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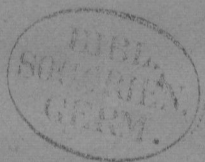
BELIEF OF MAHOMET

IN

HIS OWN INSPIRATION.

by W. Muir Esqre
of the Bengal Civil Service

[EXTRACTED FROM THE CALCUTTA REVIEW, NO. XLVI.]



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THE BELIEF OF MAHOMET IN HIS OWN INSPIRATION.

[FROM THE CALCUTTA REVIEW, NO. XLVI.]

The Koran.

OUR sketch of the *Life of Mahomet* had, in the last paper, reached a point, about his fortieth year, when anxious yearning after religious truth had sprung up, and the mind, brooding upon the gross superstition and abject worldliness of the inhabitants of Mecca, and bewildered by its own speculations, amidst the wild flickerings of spiritual light ever and anon flashing around, began to unburthen itself in fragments of impassioned poetry. Such rhapsodies sometimes assume the character of a soliloquy full of melancholy reflection upon the state and prospects of mankind; at other times, fraught with burning words and imagery of terror, they seem intended as a warning and admonition to his neighbours or fellow-citizens; while again, they exhibit his mind intent upon itself, and seeking for comfort and assurance when oppressed by perplexity and distress.

Few of these fragments remain to us. They did not fit in with the subsequent theory, which holds every word of the Koran as a message emanating directly from God: and it is probable that the more remarkable of them, imprinted indelibly on the hearts of those who shared in the early enquiries of Mahomet, have alone found a place in his Revelation. It is thus that we find but eighteen Suras, which we can assign to this period of his life; and in order to trace the developement of spiritual thought and religious dogma in the mind of Mahomet, copious extracts from these must be laid before the reader.*

Of the soliloquies, the subjoined Sura is a specimen:—

CI. That which striketh! What is it which striketh?
And what shall certify thee what THE STRIKING meaneth?
On that Day, Mankind shall be like unto Moths scattered abroad,
And the Mountains shall be like unto wool of divers colours dyed. *a*

* The earliest eighteen Suras, we would place in the following order:—1, CIII; 2, C; 3, XCIX; 4, XCI 5, CVI; 6, I; 7, CI; 8, XCV; 9, CII; 10, CIV; 11, LXXXII; 12, XCII; 13, CV; 14, LXXXIX; 15, XC; 16, XCIII; 17, XCIV; 18, CVIII. The next four, following immediately upon these, are; 19, XCVI; 20, CXII; 21, LXXIV; 22, CXI.

Any such arrangement can, however, be only approximate, because, as explained in the "*Sources for the Biography of Mahomet*" the chronology of the several Suras is to be gathered from internal intimations of style, contents, and reference to passing events. The earlier Suras are generally composed of short pieces, delivered all at once, and are therefore more easily classified than the later Suras, which are made up of fragments composed on various occasions. As they advance in time, the Suras gradually become longer; but they have been arranged in the present Koran in an order the reverse of this, the longest being placed first and the shortest last. Hence it is that the casual reader of the Koran can form no correct conception of the origin and developement of Mahomet's system, by a perusal in its present shape and sequence.

Then, truly, whose soever Balances are heavy,* he shall enter into a life of Happiness;
 And he whose Balances are light, to him verily appertaineth the Pit,
 And what shall certify thee what THE PIT meaneth?
 A Raging Fire!

Of the following verses, some are represented as proceeding from God, but probably as yet only by poetical fiction:—

SURA XCV. I swear by the Fig and Olive,
 By Mount Sinai, and by this violate Territory!
 That We verily created Man of a most excellent Fabrick,
 Then We rendered him the lowest of the Low;
 Excepting such as believe and do the things that are right,
 For unto them shall be given a Reward that fadeth not away.
 Then, what shall cause thee after this to deny the Reckoning?
 What! is not God the most righteous of all Judges?

The voice of expostulation and alarm was raised in accents such as these:—

CIV. Woe unto the Backbiter and Defamer;
 He that heapeth up Riches, and numbereth them for the Future!
 He thinketh surely that his Wealth shall be with him for ever.
 Nay! for verily he shall be cast unto the crushing Fire;
 And what shall cause thee to know what the CRUSHING FIRE is?
 The Fire of God kindled,
 Which shall mount above the Hearts,
 It shall verily rise above them as a covering,
 Stretched upon lofty columns.

The XCII. Sura, after a variety of wild and incoherent oaths, proceeds thus:—

V. 12. Verily it is Our part to give Direction,
 And unto us belongeth the Future and the Past.
 Wherefore, I warn you of the Fire which breaketh into Flame,
 There shall not be cast therein but the most Wretched,
 He that rejected the Truth, and turned his back;
 But who greatly feareth the Lord shall escape therefrom,
 He that giveth of his Wealth to purify his Soul withal;
 And who offereth not his Favors unto any with the hope of Recompense,
 Excepting that he seeketh the Face of his Lord, Most High,
 And surely he shall be satisfied.

The following Sura illustrates the rhyming style adopted by Mahomet, even in his earliest compositions. Each verse ends with the syllable *há*,† the corresponding word being indicated below by italics:—

XCI. The Thamudites rejected the message of the Lord in *their* impiety;
 When the most abandoned among *them* arose;
 (Now the Prophet of the Lord had said unto them, "It is the she-camel
 [of the Lord; Give ye drink unto *her*;"")
 But they rejected him, and cut her in pieces;
 Wherefore the Lord overthrew them in their iniquities, and rendered unto them
 [a recompense equal with *their Sin*;
 And HE feareth not the issue *thereof*.

