



G. W. Thatcher in Oxford

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Essays  
in Honour of  
Griffithes Wheeler Thatcher  
1863-1950

EDITED BY  
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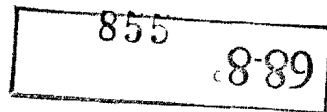
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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

In December 1962, the Rev. John Garrett, M.A., Warden of Camden College, Sydney, wrote to me saying, "The Officers of the Camden College Council have asked me to say that they consider the time appropriate for some memorial volume for the late Dr. G. W. Thatcher, the distinguished Semitic scholar who was for many years Warden of the College." The Council expressed its wish that I should compile the volume, an invitation that gave me great pleasure for I had known Thatcher very well and had regularly read Arabic with him from the time I left the Army until his death.

Two questions seemed to present themselves for answer by me—should the scope of the volume attempt to cover all Thatcher's interests, and who should be invited to contribute to it? The former question was hard, for Thatcher was interested in a large variety of subjects—Arabic and Semitic languages generally, Semitic religion, New Testament, the Classics, Georgian (in which he had compiled copious notes in preparation for a dictionary), Music, Anthropology and others. He had not been merely a dabbler, he was deeply learned in all these fields, a variety of interest which was probably practical only for a bachelor, accustomed to the traditions of Oxford, who had lived into the eighties.

I decided to limit so far as possible the general scope of the volume to the Semitic field which I defined sufficiently widely to include Anthropology, Comparative Religion and New Testament. There can be no doubt that the Semitic scholar can learn a great deal about the sort of processes that were formative in Ancient Near Eastern society by considering the conditions that are current to-day among the Stone Age peoples of Australia and New Guinea. Emeritus Professor Elkin's article, therefore, had a place in the volume; and there was a further fact to be considered—Professor Elkin was a personal friend of Dr. Thatcher for many years. There can also be no doubt that the New Testament is a

p- 191-216

THE DEBT OF ISLAM TO MONOPHYSITE  
SYRIAN CHRISTIANITY

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(1916-2006) +

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In Muslim Arabic sources, the paganism of the pre-Islamic Arabs has been overemphasized presumably to mark the more clearly the contrast made, reminding one of 'the testimony' of the recent convert. But there is clear evidence in both Arabic and Syriac sources that both Judaism and Christianity were indeed to be found in various parts of pre-Islamic Arabia. Some European scholars since last century have stressed the great indebtedness of Islam to Judaism. Few have emphasized the debt to Christianity. While it was not denied that Muhammad knew something of Christianity, he used to be seen as reacting against as, for example, Sir William Muir could say in *The Quran*<sup>1</sup> "the imperfect and garbled form" of Christianity known in Arabia. Syrian Christianity, Nestorian and Monophysite condemned by the fifth-century Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon respectively has been regarded as heretical ever since. It is not surprising then that with notable exceptions like Bell, Tor Andrae and Guillaume little or no credit has been given to the influence Syrian Christianity had on Muhammad the Reformer (as he used to be seen in the Protestant West).

For his part, Muhammad claimed to be bringing no new message but recalling men to the God and the religion of Abraham, the friend of God, and to be confirming the Law and the Evangel. Muhammad did not think he was calling God a new name in calling Him in Arabic Allah, the God. Allah is also the Syriac word for God.

The Qur'an refers to personages of both Old Testament and  
1. London, 1878.

nashri  
Jesu  
Christi!

New Testament and teaches the Virgin Birth and Ascension of Jesus the Messiah. It is obvious then that his knowledge was not derived entirely from Jewish sources. There are, however, problems of the Biblical historiography of the Qur'an which makes the Mother of Jesus, Aaron's sister Miriam. In this article we will seek to show that Muhammad's Biblical historiography and his view of the Old Testament is entirely derived from the Syrian Church interpretation of the Old Testament seen through the eyes of the New Testament. We shall also attempt to show that Muhammad's monotheism is derived from a Monophysite Syriac Christianity protesting against Orthodoxy. We believe that we can give Qur'anic evidence of lexical indebtedness to early Syriac religious texts.

One could describe Arabia as the large peninsula at the south-west extremity of Asia, bounded on the west by the Red Sea and the south-east by the Gulf of Bab-el-Mandeb and the Indian Ocean, and on the north-east by the Persian Gulf. At the northern end, Arabia's limits were indefinite and could include the whole of the desert country between Egypt and Syria on the north-western and northern side, and the banks of the Euphrates on the north-eastern. Professor A. Guillaume goes further and says, "By Arabia its people understand the land enclosed on the north by the mountains of Asia Minor, on the south by the Indian Ocean, on the east by the mountains of Persia, and on the west by the Mediterranean and the Red Sea."<sup>2</sup> It is worthwhile pausing to define the geographical extent of Arabia, because since Islam was first preached in Mecca in the Hedjaz in Arabia, and the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic, there has been too great a tendency to identify Arabia and Islam. However, Christianity was preached in Arabia by Paul the Apostle (cf. Gal. 1:17) who was afterwards to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Origen (196-253/4) (cf. Eusebius H.E. VI, ch. 19:36) was sent from Egypt to go to Arabia and dispute with an Arabian Christian sect who denied the immortality of the soul and claimed that it died with the body and would be resuscitated along with it by the power of God. In the time of Origen too, there was Beryllus Bishop of Bostra in Arabia whom Eusebius (H.E. VI, ch. 19) mentions as an author of some distinction. Eusebius cites a letter of Dionysius of Alexandria relating to the persecution by Decius

2. *Islam*, Pelican, 1954, p. 1.

(249-251) in which he mentions the Church of Arabia. Again, Eusebius (H.E. VIII, ch. 12) speaking of the persecution in the time of Diocletian (284-305) says: "Why need we mention the rest by name, or number the multitude of the men or picture the various sufferings of the admirable martyrs of Christ. Some of them were slain with the axe as in Arabia."

Socrates' Ecclesiastical History Book III, ch. 25, mentions Theotimus of the Arabs among the bishops who in Jovian's time accepted the Nicene Creed. All such references would apply to Christians in north Arabia, i.e. in the Roman Province Arabia Petraea, which, however, included the north-west part of the Hedjaz. However, Philostorges (H.E. Book I, ch. 3) states that a monk named Theophilus who was an Indian bishop was sent by the Emperor Constantine in 342 to the Himyarite king of Yaman, and obtained permission to build three churches, one at Zafar, another at Aden and a third at Hurmuz on the Persian Gulf. It would appear then that over two hundred years before the birth of Muhammad, Christianity was represented in widely distant parts of Arabia, north, south, east and west.

So far we have spoken of Arabian Christianity in general, now we must turn to specifically Syrian Christianity. Syrian Christian churches claim St. Thomas and not St. Peter as the fount of their Apostolic Tradition. Whether we accept or not the tradition that St. Thomas sent Addai as apostle to Edessa, a city of northern Mesopotamia, there was a Church with a bishop there by the second part of the second century. The Edessan Church, situated as it was in Edessa an important entrepôt for eastern trade with the Roman Empire, became the Mother Church of many Churches in Persia, central Asia, India, and by A.D. 600 if not before, in China. After Nestorius Bishop of Constantinople was anathematized in 436 at Ephesus on rejecting the innovation 'Theotokos', 'Mother of God' instead of 'Christotokos', 'Mother of Christ' as title of the B.V.M., the Edessan Church which followed his teaching was excommunicated. The 'Theotokos' issue was more than a question of an honorific title for the B.V.M. It is connected with the basic question, "What think ye of the Christ, whose son is He?" (cf. Matt. 24:42) which is posited by the Gospels. The answer to this basic question the Creed of Nicæa had sought carefully to define as a result of the controversies which came to a head in the third century.

