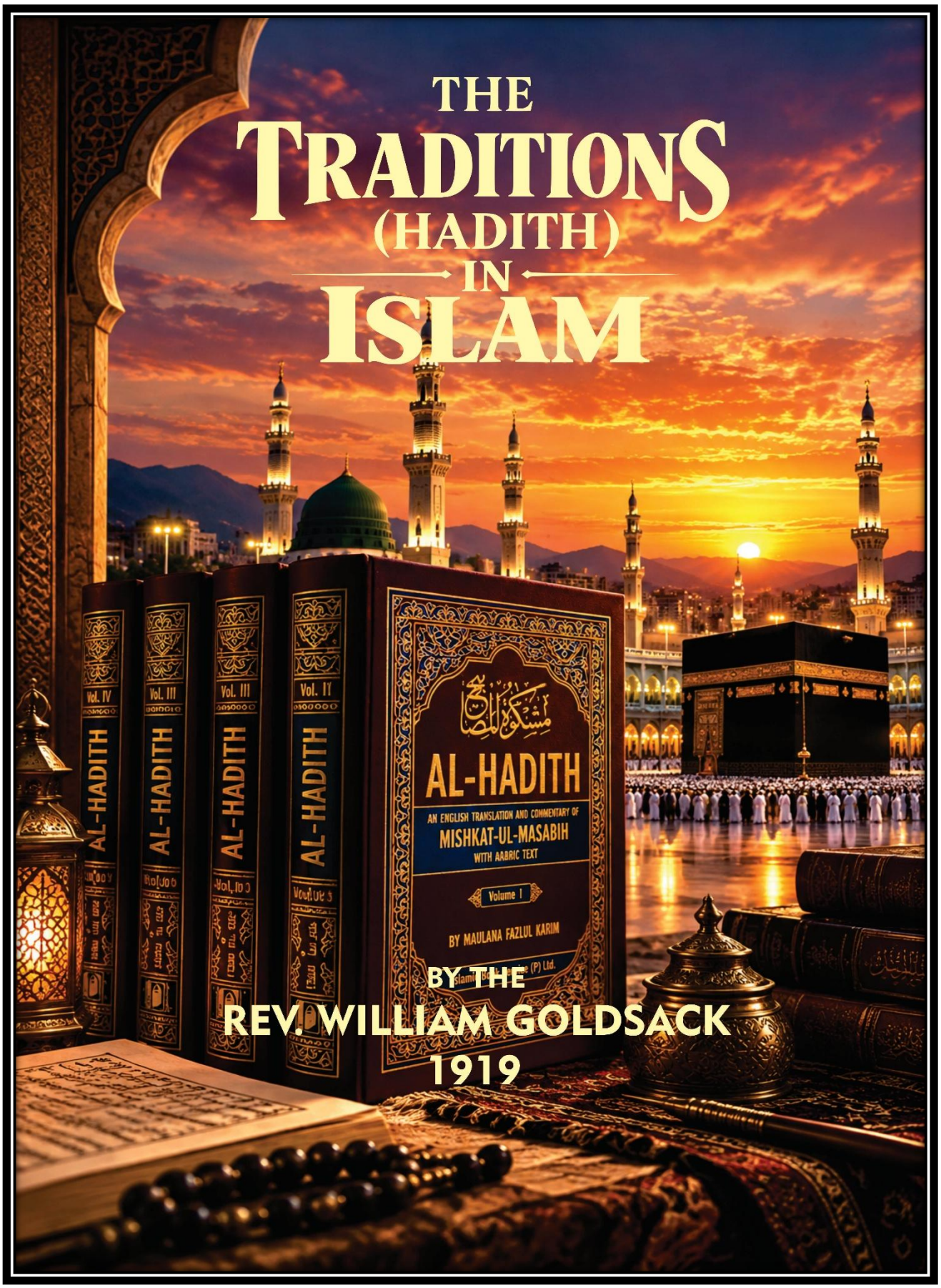

THE
TRADITIONS
(HADITH)
IN
ISLAM
AL-HADITH
AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY OF
MISHKAT-UL-MASABIH
WITH AABRIC TEXT
Volume 1
BY MAULANA FAZLUL KARIM
BY THE
REV. WILLIAM GOLDSACK
1919

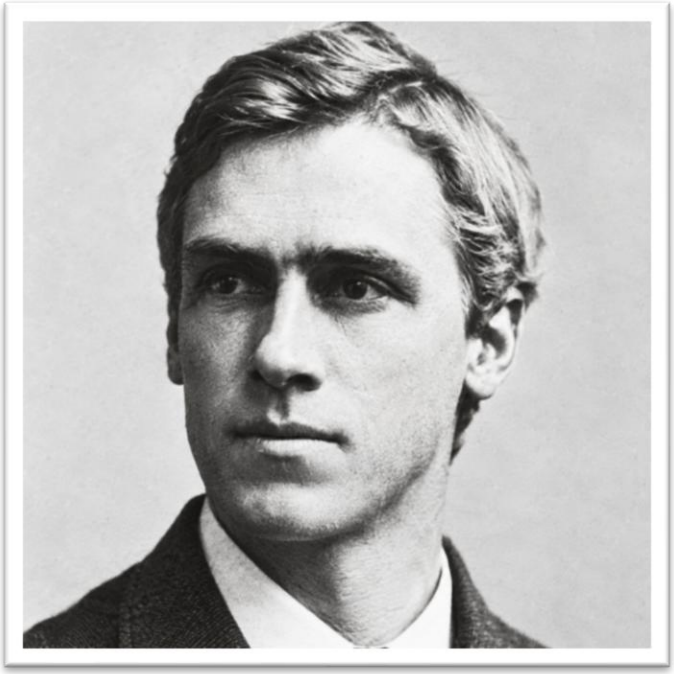
THE TRADITIONS IN ISLAM

An essay on the origin and value of Muhammadan Tradition

Qur'anic references were edited to reflect the verse numbers used in modern translations of the Qur'an.Also, some footnotes were edited to give additional support for the text.



KABBA IN MECCA



BY THE

REV. WILLIAM GOLDSACK

Australian Baptist Missionary and Apologist

1871–1957

Author of: *The Qu'ran In Islam, Christ In Islam,*
The Origins of the Qur'an, God In Islam, Muhammad In Islam. . .

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PREFACE

THE importance of the traditions in Islam can hardly be over-estimated. Muslim scholars define them as *wahi ghair matlu* (وحي غير متلو), or 'unrecited revelation', and in the theology of Islam they occupy a place second only to the Qur'an itself. Indeed they are described as the 'uninspired record of inspired sayings', and have, all down the ages, been used by Muslim divines both in the formation of canon law, and also in the exegesis of the Qur'an.

In popular Islam the traditions have usurped the place of the Qur'an itself, and for every Muhammadan who knows anything of the Qur'an, there are a thousand who are conversant with the stories of the traditions. Indeed, in countries in which Arabic is not the vernacular of the people, the Qur'an is an unknown book to all except a select few; whilst, on the other hand, books of traditions, such as the *Qisasu'l-Anbiya,* are read by the masses in vernacular translations almost wherever Muslims are to be found.

Yet there have always been Muslims who have questioned the authority of the traditions. For example, there died in the year 276 of the *Hijra* a Muslim scholar, named Al Imam Ibn Qutaybah ad-Dinawari, [1] who wrote a remarkable book, quoted frequently in the following pages, entitled *Kitab Tawil Mukhtalifu'l-Hadith*. [2] In the preface to his work the author describes it as written in refutation of the enemies of the people of the traditions and a reconciliation between the traditions which they accuse of contradiction and discrepancy; and an answer to the doubts which they cast on some of the obscure or seemingly ambiguous traditions.'

If thus early in the history of Islam opposition to the traditions had become so pronounced as to call forth a reply of nearly five hundred pages, one is less surprised to find a modern scholar, like Syed Amir Ali, describing the stories of those same traditions as golden dreams and beautiful and gorgeous legends.

Educated and thoughtful Muslims to-day ought no longer to be content to take on trust the extravagant claims made for the traditions. Intellectual honesty requires that they test for themselves this great mass of literature, which has come down to them from the second and third centuries of the Muslim era. If the following pages help any such to a clearer appreciation of moral values, and lead them to view the traditions in a truer historical perspective, the author's labours will not have been in vain.

There are few phases of Islam about which more general ignorance prevails amongst English-speaking people than the traditions. Books, in the English language, dealing with the Qur'an, are not rare; but, so far as the author is aware, no

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[1] Ibn Qutaybah ad-Dinawari.

[2] Ta'wil Mukhtalif al-Hadith (The Interpretation of Conflicting Narrations).

critical study of the traditions of Islam has yet appeared in English. The late Sir William Muir, it is true, has dealt with the subject in a popular way in the valuable introduction to his *Life of Mahomet*; and the same writer has given us, in his book *The Mohammedan Controversy,* an admirable review of Sprenger's famous essay on tradition; but, so far, nothing has been produced in English corresponding with Goldziher's epoch-making essay on the traditions in his *Mohammedanische Studien* (vol. ii) in German.

The following essay is, at best, an introduction to the study of a most important and fascinating subject; and it is to be earnestly hoped that some capable scholar will yet do for English students of Islam what Goldziher has done for German.

In compiling the following pages, the writer has labored under somewhat severe limitations. In the first place, he had access neither to Goldziher's famous study of the traditions, nor to Sprenger's celebrated essay on the same: yet these two scholars have undoubtedly given us the best analysis of the traditions which has yet appeared in any European language. In the second place, the writer has endeavored, all through, to confine himself to the briefest possible limits consistent with perspicuity. The book was written, primarily, for educated and intelligent Muslims, and this object is reflected, not only in the size, but in the style of the book. Over twenty years of close personal intercourse with Muslims in India has taught the writer the value and necessity of giving chapter and verse for every statement made in a book which is, necessarily, more or less of a controversial character. Hence the following pages are burdened with a much larger number of original quotations than would have been the case had he been writing exclusively, or even primarily, for western readers. The same reason has been operated to keep these quotations in the body of the book, instead of placing them in footnotes at the bottom of the page.

For the convenience of students generally, and of educated Muslims in particular, a complete list of the works made use of in the preparation of this volume is given in an appendix. The writer has, all through, made large use of the famous *Mishkatu'l Masabih* which is, to-day perhaps, the most popular collection of traditions in India. Generally speaking, the quotations from that book are made from Matthew's translation.

William Goldsack
Jessore, Bengal
1918

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN OF TRADITION

ACCORDING to Muhammadan writers, there are four foundations upon which the doctrines of Islam are based. These are the Qur'an, the traditions, *ijma'*, [1] or the unanimous consent of Muslim theologians, and *qiyas*, [2] or the analogical reasoning of the learned with regard to the teaching of the Qur'an and the traditions. The first two foundations are called the roots, and the latter, as being derived from and dependent upon them, the branches. For all practical purposes, therefore, Islam may be said to be founded on the alleged revelation given by God to Muhammad in the Qur'an and the traditions. Muslim theologians, however, make a distinction between the revelation of the Qur'an and that of the traditions. By them the former is said to be *wahi matlu* (وَحِى مَتْلُو), or 'recited revelation', whilst the traditions are described as *wahi ghair matlu* (وَحِى غَيْر مَتْلُو), or 'unrecited revelation'. In the first case, the Qur'an is said to have been recited to the prophet, generally by the angel Gabriel, and by him, in turn, repeated, word for word, to his followers. The traditions, on the other hand, are the reputed oral records of the sayings and actions of Muhammad as handed down by his early followers and ultimately committed to writing by later Muslims. Thus it is seen that the Qur'an is, according to Muslims, a purely objective revelation, whereas in the traditions, on the other hand, the inspiration is subjective only. It should be remarked here, however, that all traditions do not deal with the sayings or doings of Muhammad. There are not a few traditions which have for their subject-matter the sayings or doings of the 'companions', or the immediate 'successors' of Muhammad. Thus, a distinction is made by Muslim theologians between a *marfu'* [3] tradition, which has to do with the prophet himself, and a *mawquf* [4] tradition which refers only to the sayings or doings of his companions'. There is also *maqtu* [5] tradition, which does not go back farther than the first generation after Muhammad, in other words, which deals with the sayings or doings of the *tabi'un',* [6] or followers of the companions'.