Allusion is sometimes made, though in a very brief and vague form, not only to Arab, but to Jewish legend:—

LXXXIX. v. 6. What! hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with the children of AD,—
 The Iremites possessed of pillars,
 The like whereof hath not been builded in any City:—
 And with the THAMUDITES which hewed out the Rock in the Valley:—
 And with PHARAON that used the Stakes?
 These all behaved insolently in the Earth,
 And multiplied Wickedness therein;
 Wherefore thy Lord poured upon them the mingled Cup of his Wrath,
 Verily, thy Lord is in his Watch-tower; &c.

* I. E., with good deeds.

† The feminine pronoun of the third person.

And there was not wanting special appeal at times to national considerations. The 105th Sura, which recounts God's mercies to the Meccans in the overthrow of Abraha, and preservation of their city, belongs probably to this period; as well as the following:—

CVI. For the stirring up of the COREISH;—
The stirring of them up unto the Winter and Summer (mercantile) Expeditions.
And let them worship the Lord of this House,
He who hath provided them with Food against Hunger,
And granted them immunity from Fear.

In elucidation of the honest striving after Truth by Mahomet at this time, we quote another Sura, in which the two paths of Virtue and Vice, and the difficulties of the straight way, are set forth:—

XC. Verily I swear by this Territory,
(And thou'art a Resident* of this Territory;)
By the Begetter and that which is begotten!—
Verily we have created Man in Trouble.
Ah! doth he think indeed that no one hath power over him?
He saith, *I have wasted much wealth.*
Ah! doth he think that no one seeth him?
What! Have We not made him two Eyes and two Lips,
And guided him unto the TWO ROADS,
Yet he applieth himself not unto the ASCENT;—
And what shall cause thee to know what THE ASCENT is?—
Freeing the Captive,
Or giving Food in the day of Want
To the orphan that is near of kin,
Or to the Poor that lieth in the Dust.
Further, the Righteous must be of those who believe, and stir up one another
[unto Stedfastness and Compassion:—
These are the Heirs of Blessedness;
But they who deny Our Signs, shall be the Heirs of Wretchedness;—
Around them shall the Fire close.

It is highly probable that Mahomet was occupied with such thoughts, and gave vent to his feelings in language like that of the above quotations, for several years before he assumed the office of a Divine teacher. The early Suras, and we may suppose many other reflective and didactic pieces, not preserved, because not purporting to proceed as inspired from God,— would be recorded by the aged Waraca, by Ali, who was still a boy, and possibly by Khadija herself;† or by some member of her family, which, as we have seen, contained persons enquiring after the true religion, and more or less acquainted with Judaism and Christianity. The friends and some of the relatives of Mahomet listened with reverence to his admoni-

* *حل* Abd al Cadir translates this “free,” *i. e.*, from the obligation of holding the Meccan Territory inviolable, and therefore not blamable for invading it in after days with an army!

† “Tabari informs us that when Mohammed first entered on his office, even his wife Khadija had read the Scriptures and was acquainted with the history of the prophets.” (*Sprenger*, p. 100.) But this is from the *Persian* translation of Tabari, and does not appear in the original Arabic. The words are:—

خدایچه بکتابها پیشین خوانده بود و خبرها پیغمبران دانسته

tions, and sought to follow his injunctions, as those of a faithful teacher, guided haply by the Spirit of God. Khadija his loving wife, Zeid and Ali his adopted sons, and perhaps Abu Bakr his bosom friend, and Waraca, who saw in his first teaching the counterpart of his own ideas, were amongst the earliest of his disciples.

But without this little circle, Superstition and the World held undisputed sway, and expostulation was met by a gross and repellent darkness. The kind and generous Abu Talib smiled at the enthusiasm of his nephew; Abu Lahab, another uncle, mocked and insulted him; Abu Jahl and his party sneered. The great body of the Coreish were careless and indifferent; and as Mahomet passed by the knots that clustered about the Kaaba, to discuss the events of the day, they would point disdainfully at him as a half-witted creature.

The more susceptible amongst the citizens listened, perhaps, at first with attention; but when pressed to practical and decisive steps, they would answer;—"It is well for Jews and Christians to follow the purer faith thou speakest of; *they*, we know, have had prophets with a message of the will of God. Let us be content with the light given unto us, and remain as we are. *If a Prophet had been sent unto us, we should no doubt have followed his directions, and been equally devout and spiritual in our worship, as the Jews and Christians.*"* Mahomet felt the force of such a reply, for it was in unison with hidden thoughts, ever present, yet undeveloped in his heart. Would the merciful God be unmindful of the appeal thus virtually made to Him for guidance? It might perhaps be in reality a divine call upon himself to furnish that direction, so woefully needed, and so sincerely desired. And, again, whence that rush of inspiring thoughts of God's Unity and Providence, of a future Recompense, of Heaven and Hell? Whence the ecstatic periods, the flow of burning thoughts, the spontaneous burst of eloquence and heavenly speech, which gave form and substance to the long conceived yearnings of his heart, and stereotyped them as the words of Divine Truth? Could the Prophets of old have had a more convincing test of their inspiration? What if all this formed a heavenly call; a Divine Mission?

He believed, then, that God had called him to preach re-

* See Sura XXXVI. 42, where such professions are quoted by Mahomet, as showing that his people had at first declared their willingness to follow a prophet, if he were only sent to them; but that now a Prophet *had been sent*, they disbelieved him and broke their promise. Such notices are frequent in the Koran, and the pretext assigned in the text, was, no doubt, one of the earliest which Mahomet had to answer.

