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News and Notes

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Was Mohammad Inspired ?

A SYMPOSIUM.

X.

I FULLY endorse the statement that, 'God truly inspired Mohammad.' Those who oppose it, should endeavour to estimate the good of Mohammad's mission to Arabia in the seventh century, and its value to the world at large. History will not let any one deny that the religion of Mohammad was an immense advance to Arabs on anything they had previously believed in. It also united together the scattered tribes and lifted the nation to the forefront of the important powers in the world. Nay it effected what Judaism and Christianity had alike failed to do. Arabs were plunged in ignorance and barbarism; they worshipped idols; they ate dead bodies; they committed lewdness; disregarded family ties and duties of neighbours and hospitality; they knew no law but that of the strong. At such a time God raised Mohammad and sent him as a "warner and bringer of good tidings;" a man of whose birth, truthfulness, and integrity these Arabs were aware. He called them to the unity of God, and taught them not to associate any god with Him; he forbade them the worship of idols, and enjoined upon them to speak the truth, to be faithful to their trusts, to be merciful, and to regard the rights of others; to love their relatives and to protect the weak; to flee vice and avoid all evils. He taught them to offer prayers, to give alms and to fast.

I do not hesitate in declaring that Mohammad was a great man, one of the greatest ever sent upon earth. He was a man of the deepest conviction, and for many years of the purest purposes, and was only drawn down at last by using low means for a good end. He was

dissatisfied with the ancestral religion and was looking for something better. This desire led him to enquire after a worthy service of God.

Liturgy is an important part of every religion. He comes in contact with Christians and Jews and is struck by their liturgical chants. On enquiry he is told that the words they use are forms supplied by God Himself from His Holy Books. It seems to me that he recognised in the divine services of Jews and Christians what he was looking for: that he found this an entirely worthy service, and that he had a great desire to adopt such a liturgy for himself. If God in His mercy would only send him portions of his books as he had sent portions to the prophets, how gladly would he receive them in a service of praise. Such desires would raise the further question: Why may not God send an Arabic Prophet?

The very terms *nabi* and *rasul* in which Mohammad announced himself, indicate that he came under the influence of Hebrew and Christian ideas. "We have sent thee with the truth, as a bringer of tidings and warner." 2: 112, 48: 8, 6: 18. The prophets and apostles are well described by this word, for it was their work to warn their people of the judgment of God.

Let us see what the Quran is like. The Quran appears declamatory, monotonous, tedious unless we can connect it with the biography of its writer. All the incidents of his life took the shape of some revelation. But the merit of the Quran is in its intense earnestness, reflecting the various experiences of its author. It certainly has exercised a great fascination over the mind of the East. Comparing it with the Bible it may be said that the Quran lays claim to a verbal mechanical inspiration, alike in every part. The Bible, as it is now generally recognised, makes no such claim. The Bible is the work of a great number of authors, poets, prophets, statesmen; the Quran comes from the brain of a single man. Again, the strength of the Quran is in its unity, intolerance, and narrowness: that of the Bible in its variety, breadth, and liberality.

Let us see how the Quran was revealed. The tradition reads as follows: The first of the revelations which came to the Apostle of Allah was a good dream and he did not have a dream without there coming something like the break of day. Then he liked to be alone and he used to go to the cave of Hira and purify himself--this (purification) was a performance of religious exercises for several nights until he desired to return to his family. He used to provide himself with food for these periods and go there again and again, until finally the truth came to him. And he was in the cave of Hira, and the angel came to him and said; "Recite." He replied: "I can not recite." Then said he (that is Mohammad) he took hold of me, and squeezed me to the utmost of my endurance. Then he let me go and said again: "Recite." The same answer was given and the same action repeated a second and a third time. At the last the angel repeated these verses, which now constitute a part of the Quran:

Recite in the name of the Lord who created,
 Created man from a clot of blood ;
 Recite, thy Lord is bountiful ;
 He who has taught man by the pen :
 Taught him what he did not know.
 But man is rebellious.
 As soon as he sees himself becoming rich :
 Yet verily to thy Lord they shall return.