The word usually employed by Muslim writers to denote the traditions is *hadith* (plural, *ahadith*). This word originally meant conversation, record or narrative, and is now technically used to indicate either a single tradition, or a whole

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[1] Ijma'

[2] Qiyas

[3] Marfu.

[4] Mawquf.

[5] Maqtu.

[6] Tabi'un.

collection of traditions. Another term frequently used for Islamic tradition is *sunna*. This word signifies a custom, habit or usage of the prophet Muhammad; and the doctrine of the inspiration of the traditions is based upon the Muslim belief that Muhammad, in all he said and did, was supernaturally guided, so that his words are to be regarded as the very words of God. Thus the theologians deduce the doctrine that God has given commands and prohibitions to men, not only by the Qur'an, but also by the mouth of the apostle Muhammad. This doctrine finds its basis in the reputed sayings of Muhammad, 'Have I not been given the Qur'an, and with it that which is like it . . . verily what the apostle of God hath made unlawful is like what God hath made unlawful'. [1] 'I have left you two things, and you will not stray so long as you hold them fast. The one is the word of God, and the other is the *sunna* of his prophet.' It is also related that Muhammad used to say, 'Science (i.e. religious knowledge) consists of three things: well-ordered verse, well-observed *sunna* and just law.'

In the introduction to the *Mishkatu'l Masabih,* a very celebrated collection of traditions, the word *hadith* is defined as being applied to the record of 'the words of the prophet, and his actions, and what he permitted'. The last mentioned is explained as being something said or done by others in the prophet's presence, which he neither denied nor forbade. Muhammad himself is reported to have encouraged his followers to preserve his words; and there is a tradition to that effect that he once said, بلغوا عني ولو آية 'Transmit from me, even if it be but one verse.' He is also reported to have said, 'May God bless him who hears my Words, and keeps them, and understands them and transmits them'. On another occasion, on being asked who his successors be, he replied, 'Those who report my sayings, and instruct men in the same.' [2] Yet there is evidence that the prophet forbade his followers to write down his various utterances; and he is reported as saying لَا تَكْتُبُوا عَنِّي، وَمَنْ كَتَبَ عَنِّي غَيْرَ الْقُرْآنِ فَلْيَمْحُهُ، وَحَدِّثُوا عَنِّي وَلَا حَرَجَ، وَمَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَلْيَتَبَوَّأْ مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ۔ 'Do not write down (anything) from me; and whoever writes down (anything) from me, except the Qur'an, let him erase it. But narrate from me, for that is not forbidden; and whoever intentionally relates about me falsely, let him find his resting place in the fire'. [3] The same authority is responsible for the statement that Muhammad forbade his followers committing his ordinary utterances to writing, out of fear that they would be confused with the words of the Qur'an, many of which were written down. This certainly suggests that the prophet, at least, intended to convey the idea that there was an essential difference between his own words and the words of the Qur'an. Whatever be the reason, the

[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu'l-Iman

[2] Quoted in Klein's The Religion of Islam, p. 25.

[3] Tujiyahu'n-nazar ila usulu'l-athar. p. 5.

evidence is full and clear that, at first, the traditions depended for their transmission upon the precarious memories of men, and were, for many years, handed down orally from one generation to the next.

Al-Qastallani, [1] the famous commentator of Al-Bukhari, states very clearly that لَمْ يَكُنِ الصَّحَابَةُ وَلَا التَّابِعُونَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْأَحَادِيثَ، إِنَّمَا كَانُوا يُؤَدُّونَهَا لَفْظًا وَيَأْخُذُونَهَا حِفْظًا 'neither the companions (of Muhammad) nor the immediate successors (of the companions) used to write down the traditions. They only passed them on by rote and preserved them by memory.' [2]

A tradition is technically divided by Muslim theologians into two parts. There is, first, the *isnad,* [3] the support or authority on which the tradition rests. This consists of the names of the succession of reporters by whom the particular tradition was handed down. This *isnad,* to be complete, must begin with the name of the original person who actually heard the words spoken by Muhammad, and must continue in an unbroken chain up to the name of the last reporter from whom the written record was made —when, of course, oral repetition automatically ceased. The second part of tradition consists of the actual text of what Muhammad is reported to have said or done. This is called the *matn* (مَتَن) [4] or text. We now give below two specimens of traditions: one reporting an actual saying of Muhammad; the other relating his *sunna* or custom during a certain religious observance. 'Abu Kuraib said to us that Ibrahim ibn Yusuf ibn Abi Ishaq said to us from his father from Abu Ishaq from Tulata ibn Musarif that, he said, I have heard from Abdu'r-Rahman ibn Ausajah that he said, I have heard from Bara ibn 'Azib that he said, I have heard that the prophet said, "Whoever shall give in charity a milch cow, or silver, or a leathern bottle of water, it shall be equal to the freeing of a slave"' [5] The second is as follows: 'Walid bin Muslim said that Al Awzai said to us from Qatada that he wrote to him to inform him from Anas, the son of Malik, that he said to him, "I prayed behind the prophet and Abu Bakr and 'Umar and 'Uthman, and they began (repeating Surat'l al-Fatihah) with the words, "Praise be to God the Lord of the worlds'; and they did not repeat the words, 'In the name of God the most merciful' either at the beginning of the recital or at the end of it."' [6]

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[1] Al-Qastallani.

[2] Sharah Sahih al-Imam al-Bukhari, vol. 1, p. 3. Az-Zarqani says the same on p. 10 of his Commentary on the Muwatta.

[3] Isnad and Hadith Studies.

[4] Matn.

[5] Quoted in Hughes' Dictionary of Islam, p. 640.

[6] Tujiyahu'n-nasar ila upilosTathar, p. 339.

It would appear therefore, from what has been written above, that Muhammad encouraged his followers to preserve in their memories and hand down to their successors the teaching which he gave them from time to time. But there were other reasons for the practice. Even among the heathen Arabs it was considered a virtue to follow the *sunna* or custom of one's forefathers. [1] It is obvious, however, that the Muslims could no longer follow the customs and usages of their heathen ancestors. What could he more natural, therefore, than that they should adopt the *sunna* of their prophet and make his divinely guided life, in all its details, their model and pattern. This, as a matter of fact, they did; and so his every word and act became for them a divine rule of faith and practice. Such being the case, it is not difficult to understand the eagerness with which, after Muhammad's death, his every word and action were recalled. Those who had been his most intimate companions were never tired of repeating, and, it must be added, of amplifying, his words. They loved to dwell in the past, and to cheer and comfort each other with recitals of the words and deeds of the wonderful man who had united the jarring, warring tribes of the Arabian desert into one great nation, embracing some of the fairest lands of the East. Indeed, we are told that it was an early custom of the Muhammadans when meeting one another, for one to ask for news (*hadith*) and for the other to relate a saying or anecdote of the prophet. This custom increased as time went by, until, when a generation arose which had not known the prophet, thousands of enthusiastic converts hung upon the lips of the 'companions', as Muhammad's contemporary followers came to be called, and drank in the stories of how he spoke and ate and lived. No detail was too trivial, no story too commonplace for the men, who looked with envy and pride upon those who had been privileged to converse with the prophet and listen to his teaching. The desire to imitate Muhammad was carried to almost idolatrous lengths, so that a generation of men arose who refused to do anything which he had not done, or to eat anything which he had not eaten, even although its lawfulness was unquestioned. Thus it is related that the Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal would not eat watermelons, although he knew that the prophet ate them, because he could not learn whether he ate them with or without the rind, or whether he broke, bit, or cut them! The same man is said to have forbidden a woman to spin by the light of torches passing in the streets by night, which were not her own property, because the prophet had not mentioned whether it was lawful to do so, and was not known to have ever

[1] Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol.ii, p. 189.

availed himself of a light belonging to another person without asking that person's permission. [1]

Such men looked with superstitious reverence upon all who had known the prophet; and they listened to stories of him as of one endowed with supernatural power and surrounded with a halo of supernatural glory. 'Is it possible, father 'Abdullah, that thou hast been with Muhammad?' was the question addressed by a pious Muslim to Hodzeifa in the mosque of Cufa. 'Didst thou really see the prophet, and wert thou on terms of familiar intercourse with him?' 'Son of my uncle, it is indeed as thou sayest.' 'And how wert thou want to behave towards the prophet?' 'Verily we used to labor hard to please him.' 'Well, by the Lord,' exclaimed the ardent listener, 'If I had but been alive in his time, I would not have allowed him to put his blessed foot upon the earth, but would have borne him on my shoulders wheresoever he listed.' [2]

As the years passed by, and the founder of Islam became gradually farther removed from those who embraced the faith, so his portrait gradually came to assume more and more a semi-divine character. Fancy ran riot, faith degenerated into superstitious credulity, and, acting on as Shafi'i's maxim that, 'In the exaltation of Muhammad to exaggerate is lawful,' traditions in tens of thousands began to be manufactured for the glorification of the prophet. It would seem that Muhammad himself astutely suspected the danger of such exaggeration, for he is reported as warning his disciples in these words ـ إِيَّاكُمْ وَالظَّنَّ، فَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ أَكْذَبُ الْحَدِيثِ 'Beware of imagination, for imagination is the falsest tradition.' [3]

The oral form in which these so-called traditions were handed down gave full opportunity for the manufacture of spurious traditions, and before the era of written collections of traditions arrived, the historic records of the prophet's life had come to be almost obliterated by the mass of utterly legendary material which came into existence and was repeated with ever-increasing exaggeration. Proof of these charges will be given in the next chapter; it must suffice here to remind the reader that the great Bukhari, who died in the year 256 of the Muslim era, retained as trustworthy only some 7,275 traditions out of the 600,000 which he had, with infinite pains, collected from all over the Muslim world! One of the greatest of Western students of Islam thus describes the process, 'Familiar intercourse with heavenly

[1] Edward W. Lane, The Manners & Customs of the Modern Egyptians, p 281.

[2] Quoted in William Muir's, Life of Mahomet, Introduction p. xxviii.

[3] Zubdatu'l-Bukhari, p. 238

messengers, thus countenanced by the prophet, was implicitly believed by his followers, and led them, even during his lifetime, to regard him with superstitious awe. On a subject so impalpable to sense, and so congenial with imagination, it may be fairly assumed that reason had little share in controlling the fertile productions of fancy; that the conclusions of his susceptible and credulous followers far exceeded the premises granted by Mahomet; that even simple facts were construed by excited faith as pregnant with supernatural power and unearthly companionship; and that, after the object of their veneration had passed from their sight, fond devotion perpetuated and enhanced the fascinating legends. If the prophet gazed into the heavens or looked wistfully to the right hand or to the left, it was Gabriel with whom he was holding mysterious converse. Passing gusts raised a cloud from the sandy track; the pious believer exulted in the conviction that it was the dust of the Archangel with his mounted squadrons scouring the plain as they went before them to shake the foundations of the doomed fortress. On the field of Bedr, three stormy blasts swept over the marshalled army; again, it was Gabriel with a thousand horses flying to the succor of Mahomet, while Michael and Seraphil, each with a like angelic troop, wheeled to the right and to the left of the Moslem front. Nay, the very dress and martial uniform of these helmed angels are detailed by the earliest and most trustworthy biographers with as much *naiveté* as if they had been veritable warriors of flesh and blood; while the heads of the enemy were seen to drop off before the Moslem swords had ever touched them, because the unseen scimitars did the work more swiftly than the grosser steel of Medina! [1]

It is worth noting that most of the ‘companions’ were born later than Muhammad and could have known little or nothing of his birth and early childhood; and yet there is no period in the prophet’s life which reveals more clearly the unchecked rovings of a vivid imagination, as seen in the fabulous stories concerning that period of his life, than the period of his birth. These ‘inventions of a playful fantasy’ are clearly the creations of a later age foisted upon the ‘companions’ in order to secure for them the credentials necessary for their acceptance. The same remark applies to the large mass of tradition which professes to relate the miracles of Muhammad. There is a well-known saying of the prophet to the effect that whatever contradicts the Qur’an is not true. [2] Judged by this standard, thousands of traditions purporting to relate the miracles of Muhammad must he totally rejected as spurious and unhistorical; for the testimony of the Qur’an is clear that Muhammad worked no miracle. Amongst a wealth of passages, the following must suffice here:

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[1] William Muir's, Life of Mahomet, Introduction, p. lii

[2] The tradition is quoted in full on p. 31.