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formation to his countrymen; but was he authorized to use the name of the Lord, and to recite his warnings, threats, and promises, as words of Inspiration? It would surely stultify his position, to stand forth as a *Messenger* sent by God to reclaim the Meccans to Himself, and yet to bring no message. The work was evidently of God; why then question that these willing thoughts and living words were *intended* by God as His commands? And, ever and anon, the rising doubt would be quelled by a glance at *the end*. For the glorious object of the conversion of his people, could there be any thing wrong in the only suitable means? Nay, this strange mental struggle itself, seemed to be but the budding of inspiration. Should he attempt to stay the divine emotion, and repress the work within, he might be fighting against the Lord Himself! Why then hesitate to take the name of God into his lips, and go forth boldly as His Legate, trusting that the same Spirit which had guided Jewish and Christian prophets, would put the words into his mouth? The God that overrules all Nature, even to the minutest concerns of the brute creation, without whom not a leaf falls to the ground,—He will not suffer these mental longings to miss the aim for which they are intended. Into His hands then he would commit himself, and secure in the singleness of his object, the glory of God, and the good of his fellows, he would go forth speaking His words.

While absorbed by reflections such as these, sometimes doubting, sometimes believing, Mahomet at seasons suffered grievous mental distraction. To this period we attribute the Suras, in which, after deep depression, he sought to re-assure his soul, by remembering the favors of God:—

XCIH. By the rising Sun-shine!
By the Night when it over-casteth!
Thy Lord hath not removed from thee, neither hath He been displeased.
And verily the Future shall be better unto thee than the Past.
And thy Lord shall shortly dispense unto thee a Gift; and thou shalt be satisfied.
What! Did He not find thee an Orphan, and gave thee a Home?
And found thee astray, and directed thee?
Now, therefore, as touching the Orphan, do not oppress him;
And as touching him that asketh of thee, repulse him not;
And as touching the Favors of thy Lord, rehearse them.

XCIV. What! Have we not opened for thee thy Breast?
And taken off from thee thy Burden,—
That which galled thy Back;
And exalted the Mention of thee?
Then truly with the Difficulty, there shall be ease.
Verily with the Difficulty, there shall be ease.
And when thou art set at liberty, then labor,
And towards thy Lord raise thy Desire.

The following Sura appears to refer to the taunts of those

who reproached him with the death of his sons as a mark of God's displeasure,

CVIII. Verily, We have given unto thee an Abundance;
Wherefore offer unto the Lord thy prayer, and sacrifice unto Him.
Verily whoso hateth thee shall be childless.

Notwithstanding such consolations, the depths of his distress were sometimes insupportable, so that he repeatedly meditated suicide. What, if all this were but the simulation of Divine impulse, the stirrings of the Evil One and his emissaries? What crime so awful as to forge the name and authority of God? Rather than expose himself to a risk so awful, he would at once render it impossible, by casting himself headlong from one of these wild cliffs. An invisible influence appeared to hold him back;* was it Divine? Or might it not also be diabolical?

But the old train of reasoning again revived in his heart, stronger than ever: and now when the mind was fully surrendered to it, bright visions of a united people abjuring their loathsome idolatry, would rise before him. "And I, thus 'acknowledged their Prophet, why should I not be also their 'Chief and Leader? Yes, Faith and Piety shall reign 'throughout Arabia, and if need be, the sword shall be bared 'to compel men to enter into the Kingdom of God:—

' When the Help of the Lord shall come and Victory,
' And thou shalt see Men entering into the Faith of God in multitudes,
' Then celebrate His Praise, and ask Pardon of Him, for He is forgiving:

Sura C X.]

' Moses led forth his people, and so did other Jewish Chieftains,
' to do battle for the Lord against the Idolaters: and why
' should not I, the Vicegerent of God, do likewise, and
' bring in godly submission the whole of Arabia to His feet?
' It will surely be for the furtherance of *His* Kingdom. And
' Syria, Greece, and Rome; what mummeries have I not
' heard and seen within their cities? They, too, will listen
' to the voice of reason teaching them the Unity of God.
' They have a Revelation, and profess to obey it: I will
' show to them that they have corrupted and obscured the
' Truth. And Egypt, Persia, Abyssinia, Hira,—all around,
' why should I not dash to the ground, the Idols, and every
' thing that exalts itself against the True God;—if only my
' people will be convinced and rally around me to fight the
' battles of the Lord."† Such images as these, at this time,

* *Wächidi*, p. 37½. *Tabari*, pp. 90, 96.

† See *Hishâmi*, pp. 136, 165, and 290.

Wächidi, p. 38½. *Tabari*, p. 122. Mahomet is there represented as at a very early stage, assuring the Coreish, that if they only would be converted to his faith, they would conquer, not only all Arabia, but the surrounding nations.

were, it may be, very faint and dim, but we believe that they had an existence in the mind of Mahomet; and it is probable, that they formed the evil and misguiding element, which first mingling itself with the pure longing after Truth, led to the fatal and fearful error of speaking unauthorizably in the name of God. AMBITION, once admitted, opened an easy breach for the suggestions of evil and the attacks of worldly temptation; and yet it was so subtly mingled with the Spiritual, that haply it may have escaped the observation of Mahomet himself.

At this crisis, the fate of Mahomet and of Islam trembled in the balance. It was his hour of trial, and he fell.

On the one hand, he was surrounded by a little knot of believing adherents. Spiritual truth seemed to shine, clear and radiant as a sunbeam, upon his own heart; ecstatic trances impressed a seal, apparently divine, upon his convictions; and (though ambition might lurk,) he was conscious of a sincere desire, and fancied he perceived a Divine Commission, to call forth his people from Darkness into Light. On the other side, the ungodly laughed him to scorn; while his solemn expostulations and warnings were treated, even by the wise and sober, as the effusions of a fond enthusiast. *Before a Divine Commission all difficulty would vanish.* He would wait then for the inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit, to lead him, as it had oft times led the Prophets before him. Gabriel,* perhaps, would visit him, as he visited Zacharias and Mary, to announce the Advent of the last Dispensation.

