou hast a protracted Labour.  
 And commemorate the name of thy Lord, and consecrate thyself solely unto Him.\*

It is possible that the convictions of Mahomet may have become so blended with his grand object and course of action, that the very *study* of the Coran and effort to compose it, were regarded as his best season of devotion. But the surreptitious manner in which he availed himself of Jewish information, producing the result, not only as original, but *as evidence of inspiration*,† begins to prove an active, though it may have been unconscious, dissimulation and course of falsehood, to be justified only by the miserable apology of a pious end.

Up to this period there is hardly any mention of the *Christian* Scriptures. The sources of available teaching regarding them were probably as yet imperfect.

\* Sura LXXIII., 1—7.

† See Sura XXXVIII., 70. The story of man's creation, and the fall of Satan, is thus prefaced: "*I had no knowledge regarding the Heavenly Chiefs when they disputed; verily, it hath been revealed unto me for no other purpose than (to prove) that I am a public Preacher.*" So Sura XXVIII., 45—47, regarding the story of Moses at the Mount. Also XII., 102; after relating the history of Joseph, he adds, "*This is one of the secret histories, which we have revealed unto thee; thou was not present with them,*" &c.

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