وَأَقْسَمُواْ بِاللّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِن جَاءتْهُمْ آيَةٌ لَّيُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا الآيَاتُ عِندَ اللّهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّهَا إِذَا جَاءتْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ.

'With their most solemn oath have they sworn by God that if a sign (miracle) come unto them they will certainly believe it. Say (O Muhammad), Signs are in the power of God alone, and he teacheth you not thereby, only because when they were wrought ye did not believe.' [1]

وَقَالُوا لَوْلاَ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّمَا الآيَاتُ عِندَ اللّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ أَنَّا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ.

'And, they say, "Unless a sign be sent down to him from his Lord—" say, Signs are in the power of God alone, and I am only a plainspoken warner. Is it not enough for them that we have sent down to thee the book to be recited to them?' [2] This testimony of the Qur'an is so clear that Syed Amir Ali, one of the greatest scholars that Indian Muhammadanism has produced, says candidly in his *Life of Mohammed* that, 'they asked for miracles. Remark his reply, "God has not sent me to you to work wonders, He has sent me to preach to you" . . . Disclaiming every power of wonderworking, Mohammed rests the truth of his divine commission entirely upon his teachings.' [3]

We shall have occasion, in a later chapter, to notice the different classes into which Muslim scholars of a later age divided the traditions. Amongst these is a class of tradition known as the *hadithu'l-mutawatir*. This term is applied to an *undoubted* tradition which has been handed down by many distinct chains of narrators, or rather by a chain of unanimous generations, and which has, therefore, always been accepted as genuine and authentic. The number of such traditions is acknowledged by Muslim scholars to be exceedingly small. Now it is a most significant fact that not a single tradition relating to an alleged miracle of Muhammad is found in this class. [4]

If traditions were invented in order to glorify the prophet Muhammad, no less surely were they invented in order to apologize for the many blemishes in his character. Judged by normal standards, there are many things in the life and character of the founder of Islam which will not bear investigation. This is especially true of his dealings with women; and his later apologists have not been slow to set up a

[1] Qur'an al-An'am 6:109.

[2] Qur'al-Ankabut, verse 50 and 51.

[3] Syed Amir Ali, Life of Mohammed, p. 49.

[4] See Imadu'd-Din's Tawarikh Muhammadi, p, 12.

special standard in order to meet this obvious difficulty. These attempted excuses, after the event, bear upon them the mark of barefaced forgery, and themselves constitute the strongest indictment of the prophet's character. Thus a late biography of the prophet, the *Siratu'l-Halabiyya*,[1] has a whole section devoted to what it terms the 'special privileges of the prophet of God'. What these are like may be gathered from the following illustration:

أَنَّهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا رَغِبَ فِي امْرَأَةٍ خَلِيَّةٍ، كَانَ لَهُ أَنْ يَدْخُلَ بِهَا مِنْ غَيْرِ لَفْظِ نِكَاحٍ أَوْ هِبَةٍ، وَمِنْ غَيْرِ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا شُهُودٍ، كَمَا وَقَعَ لَهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي زَيْنَبَ بِنْتِ جَحْشٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا كَمَا تَقَدَّمَ، وَمِنْ غَيْرِ رِضَاهَا، وَأَنَّهُ إِذَا رَغِبَ فِي امْرَأَةٍ مُتَزَوِّجَةٍ، يَجِبُ عَلَى زَوْجِهَا أَنْ يُطَلِّقَهَا لَهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

'When the prophet of God longed for any unattached woman, it was his privilege to go in to her without the word "marriage" or "gift " or without any marriage-agent or witnesses, as happened to him in the case of Zainab bint Jahsh, as has been said before, and without her consent. And if he longed for any married woman, then it became incumbent upon her husband to divorce her for the prophet.' [2]

Another special privilege of the prophet, mentioned in the same book, was his right to choose any female prisoner from the spoils of victory before the regular division was made!

In a similar manner it was felt by later Muslims that some apology was needed for the prophet's ruthless plundering and raiding, which are detailed at such length by all his biographers. Hence a tradition was concocted in which it was asserted that this, too, was a special privilege of the founder of Islam. It is found in the celebrated *Mishkatu'l Masabih*, and runs as follows:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَضَّلَنِي عَلَى الْأَنْبِيَاءِ أَوْ قَالَ أُمَّتِي عَلَى الْأُمَمِ وَأَحَلَّ لِيَ الْغَنَائِمَ.

'Verily God has given me precedence over the prophets.' Or he said (according to another tradition), 'He has given my followers precedence over other nations by the fact that he has made plunder lawful for us.' [3]

Besides the reasons mentioned above, there are other causes which were largely responsible for the manufacture of false traditions. Amongst these may be mentioned the new conditions arising out of the wide spread of Islam. With the conquest of Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, countries containing much higher civilization than the people of Arabia had ever seen or imagined, new ideas and institutions borrowed from Christians and other conquered races soon made their influence felt. Social

[1] Sirat al-Halbiya.

[2] As Siratu'l-Halabiyya, vol. iii. p. 336.

[3] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu'l-Jihad

customs, religious movements, and political relationships with other peoples all called for legislative action; and new and unforeseen circumstances were constantly arising for which the Qur'an made no provision. 'The Arabs, a simple and unsophisticated race, found in the Coran ample provision for the regulation of their affairs: religious, social, and political. But the aspect of Islam soon underwent a mighty change. Scarcely was the prophet buried, when his followers issued forth from their barren peninsula resolved to impose the faith of Islam upon all the nations of the earth. Within a century they had, as a first step, conquered every land that intervenes from the banks of the Oxus to the farthest shores of Northern Africa, and enrolled the great majority of their peoples under the standard of the Coran. This vast empire differed widely from the Arabia of Mahomet's time; and that which sufficed for the patriarchal simplicity of the early Arabs was found altogether inadequate for the multiplying wants of their descendants. Crowded cities, like Cufa, Cairo, and Damascus, required elaborate laws for the guidance of their courts of justice; widening political relations demanded a system of international equity; the speculations of a people before whom literature was throwing open her arena, and the controversies of eager factions on nice points of doctrine, were impatient of the narrow limits which confined them; all called loudly for the enlargement of the scanty and naked dogmas of the revelation, and for the development of its rudimental code of ethics.' [1] Such was the problem. It was solved by recourse to the traditions. Where these did not exist, they were created, and henceforth all recitals regarding the life of the prophet acquired a new and unlooked value. Henceforth his sayings and practice were to supplement the Qur'an, and provide a magic key to open every lock. Thus was met the demand for a fuller legal code and a more comprehensive social legislation. Judgments professing to proceed from Muhammad, or to be founded on principles enunciated by him, were gradually framed and promulgated, until his reputed utterances became invested with the force of law as well as the authority of inspiration. Thus by the aid of analogy and fictitious traditions, an exhaustive treasury of precedents was established for every possible contingency.

In any estimate of the causes leading up to the origin of the traditions the political factor must be given a prominent place. For twenty-five years after the death of Muhammad Islam remained, under the Khalifas Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman, an undivided empire. With the assassination of the latter, however, the political unity of Islam was rent in sunder, and civil war deluged the kingdom in Muslim blood. With the death of 'Ali four and a half years later, the Umayyad dynasty was firmly established at Damascus, and thenceforth, until the 'Abbasides came into power in Iraq a hundred years later, history records a succession of rebellions, murders, and civil wars in which the rival parties freely anathematized each other, and just as

[1] William Muir, Life of Mahomet, Introduction, p. xxix.

freely based their mutual denunciations upon the alleged authority of the prophet. It is scarcely surprising, under such conditions, to find tradition being called in to the help of the various parties. A striking illustration of this is mentioned by Gairdner in his *Mohammedan Tradition and Gospel Record.* He writes as follows: 'Arabia being very anti-Umayyad, while Jerusalem was a chief center of their power, the Umayyad Sultans sought to encourage the idea that a pilgrimage to Jerusalem was as meritorious, or even more meritorious, than one to the haramain (i.e. Mecca and Medina). And a *hadith* was produced in which Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem were mentioned as the three places of pilgrimage, with the following startling appendix: "And one prayer in Jerusalem is better than a thousand prayers in other places." Again, when the proud Umayyad Sultans led the Friday prayers, the old custom whereby the leader delivered the address standing, and after the prayer, became distasteful for obvious reasons. The Moslem historians freely admit that the Umayyads took in hand the alteration of the custom. The unfailing remedy — a *hadith* — was to hand, and this time it was another pious official theologian, Raja bin Hajwa, who was impressed into the service; and a *hadith* was produced which stated that 'Uthman had delivered the second of the two khutbas (address) sitting.' [1]

On the other hand, we find 'Ayesha, the favorite wife of the prophet, producing traditions in order to blacken the character of the Umayyads as a race of profligate usurpers! Thus she is reported to have addressed Merwan in these words:

سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ لِأَبِيكَ وَجَدِّكَ أَبِي الْعَاصِ بْنِ أُمَيَّةَ: إِنَّهُمُ الشَّجَرَةُ الْمَلْعُونَةُ فِي الْقُرْآنِ.

'I heard the apostle of God say to thy father and grandfather, i.e. to Al-'As'bin Umayya, that they were the accursed tree (mentioned) in the Qur'an.' [2] Another tradition of the same nature runs as follows:

عَنْ جُبَيْرِ بْنِ مُطْعِمٍ، قَالَ: كُنَّا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَمَرَّ الْحَكَمُ بْنُ الْعَاصِ، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «وَيْلٌ لِأُمَّتِي مِمَّا فِي صُلْبِ هَذَا

'It is related from Jabir (bin) Mat'am that we were with the apostle of God when Hakim bin passed by. Then the apostle of God said, Woe to my followers who are in the loins of this (man).' [3] Still another tradition, obviously the offspring of political faction, runs as follows:

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[1] Gairdner: Mohammedan Tradition and Gospel Record, p. 10.

[2] As Siratu'l-Halabiyya, vol. i. p. 346.

[3] As Siratu'l-Halabiyya, vol. i. p. 346.

عَنْ حُمْرَانَ بْنِ جَابِرٍ الْجُعْفِيِّ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: «وَيْلٌ لِبَنِي أُمَيَّةَ» ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ.

'It is related from Hamran bin Jabir al-Ja'fi that he said, I heard the apostle of God say three times, "Woe to the Bani Umayya"! [1]

In the same way, traditions were put into the mouth of Muhammad which tended to almost deify 'Ali, the prophet's son-in-law, and to secure for his descendants the exclusive right to the Khalifate.

The manufacture of spurious traditions, however, was by no means confined to political parties. The great theological debates, which, after the death of the prophet, shook Islam to its foundations, were prolific in the production of false traditions. Each party supported its own particular dogma by pretended utterances of the prophet, and Mu'tazilahs, Shiahs, Kharijites and a host of other sects freely used the name of the prophet to gain acceptance for their various shibboleths. Thus, for example, we are told in the introduction to the celebrated *Mishkatu'l Masabih* that the Kharajites were not to be trusted in their use and quotation of tradition; and the reader is warned against accepting such traditions as they bring forward, for, the writer continues:

وَلَا شَكَّ أَنَّ أَخْذَ الْحَدِيثِ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْفِرَقِ يَكُونُ بَعْدَ التَّحَرِّي وَالِاسْتِصْوَابِ وَمَعَ ذَلِكَ الِاحْتِيَاطِ فِي عَدَمِ الْأَخْذِ لِأَنَّهُ قَدْ ثَبَتَ أَنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ الْفِرَقَ كَانُوا يَضَعُونَ الْأَحَادِيثَ لِتَرْوِيجِ مَذَاهِبِهِمْ.

'There is no doubt that the accepting of traditions from these sects can only be done after due selection and approval, and notwithstanding that, the watching against them should take the form of non-acceptance, because it has been proved that these sects used to forge traditions for the spread of their particular parties.' [2] Often these good people contrived to produce the traditions they needed in order to substantiate their particular theological position, and there is an unusually candid admission of this fact recorded for our edification. It needs no comment, and runs as follows:

إِذَا هَوِينَا أَمْرًا صَيَّرْنَاهُ حَدِيثًا

'If we want anything, we put it into circulation as a tradition.'

Another version is:

إِذَا رَأَيْنَا رَأْيًا جَعَلْنَاهُ حَدِيثًا

[1] Ibid.

[2] Introduction to Mishkatu'l Masabih, p. 5.