While seated or wandering amidst the peaks of Hirâ, buried in reveries such as these, the imagination of a heavenly visitant that had long flitted vaguely before him, was suddenly realized, as in a vision, by his excited fancy. Gabriel, the messenger of God, appeared in the sky, and approaching within two bows' length of the Prophet, seemed to bring from his Master this memorable behest:—

RECITE in the name of the Lord who created;
Created Man from nought but congealed blood;
Recite! For thy Lord is beneficent.
It is He who hath taught (to record Revelation,) with the Pen:
Hath taught Man that which he knoweth not
Nay, verily, Man is rebellious;
Because he seeth himself to abound in Wealth.
Verily, unto thy Lord is the return of all.

* It is clear that at a later period at least, if not from the first, Mahomet confounded *Gabriel* with the *Holy Ghost*. The confusion may have arisen from the statement of some ignorant Christian. Mary conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Ghost which overshadowed her. But it was Gabriel who visited Mary to announce the conception of the Saviour. The Holy Ghost was, therefore, another name for Gabriel. Examples of even grosser ignorance are not difficult to produce. Mahomet, as we have already seen, believed that the Christians regarded Mary, "the Mother of God," as the third Person in the Trinity!

Hast thou seen him that holdeth back
 The Servant (of God) when he prayeth?
 What thinkest thou? had he listened to right Direction,
 And commanded unto Piety?
 Dost thou not see that he hath rejected the Truth, and turned his Back?
 What! Doth he not know that God seeth?
 Nay, verily, if he forbear not, We shall drag him by the Forelock,
 The lying, sinful Forelock!
 Then let him call his company of Friends, and We shall call the guardsmen of Hell;
 Nay! submit not unto him: but worship, and draw nigh unto the Lord. *Sura 46*

Thus was Mahomet, by whatever deceptive process, (~~Sura~~ *Sura* ~~XCVI.~~) led to the high blasphemy of forging the name of God, a crime which he has repeatedly stigmatized in the Koran itself, as the greatest that mankind can commit. Thenceforward he spoke literally *in the name of the Lord*; and so scrupulous was he, lest there should be even the appearance of a human colouring, that the admonitions, as well as revelations, of the Koran, are prefaced by the Divine command, "*Speak*" or "*Say*," which, if not expressed, must always be understood; thus—

SURA CXII. SAY:—He is GOD alone: God the Eternal!
 He begetteth not, and He is not begotten;
 And there is not any like unto Him.

d This Commission pervaded the entire future course of Mahomet, and mingled with his every action. He was now the Servant, the Prophet, the Vicegerent of God; and however much the circle of action arising out of this principle might expand, the principle itself was from the commencement absolute and complete. How far the two ideas of a Resolution subjectively formed, and involving a spontaneous course of action, and of a Divine Inspiration objectively imparted and independent of his own will,—were at first simultaneously present, and in what respective degrees, it is difficult to conjecture. But it is certain that the conception of a Divine commission soon took entire and undivided possession of his soul; and, colored though it often was by the motions and inducements of the Day, or mingled with apparently incongruous desires, retained a paramount influence until the hour of his death. The 96th Sura was, in fact, the starting point of Islam. Theologians and Biographers generally hold it to be the first revealed Sura; and Mahomet himself used to refer to it as the commencement of his inspiration.*

* Several years after, he referred to the vision which he believed himself now to have seen, in the following words:—

Verily it is no other than a Revelation that is inspired:
 One mighty and strong taught it unto him:—
 One endued with wisdom; and he stood
 In the highest part of the Horizon,
 Then he drew near and approached.

And he reached to the distance of two bows' length, or yet nearer:
 And he revealed unto his servant that which he revealed.
 The heart did not belie in that which he saw.

What! Will ye then dispute with him concerning that which he saw?

Sura LIII. 4—12.]

But the Divine Commission was unheeded at Mecca; scorn and abuse gathered thicker than ever around him. He was taunted as a poet carried away by wild fancy; as a Magician, or a Soothsayer, the style of whose oracles was perceived in his oaths and rhapsodies; or as one possessed by Genii and Demons.

Grieved and dispirited, he fell back upon his Commission. Was it a warrant and a command to *publish* his message even to a stiff-necked and rebellious people, or not rather a simple attestation for himself and his willing adherents, that his doctrine was true? Engrossed with these reflections, the Prophet stretched himself upon his carpet, and wrapping himself in his garments, fell into a trance or vision. The Angel was at hand, and Mahomet was aroused from his despondency, to energy and action, by this animating message:—

LXXIV. Oh thou that art covered!
 Arise and preach!
 And magnify thy Lord;
 And purify thy clothes;
 And depart from uncleanness.
 And show not thy Favors, in the hope of self-aggrandisement;
 And wait patiently for thy Lord.

Leave me and him whom I have created alone;
 On whom I have bestowed abundant Riches,
 And Sons dwelling before him,
 And disposed his affairs prosperously;
 Yet he desireth that I should add thereto.
 Nay! Because he is to Our Signs an Adversary,
 I will afflict him with fierce Calamity;
 For he imagined and devised Mischief in his heart.
 May he be damned! how he devised!
 Again, may he be damned! how he devised!
 Then he looked;
 Then he frowned and scowled;
 Then he turned his back and looked contemptuously.
 And he said, *Verily, this is nothing but Magick that will be wrought,**
Verily, this is no other than the speech of a Mortal.
 Now, I will cast him into Hell fire
 And what shall cause thee to know what HELL-FIRE is?
 It leaveth not, neither suffereth it to escape,
 Candescent on the Skin
 Over it are nineteen (Angels) †

Nay, by the Moon!
 By the Night when it retireth!
 By the Morn when it reddeth!
 Verily it is one of the most weighty matters,
 A warning to Mankind:
 To him that amongst you desireth to advance, or to remain behind
 Every Soul lieth in pledge for that which it hath wrought
 Excepting the Heirs of God's Right hand
 In Gardens, they shall enquire concerning the Wicked;—
What hath cast you into Hell?
 And they shall reply:—*We were not of those that prayed;*

* Alluding to the doctrine of the Resurrection, the re-vivification of dry bones and dust being laughed at as mere magic.