The importance of dreams is evident upon the face of the Old Testament narrative. Jacob has a decisive revelation in a dream. Joseph's dreams foreshadowed God's dealings with him. The author of the Book of Job assumes that God speaks to men "in thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men." So in the New Testament: the angel which encouraged Paul stood by him in the night, the most natural interpretation of the words being that he appeared in a dream. Without laying stress upon the cases where the dream is sent to startle the unbeliever (as Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar) it is clearly made out that, to the Old Testament writers, the dream was one method of revelation. Jeremiah, to be sure, speaks slightly of dreams and seems to contrast them with the voice which came to the prophet.

The next Sura in point of time is said to be one that begins: "O Thou who art wrapped in a garment." Tradition has fastened on these words and has invented a situation for them. It tells us that Mohammad was subject to epileptic fits, and that, when he felt these coming on, he would have Khadija wrap him in a covering so that he would be protected from the air, or from the gaze of curious visitors. On the basis of this tradition a modern scholar has built up an elaborate theory of Mohammad's epileptic or hysterical disease. But if the waking vision produced extraordinary physical manifestations in Mohammad the same is seen in the Old Testament Prophets. Balaam speaks of himself as falling down when he had the vision of the Almighty. Ezekiel fell upon his face when he saw the chariot of glory. So did Daniel at the appearance of Gabriel; and John, when he had a revelation of the Son of man, fell at his feet like one dead.

What was it to which he was called? To answer this question, we may look at few of these early chapters.

"O, thou who art wrapped in a garment ;
 Rise and warn ;
 And magnify thy Lord,
 And cleanse thy garments,
 And flee iniquity,
 And do not spend with the desires of gain ;
 And wait patiently for the Lord,
 When a blast is blown upon the trumpet,
 That will be a distressful day,
 Not easy for the unbelievers."

The message is evidently a command to preach. "Arise and warn" is its key-note. The rest is interpreted by this. In order to warn, he must himself be an example of faith. That is, he must worship in an acceptable manner, purifying his garments and calling upon the name of his Lord. It is this which was emphasised in the first revelation. The prophet is there called upon to recite the praises of God, that is to spend the time in worship. In both, the command is motived by the thought of approaching judgment. Man is rebellious and will be brought to an account. The trumpet will be blown and a distressful day ensue. These are evidently reasons for the command to warn men of their danger. In this respect, the call of Mohammad is like the call to the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the prophets in general, are sent to rebuke a sinful nation, to declare the wrath of God, and to threaten approaching calamity.

The conception of the revelation as law becomes especially prominent in the later period of Mohammad's life. We can readily account for this. At Medina the simple warner and bringer of tidings had become the theocratic ruler and judge over a small but heterogeneous community, unused to a settled form of government. His decisions, therefore, became precedents and his regulations became laws. These were embodied in the Quran, which, in this period differs materially in character from the earlier revelations. The later Suras are in a sense the archives of the infant state.

And in this connection we must not shut our eyes to the further fact that God's care for His cause is, in the Old Testament, extended to the personal affairs of the prophet. Jeremiah was informed by revelation of the intended treachery of his fellow townsmen. Samuel was directed by revelation in making use of a subterfuge to deceive Saul, and thus to relieve his own fear. God identifies Elisha's honour with His own, and where the prophet relieves his feelings with a curse, God makes the curse effective to avenging the insult. Such examples show that Mohammad's presumption is not altogether without precedent.

There are thinkers, however, to whom it is incomprehensible that a man should, in all honesty, put forward a claim to speak as the Messenger of God. They are compelled to seek some ulterior motive for his activity. The whole mediæval world was of course incapable of understanding the Prophet of Islam. The only thing which those centuries could see was that Mohammad was the deadly enemy of their civilization. They could explain his impulse only as the direct act of Satan. In truth, the hordes of fierce and savage warriors which poured from Arabia and overran a large part of the known world, must have made upon their victims the impression that hell had let loose all its demons. According to the prevalent theory of Christian writers down to very recent times, therefore, Mohammad was the most distinguished instrument of Satan. Anti-Christ is one of the

names frequently applied to him. At the present day we may fairly regard this view as antiquated. Satan is not a preacher of truth, and we can hardly doubt that Mohammad was sincere in preaching the truth.