'If we entertain a (legal) opinion, we make it into a tradition.' [1]

It is the existence of contradictory traditions which is largely responsible for the great diversity which exists up to the present day in the religious practices of the various sects. An instructive illustration of this is to be found in the *Mishkat* where there is a well-attested tradition from Wail bin Hujr to the effect that:

رَأَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا سَجَدَ وَضَعَ رُكْبَتَيْهِ قَبْلَ يَدَيْهِ، وَإِذَا نَهَضَ رَفَعَ يَدَيْهِ قَبْلَ رُكْبَتَيْهِ.

'I saw the prophet when he bowed down, he placed his two knees before his hands (i.e. he knelt first before placing his two hands to the ground). And when he rose up from prostration, he raised his hands before his knees.' On the other hand, there is another tradition, equally well-attested, that

قَالَ أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «إِذَا سَجَدَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلَا يَبْرُكْ كَمَا يَبْرُكُ الْبَعِيرُ، وَلْيَضَعْ يَدَيْهِ قَبْلَ رُكْبَتَيْهِ.

"Abu Hurairah said, the apostle of God said, When any one of you prostrates himself, then let him not sit down as a camel sits down, but let him place his hands before his knees (i.e. he should place his hands on the ground in front of him)." [2] The result of these contradictory traditions is that Abu Hanifa, Shafi'i and Ahmad bin Hanbal follow the tradition of Wail, and kneel before touching the ground with their hands, whereas Malik and Awz'u adhere to the tradition of Abu Hurairah and put their hands on the ground before their knees.

It is interesting to note here that the author of the *Hidayah,* a work in four volumes, written in reply to the *Izharu'l-Haq,* has given a list of over ninety contradictory traditions relating to various religious duties of Islam. [3]

Another set of traditions, with a theological bias, which are obviously the products of a later age, are those in which sects, which came into existence after the death of Muhammad, are represented as being mentioned by him. Thus, for example, there is a tradition foisted on to Ibn 'Abbas to the effect that he said,

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: صِنْفَانِ مِنْ أُمَّتِي لَيْسَ لَهُمَا فِي الإِسْلاَمِ نَصِيبٌ: الْمُرْجِئَةُ وَالْقَدَرِيَّةُ.

'The apostle of God said, Two sects of my followers will have no part in Islam; the Murjiyahs and the Qadariyahs.' [4]

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[1] 'Abdulla bin Lahi'a, quoted in Gairdner's Mohammedan Tradition and Gospel Record, p. 12.

[2] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu's-Sujud.

[3] Al Hidayah, vol. ii, pp. 308-319.

[4] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu'l-Iman.

To such an extent was the manufacture of spurious traditions carried on for dogmatic and controversial purposes, that it has been shrewdly remarked that these themselves furnish a not unreliable history of the later controversies of Islam. This great mass of literature teems with contradictions, which stand to the present day in all the great collections, such as those of Bukhari, Muslim and others. Referring to this subject in his well-known *Life of Mahomet*, Sir William Muir tells us, by way of illustration, that 'A score of persons affirm that Mahomet dyed his hair. They mention the substance used. Some not only maintain that they were eye-witnesses of it during the prophet's life, but after his death produced relics of hair on which the dye was visible. A score of others, possessing equally good means of information, assert that he never dyed his hair, and that, moreover, he had no need to do so, as his grey hairs were so few that they might have been counted.' [1]

Yet another factor in the manufacture of traditions was the new spirit produced by Muslim contact with Christian nations, resulting in a growing knowledge of the historic Christ. With a fuller knowledge of the dignity and majesty of the Messiah, as depicted in the Gospels, it became imperative to attribute to Muhammad a dignity worthy of the last and greatest prophet, and so he came to be enveloped in a halo of almost supernatural glory. Christ worked miracles; so must Muhammad. The son of Mary is a great Intercessor at the throne of grace, and so, in spite of Qur'anic verses to the contrary, Muhammad is depicted as the greatest intercessor. Indeed, all the chief prophets in turn, at the last day, will decline the great commission and will plead unworthiness, and then Muhammad will stand forth as the one hope for sinful men. So, again, the heavenly glory which accompanied the annunciation of the birth of Christ to the shepherds of Bethlehem is eclipsed by a supernatural light which, it is alleged, attended the birth of Muhammad, and lighted up the whole land 'from Basra to Sham'. The doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ is matched by the blasphemous teaching regarding the 'Light of Muhammad': his original essence, which was existent before all created things, and for whose sake God is declared to have created the world. The reader will gain some idea of the extravagance of language in which later writers indulged from the following quotation from the *Maulud Sharif* of Ghulam Imam Shadid. 'Ye that are lovers of the face of Mohammed, and ye that be enamoured with the curls of Ahmad, know and be well aware that the light of Mohammed is the origin of all existing things, and the essence of everything that hath a being. Because that when it pleased the great Creator to manifest His glory, He first of all created the light of Mohammed from the light of His own unity, and from the light of Mohammed produced every existent thing. Now this glorious personage was made the last of the prophets, solely on this account, that as the rising sun chaseth away the splendours of moon and stars, so doth the

[1] MUIR: Life of Mahomet, Introduction, p. lix.

glory of the religion of Muhammad supersede all other religions; so that if that pre-existent light had displayed its brilliancy from the first, then would all other prophets have shrunk into obscurity and been shorn of their apostolic dignity.' [1] The quotation is from a modern work, but its extravagant statements find their bases in reputed traditions of the prophet himself. Thus the opening chapter of the *Qisasu'l-Anbiya* relates a story, with, of course, its long chain of narrators,. as to certain Muslims who were sitting with Muhammad, when one of them, Jabir bin 'Abdallah by name, asked a question as to what was the first thing God created. In reply Muhammad is represented as saying that 'The first thing God created was my light'; and then follows an extraordinary story of how this light wandered for a thousand years, 'one day of which equalled a thousand years on earth' engaged in the praises of God! [2]

The subject of Muhammadan attempts to eclipse the Gospel records by similar or greater stories concerning Muhammad has been absolutely exhausted by S. W. Koelle in the second part of his *Mohammad and Mohammadanism*. Koelle there describes the picture of Muhammad in tradition as 'a repulsive and truly blasphemous caricature of the divine beauty of the Son of Man', and he goes on to show how almost every detail of the Gospel record of the life of Christ has produced a Muslim imitation.

In the traditions the miracles of Jesus are topped by a whole series of puerile prodigies. Water flows from between Muhammad's fingers or, at his bidding, wells up from parched fountains. Trees and stones salute him by the way, or co-operate to shade him from the midday sun. A wooden pillar weeps because he desists from leaning against it; maniacs are cured at his word; the hunger of crowds of men is satisfied by a single cake; and the record of Christ's transfiguration and converse with messengers from the other world is eclipsed by the story of Muhammad's journey in person to the very sanctuary of heaven, where he holds familiar intercourse with the Deity himself!

One more palpable reason for the widespread manufacture of traditions must be referred to before we pass on to discuss the value and authenticity of tradition generally. We allude to the need, which early arose, for the elucidation of obscure texts of the Qur'an, and for added light on certain details of the prophet's life which are only briefly alluded to in that book. Every reader of the Qur'an, for example, will have noticed that not a few special revelations are said to have been 'sent down' in connexion with the personal affairs of Muhammad. Many of these 'revelations', however, are brief and enigmatical, and leave the reader sadly puzzled as to the real meaning of the text. To elucidate such passages was the work of the commentators,

[1] Quoted in Muir's The Mohammedan Controversy, p. 77.

[2] Qisasu'l-Anbiya, p. 3.

who freely filled up the blanks and straightened out the tangles by recourse to traditions. When these were not forthcoming, they were promptly supplied. This is freely admitted by liberal Muslims. Thus Syed Amir Ali writing of the *Mir'aj,* the famous night journey of Muhammad to heaven, says: 'This period is also remarkable for that notable vision of the ascension, which has furnished worlds of golden dreams for the imaginative genius of poets and traditionists. They have woven beautiful and gorgeous legends round the simple words of the Qur'an.' [1] It is, indeed, to the commentators that we are indebted for many of the fabulous details of the prophet's life; and these are found in such profusion within the commentaries of the Qur'an that one of the greatest of Western students of Islam has expressed the opinion that it would be easier to compile a life of Muhammad without the standard biographies than without the commentaries.

It may not be out of place to quote here, by way of illustration, one or two passages of the Qur'an, and to note the huge superstructure which tradition has erected thereon. The famous passage said to refer to Muhammad's miraculous journey to heaven is found at the beginning of the seventeenth chapter of the Qur'an verse one. It runs thus, 'Glory be to Him who carried his servant by night from the sacred temple to the temple that is more remote, whose precincts we have blessed, that we might show him of our signs'. All commentators of the Qur'an agree that the 'sacred temple' refers to the temple of Mecca, and that the temple which is 'more remote' indicates a supposedly existent temple at Jerusalem. Syed Amir Ali and other intelligent Muslims regard this event as no more than a vision of the night vouchsafed to Muhammad; but in no subject have the commentators given a wider rein to an exuberant fancy than in their expositions of this passage. According to them, Muhammad was not only transported bodily from Mecca to Jerusalem in one night on the back of a mythical steed 'between a mule and an ass', but to the very sanctuary of heaven itself, where, after receiving the regular Muslim greeting, *salam alaikum,* from the angels, he found himself in the awful presence of his Maker. In the commentaries and books of tradition the whole story is dressed up in most fantastic detail, and Muhammad is represented as conversing, not only with God Himself, but with various prophets who had preceded him. The nature of these conversations may be judged from the following quotation from the *Mishkat*:—

فَفتح فَلَمَّا خَلَصْتُ فَإِذَا مُوسَى قَالَ هَذَا مُوسَى فَسَلِّمْ عَلَيْهِ فَسَلَّمْتُ عَلَيْهِ فَرَدَّ ثُمَّ قَالَ مَرْحَبًا بِالْأَخِ الصَّالِحِ وَالنَّبِيِّ الصَّالِحِ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزْتُ بَكَى قِيلَ لَهُ مَا يُبْكِيكَ قَالَ أَبْكِي لِأَنَّ غُلَاماً بُعِثَ بَعْدِي يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مِنْ أُمَّتِهِ أَكْثَرُ مِمَّنْ يَدْخُلُهَا مِنْ أُمَّتِي.

[1] SYED AMIR ALI: Life of Mohammed, p. 58.

'Then he opened (the door of the sixth heaven), and when I entered, behold Moses! (Gabriel) said, this is Moses, therefore salute him, so I saluted him, and he returned the salute, and said, "Welcome good brother and good prophet. And as I passed by, he wept. And it was said to him, what makes you weep? He replied, I weep because a boy (i.e. Muhammad) has been sent after me of whose followers more will enter heaven than of mine.' [1]

The account of the so-called splitting of the moon, as related in the Qur'an, furnishes another fruitful topic for the commentators. Here, again, the original passage is far from clear. It runs thus, The hour hath approached, and the moon hath been cleft'. [2] The saner exegetes of the Qur'an refer this splitting of the moon to a date still in the future, viz. to the day of resurrection, of which it is said to be one of the signs. Such moderation, however, failed to satisfy the craving for the fabulous; and an ignorant and unscrupulous body of commentators soon arose who have related in circumstantial detail, and with incredible extravagance, a story of Muhammad answering the Arab demand for a miracle by splitting the moon in twain, so that, one half was seen on one side of the mountain, and the other half on the other side'. [3] The limit, however, is surely reached in the following from the *Siratu'n-Nabawiyya*

إِنَّ الْقَمَرَ دَخَلَ فِي جَيْبِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، وَخَرَجَ مِنْ كُمِّهِ.

'Verily the moon entered the prophet's pocket and came out at his sleeve'! [4] An-Nawawi, the famous commentator of Muslim, mentions a tradition in which this story is told with the following variations: Two men were arguing about the splitting of the moon,

فَقَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا: «إِنْشَقَّ فِرْقَتَيْنِ، دَخَلَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا فِي كُمِّهِ، وَخَرَجَتْ مِنَ الْكُمِّ الْآخَرِ.»

'And one of them asserted that it split into two portions, one of which entered by one of his (the apostle's) sleeves and came out by the other sleeve.' Little wonder that intelligent Muslims feel bound, for very shame, to repudiate such travesties of inspiration.