The Church from the beginning had preached that there is one God, the God of the Old Testament who sent Jesus the Messiah. But what was the relation of Jesus to God? The Four Gospels in their several ways indicated answers. In Mark, He had received the Spirit, and Divine recognition of Sonship at the Baptism. Matthew and Luke gave their stories of the Virgin Birth. Mary's child was conceived of the Spirit. John had no Virgin Birth story but identified Jesus with the Word of God that was with God from all Eternity.

In the Gospels as indeed in all the Apostolic and Sub-Apostolic writings there is the conviction that Jesus and His message and work both confirm and fulfil the Old Testament. Apart from Gnostic heretics the Early Church held fast to the Old Testament and claimed it as her Bible. She did not stop at that but claimed she was the real Israel. The Church preached the One God of the Prophets but claimed Jesus was His Son, and that Jesus' message was the message of the Old Testament, as *properly* understood.

To preach and maintain belief in *one* God was the constant aim of the Church. But what was the relation of Jesus to God? There were basically two lines of approach which alike sought to protect the Unity of God: (a) Adoptionist, i.e. that Jesus was a prophet and God gave Him His Spirit at the Baptism, e.g. cf. the doctrine of Paul of Samosata; (b) Modalist, i.e. that God showed Himself to the Jews as Father, to the Apostles as Son, and to the Gentiles as Holy Spirit (cf. e.g. the views of Sabellius). These attempts to explain the problem, when so expressed, were regarded as heretical. Arius at the beginning of the fourth century brought the issue to a head by teaching that God created the Son or pre-existent Christ before the *general* creation, but the Son was not consubstantial with the Father. The Nicene Creed formulated to correct this error, specifically stressed the coeternity of God the Father and God the Son and of their being of one and the same Nature. True, it says that He was born of the Virgin Mary. But Nestorius felt that to call her 'Theotokos' undermined the structure of the Nicene Creed by saying she bore God. For Nestorius, following his teacher Theodore of Mopsuestia, looked back to St. John's Gospel where Jesus says of His body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it." So God the Son was in the human Jesus from the womb and throughout His ministry as God in the Temple; i.e. Jesus Christ, Son of God was made up of two natures, Divine and

human, *not* united, but forming one person. Though Nestorius and Nestorians were anathematized, it highlighted the fact that further definition in precise terms of the nature of the Incarnation was required. The Council of Chalcedon, less than a generation later defined the relation of the Divine and human natures in Christ, and it was at this Council that most of the Syrians who had not left the Orthodox Church with Nestorius were anathematized. These were the Monophysites. Here follows the Monophysite Confession of Faith as given by Philoxenus (Mar Aksenaia) Bishop of Mabbug (fifth century).

We confess three divine Hypostases, one God (Allah). The Father is God (Allah), the Son is God (Allah), the Holy Spirit is God (Allah) but there are not three Gods (Allahs). The Father is (Divine) Nature, and the Son is the son of (the Divine) Nature (i.e. consubstantial) and the Holy Spirit is of the (Divine) Nature, but there are not three Natures. The Father is Essence, and the Son is the Son of the Essence, and the Holy Spirit is of the Essence, but there are not three Essences: Nature equal which is not divided, the Essence which is confessed in the Hypostases, one Nature in three Hypostases which are equal and in complete accord. Here is our God (Allah) whom we adore, and in whom we believe.

The Eastern Roman Empire and the Sassanid Persian Empire maintained the same attitude one to the other as the earlier Roman Empire and the Parthians. Both had Arab mercenary forces. The Persian Arab forces were mainly Nestorian, the Roman Arab forces mainly Monophysite. The Eastern Roman Empire was Orthodox: Monophysitism was a heresy. The tension between the Arabs and their Eastern Roman overlords was increased because of religious differences on the questions of the Trinity and Incarnation. In the sixth century the Arab chief Harith, a Monophysite, went to Constantinople to ask the Greek Orthodox Emperor Justinian I that his people be given a bishop but a Monophysite bishop. Justinian agreed; after all the Arab tribes were his mercenaries employed in fighting the Persian forces, also Arab, but Nestorian. In 563 Harith, conscious of how much the Emperor was indebted for his services against the Persians, brought a document to Constantinople which he tried to get accepted. It said: "The Trinity is One God, One Nature, One Essence; those who do not accept this doctrine are to be anathematized." On two bishops re-

fusing to sign, Harith said: "Now I know you are heretics. We and our armies accept this doctrine as do the Orientals." As Professor Guillaume who cites this incident says, "Here plainly is a claim to a native Arab Christianity stripped of the subtle refinements of the Greek theologians, and an explicit claim to the right to defend that faith by the sword."<sup>3</sup> Harith's statement is pure Monophysitism.

Monophysitism certainly conserved the Unity of God and the Divinity of the Son, but was related to heresies like that of Eutyches or that of Julian of Halicarnassus where Christ is denied a human nature. On the other hand there was the Arabian Trithelist heresy springing in reaction from Monophysitism; it held that since it is certain that the (Divine) Nature belongs to each one of the Hypostases in particular, and that it is God, then there are Three Natures, and Three Gods, as well as Three Hypostases.

According to Philosterges (H.E. *op. cit.*) Christianity came to Najrān in the Yemen in the fifth century. It was Syriac Monophysite Christianity, and in 514 the great Monophysite Theologian Jacob of Saroug wrote to the Arab Christians of Najrān of whose number so many (20,000, so Muir, *Life of Mahomet*, Introduction) had then fallen martyrs to the faith in death by fire, in the persecution of Dhu'l Nuwas Himyarite Arab King who had adopted Judaism. This had its repercussions, as one survivor with a half-burnt Gospel reached Constantinople and demanded retribution. At Justinian's request the Abyssinians in 525 sent an armada and destroyed Dhu'l Nuwas.

It is usually held that the Qur'an Sura 85, The Sura of the Zodiacal Signs (a Meccan Sura), alludes to this persecution. "And the fire with its kindling, When they sat over it, And witnessed the while what they were doing with those who believed (i.e. with the Monophysite Christians). And took not vengeance on them save for their belief in God, The Mighty, the praiseworthy, Whose is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth; For God is witness over all."

The Egyptian Copts and the Abyssinians became Monophysites. Not so long before Muhammad was born in 571, a huge Christian church was built at San'a in the Yemen. It was the wonder of the age. The Arabs of the Yemen were ordered by the

3. *Islam*, Pelican, 1954, p. 17.

ruler of Abyssinia to perform a pilgrimage to this new church instead of the Ka'aba at Mecca. This edict was resisted and traditionally gave rise to the 'War of the Elephant' when Abrahah, the Viceroy of Egypt, took an oath that he would destroy the Meccan Shrine and marched at the head of an army of Abyssinians mounted on an elephant. The 'War of the Elephant' marks the period of Muhammad's birth. There is the Sura of the Elephant in the Qur'an referring to Divine intervention against the Abyssinians.