On one occasion he went to preach the doctrine of one God to some idolaters. But he made no impression on them, and as he left the town, was followed by a mob, hooting, and pelting him with stones. At last they left him, and in the shadow of some trees he betook himself to prayer. His words have been preserved, it is believed by the Moslems, and are as follows—"O Lord, I make my complaint unto Thee of the feebleness of my strength, and the weakness of my plans. I am insignificant in the sight of men. O Thou most merciful, Lord of the weak, Thou art my Lord. Do not abandon me. Leave me not a prey to these strangers, nor to my foes. If Thou art not offended, I am safe. I seek refuge in the light of Thy countenance, by which all darkness is dispersed, and peace comes. There is no power, no help, but in Thee." Are these words put in Mohammad's mouth by Satan? If not, then by whom?

AHMAD SHAH.

XI

Some of the letters which have appeared in *News and Notes* on the subject of the alleged inspiration of Mohammad have revealed a lot of loose thinking on this important matter. It seems to be taken for granted that *some* kind of inspiration must necessarily be posited in order to account for Mohammad's conception of the unity of God and the sinfulness of idolatry; and so we are asked, "If God did not inspire Mohammad, then who did?" Those who write thus will find their answer in the masterly work of Dr. Tisdall entitled *The Sources of the Qur'an* where it is shown that Mohammad "borrowed" from both Jewish and Christian sources the truths found in Islam, the good in which "serves only to recommend and preserve the evil which renders it a false and delusive faith, a curse to men and not a blessing."

Others would have us believe that at Mecca Mohammad was a paragon of simplicity and virtue who, under the influence of divine inspiration, "described the truths which God had revealed." This "charitable" theory however wont work, for it is in the Meccan Suras that we find some of Mohammad's most blasphemous caricatures of the character of God, and some of his most vehement denials of the very fundamentals of Christian truth. Thus in combating the doctrine of the divine Sonship, which his "inspiration" was apparently unable to prevent him from misunderstanding, he says, "He is the Maker of heaven and earth, how should he have issue since he hath no consort?" It is in Meccan Suras, too, that we are told that the angels were ordered to worship Adam in paradise, that Mohammad was foretold by Jesus under the name of Ahmad, that God has created myriads for hell and has vowed to fill it with men and genii, that "shooting stars"

are nothing else but darts thrown at the devils by angels, that God created mountains to steady the earth, that Jesus was born at the foot of a palm tree, and that his mother was Mary "the sister of Aaron." All this rubbish, and much more of the same kind, we are asked to believe came from the lips of a man before "he went off the lines" and whilst under the inspiration of God !!

Those who have read in the Traditions Mohammad's own description of how inspiration came to him at Mecca, when Gabriel appeared in visible form and "squeezed" the prophet as he ordered him to recite, will realise the infinite space which divides Mohammad's pretended revelation (*Tanzil*) from that inspiration which some are inclined to accord him.

In closing let me remark that far too much is made of Mohammad's "noble behaviour at Mecca," and his steadfastness under persecution as a proof that he was a prophet of God. Those who write thus forget history, from Socrates to the Bab movement in Persia.

WILLIAM GOLDSACK.

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Selections from the Mishcat.

Why Tradition (*Hadith*) is important.

Mark Twain once defined a "classic" as a piece of literature which every one talked about but no one had read. One fears that this remark would apply to the *Hadith* as regards many missionaries among Moslems who are nevertheless well aware that not the Koran only is among the sources (*'usul*) of Islamic theology, jurisprudence and the practical duties of daily life. These sources are four, and among them *Hadith* is undoubtedly of the greatest importance. Both in quantity and in quality of interest and of influence the *Hadith* collections surpass the Koran. *Ijma'* and *Qiyas* also, *i.e.*, the agreement of the learned as representing the body of believers and their deductions, are based on *sunnat-an-nebi*, the practice of example of the Prophet. What the *mihrab* (prayer-niche) is to the true *kibla*, that the *hadith* is to the *sunna*. It is the exact indication of what Mohammed would do.