Amongst the many passages of the Qur'an which have given trouble to honest commentators is the following: —

هُوَ الَّذِى يُصَلِّى عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلاَئِكَتُهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ.

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[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Babu'l-Mi'raj.

[2] Qur'an al-Qamar 54:1.

[3] Khalasatu't-Tafasir, vol. iv, p. 321.

[4] Al Siratu'n-Nabuwiyya, vol. iii, p. 133.

'He it is who prays for you, and his angels too, to bring you forth out of darkness into the light.' [1] Some commentators escape the difficulty of God praying by rendering the word *yusalli* 'bless', and it is admitted that the word will bear that construction; but other Muhammadans, impressed by the fact that the ordinary word for 'pray' is here used, have considered it necessary to find a tradition to prove that God does indeed pray. This is found in the *Siratu'l-Halabiyya* in the account of the Mi'raj or miraculous night-journey to heaven. Muhammad is there represented as relating his experiences in heaven and saying,

سَمِعْتُ مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِى بِلُغَةٍ تُشْبِهُ لُغَةَ أَبِي بَكْرٍ، فَقَالَ لِي: «قِفْ، فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ يُصَلِّي.»

'Then I heard a crier crying in a voice resembling the voice of Abu Bakr, who said to me, stand still, for your Lord is praying.' Upon the prophet expressing surprise that God should pray, the oracle is then made to say, 'I only say, praise be to me! praise be to me! my mercy outruns my anger'. And then, the more surely to connect this tradition with the verse of the Qur'an quoted above, Muhammad is commanded to 'Recite, He it is who prays for you,' etc. [2]

The book in which this story is preserved relates other traditions concerning God praying. Thus it is stated that the Bani Isra'il asked Moses whether God prayed; whereupon not being able to give an answer, the great lawgiver wept! Then, to comfort him, God assured him that he did pray!

Such is the pitiful nostrum which makes up the mental pabulum of multitudes of Muslims all over the world to-day. Muslim tradition, much of it too obscene for translation, has practically usurped the place of the Qur'an and brought multitudes of men and women into subjection to a moral and social law, which is as little the product of divine inspiration as are the epic stories of the Ramayan and the Mahabharat.

We shall have occasion, in later chapters, to give further illustrations of these extraordinary productions of Semitic imagination. We now ask the reader to accompany us in a study of the evidence for the authenticity and integrity of Muhammadan tradition. In doing so, we shall confine ourselves almost entirely to evidence furnished by Muslim authors themselves.

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[1] Qur'an Al-Ahzab 33:43, See Palmer's translation in loc.

[2] Siratu'l-Halabiyya, vol. i, p. 443.

CHAPTER II

THE AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY OF TRADITION

IN the previous chapter we have noted the rise of tradition and have referred to some of the principal causes which operated to give the alleged sayings of Muhammad an authority and prestige practically equal to that enjoyed by the Qur'an itself. We have also shown that Muhammad, whilst apparently disapproving of the practice of committing his words to writing, did undoubtedly encourage their oral transmission. If the traditions we have already quoted are to be accepted as genuine, he also fostered the belief that his words were to be accepted as having something more than the mere weight of his own personal authority. But it would be manifestly unwise to attach too much weight to those statements. Muhammad himself unquestionably conceded the relative inferiority of the *hadith* in these words:

كَلَامِى لَا يَنْسَخُ كَلَامَ اللهِ، وَكَلَامُ اللهِ يَنْسَخُ كَلَامِى.

'My words do not abrogate the words of God, but the words of God abrogate my words.' [1] Yet the great majority of Muslims throughout the world have undoubtedly held that the traditions are to be accepted as inspired, and to be treated as formative for rules of faith and practice. Al Qastalani correctly represents the orthodox belief when he says, 'Verily the science of the *sunna* of the prophet is, after the Qur'an, the greatest science in degree, and highest in nobility and glory, because upon it is founded the rules of Islamic law and through it appears a detailed statement of all the Qur'anic verses. And why should it not be so, seeing that its source is from what was not expressed because of (personal) desire: rather it is an inspired revelation.' [2]

Thus, not only the words, but the very actions, of the prophet came to have a Divine authority, and to be looked upon as carrying with them the obligation of slavish imitation. The result is seen in a mass of traditions full of puerile details of the prophet's manner of life: as to how he cleaned his teeth or performed his ablutions. Indeed, many a wordy battle was waged between later zealots as to whether the right or the left foot should be washed first in the ablutions preceding prayer! In their zeal these early disciples seem to have far outrun their master; for there are not wanting traditions, even amongst the most authoritative collections, which seem to indicate that he, at any rate, knew of no such Divine compulsion, and conceived himself as free, at any time, to alter such ceremonial practices, or establish

[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu'l-Iman.

[2] Sharah Sahih al-Imam al-Bukhari, vol. i, p. 3.

new ones, as he thought best. Thus Bukhari has preserved a tradition to the effect that Muhammad said,

لَوْلَا أَنْ أَشُقَّ عَلَى أُمَّتِي لَأَمَرْتُهُمْ بِالسِّوَاكِ مَعَ كُلِّ صَلَاةٍ.

'Were it not that it would involve hardships to my followers, I would certainly command them to clean their teeth with every prayer.' [1]

The well-known incident of his forbidding the artificial fertilization of the date-palm is also in point. It is related in the *Mishkat* that when Muhammad arrived in Medina, after his flight from Mecca, he forbade the practice which was a common custom in those parts. The result was a poor harvest; and when his perplexed and disconcerted followers informed him of the result, he is reported to have said,

إنما أنا بشر إِذَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ أمر دِينِكُمْ فَخُذُوا بِهِ، وَإِذَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ رَأْيٍ فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ.

'I am only a man. When, therefore, I command you anything concerning your religion, then accept it; but when I command you anything as a matter of my own opinion—then, verily, l am only a man.' [2]

The question before us, then, is twofold. First, to what extent did Muhammad intend his words and actions to be binding upon his followers, as of Divine authority, and as a standard for their imitation, and, secondly, how far can the present mass of tradition, as found in the standard collections, be regarded as faithful records of what the prophet said and did. We think the two traditions quoted above will serve to indicate to some extent the trend of the prophet's intentions. He certainly never intended to pose as one whose every act was performed under Divine guidance. The following story, handed down by Ibn Mas'ud, conclusively shows that the prophet regarded himself simply as a man, subject to all the frailties of human nature. It is as follows: On a certain occasion Muhammad performed the mid-day prayer in five raq'ats (or series of prostrations). Therefore it was said to him, Have the prostrations been increased (from four to five)? He said, What do you mean? They replied, You made five series of prostrations. Then, after the salam, he made two prostrations, and said,

إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ أَنْسَى كَمَا تَنْسَوْنَ فَإِذَا نَسِيتُ فَذَكِّرُونِي.

'Verily I am only a man like you. I forget as you do. Therefore when I forget, do ye remind me.' [3]

Even if it could be shown that Muhammad did intend that his followers should make his life, in all its details, their example and precept, yet the evidence for the authenticity of the multitude of traditions which have come down to us is so weak

[1] Zubdatu'l-Bukhari, p. 52.

[2] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu'l-Iman.

[3] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu's-Salat.

that we cannot know with certainty that any one of them truly represents what the prophet said or did. We referred on page 10 to the class of *hadith* known as *mutawatir,* i.e. an undoubted tradition which has been handed down by many distinct chains of reporters, and which, as a result, has always been accepted as authentic. The fact that Muslim theologians only regard five, out of all the thousands of traditions, as belonging to this class, [1] is in itself sufficient evidence of the doubts attaching to the remainder.

There is one famous dictum of the prophet, hinted at in the previous chapter, which automatically gives the lie to a very large proportion of the traditions now current. We refer to his challenge that every alleged tradition be brought to the tribunal of the Qur'an. What agrees therewith, he tells us, is true; whilst all that disagrees with it, is false: by the Qur'an must the traditions stand or fall. His words are as follows,

وَإِنَّهُ سَيَفْشُو عَنِّي أَحَادِيثُ، فَمَا أَتَاكُمْ مِنْ حَدِيثِي فَاقْرَؤُوا كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَاعْتَبِرُوهُ، فَمَا وَافَقَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ فَأَنَا قُلْتُهُ، وَمَا لَمْ يُوَافِقْ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ فَلَمْ أَقُلْهُ.

'Verily traditions will be circulated concerning me; therefore, whatever of my traditions comes to you, read the word of God (the Qur'an) and consider it carefully. For whatever agrees with the word of God, I have said it; and what does not agree with the word of God, I have not said it.'' [2]

In another tradition, mentioned in the same place, Muhammad is reported as saying, 'Compare my tradition with the word of God: if it agrees therewith, it is from me, and I have said it.'

Ibn Majah preserves a curious utterance of the prophet to the effect that he said,

اقْرَأُ قُرْآنًا مَا قِيلَ مِنْ قَوْلٍ حَسَنٍ فَأَنَا قُلْتُهُ.

'Read the Qur'an. Whatever good saying has been said, I have said it', [3] which his commentator, Al Hadi, explains to mean,

اِقْرَأُ قُرْآنًا حَتَّى تَعْرِفَ بِهِ صِدْقَ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ مِنْ كَذِبِهِ.

'Read the Qur'an in order that you may know by it the truth of this tradition from its falsehood.'

It would almost seem that false traditions began to be circulated even in the prophet's lifetime. At any rate, he is repeatedly reported to have warned his followers against later fabricators of tradition. Many such warnings have been handed down. Muslim has preserved several, from which we cull one or two by way of illustration.

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[1] Thomas Patrick Hughes, A Dictionary of Islam, published 1885, p. 640.

[2] Mantakhab Kanzu'l-Amal (on margin of Misnad), vol. i, p. 101.

[3] Ibn Majah, vol. i, p. 7.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، أَنَّهُ قَالَ: «سَيَكُونُ فِي آخِرِ أُمَّتِي أُنَاسٌ يُحَدِّثُونَكُمْ مَا لَمْ تَسْمَعُوا أَنْتُمْ وَلَا آبَاؤُكُمْ، فَإِيَّاكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ.

'It is related from Abu Hurairah from the apostle of God that he said, there will be amongst my later followers' men who will relate to you what neither you nor your fathers have heard. Therefore, beware of them.' [1] Another saying of the prophet is to the effect that,

يَكُونُ فِي آخِرِ الزَّمَانِ دَجَّالُونَ كَذَّابُونَ، يَأْتُونَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَحَادِيثِ بِمَا لَمْ تَسْمَعُوا أَنْتُمْ وَلَا آبَاؤُكُمْ، فَإِيَّاكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ، لَا يُضِلُّونَكُمْ وَلَا يَفْتِنُونَكُمْ.

'There will be in later times deceivers and liars, who will bring you traditions which neither you nor your fathers have heard. Therefore, beware of them, that they do not lead you astray nor seduce you.'

In the *Al Jam'i as-Saghir* it is hinted that the number of such false traditions will not be small. Thus, we read that the prophet said,

إِيَّاكُمْ وَ كَثْرَةَ الْحَدِيثِ عَنِّي.

'Beware of many traditions (related as) from me.' [2] It was even felt necessary by Muhammad to condemn those who would knowingly repeat false traditions; and so he is reported as saying, 'Whoever, seeing a tradition concerning me to be false, yet relates it, he is one of the liars. [3]

The prophet's fears were well-founded; for there is incontrovertible proof that he was scarcely in his grave before spurious traditions in their thousands began to circulate. In other words, the manufacture of false traditions was not confined to men of later generations. On the contrary, the very 'companions' of Muhammad himself are proven to have been utterly unscrupulous in their behavior in this respect. Even men who were esteemed 'pious' by their generation, on the principle, apparently, that the end justified the means, were as ready to falsify as those of less upright character. Thus Muslim has preserved a tradition to the effect that,

حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ أَبِي عَتَّابٍ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنِي عَفَّانُ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى بْنِ سَعِيدٍ الْقَطَّانِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، قَالَ: «لَمْ نَرَ الصَّالِحِينَ فِي شَيْءٍ أَكْذَبَ مِنْهُمْ فِي الْحَدِيثِ.»

'Muhammad bin Abi 'Atab informed me that 'Affan informed me from Muhammad bin Yahya bin Sa'idu'l-Qattan from his father, that he said, I have not

[1] Sahih Muslim, vol. i, p. 6.