† At this point is interposed a passage (v. 31) evidently produced many years after, and probably at Medina, in reply to certain objections, raised likely by the Jews, respecting the number of the Infernal Guard.



*And we did not feed the Poor ;
 And we babbled vainly with the vain Babblers ;
 And we mere Rejecters of the Day of reckoning ;
 Until the Conviction thereof overtook us.*
 And the Intercession of the Interceders shall not avail them.
 Then what alleth them that they turn aside from the Admonition.
 As if they were affrighted Asses
 Fleeing from a Lion ?
 And every one of them desireth that expanded Pages be given unto him.
 Nay ! They dread not the Life to come.
 Nay ! This is a Warning
 And whoso chooseth is warned thereby,
 And there shall none be warned but as the Lord pleaseth.
 He is to be feared, and He is the Forgiver.

We have thought it expedient to introduce this Sura nearly entire, not only for the remarkable commission to *preach publicly*, with which it opens, but as the only means of conveying an adequate idea of the style of Revelation adopted by Mahomet about the third or fourth year of his prophetic life. The person so vehemently condemned, is supposed to have been Walid, the honoured Chief of Mecca, who, as we have seen, was the first to raise his pick-axe on the re-building of the Kaaba. The heart of Mahomet was vindictive and revengeful. Thus he cursed Abu Lahab, his own uncle, and the father-in-law of two of his daughters, on account of his contemptuous bearing :—

CXI. Damned be the hands of Abu Lahab ; and damned let him be !
 His Riches shall not profit him, nor that which he hath gained.
 He shall be cast into the Fire that flameth,*
 And his Wife bearing Fire-wood,
 Around whose Neck shall be a rope of Palm-fibre.†

But it is not our intention now to enter upon the *consequences* of Mahomet's public preaching, and his struggle with idolatry. Our present object is simply to trace the growth of the idea of Inspiration and a Divine Mission in his mind ; and this we have attempted to do from the only reliable source in our hands,—the Revelations of Mahomet himself.

But to complete the view, it is necessary that we should place before the Reader, the stories of the Traditionists. These, however, at this point, are peculiarly untrustworthy. Mahomet himself, from whose lips alone any satisfactory statement of the mental process could have been gained, was reserved, if not entirely silent, on the subject. It is likely that the painful season of perturbation and dubitaney, recurred ungratefully to his memory ; and that the grand result, the salient

* A play upon the word *Lahab*, which signifies *flame*, as well as his adversary's name.

† The story is, that she had strewed Mahomet's path with a bundle of thorns, whence her punishment. Abu Lahab is said, at an assembly summoned by Mahomet, to have exclaimed, "*Let him be damned ! Is this all that he hath called us together for ?*" Whereupon God revealed this passage damning Abu Lahab.

point of his career, viz., the commission to Recite and to Preach in the name of God, obscured, if it did not entirely hide, the steps which led to it.

Again, the fixed Dogma with which every Mahometan sets out,—that the Koran contains no Sura, sentence, or word, not emanating by direct communication from God, has confined and misled the conclusions of the Biographers.* It would be blasphemy with them to hold that any fragments of the spontaneous musings of the Prophet's mind, before his Revelations were cast in the unvarying mould of inspiration, have found their way into the Koran; and hence they miss the clue, which in the above speculations we *may* have discovered to some approximate track of Mahomet's mental and Spiritual History.

Lastly, what facts the Biographers may have preserved from the tradition of Khadija's recollections,† have been greatly distorted by the miraculous associations cast around them. Mahomet himself was not unwilling to countenance such superstitious belief. And there is no subject which, in the growth of tradition, would imperceptibly attract so much of the wonderful and mysterious, as the communication of the Divine monitions to the heart of Mahomet, and more especially its first beginnings.‡ Having thus warned the reader against a too implicit faith in the representations of the Biographers, we proceed to give them as nearly as possible in their own words.

The first beginnings of the Prophet's inspiration were *real Visions*; he saw no vision that was not clear as the breaking forth of the morning. This continuing for some time, he became extremely fond of privacy: nothing was so pleasing to him as retirement. So he used to repair to a cave at Mount Harâ, where he was in the habit of passing whole days and nights alone, before he revisited his family: then he would return to Khadija, and remain for a time at home through affection for her. This went on until the truth burst upon him, which happened in the cave of Harâ.

About this time, while he was at Ajjâd, he saw an Angel in the sky calling to him, *Oh Mahomet! I am Gabriel!* and he was

* See page 2 of the Article on the "*Original Sources for the Biography of Mahomet.*"

† See page 42 of the same paper; *Canon I. B.* It is to be remembered that this period preceded the time at which Mahomet stood forth prominently to public notice, as a preacher. Then his system had been matured, and the idea of Inspiration formed. Before that time he would not be the object of much observation. Khadija would be almost the only witness of his early mental struggles. Ali was yet but a boy; and it is doubtful how far Zeid and Abu Bakr were yet on sufficiently intimate terms, to be made the confidants of his most secret thoughts.

Vide Article above quoted. (p. 48. *Canon II. D.*)

terrified, for so often as he raised his head to the heavens, he saw the Angel.* And he returned hastily to Khadija, and told her what had happened; and he said,—“Oh Khadija! I have never abominated any thing more heartily than these Idols and Soothsayers, and now verily, I fear, lest I should turn out a Soothsayer myself.” “Never, my cousin! say not so. The Lord will not treat thee thus;” and she proceeded to recount before him the virtues of his character, on which she founded this assurance. Then she repaired to Waraca,† and repeated to him what Mahomet had told her;—“By the Lord!” replied the aged man, “thy uncle’s son speaketh the truth; this verily is the beginning of Prophecy; and there will come unto him the Great Law,‡ like unto the Law of Moses. Wherefore charge him that he entertain none but hopeful thoughts in his heart. If he should declare himself a Prophet, while I am yet alive, I will believe in him, and stand by him.”