Professor Guillaume points out that

the Monophysites were extraordinarily active in converting the Arabs, and shortly before the birth of Muhammad large numbers had been baptised. A priest and deacon were appointed to each tribe. Churches were founded, almsgiving and fasting were regularly practised. Monasteries were open day and night to travellers, who were given food and drink before they were sent on their way. Women were veiled when out of doors.<sup>4</sup>

Professor Guillaume goes on to point out that the Nestorians were equally active; that they established schools in many towns. Whereas in the fifth century they had a monastery at Hira from where Christianity went to Bahrain, by the time Muhammad was a young man, King Nu'man of Hira was converted to Christianity. Now in 597 the Persians conquered the country. The Persians after the lengthy persecution in the fourth century in the reign of Sapor II, favoured the Nestorians; their Arabs were mainly Nestorian. So though Monophysites and Nestorians were regarded alike as heretics by the Eastern Roman Empire, they did not see eye to eye. The Nestorians were very missionary. It is they who went to central Asia, India and China. We can be sure that they, conscious of the sympathy of the Persian government, sought to spread Nestorianism in Arabia at the expense of Monophysitism. After all, the Monophysite Arabs had fought for Rome. That is not to say that the Monophysite Arabs loved Rome, who regarded them as heretics, as not belonging to the true Israel, the Orthodox Church. Hitherto scholars have not paid enough attention to the importance of the divisions both theological and political between Monophysite and Nestorian Arabs. This had great significance as providing an opportunity for the emergence of

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

Muhammad as Prophet of Islam which owed much to what was common in each, but solved their mutual differences on Trinity and Incarnation (the very points on which the Eastern Roman Empire had anathematized them both) by abandoning such positions: cf. Qur'an Sura Nisa 166—"O ye people of the Book! do not exceed in your religion, nor say against God aught save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, is but the apostle of God and His Word, which He cast into Mary and a spirit from Him; believe then in God and His apostles, and say not 'Three'. Have done, it were better for you. God is only one God."

The Ka'aba, the Holy Place of Mecca, according to Professor Guillaume had pictures of Biblical personages surrounding its inside walls in the time of Muhammad. Muhammad after Islam was triumphant removed all except that of the Virgin and Child. The Virgin Mary has long been held in honour by Arabs. There was the sect of Collyridians in Arabia in the fourth century who worshipped St. Mary as a goddess, and thought she ought to be honoured and appeased with libations, sacrifices and offerings of cakes (*κολυβιδες*, cf. Mosheim, Bk. II, p. 414). The immaculate conception of the B.V.M. was taught in Medieval Islam: only last century did it become a dogma in the Roman Catholic Church.

Professor Guillaume, in a lecture he gave in Leeds University in 1958, held that it was from the paintings, arranged in no apparent historical sequence, inside the Ka'aba that Muhammad derived his peculiar notion of Biblical history with Mary Mother of the Lord apparently Aaron's sister. Professor Guillaume pointed out that the paintings had been done by a Copt. He demonstrated that the order was most probably a reproduction of the same order as that inside an ancient Coptic Church in Upper Egypt. But he did not go on to explain why that order would arise in the first place. The present writer feels that the paintings done by a Coptic monk or even an ordinary Copt would reflect this Monophysite Christian's concept of Biblical history. Tor Andrae points out<sup>6</sup> that tradition tells that Muhammad heard Kuss ibn Sa'd, said to have been Bishop of Najrān, preaching in the market at Okatz (cf. *Kitab al-Aghani* XIV, pp. 41ff.; Mas'udi, i. p. 33). So it was Christian Missionary Sermons which provided him not only with his knowledge of the Bible, but basic Christian doctrines. Tor 5. *Mohammed: The Man and his Faith*, London, 1936, pp. 126-7.

Andrae<sup>6</sup> sees three possible heads in such a sermon: (1) God's Providence, (2) Man's duty to God in return, (3) Judgement for those who do not fulfil this duty. Whereas it could be that the Copt's pictures in the Ka'aba could be better explained as representing Biblical history derived from a sermon, even this stops short. The sermon's attitude to Biblical history as illustrating God's Providence would be conditioned by a theological attitude to the Old Testament. We should note here that we have a tradition which claimed that Muhammad actually received instruction in Christianity from learned Christians Jubrā and Yasārā, and that on this account Quraish said: "It is only some mortal that teaches him." Cf. Baidawi on Sura 16:105.

The Syrians saw the Old Testament as fulfilled in the New Testament. In this they were not so different from the first writers of the New Testament who depicted the life of Christ to a great extent in the light of the Testimonia which they believed they found relating to Him in the Old Testament. The incident on the way to Emmaus, Luke 24:27, "And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in the scriptures the things concerning himself" gives a pointer to this. The infant Church had had to justify its very existence theologically *vis-à-vis* the parent body Judaism. Judaism had the Law, the Torah, and the Jews claimed a 'once-for-allness' for the Revelation of the Law at Sinai. They claimed that through it they were God's Chosen People. St. Paul went behind the Law to Abraham and claimed that God had covenanted with Abraham long before the Law was given, that in his seed which Paul, using Rabbinic Exegetical methods,<sup>7</sup> takes not as the Rabbis took as referring to the Jewish Community, but to Jesus, all nations would be blessed. Paul saw the Law as an interlude and not only so, but occasioned by sin. Cf. Galatians 3:19—"What then is the Law? It was added because of transgressions." With Christ the promised Seed come, it was done away with. The great Syrian Father Theodore of Mopsuestia, taught that Jesus was the true Son of God, old Israel were only sons by adoption; but in and by what the Godman Christ had done, those who believed in Him could become sons of God by adoption; the Church under the leadership of Christ was the new true Israel, the continuation and fulfilment

6. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

7. Cf. Joseph Klauser, *From Jesus to Paul*, London, 1944, *op. cit.*



of the Israel of the Old Testament. But this was basic to the theology of the Church Catholic since Paul. The Syrian Fathers perhaps went further than the Greek and Latin Fathers in the stress they put on this, to wit, that in fact it is Christ the Word as Second Person of the Trinity who speaks to man of Himself in the Old Testament. Therefore the Syrian Christian writers like Aphraates, early fourth century, Ephraem, fourth century, Jacob of Saroug, fifth to sixth century, in the homilies on New Testament themes quote the Old Testament more than the New Testament. The early Christians in general and Syrians in particular regarded the Jews as heretics and as completely wrongly interpreting the Old Testament.

The Syrian Christians supplied Muhammad with a ready-made argument against the Jews. It is often alleged that he said that they had falsified the Taurat. But evidence is clearer that he alleged that they *hid* the proper (in his eyes) meaning, cf. Sura 6:92. This was the usual Christian polemic against the Jews. In Sura 2:141 Muhammad seems to use the same argument against the Christians as well as the Jews.

Muhammad called his revelation: The Qur'an. Professor Guillaume, speaking of the Nestorians (but the same would apply to the Monophysites), writes: "In their monasteries monks could be heard chanting their offices, so that the Arabs became accustomed to seeing the monks at prayer day and night, prostrating themselves with their faces to the ground. In prayer, the Christians turned to the east. Such men were a familiar sight on all caravan routes of Arabia."<sup>8</sup> As Tor Andrae points out, the word used in the Syrian Church for the Scripture reading in Divine Service is *geryana*.<sup>9</sup> It seems that Tor Andrae is correct in suggesting that Muhammad, familiar with readings by the monks of their revealed books, took this name for his Revelation, both each revelation and as descriptive of the whole. When he received the first revelation, he was commanded to Read, not silently, but aloud to proclaim, cf. Sura 96:1f., which would be just as the monks did. However, the Syrian monks' sacred books were in Syriac and their *geryane*, their readings, were in Syriac, a tongue similar to Arabic but a foreign tongue to the Arabs of Quraish, Muhammad's tribe in the Hedjaz. It is doubtless with pride that Muhammad claimed his was an Arabic Qur'an (cf. Sura 12:1).