[2] Al Jam'i as-Saghir, vol. i, p. 101.

[3] Ibn Majah, vol. I, p. 10.

seen the pious given to falsification in anything more than in the traditions.' [1] Some of these 'pious' fabricators are mentioned by Muslim. One was named 'Abad bin Kathir. It was said of him that, when he repeated the traditions, he brought forward weighty matters; but, the narrator continues,

إِذَا كُنْتُ فِي مَجْلِسٍ ذُكِرَ فِيهِ عَبَّادٌ أَثْنَيْتُ عَلَيْهِ فِي دِينِهِ وَأَقُولُ لَا تَأْخُذُوا عَنْهُ.

'When I was in the assembly, Abbad was mentioned therein. Then I praised him concerning his religion, but I said, do not accept (traditions) from him.' [2]

Another 'pious' fabricator of traditions was one Zayad bin 'Abdullah. The tradition concerning him runs thus,

زِيَادُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، مَعَ شَرَفِهِ، يَكْذِبُ فِي الْحَدِيثِ.

'Zayad bin 'Abdullah, in spite of his honorable reputation lies in traditions.' [3]

Ibn 'Abbas was a 'companion' of the prophet. The following tradition shows how, even in his lifetime, the practice of forging traditions had spread. It is quoted by Muslim and runs thus: 'It is related from Mujahid that he said, Bashir Al 'Adi came to Ibn 'Abbas and began relating to him a tradition, and said, "The apostle of God said . . .". But Ibn 'Abbas neither listened to the tradition nor looked towards him (the speaker). Therefore, he said, O Ibn 'Abbas, what have I done that I do not see you listening to my tradition which I am relating from the apostle of God? Ibn 'Abbas replied, We, once upon a time, when we heard any man say, "The apostle of God said" so and so, used to look upon him with our eyes and listen to him with our ears, but now, when men are no longer distinguishing truth from falsehood, we accept from men nothing which we do not know (to be true).' [4] Muslim quotes other traditions to the same effect; and Ibn Majah (vol. i, p. 8) also records the same with slight variations.

Abu Bakr, the successor of Muhammad in the Khalifate, and one of his most trusted companions, also bears unequivocal testimony to the prevalence of false and contradictory traditions. Thus we read in a tradition from Murasil bin Abi Malikat that,

إِنَّ الصِّدِّيقَ جَمَعَ النَّاسَ بَعْدَ وَفَاةِ نَبِيِّهِمْ، فَقَالَ: «إِنَّكُمْ تُحَدِّثُونَ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَحَادِيثَ تَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهَا، وَالنَّاسُ بَعْدَكُمْ أَشَدُّ اخْتِلَافًا، فَلَا تُحَدِّثُوا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا، فَمَنْ سَأَلَكُمْ فَقُولُوا: بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ كِتَابُ اللَّهِ، فَاسْتَحِلُّوا حَلَالَهُ، وَحَرِّمُوا حَرَامَهُ.»

[1] Sahih Muslim, vol. i, p. 8.

[2] Ibid.

[3] At Tirmidhi, vol. i, p. 203. (Quoted in Gairdner's Mohammedan Tradition and Gospel Record, p. 12.)

[4] Sahih Muslim, vol. i, p. 7.

'Verily, As Siddiq (i.e. Abu Bakr) gathered the people together after the death of their prophet, and said, verily you are relating concerning the apostle of God traditions in which you contradict one another, and the people after you will be still more forward in contradiction. Therefore, do not relate anything concerning the apostle of God. And whoever asks you anything, say, The Book of God (i.e. the Qur'an) is between us. Therefore, make lawful what is lawful in it, and regard as unlawful what is unlawful in it.' [1]

In a similar manner the Khalifa 'Umar discouraged the recital of traditions because of his knowledge of the unlimited opportunities which oral transmission gave to unscrupulous persons for the fabrication of false traditions or the alteration of what were true. Thus, there is a tradition from Ibn Qatada that, ''Umar was strong in his repudiation of those who multiplied traditions or who brought forward information concerning laws for which they had no witnesses. And he used to order them to relate less traditions, wishing thereby that men should not multiply them and so bring into them a mixture of truth and falsehood, and lest there should take place tampering of *isnads* and general falsification through the agency of hypocrites and wicked men and desert Arabs.' [2]

It is refreshing, after what has been written above, to turn to some of the 'companions' whose consciences were not so dead. One such was 'Abdullah bin Jubair ('Abdullah bin Az-Zubair). Of him it is related that a man said to him,

إِنِّي لَا أَسْمَعُكَ تُحَدِّثُ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَمَا يُحَدِّثُ فُلَانٌ وَفُلَانٌ، فَقَالَ: «أَمَا إِنِّي لَمْ أُفَارِقْهُ، وَلَكِنْ سَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ: مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ فَلْيَتَبَوَّأْ مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ.»

'I do not hear you recite traditions concerning the apostle of God as does so and so. He replied, Yet I never left the apostle; but I heard him say, He who relates falsely concerning me, let him find his resting-place in the fire.' [3] This tradition is also related by Ibn Majah with slight variations (see vol. i, p. 10). The remark of the latter's commentator, Al Hadi, is instructive. He says, the meaning is, 'That which restrains me from relating traditions is the fact that it leads, through carelessness and neglect, to addition and subtraction.'

In the very valuable introduction to the Sahih of Muslim a number of men are named who were noted for their falsification of traditions. We can only mention one or two here by way of illustration. Such was Amru bin 'Abid. This man 'related from Al Hasan'' and said, 'The man who becomes intoxicated from drinking wine (*nabidh*) should not be scourged. (Hajaj) replied, Verily he lied, for I heard Al Hasan

[1] Tujiyahu'n-nazar ila usulu'l-athar, p. 12.

[2] Ibid., p. 11.

[3] Tujiyahu'n-nazar ila usulu'l-athar, p. 11. See also, Sahih Bukhari, Book 3 Hadith 107.

say that the one intoxicated from wine should be scourged.' [1] Another noted falsifier of tradition was Al Hasan bin 'Amarat. It is related that Jarih bin Hazim said, 'It is not right to repeat traditions from Al Hasan bin 'Amarat, for he lies. Abu Da'ud said, I said to Sha'bat (the narrator), And why is that? He said, He (Hasan) related as from Al Hakam a certain thing for which we found no foundation. He said, I said to him, And what was that? He replied, I said to Al Hakam, Did the apostle of God pray over those who were killed at (the battle of) Uhud? He said, He did not pray over them. But Al Hasan bin 'Amarat affirmed, as from Al Hakam, who related from Maqsam as from Ibn 'Abbas that the prophet of God prayed over them and buried them.' [2] Here we see that the notorious Al Hasan not only invented a false tradition but also concocted a full *isnad* to match! Muslim mentions another extraordinary person who claimed to know 70,000 traditions! Little wonder that we read that of him,

اِتَّهَمَهُ النَّاسُ فِي حَدِيثٍ، وَتَرَكَهُ بَعْضُ النَّاسِ.

'The people suspected his traditions, and some of the people left him.' [3] Many other fabricators of tradition are named by Muslim, but limits of space prevent a fuller treatment here. One noted forger, however, must be mentioned. He was Ibn Abi Awja. This man was executed in A.H. 155, after having confessed that he himself had put into circulation no less than 4,000 false traditions! [4]

The almost incredible extent to which the forgery of traditions was carried on can best be understood by the statement already made, that Bukhari collected 600,000 traditions, but only retained as trustworthy 7,275. Similarly, Muslim is said to have retained, after deleting repetitions, only some 4,000 out of the 300,000 which he had collected. [5] Whilst Az-Zaraqani, the learned commentator of the *Muwatta* of Ibn Malik, says that,

إِنَّ مَالِكًا رَوَى مِائَةَ أَلْفِ حَدِيثٍ، وَجَمَعَ مِنْهَا الْمُوَطَّأَ عَشَرَةَ آلَافٍ، ثُمَّ لَمْ يَزَلْ يَعْرِضُهَا عَلَى الْكِتَابِ وَالسُّنَّةِ، وَيَخْتَبِرُهَا بِالْآثَارِ وَالْأَخْبَارِ، حَتَّى رَجَعَتْ إِلَى خَمْسِمِائَةٍ.

Verily Malik related 100,000 traditions, from which he compiled the *Muwatta*, containing 10,000. These he continued to compare with the Book and the *Sunna*, and to test them by traditions and histories until they were reduced to 500.' [6]

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[1] Sahih Muslim, p. 11.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Sahih Muslim, p. 10.

[4] MACDONALD: Muslim Theology, p. 80.

[5] Al Nawami, Sharah Sahih Muslim, vol. i, p. 38.

[6] Az Zaraqani on margin of the Muwatta, vol. i. p. 8.

Some Muslims evidently tried to steer a middle course between those who abstained altogether from the recital of traditions from fear of inadvertent falsification and those who freely forged to suit their own purposes. Thus, it is related that certain men said,

إِذَا رَوَيْنَا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي الْحَلَالِ وَالْحَرَامِ وَالسُّنَنِ وَالْأَحْكَامِ، شَدَّدْنَا فِي الْأَسَانِيدِ، وَإِذَا رَوَيْنَا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي فَضَائِلِ الْأَعْمَالِ، تَسَاهَلْنَا فِي الْأَسَانِيدِ.

'If we had related to us as coming from the apostle of God traditions dealing with things allowable or prohibited, or the practice or decisions (of the prophet) then we would be strict about the *isnads*; but if we had related to us as coming from the prophet of God traditions dealing with virtuous actions, then we would be lax about the *isnads*!' [1] These good people apparently felt some compunction about altering canon law, whilst having no scruples with regard to such trifling matters as 'virtuous actions'!!

The most notorious fabricator of tradition, whose name has come down to us, was a 'companion' of the prophet, generally known by his nickname Abu Hurairah. It is related of him that,

إِنَّ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ صَحِبَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ نَحْوًا مِنْ ثَلَاثِ سِنِينَ، وَأَكْثَرَ الرِّوَايَةَ عَنْهُ، وَعُمِّرَ بَعْدَهُ نَحْوًا مِنْ خَمْسِينَ سَنَةً.

'Verily Abu Hurairah accompanied the prophet for about three years. And he multiplied traditions concerning him; and lived after him for a period of about fifty years.' [2] We give the text of this tradition, because of its great importance. It states very clearly that this man only lived with Muhammad for a period of three years. In other words Abu Hurairah, as we know from other sources, was only converted to Islam three years before the prophet's death. Yet the most extraordinary stories have come down to us of this man, which show conclusively that he was, without doubt, the most unscrupulous forger of traditions which Islam has ever produced. And yet, despite this fact, the great collections of traditions extant to-day contain more traditions from Abu Hurairah than from any other 'relator'. Not only was he a forger of traditions, but his general character was far from being above reproach. This is shown by the following incident. It is related that when 'Umar assumed the Khalifate, he appointed Abu Hurairah to the governorship of Bahrein. But the latter abused his trust and was eventually recalled and disgraced for misappropriating monies belonging to the state, being made, we are told, to disgorge 12,000 (another report says 10,000) dirhams. The story, which is told by Al Baladhuri from Qasun

[1] Quoted in Gairdner's Mohammedan Tradition and Gospel Record, p. 20.

[2] Tawil Mukhtalifu'l-Hadith, p. 48.

bin Salam, relates that when the Khalifa ‘Umar met Abu Hurairah on his return from Bahrein he accosted him in these words, يَا عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّ كِتَابِهِ، أَسَرَقْتَ مِنْ مَالِ اللَّهِ؟ ‘O enemy of God and enemy of His book, hast thou stolen the money belonging to God’? [1] Hurairah, of course, denied the charge, but he was unable to convince ‘Umar of his innocence, and was compelled to hand over his ill-gotten wealth.

It is a remarkable fact that, although Abu Hurairah only lived with Muhammad for a period of three years, yet he produced more alleged sayings of the prophet than those who had been with him from the beginning of his mission. Little wonder that the charge was constantly made that he fabricated his traditions. Some idea of the extent to which this man produced so-called sayings of the prophet may be gained from the fact that in the *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal, where the traditions are grouped under the names of their respective reporters, no less than 313 pages are devoted to the traditions said to have been related by Abu Hurairah! Some idea of what these figures mean will be gained if they are compared with the amount of space devoted in the *Musnad* to the traditions of other prominent ‘companions’ of the prophet. Thus, for example, the traditions related by ‘Ali bin Abu Talib cover eighty-five pages, those of ‘Umar bin Khattab forty-one, those of Abu Bakr twelve, and those of ‘Uthman eighteen. Yet these latter lived for many years with the prophet, and shared with him, not only his successes at Medina, but also his years of adversity in Mecca.