These collections are therefore as popular among the common people as Sheldon's "What would Jesus do" proved popular as a story. Only in the former case it is not religious fiction but actual, divine revelation, (*wahi-ghair-al matlu*). The six standard collections are well-known by name but who has read them? In the sixth century of the Hijra, Imam Hussain al Baghawi prepared a careful and authoritative collection from all of the six standard books, entitled '*Mishcat-ul-Masabih*.' This has had an enormous vogue and is perhaps the best known summary of the vast Moslem Talmud. It has been translated by Moslems into Persian and other languages, and was also translated into English by Capt. Matthews and published at Calcutta in 1809.

The book however, is so rare as to be inaccessible and unobtainable to most of us. Hughes used it almost exclusively for reference in his Dictionary of Islam, and this makes it the more important to have access to the work in English form.

We congratulate Rev. William Goldsack on the completion of his task of preparing a new, revised translation of selections from the Mishcat. While we still hope that the whole work will be made accessible at some future date, *we urge every missionary to secure a copy of this book immediately*. It is as hopeless to judge of the real character of Islam from the Koran alone, as to deduce the beliefs and practices of Christians in Mexico from the Pauline epistles, or of orthodox Judaism from the Pentateuch. There is not a single Moslem sect that looks to the Koran as the only rule of faith and practice. The lock of Koran obscurity only opens to the key of tradition. The *Hadith* is at once the strength and the weakness of Islam. It reveals the real Mohammad and indicts him. Intelligent Moslems reverence and yet dread the collections of Al Bucharî and Muslim.

We must no longer neglect the weapons forged to our use in this great armoury of fact and fiction. The untrustworthiness of many of the Traditions and the weakness of the whole as a support of Islam only increases the importance of knowing them. (See Professor Wensinck's article in "The Moslem World" for July, 1921).

Let every one sell his cloak, if need be, and furnish himself or herself with this newly burnished weapon for our spiritual warfare.

S. M. ZWEMER.

Notes.

SUBSCRIPTION TO 'MOSLEM WORLD' MAGAZINE.—Through a printer's error it was stated last month that the subscription to the Moslem World Magazine is now, in Indian money Rs. 6-12-0. Will members in India please note that this should be Rs. 4-12-0. But who will refrain from a broad smile when it is stated that the New York Office of the magazine recently actually worked out the equivalent of \$ 1.25 to be "about thirty-seven rupees at the present market value!" Surely there is some confusion here with the German mark!! Reason enough this, for the small number of subscribers to the magazine in India!!!

'THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS.'—In our July issue we reproduced a letter over the signature of 'Mohamed Ali,' written from jail, and addressed to Mr. C.F. Andrews, in the course of which he refers to the Gospel of Barnabas which he thinks was recently discovered. We are glad to see in The Epiphany of July 22, a very lucid statement of the facts concerning this obvious forgery, and of its complete exposure. The article is just what Mr. Mohamed Ali should read, and he will then learn that its historical value is "exactly nil."

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY AT CAIRO.—A beautiful Egyptian palace which was once the home of a pasha has become the main building of the American University at Cairo. It was in this very building that in 1910 Theodore Roosevelt made the memorable speech which so stirred all the British Empire. It is therefore quite fitting that an American institution of learning should occupy this same building as it strives to make the young Egyptians strong, educated Christian men like the virile American who spoke there twelve years ago.

The institution started on its second year with an enrolment of over two hundred carefully chosen Egyptian students, 60 per cent of whom are Mohammedan. There are three college classes at the present time, and one class is added each year until the full quota of college classes will have been completed. With the insistent demand for educated leadership in Egypt today this American Christian institution possesses an opportunity, at the intellectual center of the Mohammedan world, almost unparalleled in the whole world.—From 'The Record of Christian Work. May, 1922.

Please notify us of change of Address!—We have recently lost touch with a number of members because they have not notified us of changes in their address. Will members please bear in mind that the Secretary needs to be informed of such change in the event of transfer and long furlough.

NEW MEMBER.

213. Rev. W. H. G. Holmes, Ed. Epiphany, Calcutta (1th Day.)
Oxford Mission.

The annual subscription to the League is only Rs. 2-0-0. The Secretary will be glad to send spare copies of this issue to addresses mentioned by members with a view to securing new subscribers. News and requests for prayer will always be welcome and should be sent early in the month to the Hon. Secretary :—

Rev. L. Bevan Jones,
Baptist Mission,
Dacca, Bengal, India.