8. *Islam*, p. 15.

9. *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

The Scripture readings of the Syrian Fathers would be from the Old Testament and New Testament. Muhammad, while referring frequently to the earlier revelations as Taurat (Pentateuch), and the Injil (the Gospel) *never* uses the terms Old Testament and New Testament. The Zubur, the Psalms of David are twice mentioned. Moses, the Qur'an tells us, brought the Taurat, the Jews fell away from it. Prophets came and warned them, but they killed them, then Jesus was sent with the Injil, the Gospel. This was not a new Revelation, but confirmed the truth of the first. Note Muhammad does not say there were Four Gospels. If by Gospel he meant Four Gospels, he would have shown the discrepancies between them. He does *not* say the Christians corrupted the Gospel. He blames the monks for adding the doctrine of the Trinity and tells the Christians to get back to their Scripture, i.e. the Injil.

In the Qur'an, there is mention of more Old Testament personages than New Testament figures; as a result it has been understood that Muhammad was influenced more by Jews and Judaism than by Christians. It is true that at Medina after the Hijra he did hope to gain the Jews who were numerous and prominent there. While in Medinan Suras knowledge of Rabbinic Midrashic traditions can be seen supplementing the Old Testament story, and in Sura Nisa (Women), the Mishnaic Tractate Sanhedrin is once quoted, yet Muhammad's whole attitude to the Old Testament even at this period is that which is derived from Syrian Christianity: the Old Testament is confirmed in the New Testament which gives the original sense of the Old Testament before it was corrupted. What then is the Gospel which Muhammad heard? In Sura (19) Miryam (Mary), the annunciation to Zacharias of the birth of John the Baptist is virtually in the words of Luke's Gospel, whereas in the Sura (61) of the Ranks there is a reference, Muslims believe, to the promise of the Paraclete in John's Gospel. Now in the mid-second century when it was already generally agreed that the Four Gospels, and *they only* were acceptable to the Catholic Church, Tatian of Edessa made a harmony of the Four called the Diatessaron. It is not agreed whether the Diatessaron was originally in Greek or Syriac. The Syriac Fathers, Aphraates and Ephraem, of the fourth century quote the Diatessaron as the Gospel. It seems that the text of the Four separate Gospels existing in Syriac before the Diatessaron was that used in its compilation. The Diatessaron displaced them. However, about 400,

Rabula, Bishop of Edessa, it is said destroyed all copies of the Diatessaron and had the Syriac 'Vulgate' Peshitta Gospels produced in a Syriac text close to the readings of the Greek Gospels. Rabula was Orthodox, and the Diatessaron was still used by Monophysites and Nestorians after they were declared heretics. In the ninth century Ishodad of Merv was still quoting the Diatessaron in his Commentary of John's Gospel. The only early complete text of the Diatessaron is that of the Arabic Diatessaron translated from a Syriac MS. in the ninth century.

The present writer has for several years sought an answer to the problem of why it is that the Old Testament personages in the Qur'an are of the patriarchal period with few exceptions; allied with them as if of the same generation are Zacharias, Mary, Jesus and John. I believe the answer is that Muhammad gained his knowledge of the Old Testament from the Diatessaron, the Harmonized Gospel. I do not know of this solution having been put forward before.

In the first place the Diatessaron cuts out the Matthean and Lucan genealogies of Jesus. The groundwork of the Diatessaron is John's Gospel, 96 per cent of which is reproduced: 76.5 per cent of Matthew is used, 66 per cent of Luke, 50 per cent of Mark.<sup>10</sup> The beginning of the Diatessaron is John 1:1-5 with the emphasis on the Word, in Arabic Kalam, which in the Qur'an Sura Nisa 166 is applied to Jesus in the phrase "which He cast into Mary". The promise of the son to Zacharias, Luke 1:5ff. follows next. Now in Luke 1:5 it is said that Zacharias' wife was of the daughters of Aaron. Mary (Miriam in Syriac and Arabic as well as in Hebrew) is her kinswoman—Luke 1:36. Surely it is plain how Muhammad could confuse Mary the B.V.M. and Miryam, since Mary is a kinswoman of one of the daughters of Aaron, especially as *no* genealogy of Jesus is given in the Diatessaron, the Injil of the Syrian Churches in Arabia.

It is worthwhile pausing to see how many Old Testament figures are mentioned in the Diatessaron: The Gospel, and see if they at all compare with those in the Qur'an. Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah are mentioned in the Diatessaron and in the Qur'an. I insert here a table showing the complete identity of the spelling of some of these names in the Arabic of both Qur'an and Diatessaron and

10. For these percentages cf. G. F. Moore, *J.B.L.*, Vol. IX, 1890, p. 201ff.

even of the Syriac Gospel. Even where the spelling is not identical, close relationship can be noted.

The following Old Testament personages appear in the Qur'an and the Diatessaron (i.e. the harmony of the Four Gospels). Where the name is differently spelt in Peshitta, Qur'an and Arabic Diatessaron, I indicate this.

ADAM	<i>Peshitta, Qur'an, Arabic Diatessaron</i>
ABEL	HĀBEL <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i> HĀBĪL
NOAH	NŪH <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i> NŪH
ABRAHAM	ABRĀHĀM <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i> IBRĀHĪM
LOT	LŪT <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i>
ISAAC	ISHAQ <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i>
JACOB	YA'QŪB <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i>
JOSEPH	YAUSEF <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i> YŪSUF
MOSES	MŪSHEH <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i> MUSA
AARON	AHRŪN <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i> HARŪN
MIRYAM (MARY)	<i>Pesh, Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i> MIRYAM
JOSHUA	(In LXX and in Greek N.T. Jesus) YESHU' <i>Pesh; 'ISĀ Qur'an; 'ISŪ' Ar. Diatessaron</i> (Jesus ancestor of St. Joseph, Luke 3:29 YŪSĪ <i>Pesh.</i> )
JONAH	YAUNAN <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i> YŪNUS
DAVID	DAVĪD <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i> DĀ'ŪD
SOLOMON	SHLEIMŪN <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i> SULAIMAN
ELIJAH	ELYA or ILYĀ <i>Pesh; ILYĀ Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i>
ELISHA	ELISHA <i>Pesh; ALYASA' Qur'an; ALĪSHA' Ar. Diatessaron</i>
ISRAEL	YISRAEL (but cf. Rev. 7:4, 2 Cor. 11:2 ISRAELITE; ISRAELAYA) <i>Pesh; ISRA'IL Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i>
ZACHARIAS	ZKARYĀ <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i>
JOHN	YAUHANĀN <i>Pesh; Qur'an</i> YAHYA; <i>Ar. Diatessaron</i> YUHANA
GABRIEL	GABRIEL <i>Pesh; Qur'an and Ar. Diatessaron</i> GIBRIĪL

The following are Old Testament personages mentioned in the Qur'an and in the New Testament outside the Gospels.