The accounts in which Abu Hurairah is accused of fabrication of traditions are very many in number. One or two illustrations must suffice here. [2] It is said, for example, that

فَلَمَّا أَتَى مِنَ الرِّوَايَةِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ بِمِثْلِهِ مَنْ صَحِبَهُ مِنْ جِلَّةِ أَصْحَابِهِ وَالسَّابِقِينَ الْأَوَّلِينَ إِلَيْهِ، اتَّهَمُوهُ وَأَنْكَرُوهُ عَلَيْهِ، وَقَالُوا: «كَيْفَ سَمِعْتَ هَذَا وَحْدَكَ؟ وَمَنْ سَمِعَهُ مَعَكَ؟»

‘When he brought a tradition the like of which those of the principal people who companied him (Muhammad) and who preceded Abu Hurairah had not brought, they suspected him, and repudiated it, and said, How is it that you alone heard this? Who else heard it with you?’ [3]

Bukhari also relates a tradition to the effect that,

إِنَّ النَّاسَ يَقُولُونَ: أَكْثَرَ أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ.

‘Verily the people say, Abu Hurairah relates too much.’ [4] The excuse given by Abu Hurairah was that many of the principal companions of the prophet were busy

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[1] Futuhu'l-Buldan, p. 90.

[2] The curious will find the subject dealt with at considerable length in Gairdner's Mohammadan Tradition and Gospel Record, pp. 13-15.

[3] Tawil Mukhtalifu'l-Hadith, p. 48.

[4] Sahihu'l-Bukhari, vol. i, p. 23.

with their worldly business, whilst he used to remain with the apostle, and so had fuller opportunity of hearing his teaching. This excuse, however, evidently failed to still the angry murmurs of the people, and so the resourceful Abu Hurairah brought forward the following story to account for his wonderful memory,

قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي أَسْمَعُ مِنْكَ حَدِيثًا كَثِيرًا أَنْسَاهُ قَالَ ابْسُطْ رِدَاءَكَ فَبَسَطْتُهُ قَالَ فَغَرَفَ بِيَدَيْهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ ضُمَّهُ فَضَمَمْتُهُ فَمَا نَسِيتُ شَيْئًا بَعْدَهُ.

'I said, O Apostle of God, I hear many traditions from you, which I forget. He (Muhammad) said, Stretch out your mantle. Therefore, I stretched it out. He said, then he took it in his two hands; after which he said, Gather it up. So I gathered it up; and I never forgot anything after that!! [1] No wonder that Al Nawawi, the commentator of Muslim, could tell us that Abu Hurairah knew 5,374 traditions. [2] And yet Bukhari is said to have only retained in his collection 446 of all the traditions related by Abu Hurairah. [3] Many illustrations are given in Muslim books of this man's fabrication of traditions. One not very edifying tradition regarding purification makes Ayesha and Hafsa, two of the prophet's wives, contradict a tradition of Abu Hurairah on the subject. When the latter was brought to book, he said,

إِنَّمَا حَدَّثَنِي بِذَلِكَ الْفَضْلُ بْنُ الْعَبَّاسِ، فَاسْتُشْهِدَ مَيِّتًا، وَأَوْهَمَ النَّاسَ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ الْحَدِيثَ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

'Verily, Fadal bin Al-'Abbas related it to me. But (continued the narrator), the fact is, he called to witness a dead man, and pretended to the people that he had heard the tradition from the prophet. But he had not heard it.' [4] In the book from which we have just quoted, a book written less than three hundred years after Muhammad, other stories are given of 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali contradicting the utterances of this champion traditionist. He himself, in later days, practically acknowledged his fault, and there is a tradition from Abu Salma that,

قُلْتُ لَهُ: أَكُنْتَ تُحَدِّثُ فِي زَمَانِ عُمَرَ هَكَذَا؟ قَالَ: «لَوْ كُنْتُ أُحَدِّثُ فِي زَمَانِ عُمَرَ مَا أُحَدِّثُكُمْ، لَضَرَبَنِي بِمِخْفَقَتِهِ.»

[1] Ibid., p. 24.

[2] An Nawawi, vol. i, p. 120.

[3] Tujiyahu'n-nazar ila usulu'l-athar, p. 11.

[4] Tawil Mukhtalifu'l-Hadith, p. 28.

'I said to him (Abu Hurairah), And used you to relate thus in the time of 'Umar? He replied, If I had related in the time of 'Umar as I relate to you, he would have beaten me with his arrow.' [1]

There is an instructive story preserved in the *Kitabu'l-Hayawan* of the days of the Khalifa Harun ar Rashid to the effect that certain doctors of Islamic law were disputing in a Baghdad Mosque, when the Hanifite doctor protested against the citation of Abu Hurairah as an authority, on the express ground that Abu Hurairah is suspected of falsehood in what he has written'. [2] And yet, practically the whole Muslim world to-day accepts this man as an authority, second to none, for the life and teachings of the prophet Muhammad!!

Another reporter, whose name appears very frequently in the *isnads*, is 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas, generally known as Ibn 'Abbas. In the *musnad* no less than 160 pages are devoted to traditions purporting to have been related by him. Ibn 'Abbas is second only to Abu Hurairah as a traditionist and stood first amongst the Muslims of his day as a commentator of the Qur'an. He is, indeed, the father of Qur'anic exegesis, and hundreds of reputed traditions claiming to throw light upon the obscure texts of the Qur'an are attributed to him. And yet this person was only a boy of fourteen years when Muhammad died, and only spent some three or four of those years in the companionship of the prophet! They must be credulous indeed who can believe that this boy of fourteen years really preserved from Muhammad the hundreds of traditions dealing with intricate expositions of difficult Qur'anic texts, together with the legal decisions based thereon. It is infinitely more probable either that Ibn 'Abbas forged these traditions himself in later years, in order to secure for himself the honour and prestige attaching to a reporter, or else, which is still more probable, others of a later age fabricated them, and then, to give them the needful authority, forged the necessary *isnad* leading up to Ibn 'Abbas. That *isnads* were forged in large numbers, we know. Thus Muslim relates how a man named Yazid bin Harun suspected Zayad bin Maimum of falsification. To test him, he asked him concerning a certain tradition. This the man gave, together with an *isnad*. Later on, Yazid again approached Zayad, and this time got a different *isnad*. This intensified his suspicions; so a third visit was paid, when the same tradition was repeated with still another chain of reporters. If the story had ended here, it might be rejoined that any given tradition may conceivably have, indeed many do have, more than one *isnad*. But in this case Yazid goes on to say that فنسبه إلى الكذب 'He attributed it to a lie.' [3] Another forger of *isnads* mentioned by Muslim was named 'Abdul-Karim.

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[1] Tujiyahu'n-nazar ila usulu'l-athar, p. 13.

[2] Quoted in Gairdner's Mohammedan Tradition and Gospel Record, p. 15.

[3] Sahih Muslim, vol. I, p. 11.

Another concrete example of the way traditions, with *isnads* to match, were so freely forged is given in the following story,

عَنْ أَيُّوبَ عَنِ الْحَسَنِ عَنْ صَخْرِ بْنِ قُدَامَةَ الْعُقَيْلِيِّ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَا يُولَدُ بَعْدَ مِائَةِ سَنَةٍ مَوْلُودٌ لِلَّهِ فِيهِ حَاجَةٌ قَالَ أَيُّوبُ: فَلَقِيتُ صَخْرَ بْنَ قُدَامَةَ فَسَأَلْتُهُ عَنِ الْحَدِيثِ، فَقَالَ: لَا أَعْرِفُهُ.

'Ayub (heard) from Hasan (that he heard) from Sakhar bin Qadama that the apostle of God said, there will not be born after a hundred years a person for whom God has any need. Ayub said, "Then I met Sakhar bin Qadama and asked him concerning the tradition. And he said, "I do not know it.' [1] That is to say, Sakhar repudiated a tradition which Hasan had reported as received from him. One of the clearest cases of *isnad* fabrication is the following from the *Jami* of At Tirmidhi

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الْحَسَنِ، عَنْ أُمِّهِ فَاطِمَةَ بِنْتِ الْحُسَيْنِ، عَنْ جَدَّتِهَا فَاطِمَةَ الْكُبْرَى، قَالَتْ: «كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا دَخَلَ الْمَسْجِدَ صَلَّى عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَسَلَّمَ، وَقَالَ: رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي ذُنُوبِي، وَافْتَحْ لِي أَبْوَابَ رَحْمَتِكَ.

'(It is related) from 'Abdallah binu'l-Hasan from his mother Fatimah, the daughter of Al Husain, from her grandmother, Fatimah the elder, that she said, the apostle of God, when he used to enter the masjid, used to pray for blessings on himself and say, O Lord, forgive me my sins, and open to me the doors of thy mercy.' [2] Now this *isnad* is demonstrably false, for, as At Tirmidhi points out, Fatimah, the daughter of Husain never saw her grandmother, Fatimah, the mother of Husain. As a matter of fact Fatimah the elder died when Husain was still a boy of eight years. Yet it is distinctly stated here that Fatimah, the daughter of Husain, heard the tradition from her grandmother Fatimah!

There is one other point to be mentioned before we close this chapter. It is this: assuming for the moment that the great mass of the traditions is authentic, in other words, that the great majority do really represent the utterances of Muhammad himself, the question arises, how far are they credible? Can their integrity as true and reliable reports of what Muhammad said be implicitly relied upon? The whole question has been raised in an acute form by the manifest contradictions which exist in the various reports of the prophet's words. These often involve contradictions in matters of fact and show clearly the dangers arising from an oral transmission carried over a number of years—and they show incidentally what would have happened to the Qur'an had not the Khalifa 'Uthman eliminated all danger of having different,

[1] Tawil Mukhtalifu'l-Hadith, p. 120.

[2] Jam'iu't-Tirmidhi, p. 102.

varying versions of that book by transcribing one copy, and then burning all the rest! The traditions underwent no such drastic recension and so stand today with their many internal contradictions manifest to all. These are so evident and are so at variance with any theory of accurate verbal transmission, that soon a doctrine was evolved from a reputed saying of Muhammad, no doubt manufactured for the occasion, that it was sufficient in repeating tradition if the general meaning were retained, without any reference to verbal exactness. Thus it is related that a certain disciple came to Muhammad and said,

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، إِنِّي أَسْمَعُ مِنْكَ الْحَدِيثَ، لَا أَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ أُؤَدِّيَهُ كَمَا أَسْمَعُهُ مِنْكَ، أَزِيدُ حَرْفًا أَوْ أَنْقُصُ حَرْفًا، فَقَالَ: «إِذَا لَمْ تُحِلُّوا حَرَامًا، وَلَمْ تُحَرِّمُوا حَلَالًا، وَأَصَبْتُمُ الْمَعْنَى، فَلَا بَأْسَ.

'O Apostle of God, I hear traditions from you, but I am not able to pass them on as I hear them from you, for they increase in words and decrease in words. He (the prophet) said, If you do not make the forbidden lawful or the lawful forbidden, but retain the meaning, then it does not matter.' [1] Hence, we are told that As Shafi'i, Abu Hanifs, Malik, Ahmad and Hasanu'l-Basri all recognized the right of Muslims, under certain conditions, to merely give the general sense of a tradition as distinct from an exact repetition of the prophet's words.

That such verbal alterations were made is unquestionable. Thus, it is related to that,

كَانَ ابْنُ مَسْعُودٍ إِذَا حَدَّثَ قَالَ: «قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ كَذَا أَوْ نَحْوَهُ.

'When Ibn Mas'ud related a tradition, he used to say, the apostle of God spoke thus, or something like it.' [2] Again, we read,

عَنِ ابْنِ عَوْنٍ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: «كَانَ الْحَسَنُ وَإِبْرَاهِيمُ وَالشَّعْبِيُّ يَأْتُونَ بِالْحَدِيثِ عَلَى الْمَعَانِي.»