Now the first Sura revealed to Mahomet was the XCIV., *Recite in the name of the Lord, &c.*, and that descended on him in the cave of Harâ. After this he waited several days§ without seeing Gabriel. And he became greatly downcast, so that he went out at one time to the Mount of Thubeir, and at another to Harâ, seeking to cast himself headlong from thence. While thus intent upon self-destruction, he was suddenly arrested by a voice from heaven; and he looked up, and lo! Gabriel upon a throne between the heavens and the earth, who said, *Oh Mahomet! thou art the Prophet of the Lord in truth, and I am Gabriel!* Then Mahomet turned to go to his own house; and the Lord comforted him, and strengthened his heart. And thereafter revelations began to follow one upon another with frequency.||

* Other traditions say only that he saw a light, and heard a voice. (*Wâckidi*, p. 37.)

† *Wâckidi* adds; “this was the first time she went to Waraca.”—as if there was also a second visit, which, however, is not mentioned,—the tradition being fragmentary. It can hardly mean the first, in the sense that she had not ever visited him before.

‡ *Al namûs al akbar*; - *namûs* being the Arabick form for *nomos*, “the Law.”

§ *ياصبر*—“days.” The period is indefinite.

¶ The above account is from *Wâckidi*, who is at this point more succinct and less marvellous than *Hishâmi*. *Tabari* again surpasses *Hishâmi* in the marvellous; and the number and variety of his absurd traditions illustrate the rapidity with which, in the third century, fabricated stories obtained currency. The following is an outline from *Hishâmi* and *Tabari*, of the current version of the first stirrings of inspiration.

“On the night whereon the Lord was minded to deal graciously with him,

The above account is from Wâckidi, who is here much freer from the marvellous than either Hishâmi or Tabari. But the period succeeding the revelation of the 96th Sura, during which inspiration was suspended, and Mahomet in despondency contemplated thoughts of suicide, is generally represented as of longer duration than in this statement. It is styled the *Fatrah*, or "intermission," and is variously held to have lasted from six months to three years; at the close of which period, the 74th and 93rd Suras, containing assurance of mercy, and the command to preach, were delivered. The accounts, however, are throughout confused, if not contradictory; and we can only gather with certainty, that there was a time (corresponding with our own deductions from the Koran itself,) during

Mahomet relates that Gabriel came to him as he slept with his family in the cave of Harâ; and he held in his hand a piece of silk with writing thereon, and he said, *Read!* Mahomet replied, *I do not (cannot) read.* Whereupon the angel griped him so tight, that he thought death had come upon him. Then said Gabriel a second time, *Read!* And Mahomet replied, *What shall I read;* which words he uttered only to escape the previous agony. And Gabriel proceeded:—*Read (recite) in the name of thy Lord, &c*;—repeating the 96th Sura to the end of v. 5; and when he had ended, the angel left him, and 'the words,' said Mahomet, "were as though they had been graven on my heart." Suddenly the thought occurred to him that he was possessed of evil spirits, and he meditated suicide: but as he rushed forth with the intention of casting himself down a precipice, he was arrested by seeing Gabriel, and stood for a long time transfixed by the sight. At last the vision disappeared and Mahomet returned to Khadîja, who, alarmed at his absence, had sent messengers to Mecca in quest of him. In consternation he threw himself into her lap, and told her all that had occurred. She reassured him, saying, that he would surely be a prophet, and went off to Waraca, who confirmed her in the same belief.

Another account adds, that she took Mahomet to Waraca, who foretold to him that he would be rejected by his people, and expelled from Mecca (!) but that if he himself survived to that period, he would assist and defend him. (*Tabari*, p. 87.)

The story that Khadîja went to the Monk Addâs, who gave her a book from which she might learn whether the visitant was an Angel or a Devil, is evidently a fiction, and does not appear to be in any early authority. (*See Sprenger*, p. 107.)

Another story is, that Khadîja, to assure Mahomet, tested the character of the inspiration, by making him sit first on her right knee, then on her left, in both of which positions the apparition continued: then she took him in her lap, and removed her veil, or uncovered her garments, when it disappeared, thus proving that he was a modest and virtuous being. Thereupon Khadîja exclaimed, *Rejoice my cousin, for by the Lord! it is an Angel, and no Devil.*

On another occasion, being terrified, he entreated Khadîja to cover him up, on which was revealed the Sura, beginning, *Oh thou covered!* [LXXIV.] Again, having had no visits from Gabriel for some time, Khadîja said to him;—*Verily, I fear that God is displeased with thee;* whereupon was revealed Sura XCIII;—*Thy Lord hath not removed from thee, neither is he displeased, &c* But all such traditions are evidently founded upon the attempt to explain, or illustrate, the passages of the Koran referred to.

which the mind of Mahomet hung in suspense, and doubted the authority of a Divine Mission.*

What was the character of Mahomet's ecstatic periods,—whether they were simply reveries of profound meditation, or swoons connected with a morbid excitability of the mental or physical constitution, or in fine were connected with any measure of supernatural influence, it would be difficult to determine. Upon this subject, exaggerated details, and fabrication of the marvellous and mysterious, are to be suspected throughout Mahometan authorities.† The following particulars it may be well to record :—

At the moment of inspiration, anxiety pressed upon the prophet, and his countenance was troubled.‡ He fell to the ground like one intoxicated or overcome by sleep; and even in a very cold day his forehead was bedewed with large pearly drops of perspiration. When questioned on the subject, Mahomet replied ;—“ Inspiration descendeth upon me in one of two ways; sometimes Gabriel cometh and communicateth the Revelation unto me, as one man unto another, and this is easy; at other times, it affecteth me like the ringing of a bell, penetrating my very heart, and rending me as it were in pieces; and this it is which grievously afflicteth me.”§

Even his she-camel, if Mahomet chanced to become inspired, while he rode upon her, would become affected by a wild excitement, setting down and rising up, now planting her legs rigidly, then throwing them about as if they would be parted from her. To outward appearance Inspiration descended unexpectedly, and without any previous warning to the prophet.||

* Some state that he “used to hear a voice and see a light.” without receiving any revelation for seven years; and that the prophetic period at Mecca, during which inspiration descended, lasted only eight years. They would thus make the former period to begin at the thirtieth year of the prophet's life.