CAIN	QAYEN <i>Pesh; Qur'an</i> QĀBĪL
ENOKH	HNOK <i>Pesh; Qur'an</i> IDRĪS
GOG	GŪG <i>Pesh; Qur'an</i> YĀGŪG
MAGOG	MAGŪG <i>Pesh; Qur'an</i> MĀGUG

PHARAOH FERŪN *Pesh*; *Qur'an* FIRŪN  
SAUL SHĀUL *Pesh*; *Qur'an* TĀLŪT

MICHAEL MIKAIL *Pesh*; *Qur'an* and *Ar. Diatessaron* MIKĀ'IL

It may be too much to assume a written translation of the Diatessaron from Syriac into Arabic in the time of Muhammad. The Syrian Churches have not encouraged the replacing of the public reading of the Gospel in Syriac by the Vernacular. On the other hand the Syrian Churches encouraged the young to learn and understand Syriac, not merely to read it. The names of Biblical characters would be arabicized. It is interesting that Sura 7:39 uses the Gospel phrase "a camel pass through the eye of a needle". The Arabic Diatessaron in translating Matthew 19:24 uses exactly the same Arabic words. Since the Arabic Diatessaron does not use a Syriac root like *shu* to translate Syriac *shlm* in a good sense because of Muslim overtones, it is striking that the Arabic Diatessaron which has come down to us uses forms of names and expressions and turns of phrase found in the Qur'an; this surely shows it does not regard such as primarily Muslim.

The Qur'an also mentions Cain, Ishmael, Joseph, Amran, Miryam, Pharaoh, Korah, Job, Ezra. Of these, since Miryam is confused with Mary the B.V.M., Joseph may well be confused with St. Joseph. The Qur'an does not mention his name in connection with Mary, but gives the story of the Patriarch Joseph, stressing his chastity. Cain, Job and Pharaoh are mentioned in the New Testament outside the Gospels. The spelling of Job and Pharaoh in Syriac is exactly the same as in Arabic. Pharaoh in Syriac New Testament and Arabic Qur'an is Firaun: in Hebrew Old Testament it is Fara'oh. Muhammad presumably heard the story of Pharaoh in a Syrian missionary sermon. The other Old Testament personages mentioned in the Qur'an but not in the Diatessaron or New Testament, he may quite probably have heard mentioned in Syrian missionary sermons which like the old style Scots sermon found the Gospel in the Old Testament. As to the angels, Gabriel is mentioned in both Diatessaron and Qur'an. Michael is mentioned in the Qur'an and in the New Testament (Jude 9; Rev. 12:7).

But did Muhammad merely hear these names in Syriac sermons?

If so, it is most odd that the orthographical forms of the names in Arabic are identical or remarkably similar to the form in the Syriac Bible.

'Abdu'l Haqq, commentator on the Mishkāt, says that Waraqa the cousin of Lady Khadijah the first wife of the Prophet, had embraced Christianity and had translated the Gospels into Arabic. There is the tradition in Sahih al-Bukhari that when Muhammad told Waraqa what he had seen on Mt. Hira, at the first revelation, Waraqa exclaimed: "It is the Nāmūs that appeared from God to Moses." Nāmūs is not the usual word used in the Syriac New Testament for the Law. It occurs only in 1 Corinthians 9:21 and once in the Diatessaron paragraph 3 and John 1:17, Arabic and Syriac Nāmūs, where it is said: "For the Law/Nāmūs was given through the mediation of Moses, but truth and grace were through Jesus Christ." Later Nāmūs was thought to be an angel, but Waraqa's exclamation may indeed point to his knowing the text of the Diatessaron: the Injil. Waraqa was a Hanīf.

In Suras 2:129; 3:60 in the Qur'an, Muhammad says Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a *hanīf*, and not of the idolaters. Ibn Ishāq cited by Tor Andrae<sup>11</sup> says four men separated themselves at a sacrificial feast of the Quraish given in honour of one of their idols. Waraqa b. Naufal was one of the four: he became a Christian and acquired much knowledge from the Christians and out of their books. Othman b. Huwairith, another cousin of Lady Khadijah, went to Byzantium and became a Christian, and occupied an honourable position at court. Zaid ibn Amr, another of the four, became neither Jew nor Christian, nor Muslim. "My God", he is reported to have said, "if I knew what form of worship is most pleasing to Thee I would choose it, but I know it not." He had had much contact with Syrian Christians. Only one of the four, Ubaidallah b. Jahsh, became a Muslim and then a Christian, telling his former co-religionists "We see clearly, but you are still blinking like newly-born puppies."

Certainly in the Qur'an Meccan Suras, Hanīf means a monotheist, though in Syriac *hanpa* means 'heathen' or Apostate. (Tor Andrae cites as example *Yulyana hanpa*—Julian the Apostate, in Syriac.)<sup>12</sup> Tor Andrae wants to identify *hanpa* with Manichee, and then give *hanīf* in the Qur'an that meaning. This is narrowing too

11. *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

much the connotation of *hanpa* in Syriac. This suggested connotation of *hanif* by Tor Andrae, is tied up with his view that Muhammad besides being influenced by Syrian missionary sermons was influenced by Manichaeism. He sees the drive in Muhammad to be prophet of the Arabs with a Revelation in Arabic, as deriving from Manichaeism. But there is no need for this. With regard to the Hanifs they may have taken the name given them and others by Christian missionaries, and felt convicted that they were heathen, but could not as yet accept Christianity in the form offered. The slur became the slogan.

Muhammad calls himself *al-nabi al-'ummi*. The expression occurs twice in the Sura 7:157, 158. This was usually taken to mean the illiterate prophet. 'Ummi in Arabic can mean national, Gentile, and then as a result of the meaning Gentile, illiterate (cf. how the Greeks regarded other nations as barbarous). It has been understood that by claiming himself to be an illiterate prophet Muhammad was stressing the miracle of such bringing the Qur'an. It is the sign, indeed all its verses, i.e. 'ayat, are signs also. Could it be that John 7:15 (in the Diatessaron) "How doth this man know writing seeing he hath not learned", said of Jesus, is thought of in relation to *al-nabi al-'ummi*. This is the sign he shares with Jesus, who in Muslim eyes also brought a book. Like Jesus Muhammad was expected to show a sign. On the other hand Sura 7:157 says of this *nabi 'ummi* that "they find him written down with them in the Law and the Gospel". This could refer to the Prophet (cf. John 7:40, also Acts 3:22, 7:37) all referring to the Mosaic promise of Deuteronomy 18:18, of the prophet like unto Moses. But he was to be an Israelite prophet from among your brethren, i.e. fellow Israelites. 'Uma in Hebrew is not so common as 'am but has the same meaning: people. However, it may be significant in Genesis 25:16 it is used in connection with Arabian tribes. In Syriac 'umta (the *t* is not a radical but only a feminine ending) means a nation and the adjective 'umtaya Gentile. It could be that the meaning which best suits *al-nabi al-'ummi* is the Prophet of the Gentiles. The Syrian Christians as well as other early Christians had been very concerned to show that a man in Christ was not a Gentile, but one of the new Israel. The word 'ammi in Syriac means Gentile, and 'Amme the Gentiles is in Bar Hebraeus *Eccles. Hist.* applied to the Arabs.<sup>13</sup> This is not a late usage because it

13. In connection with *الأمم* it should be noted that in Qur'an

occurs early in the title of George Bishop of the Arabs.<sup>14</sup> In Arabic the adjective form 'Ammi exists as does 'am, people, instead of 'Ummi and 'Umma and have similar meanings. Above we have seen how *hanpa*, heathen, could be turned from a slight into a proud title. One ventures to suggest the same has been done with 'ummi. He is the Gentile prophet, the prophet of the Gentiles in either the Old Testament or New Testament sense, and for the Gentile Arabs he is the national prophet, the prophet from among themselves. He can use that verse because his people who follow his message are no more Gentiles but the true people of God. Just as the Christians took over the promises to Abraham, he, Muhammad, believing he is recalling men to the religion of Abraham, the first Muslim, feels that he and his followers are the heirs of the promises. He had learned well from Paul the first Apostle to the Gentiles whose teaching the Syrian Fathers had developed for their own benefit. Sura 2:135 "They say 'Be ye Jews or Christians, so shall ye be guided.' Say, 'Not so, but the faith of Abraham, the hanif, he was not of the idolaters' (cf. also Sura 2:120). The Jews will not be satisfied with thee, nor yet the Christians, until thou followest their creed, say, God's guidance is the guidance."