† See the *à priori* signs of inspiration given in the introduction to the History of Ibn Khaldun,—as quoted by Sprenger, page 111.

‡ *Wāchidi* (p. 37½) اذا نزل عليه الوحي كرب له وتربله وجه

§ Two traditions from different sources, slightly varying in expression, but similar in purport. (*Wāchidi*, p. 37½.)

|| Abd al Rahman relates that on the return from Hodeibia (A. H 6,) he saw the people urging on their camels; and one enquired of the other the cause; and they said, “Inspiration hath descended on the Prophet;” so we too urged on our camels, and reached Mahomet standing by Kira al Ghāmim; and when such numbers of the people as he desired had gathered around him; he began to recite the fortieth Sura. (*Wāchidi*, p. 120½.)

We know of no case in which it is represented that Mahomet was beforehand aware that Inspiration was about to come upon him.

In later life, Mahomed referred his grey hairs to the withering effect produced upon him by the "terrific Suras."*

It will not have escaped observation that tradition has represented Mahomet as under serious apprehensions, lest the beginnings of Inspiration were in reality the promptings of evil Spirits or of Genii, who had taken possession of him. The views entertained by Mahometans, regarding Genii, are curious, and founded upon tradition traced up to the time of Mahomet himself. Before the mission of their prophet, the Devils and Genii had access to the outskirts of Heaven, and by assiduous eaves-dropping, secured some of the secrets of the upper world, which they communicated to the Soothsayers and Diviners upon earth. But no sooner did Mahomet appear, than they were driven from the skies, and whenever they dared to approach, flaming bolts were hurled at them. These are the falling stars; just at this epoch such stars are said to have been very numerous, and the Arabs were much alarmed thereby.† This belief, childish as it may appear, is clearly developed in the Koran; and throws a mysterious light upon the inner recesses of the prophet's spirit.‡

The early doubts and suspicions of Mahomet suggest to us

* The "terrific" Suras, as specified in the numerous traditions on this subject, are, "Sura Hâd (XI) and its sisters;"—the "sisters" are variously given as Suras 11, 21, 56, 69, 77, 78, 81, 101;—all Meccan, and some of them very early Suras.

While Abu Bakr and Omar sat in the Mosque, Mahomet suddenly came upon them from the door of one of his wife's houses (which opened into the mosque) stroking and raising his beard, and looking at it. Now his beard had in it many more white hairs than his head. And Abu Bakr said, "Ah, thou, for whom I would sacrifice father and mother, white hairs are hastening upon thee!" And the Prophet raised up his beard with his hand, and gazed at it, and Abu Bakr's eyes filled with tears; "Yes," said Mahomet, "Hâd, (Sura XI.) and its sisters, have hastened my white hairs." "And what are its sisters?" "The *Inevitable* (Sura 56,) and the *Striking* (Sura 101.)" (*Wâkidi*, p. 84.)

† *Vide Hishâmi*, pp. 45, 46; and *Wâkidi*, p. 31½. It is just possible that at the period referred to, there may have been an unusually grand and numerous display of falling stars, which at certain points of the earth's course are known to be especially abundant.

‡ In Sura LXXII., vv. 8—10, the Genii are thus represented as conversing one with another.—"And verily we used to pry into the Heavens, but we found it to be filled with a strong guard and with flaming darts. And we used to sit in some of the seats thereof to listen; but whoever listeneth now, findeth a flaming bolt in ambush. And we know not whether evil be hereby intended against those upon Earth, or whether the Lord be minded to guide them into the right way." When they heard Mahomet reciting the Koran, numbers of them believed. Compare also Suras XV., 17, 18; LXVII., 5; XXXVII., 6; XXVI., 210; and LXXXI., 24. The Koran is stated in some of its own verses to have been revealed for the benefit and salvation both of men and Genii.

the enquiry, whether they had in reality any true foundation, or were the mere fancies of an excited imagination. We feel it incumbent upon us to consider this question from the Christian stand-point, and to ask whether the supernatural influence, which appears to have acted upon the soul of the Arabian Prophet, *may* not have proceeded from the Evil One and his emissaries. We would not dogmatize on so mysterious a subject; but the views which Christian verity compels us to entertain regarding the Angel of Darkness and his followers, would not be satisfied without an allusion to the fearful power exercised by them, as *one at least of the possible theories*, upon which the fall of Mahomet, the once sincere enquirer, into the meshes of deception, may be accounted for.

Assuredly, Mahomet himself lived under the deep and constant conviction of the Personality of Satan and his Angels, and of his own exposure to their influences.* Our ideas of the mysterious possibility referred to, will best be illustrated by a reference to the corresponding stage in the History of our Blessed Saviour's Mission, the source of whose Temptation, (whether held to be described in allegorical, or in literal expressions) few who believe in the Divine authority of the Scriptures, will deny to have been Satan himself.

In his first approach, as narrated by the Evangelists, Satan tempted Jesus to contravene the Law of His human existence, and supply His temporal wants by drawing upon His supernatural powers. The cravings of hunger added strength to the suggestion, which, if followed, would have vitiated the great condition of our Saviour's Humanity. But sternly did He throw aside the suggestion, and throughout his career refrained from ever once bringing His Divine power to *His own* succour or relief.