The present writer ventures to suggest that Muhammad was not illiterate; that he delivered his revelations, the suras or part suras of the Qur'an *vice voce*, the way a Nabi of the Old Testament would have done as well as how a monk or priest would read his scriptures. One cannot see any quotations from or reminiscence of Pauline phrasology in the Qur'an, though in the Syrian Churches the Apostle meant Paul; one can see more the influence of John's Gospel which was an integral part of the Diatessaron. However, Deissmann<sup>15</sup> saw John's Gospel as an attempt to make a synthesis of the Synoptic Gospel and the Pauline Christ. If so, there is indirectly considerable Pauline influence in the Diatessaron of which John is the largest single element.

The word Nabi is used also in the Diatessaron as well as in the

Sura 3:19 the word 'Ummiyun, plural of 'Ummiyu, applied twice to the prophet in Sura 7:157, 158, here seems clearly to refer to the Pagan Arabs in contradistinction to Jesus and Christians.

14. Cf. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*.

15. *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, London, 1926, *op. cit.*

Old Testament. John the Baptist was a prophet; Elijah is mentioned beside him in the Diatessaron (cf. John 1:21). As far as Muhammad was concerned they were therefore contemporaries. In John's Gospel Jesus speaks much of being sent, or of 'Him who sent me.' This note comes through very much in the Qur'an where Muhammad speaks too of himself as the Apostle of God. 'Witness' is another keyword in the Johannine structure of the Diatessaron, likewise of the Qur'an. Muhammad in words reminiscent of the Johannine Christ stresses that he needs the witness of no man, God is his witness.

Gabriel looms large in the Qur'an. Gabriel in fact takes the place of the Holy Spirit of Christianity. In the first section of the Diatessaron Gabriel figures in the annunciation to Mary and in the second section (derived from Matthew). Joseph finds her with child of the Holy Spirit. This may have led to the Qur'anic identification. In the Sura of the Ranks (61:6), a Meccan Sura, we have the famous passage where Muhammad cites Jesus as saying: "O children of Israel, verily, I am the *apostle* of God to you (Muhammad's name for himself too) verifying the Law that was before me and giving you glad tidings of an apostle who shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad." This is understood to be an allusion to the Paraclete in John 16:17, Muslims declaring that the word *παράκλητος* had been substituted in the Greek for *περικλυτός*, praised, laudable, which is also the meaning of Ahmad. In Arabic the word for paraclete is *farqalit* and is exactly the same as the Syriac *farqalit* even to the hard final *t*. Farqalit in Syriac just like *παράκλητος* in Greek can mean advocate (cf. 1 John 2:1) as well as comforter, but does not lend itself to a translation 'praiseworthy', 'laudable', nor is the root *bmd* used in Syriac. Here it may seem that some reference has been made to the Greek, not necessarily to the Gospel of John by itself, but to the Greek Diatessaron, which of course includes the promise of the Paraclete. Actually this is not absolutely necessary for *παράκλητος* was taken as a proper name, and the consonants transliterated in the Syriac. However, Tor Andrae<sup>16</sup> has demonstrated that the sensuous pictures of Paradise in the Qur'an were inspired by the great Syrian Church hymnologist Ephraem Syrus of Nisbis (fourth century) in his hymns of Paradise. According to Ephraem for those who have abstained from wine on earth for him the vines

16. *Op. cit.*, pp. 119-21.

of Paradise yearn. For the man who lived in chastity there will be in Paradise females to receive him to pure bosoms. These features remind one of Qur'anic Paradise. If Muhammad were influenced by one Syrian Father, it is possible that he could be influenced by another, e.g. Jacob of Saroug, who had had contacts with the Monophysite Christians in Najrān. This writer in his famous *Liber Graduum*,<sup>17</sup> an important theological work on the training required to acquire the beatific vision, has much to say on the Paraclete as if he were still to come. Syriac Literature of the fourth and fifth and sixth centuries is not extensive. Ephraem's hymns would be known to every Syrian Christian in Arabia, and Jacob of Saroug's mystical treatises to every Monophysite monk, of whom there were many in Muhammad's time.

However, from St. John's Gospel in the Diatessaron Jesus' words "for if I go not away, the Paraclete will not come unto you: but if I go away I will send him unto you. And when he cometh, he will reprove the world for sin, and for righteousness, and for judgement:" *could* be taken as referring to a successor. Muhammad did feel that he was sent, and the phrase "reproving the world for sin, and for righteousness, and for judgement" could be used to describe his mission. In John 15:25 "But when the Paraclete is come, whom I will send unto you from my Father," if a break is made here in the sentence and we have a new beginning with "The spirit of truth, which goeth forth from my Father, he shall bear witness of me," the Paraclete and the Spirit of Truth need not be taken as one and the same. One means, it could have been possible for Muhammad to have identified himself with the Paraclete and seen the Spirit of Truth as Gabriel (cf. above Muhammad's identification of Gabriel and the Holy Spirit). Muhammad could claim that he had indeed witnessed to Jesus the son of Mary and the truth of His revelation. The difficulty in deriving the name Ahmad from Paraclete is *not* primary. Muhammad had accepted the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament which took the latter over as fulfilled in itself the New Testament. Muhammad admits that Moses foretold Jesus' coming. He knew Jesus promised to send the Paraclete. He, Muhammad, was anxious that he was sent. He was not the first to think he was the Paraclete; there was Montanus and the Montanists nearly 400 years before, who misled even Tertullian. The squaring of the name was

17. Cf. *Patrologia Syriaca*, Vol. III.

secondary; when it squared so easily it would strengthen his certainty in himself. The system that the Christians had drawn up to take over the promises of the Old Testament from the Jews was his. The Christians saw themselves in the tradition of true Abrahamic religion: that was now his: it was for him in his function as the Paraclete to take over from the Christians their heritage and reprove them of sin and warn them of judgement. In Abraham all 'amme, the nations, would be blessed. Yes, the Arabs whom the Christians called 'amme, Gentiles, would be blessed, and he was their prophet.

It is undisputed that Muhammad's basic message is to warn of impending judgement. This eschatological note is *not* typical of Rabbinic Judaism in the sixth century. Whereas Day of Judgement is a Jewish Eschatological term, the Sa'a 'the hour' is not. It is specifically Christian and is found in St. John's Gospel and therefore in the Diatessaron. Gehinnom and the Fire, also common terms for the judgement that awaits sinners, are not only Gospel terms but stressed in Syrian Eschatology.

Jesus in Arabic is *Isa*. The form *Isbo* is the normal Syriac. Jesus is often referred to in the Qur'an as Jesus the Messiah. *Isbo Mashiah* is the corresponding form in Syriac. The Qur'anic term for Christian is *Nasara*. This is the word used in the Syriac Gospel for Jesus the Nazarene (Matt. 2:23), whereas *Nasara* is not used in Syriac outside the Gospels for 'Christian'. The name *Nasara* for a Christian in Arabic seems clearly derived from the Syriac Diatessaron which includes Matthew 2:23. Perhaps we should note here that the Arabic word *mu'minin* occurs much more frequently in the Qur'an as the apparent name for the followers of the religion proclaimed by Muhammad than Muslimun. I am indebted to Dr. A. K. Kazi, Senior Lecturer (Islamic Studies) in the Department of Semitic Studies, for pointing this out. Dr. Kazi suggests that in the Qur'an Mu'min seems to point to a deeper religious experience than the term Muslim. We know that Umar did not call himself *Amir Muslimin* but *Amir Mu'minin*. So, apparently even in the time of the second Caliph, Muslim was not the name the followers of Muhammad called themselves. The emphasis on belief is one of the features of St. John's Gospel and therefore of the Diatessaron. The word in Syriac for believer is *mbaimen*. The Nicene Creed in Syriac starts off with 'ana *mbaimen* 'I believe.' *Mbaimnin* is already used in the Syriac New Testament

as the term for Christians. Payne Smith (*Thesaurus*) points out that that was specifically the term the Monophysites adopted to describe themselves. Could it be that Muhammad while stressing belief in the One God like the Christians, as the test of the true Muslim used the term Mu'minin in the hope of bringing in the *Mbaimnin*, the Christian Arab Monophysites. Later, when the advance had not been accepted and the new religious community was strong it would then drop the term Mu'minin for Muslimin. In the Syriac New Testament the root *shlm* is used in the Gospels in the sense of being betrayed, being delivered up, being perfected, fulfilled, accomplished in both active and passive sense. In the Gospel story there is a Divine irony, Judas Iscariot by betraying Jesus helps on the fulfilment of His Mission. This is brought out by the way the Gospel plays on the root *shlm*. However, the Syrian Christians later, cf. Arabic Diatessaron, use the root *shlm* (Arabic *slm*) of the betrayal affected by Judas, and when speaking of Judas Iscariot as *al-Muslim*, the betrayer. (Cf. Diatessaron ch. XLVIII [Matt. 26:49]. While this is a literal translation of the Syriac *Mashlmana*, it makes Judas, as it were, the first Muslim.) For the other uses of the Syriac root *shlm*, the cognate Arabic root *slm* is not used, but the root *tmn*, to fulfil, and *kml*, to accomplish, perfect. It seems that Syrian Christianity did not want to use the root *shlm* in the sense of fulfilment, completion, because Islam and the Muslims were claiming that Islam was the fulfilment of Christianity, and that Muslims in becoming Muslims had delivered themselves up fully to God in a way that Jesus and Christianity as well had not, being outside Islam.

In the reference to John the Baptist in the Qur'an the term *saba'* is used. This root means to dye or dip. It has been said that Muhammad did not understand that it meant baptism. However, the same root appears in Syriac, meaning to baptize. In Sura 2:132 it is said: "The dye/baptism of God! and who is better than God at baptizing/dying?" (The root *sb* is used here!) "and we are worshippers of Him". It looks as if Muhammad here is disposing of baptism as a sacrament dispensed by priests. The Qur'anic Arabic word for priest, *Qasis*, is the same word as in Syriac. The term used for the 'person' of God three times in the Qur'an is *wajh*, i.e. face. This reminds one of the Syriac theological term 'Prosofa'. In Syriac Incarnation Theology Prosofa is applied to Jesus (two natures, i.e. divine and human—one *prosofa*, one person).

Muhammad, by applying this term to God, is probably stressing Divine Unity. There is only one person in the Godhead, not three.

Muhammad's criticism of the Trinity being three Gods was justified in so far as there had been the Arabian Tritheistic heresy (see p. 196 above) but is probably polemic against Monophysitism from which this heresy had sprung in reaction.

Muhammad did not hold a Docetic view of Jesus, though he denies His death on the cross (Sura 4:154f.). It was someone else who was crucified. This goes beyond Nestorianism, which said that only Jesus the Messiah died: God the Son returned to God. In Monophysitism, Jesus being One nature Divine and human conjoined, the Divine suffered with the human on the Cross. With Muhammad's view neither suffers, and thus he solves the argument between Nestorianism and Monophysitism.

Jesus is only an apostle—Rasul (Sura 5:79)—and was a real man. Muhammad's argument to prove this is that both Jesus and His Mother ate food. Jesus wrought miracles (Sura 5:110ff.). The same Sura ends with an obvious adaptation of the Feeding of the Multitude in the story of the sending down of the Table from heaven. In the Diatessaron this miracle gets much space (in fact both the feeding of the five thousand and of the four thousand are given). To the reader of the Diatessaron the Feedings of the Multitudes are as it were the centres of the Gospel: all the more so as the Johannine sacramental discourse following the feeding of the Five Thousand is given in full, after a complete narrative based on Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It may be that Muhammad has deliberately taken this miracle, followed as it is in the Diatessaron with the Sacramental discourse on the bread of heaven to underline as he does in this Sura of the Table that God is the Giver. This was but a sign of God's providence manifested by Jesus. It is all the more noteworthy that in the Sura Jesus disclaims that He told men to take Him and His Mother as Gods, and to say that He was only a witness of God. Muhammad is also here clearly disposing of the Sacrament of Holy Communion just as he had disposed of baptism. Jesus' message of Sura 5:117 is 'Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.' Jesus of Himself can provide nothing, even His miracles were given Him by God as signs. He, like Muhammad, or Muhammad like Him are recalling other men to God.

Bell in *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*,<sup>18</sup> while seeking to show development in both Muhammad's knowledge of Christianity and his attitude to Christians does admit two significant facts. First, that words like *salat*, prayer, *sabbih*, to ascribe glory to, *taṣakka*, to seek purity—by giving alms, *'abd*, a worshipper, *qar'a*, to read, and even the word *qur'an* and *surah* (cf. Syriac *suria*, a writing, a portion of scripture), were to hand.<sup>19</sup> Bell speaks rightly of "an atmosphere of Jewish and Christian ideas pervading Arabia at all time".<sup>20</sup> The present writer would suggest that *Bism 'llah Al-Rahman, Al-Rahim* may derive from the Syriac *Beshma Rabmana Rabhima* which would give the meaning "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beloved (better surely than the tautological 'The Compassionate').".

Bell to back his claim that Christian ideas were part of the heritage of Arabia points to Imru'l-Qais of the pre-Islamic period likening a troop of game to "monks at a festival with fringed robes".<sup>21</sup> Imru'l-Qais in his Mu'allaqa (line 40) could say too: "Years have passed over it (the camp of a loved one) since I knew it, it has become like the writing of the Psalms (*zabur*) in the books (*masahif*) leaves of the monks." One recalls the term *mushaf* used later of the Qur'an. St. Simeon Stylites, famed for his long session on his pillar, was an Arab by race. Though he witnessed at Antioch, as Bell points out,<sup>22</sup> we are told crowds of desert Arabs flocked to see him and to hear him proclaim the Gospel from his lofty perch. The second thing that Bell admits is that the Muhammad of Mecca was not so different from the Muhammad of Medina. Bell writes: "He was a very practical character. In Medina that side of his character is most painfully evident. . . . Even in Mecca the practical direction of his thought is very marked. He had the mystic quality of a seeker after truth, but that did not destroy his practical bent."<sup>23</sup> In short, there is a danger of over-emphasizing the eschatological stress in Muhammad's preaching even in the Meccan period. It is there throughout, but so is his stress on God's goodness in creation and His generous Providence. For both of which, like in the Anglican General Thanksgiving, we owe Him gratitude. It is because men have forgotten and still forget that they must be warned. This reminds us of Tor

18. Gunning Lectures 1925, London, 1926, *op. cit.* 19. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 51, 52.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 71.