An analogous temptation was ever ready to entrap the footsteps of Mahomet. He, indeed, was not possessed of any inherent supernatural ability; but as a teacher who professed himself inspired, he arrogated a spiritual power, which he was continually tempted to misuse in subservience to his personal pleasure and desires; and lamentably, as the subsequent

* The following passages may be consulted on this point: Sura IV., 117.; VI., 67, 113, 121; XVI. 98-100; XIX., 82; XXII. 53, 54; XXIII., 99; XLL, 35; XLIII., 34; and CXIV.; in which latter Sura the word "Whisperer" is admitted to mean the Devil. A reference to these passages will show, that in the system of Mahomet, Satan and his Angels have power to incite the wicked to evil, and even to suggest sinful thoughts and actions to the good, not excluding Mahomet himself. The doctrine of the Personality of the Devil is patent from references to it throughout every part of the Koran—the account of the Fall, the Day of Judgment, Hell, &c.

records of his life too plainly prove, did he fall into the snare.

In the second Act, the Devil sought to deceive our Lord into seeking spiritual and lawful ends, by unlawful means;— to manifest His Messiahship by a display of supernatural energy. The object was legitimate; but the means would have involved, in a simply human nature (and it was in that respect Christ was tried,) a rash and presumptuous tempting of the Divine Providence, to which his humanity demanded a perfect subordination. Jesus was to advance His religion by no such unauthorized expedients; however much on other considerations he was to display before the world the Divine Glory of His nature, or show with what tremendous energy and Godlike manifestation, He could have supported His teaching. “*If He be the Son of God, let Him come down from the cross,*” was a suggestion from the same source; yet He descended not. It was the law of His human life to deny Himself the use of that power, by which He could have summoned Legions to work out His plans, and to blast the machinations of His enemies.

What a melancholy light do these truths cast upon the career of Mahomet! *He*, it is true, owned no divine energy. But he was tempted to assume a forged Instrument by which to work out his ends; and that Instrument was the NAME OF GOD. As his scheme advanced, he betook himself to other means; and sought, by temporal inducements, and by the force of arms, to extend the worship of the One God. The subtilty of the temptation was the same here as with our Saviour; *to compass a pious end by unlawful means.*

Again, Satan tempted Jesus to worship him by the promise of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; no empty promise, for by Satan is the world led captive. A death struggle, Jesus well knew, was at hand, between His own kingdom and the world; a mortal combat, in which, through Death itself, Life was to be won for His people: and to the world's end, the Power of Darkness would form an awful antagonism to the Power of Christianity, impeding her spread, and often recapturing her very conquests. Was it possible to compromise the struggle? Would Satan abate the fierceness of his opposition? If he were even to remain neutral, how inconceivably would the contest be lightened, and what millions *more* might be brought into the kingdom of Heaven! And this might be gained by the mere acknowledgement of Satan, a Power that in reality ruled at will the great mass of mankind.

By so slight a compromise with the Spirit of the World, was it not a duty to secure such vast and noble ends? A little concession would avoid a struggle of inconceivable anguish and loss, and with certainty secure a vast and glorious success, all tending to the praise of God, not otherwise to be hoped for. Thus would the worldling have reasoned, and thus decided. But Jesus knew of no compromise with Sin, even in its most hidden form; and, fully conscious of the fearful nature of the approaching combat, rejected the alluring offer.

So did not Mahomet. He listened to the suggestion, and was tempted to seek a compromise between Religion and the World. The result was a politico-religious system, forming the closest conceivable combination between worldliness and spirituality, between Good and Evil. Barely so much of virtue and of spiritual truth is retained as will appease the religious principle still existing in man, and his inward craving after the service of the Creator; while the reins of passion and indulgence are relaxed to the very utmost extent compatible with the *appearance* of goodness. Mahometanism indeed presents a wonderful adaptation to fallen humanity; for the spurious imitation of godliness satisfies the serious mind; the laxity of its moral code, and the compatibility of its external observances with inner irreligion, present no barrier to the Sensualist.

Whatever compromise was made by Mahomet on the one hand, the stipulation on the other was well fulfilled; for the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, followed in rapid succession in the wake of Islam.

We offer no apology for the introduction of this parallel. The acknowledged facts of our Saviour's temptation, justify the assumption, that a similar combat was *possibly* waged, though with far other results, in the case of Mahomet.

Happy would it have been for the memory of the Arabian Prophet, if his career had terminated with his flight from Mecca. Then, indeed, the imputation of such a compromise might, with some show of justice, have been branded as malicious and uncharitable. But the fruits of his principles, as exhibited *in connection with his prophetic office*, at Medina, are of too unequivocal a character to allow a doubt that *if* he acted under a supernatural guidance, that guidance proceeded from no pure and holy source. Ambition, rapine, assassination, lust, are the undenied features of his later life, openly sanctioned by an assumed permission, or even command, from the Most High! May we conceive that a satanic influence, a diabolical

inspiration, was permitted to enslave the heart of him who had deliberately yielded to the compromise with evil? May not Satan have beguiled the heart in the habitude of an Angel of light, and even when insinuating his vilest suggestions, have professed himself a Messenger from the God of Purity and Holiness? If so, what a perfect assimilation must gradually have been wrought between the prompting of the Evil One from without, and the subjective perceptions of the mind of Mahomet, when he could imagine, and with earnestness and sincerity assert, that the Almighty sanctioned and even encouraged his debased appetites!

It is enough to have suggested the awful possibility. None may venture an unhesitating reply, until there are laid bare to our view, in a more Spiritual state, the workings and the manifold agencies of that unseen life, ever plying its busy course within and around us, but mysteriously hid from mortal ken.

investigation was permitted to search the part of him which
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