Andrae's Missionary Sermon. When the Faithful Little Flock grew, there would not be so much need to stress the dread warning of the End. One is not so certain that Bell can have it both ways, i.e. see in the Muhammad of Mecca the Muhammad of Medina and *vice versa* and also stress that Islam and the Qur'an is virtually the creation of the Medinan period.

We have only the Qur'an's witness for both periods, and while one is willing to admit Bell's evidence that Muhammad did obtain gobbets of more detailed knowledge about the Old Testament and New Testament from Jews and Christians in the Medinan period, one feels that Bell makes such new scraps of knowledge responsible for producing too much in a relatively short time. After all Muhammad was not a young man when he received his call and intimates of his knew of Christianity and its doctrines.

It is surely significant, as Bell points out but does not unfortunately draw the right conclusions, that only after the Hijra did Muhammad realize that the Christian Injil and the Taurat are separate books. This in itself points to Christian influence on Muhammad from the beginning. Just as the Gospel claimed to fulfil the Law, so he claimed his Qur'an fulfilled both. But just as the Church never jettisoned the Law and the idea of the Chosen People and the promises thereto, but took them over for herself, so did Muhammad who saw himself after the battle of Badr as a second Moses even as he had seen himself as Farqalit/Ahmad successor of Jesus.

In Sura 3:43 Jesus is made to say "I will confirm what is before you of the Law and will surely make lawful for you some of that which was prohibited from you." In Sura 6:147 Muhammad teaches that God says (through him): "To those who were Jews did we prohibit everything that hath a solid hoof; and of oxen and sheep did we prohibit to them the fat, save what the backs of both do bear, or the inward or what is mixed with bone; with that did we recompense them for their rebellion, for verily, we are true."

This last reminds one strongly of the Pauline argument about why the Law was given. Whereas Sura 3 is a Medinan Sura, it is surely all the more significant that though in Medina when Muhammad hoped to win the Jews to Islam, he here endorses the Christian attitude to the Mosaic Law. But then Sura 6 is Meccan, and it was already at this earlier stage that Muhammad could say

that special restrictive legislation was put in the Law because of the rebellion of the people (presumably in the Golden Calf incident, cf. Sura 2:51, 2:87, 7:146ff.). (In fact in Sura 7 [a Meccan Sura] v. 157, Muhammad sees himself as "setting down for them their burdens and the yokes" which were upon them.)

Very important is Sura 16 (Meccan) vv. 115-25 showing as it does that not only the restrictive food legislation and the Sabbath are criticized, but the people are encouraged to follow the faith of Abraham—v. 124.

In Syriac salvation is *purqana*. The Day of the battle of Badr was called in the Qur'an, the Day of Firqan. Firqan should not be rendered decision, but salvation. Now Jesus in the Qur'an is son of Miryam, Moses' sister. The word for Joshua in Syriac is the same as that for Jesus. Joshua is mentioned twice in the New Testament (Acts 7:44 and Heb. 4:18). In Sura 3:45 we read: "And when 'Isa perceived unbelief on their part (that of the Jews) he said, 'Who are my helpers for God's sake?' The Apostles replied: 'We are God's helpers; we have believed and we testify that we are Muslims.'" Also in Sura 61:14 "O ye who have believed be helpers of God: as 'Isa son of Maryam said to the Apostles, 'Who are my helpers for God's sake?' And the Apostles said, 'We are God's helpers. So part of the Banu Isra'il believed and part disbelieved. So we assisted those who believed, against their enemies, and they appeared as conquerors.'" This last reminds one of Moses quelling the worshippers of the Calf—Exodus 32:26 (an incident referred to several times in the Qur'an) or Joshua going to fight against Amalek—Exodus 17:7 "Choose us out men."

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, cf. Sura 2:215, we have the call to the Jihad or Holy War. But it seems that it is implicit here. If Jesus equals Joshua and he led his people to the promised land (after all the Christian Greeks did possess it), his successor Muhammad would do likewise. The Apostles were the helpers of God, the Ansaru'llah, i.e. the Nasara the Christians had been the helpers of God. The Muslims of Medina who helped Muhammad were to be his Ansar. Muhammad with their help would take his holy land Mecca and afterwards extend the Dar Islam. Even the Jihad had its origins in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

Sura 2:209 says: "Men were *one nation 'Umma wahida* once." Islam, conscious that it now is heir of the promises to Abraham, from the beginning felt that it was incumbent on all Muslims to



bring all men back to God and to be one through Him. One can see where they derived this example. There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, but all are one in Jesus Christ. Remembering the equation Jesus = Joshua, the Jihad was the answer.

Heraclius, the Eastern Roman Emperor a decade earlier than the Arab conquest of Palestine in 636, had driven the Persians out of Palestine and Mesopotamia. This weakened his and the Persian Empire and made it the easier prey to the Muslim armies.

Heraclius' massacre of the Jews in Jerusalem in 629 and his treatment of the Monophysites in Mesopotamia further prepared the way for the armies of Islam. The Jews welcomed the Arabs to Palestine, as did the Monophysites of Syria and Mesopotamia. Abu'l-Faraj (Bar Hebraeus) the Syrian historian could write after Jew and Christian have lived under Muslim rule for three-quarters of a millennium: "When our people complained to Heraclius, he gave no answer. Therefore the God of Vengeance delivered us out of the hands of Romans by means of the Arabs."<sup>24</sup> The Copts of Egypt had been alienated by the Patriarch Cyrus (Heraclius' nominee). The Persian governor of Hira in Iraq, a Christian called 'Abdu'l-Masih, agreed to a treaty with Khālid b. al-Walīd the Muslim leader to be of help to the Muslims against the Persians, provided their Churches were not destroyed.<sup>25</sup>

It was not just that Islam was an Arab religious movement, but because it provided the downtrodden Jews and Arab Christians with a means of hitting back at their Greek and Persian oppressors that such help was given. Not that Jews and Arab Christians could accept the claims of Islam, but on the whole they fared better under Islamic rule than under Greek Orthodox Emperor and Sassanid Shah; both Jew and Christian in Islam were to make their contribution to Islamic civilization and culture. The Syrians with their translations they had made into Syriac of Greek scientific, and medical and philosophical works, and which in the time of Caliph Ma'mun were to be translated by the Syrian priest Hunain b. Ishaq into Arabic, in culture just as in religion were the middlemen.

24. Cited by Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

25. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 173.

## THE ARABIC DERIVED VERB IN PHILOLOGICAL CATEGORIES

by

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The arrangement of the Derived Forms of the Arabic verb in terms of increase over the ground form has persisted for a very long time.<sup>1</sup> The old Arab grammarians no doubt found this system of classification a convenient one, representing as it did a simple catalogue of increase, each form a little larger than its predecessor. This principle of increase, named by the Arab grammarians *fī' l-maṣā'id fīh*, has been perpetuated in almost every grammar of Arabic in European languages, and to-day, centuries after its formulation, the student of Arabic is virtually certain to learn his verbal forms according to the ancient scheme.

The Arab grammarians were not, of course, Semitists or specialists in Near Eastern philology. They did not take into account—indeed they could not—the growth of the language from older forms, nor the relationship of it to other Semitic languages which had a similar history of growth and a like milieu. In a sense, the arrangement of the Derived Forms by increase was the only one possible for purposes of simplicity, albeit it created a system that had no merit other than its straightforward order. Thus Forms I to XI are listed in numerical order in almost every grammar and the beginner has to master that system, enduring the apparently inconsistent change of imperfect vowels from one group of forms to another. Forms II, III and IV have the same vowel rhythm in

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