'It is related from Ibn 'Aun that he said, Al Hasan, Ibrahim and Ash Sha'bi used to relate the traditions according to the meaning.' [3] Others also are mentioned, who contented themselves with giving the general tenor of the prophet's words.

The reply to all this is obvious. Once admit the principle, and where will it end? If the first reporter, who actually heard a certain tradition from the lips of the prophet, repeated it with certain verbal alterations; and the second reporter, in like manner, added his own emendations; and the third, in turn, introduced still more verbal alterations, and so on through, it may be, a dozen reporters, then what guarantee have we that the tradition, as it now stands, even assuming it to have originated with Muhammad, bears any resemblance, even in meaning, to the original saying which

[1] Tujiyahu'n-nazar ila usulu'l-athar, p. 299.

[2] Ibid., p. 304.

[3] Tujiyahu'n-nazar ila usulu'l-athar, p. 308.

left the prophet's lips. Under the circumstances, we are not surprised to find that such alteration of the meaning did actually take place. An instance is given in the following tradition,

أَنَّ حَمَّادَ بْنَ سَلَمَةَ كَانَ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَخْتَصِرَ الْحَدِيثَ، فَيَقْلِبُ مَعْنَاهُ.

'Verily Hamad was wishing to abbreviate the traditions, but he turned its meaning upside down.' [1]

Another fact worth noticing in connection with the question of the verbal transmission of tradition is that many of the transmitters were non-Arabs, and, as the author of the book quoted above admits, they did not know the Arabic language with its grammatical constructions, and so there occurred in their words many mispronunciations, of which they were unaware, which altered the sense'.

It is sometimes claimed by modern Muslims that the Muhammadan traditions rank, in their degree of inspiration, with the canonical Gospels of the Christian Scriptures: that they are, in other words, 'the uninspired record of inspired sayings'. But this is obviously incorrect. The writers of the New Testament were inspired men and recorded the teaching of Christ under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Even the Qur'an itself acknowledges this. Thus, we read,

وَإِذْ أَوْحَيْتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ.

'(Remember) when I inspired the Apostles (of Christ).' [2] But it is not claimed that the narrators of the traditions were inspired, or in any way protected from error in the task of handing down the multitude of traditions which soon came into existence; so that, even assuming the authenticity of those traditions—surely an impossible assumption, as we have seen—yet there is absolutely no guarantee that, in the long course of oral transmission, they have not suffered both by subtraction and addition.

The late Syed Ahmad Khan, one of the greatest of Indian Muslims, and the founder of Aligarh College, candidly admits the early falsification of tradition, and assigns the following reasons. He writes thus: 'There exists no doubt respecting the circumstance of certain persons having fabricated some hadis in the prophet's name. Those who perpetrated so impudent a forgery were men of the following descriptions:

(1) Persons desirous of introducing some praiseworthy custom among the public forged hadis in order to secure success. Such fabrication is restricted exclusively to those hadis which treat of the advantages and benefits which reading the Qur'an and praying procure to anyone, both in this world and the next; which show how reciting

[1] Ibid., p. 314.

[2] Sura al-Ma'idah, verse 111.

passages from the Qur'an cures every disease, etc., the real object of such frauds being to lead the public into the habit of reading the Qur'an and praying. According to our religion, the perpetrators of such frauds, or of any others, stand in the list of sinners.

(2) Preachers, with a view of collecting large congregations around them, and of amusing their hearers, invented many traditions, such traditions being only those which describe the state and condition of paradise and of hell, as well as the state and condition of the soul after death, etc., in order to awaken the fear of God's wrath and the hope of salvation.

(3) Those persons who made alterations in the religion of the prophet, and who, urged by their prejudices, carried the same to extremes, and who, for the purpose of successfully confronting their controversial antagonists, forged such traditions in order to favour their own interested views.

(4) Unbelievers who maliciously coined and circulated spurious hadis.' [1]

Despite these assertions of the learned Syed, innumerable traditions of the classes named by him still exist in the great collections of Bukhari and Muslim and confirm what has been said above with regard to the absolute unreliability of those collections.

The fact is, as we have seen, neither the authenticity nor the integrity of Muslim tradition can be established. On the contrary, there is every reason to doubt both. And let it not be forgotten that it is upon the traditions, far more than upon the Qur'an, that the great systems of Muslim jurisprudence are based. The Islam current throughout the greater part of the world to-day is the Islam, not of the Qur'an, but of the traditions; and the Muhammad who is reverenced as a prophet of God by 200,000,000 of the human race is not the weak and erring man described in the Qur'an, but the semi-divine creation of Semitic imagination depicted in the traditions. No intelligent and honest Muslim should any longer tolerate such an anomaly.

[1] SYED AHMAD KHAN: Essay on Mohammedan Tradition; quoted in the Dictionary of Islam, pp. 641, 642.

CHAPTER III
THE COMPILATION AND SYSTEMATISATION OF THE TRADITIONS

WE have seen, in the preceding chapters, that Muhammadan tradition was at first transmitted orally; and we have further noticed how that fact gave unlimited opportunities for the falsification of old, and the fabrication of new, traditions. It was not until nearly a hundred years later that any systematic attempt was made to gather the then existing traditions into a regular written collection. Then the obvious falsification that was taking place roused the Umayyad Khalifa, 'Umar II, who occupied the Khalifate at Damascus during the years 99-101 A.H., to try and prevent further loss by preserving in written form the traditions then current. His reason for so doing is stated very clearly to be the fact, that with the death of the first companions and the scattering of their successors,

قَلَّ الضَّبْطُ، وَاتَّسَعَ الْخَرْقُ، وَكَادَ الْبَاطِلُ يَلْتَبِسُ بِالْحَقِّ.

'Exactness (in transmission) grew less, untrustworthiness increased, and the false began to be mixed with the true.' [1] Bukhari tells us that,

كَتَبَ عُمَرُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْعَزِيزِ إِلَى أَبِي بَكْرِ بْنِ حَزْمٍ: «انْظُرْ مَا كَانَ مِنْ حَدِيثِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَاكْتُبْهُ، فَإِنِّي خِفْتُ دُرُوسَ الْعِلْمِ وَذَهَابَ الْعُلَمَاءِ.»

'Umar wrote to Abu Bakr bin Hazam (and said), Look out what you can find of the traditions of the prophet of God, and write them down; for I fear the destruction of knowledge and the passing away of the learned.' [2]

This man, Abu Bakr, we are told, was the deputy of 'Umar at Medina, and died in the year 120 of the Muslim era. The collection made by him, unfortunately, no longer exists. We only know that it was made, and that it was quickly followed by others; but no authentic collection of traditions of an earlier date than the middle of the second century now exists.

The idea of collecting the traditions having once been mooted, enthusiasm for the task spread in every direction, and soon the most extraordinary zeal was developed for the search after alleged sayings and anecdotes of the prophet. A class of men arose, called 'collectors', who devoted their lives to the business of collecting traditions, and who scoured the whole Muslim world in search of what was represented to them as authentic reports of what Muhammad had said or done. Little

[1] Al Qastalani: Sharah Sahihu'l-Imamu'l-Bukhari vol. i, p, 3.

[2] Sahihu'l-Bukhari, Kitabu'l-'Ilm.

or no critical selection appears to have been made, and the collectors accepted without demur anything and everything which purported to come from the prophet, provided only the *silsilah*, or chain of reporters, satisfied their requirements. So far as can be ascertained, it was Bukhari who first adopted rules of critical selection. The canons, however, which guided him, were scarcely worth the name, and left ample room for the inclusion of false traditions in his collection. Thus, speaking of Al Bukhari and the collectors who preceded him, the author of a work frequently quoted in these pages says,

وَكَانَتِ الْكُتُبُ قَبْلَهُ مَمْزُوجًا فِيهَا الصَّحِيحُ بِغَيْرِهِ.

'In the books which preceded him (Bukhari), sound traditions were mixed up with non-sound.' [1]

It will be well, before we proceed to note briefly some of the principal collections of traditions which came into existence during the next two hundred years, to look once again at the facts as they have been brought before us. Here we have a great mass of tradition, produced largely by unscrupulous forgers, and handed down orally for nearly a hundred years, before any systematic attempt is made to reduce it to writing and compile it into a collection. During this time various influences, political, social and religious, had been at work to bias the judgment of both reporters and collectors; and when at last an authoritative collection was ordered, it was ordered by an Umayyad Khalifa at Damascus, who would, without doubt, have suppressed all traditions favourable to the claims of the rival house of 'Ali. The story of the unfortunate Abu 'Abdu'r-Rahmanu'n-Nasa'i throws a flood of light upon this subject. An Nasa'i, to give him the name by which he is best known, was a famous collector of traditions, and the author of one of the six great standard collections still used to-day. He was born in Khorasan in 214 A.H., and subsequently journeyed to Cairo, and thence to Damascus. At the latter place he stirred up mob violence against himself by compiling a book of traditions on the virtues of 'Ali. The Umayyad mob interrupted his recital by asking him whether he knew similar traditions in favour of Mu'awiyah, 'Ali's political rival. Upon his replying that he did not, he was so severely beaten that he died soon after from the effects. This incident is eloquent of the extent to which political influences were brought to bear on the compilation of the traditions.

The earliest collections of traditions, still extant, were works on Muslim jurisprudence. These were founded largely upon the traditions of Muhammad. Thus each great theological school came to have its own collection, upon which the laws of its own particular system were founded. The earliest of these was the *Muwatta* of

[1] Tujiyahu'n-nazar ila usulu'l-athar, p. 8.

Abu ‘Abdullah Malik bin Anas of Medina, who died in 179 A.H. [1] This great scholar is deservedly renowned; and many of the later collectors and compilers made use of the material brought together by him. He was at one time the teacher of the famous Harunu’r-Rashid.

Following the legal collections of traditions came a class known as *musnads*. These were collections in which the traditions were arranged under the respective names of the first relators, such as ‘Ayesha, Abu Huraira, etc., without any reference whatever to the subject matter. We have already referred to the *musnad* of Ibn Hanbal, who died in 241

Still later came the great collections known as the *Musannaf*, the arranged or classified. In these collections the traditions were arranged strictly according to their contents and were divided into chapters in which the various subjects, legal, ritual, etc., were grouped together. Of these latter six great collections stand pre-eminent to-day.

The first is that of Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad bin Isma’il Al Bukhari. This scholar was born in Bukhara in 194 A.H. and died in 256 A.H. He is said to have conceived the idea of collecting traditions from a dream which he had. ‘I saw in a dream,’ he said, ‘the prophet of God, from whom I brushed away flies. When I awoke, I enquired of one skilled in the interpretation of dreams, the meaning of the vision. He said to me, You shall keep lies from him.’ Thus encouraged Al Bukhari set out upon his search for traditions, and for sixteen years is said to have wandered over Iraq, Arabia, Syria and Egypt. He collected during that period the enormous number of 600,000 traditions, but, as we have already indicated, rejected all but 7,275. It is also related of him that of 40,000 men who professed to relate to him traditions of the prophet, only 2,000 of them were acknowledged by him as trustworthy! Bukhari’s great collection, known as the *Sahihu’l-Bukhari* is, perhaps, the most popular of all extant collections of traditions. Yet there is no guarantee whatever that this man was more successful than others in separating the true from the false. If it be remembered that Bukhari died in the middle of the third century of the *Hijra*, or Muslim era, the reader will be able to arrive at a just appreciation of the difficulties of his task. How could he, we ask, or any other man, after such a lapse of time, decide amongst the multitude of traditions as to which were true and which false? Moreover, the very canons of criticism adopted by Bukhari differed from those of Muslim, his celebrated disciple. Hence some traditions which would be considered as genuine according to the canons of the one would be rejected as spurious if judged by the standards set up by the other. Thus we read with regard to a certain tradition,

[1] There is an extraordinary slip here in Muir's Mohammedan Controversy. p. 117, where the author is made to-say, One of the earliest (collections) is that of Muatta, who died in 179 A.H.

قَالُوا فِيهِ: «هَذَا حَدِيثٌ صَحِيحٌ عَلَى شَرْطِ مُسْلِمٍ، وَلَيْسَ بِصَحِيحٍ عَلَى شَرْطِ الْبُخَارِيِّ، لِكَوْنِ هَؤُلَاءِ عِنْدَ مُسْلِمٍ مِمَّنِ اجْتَمَعَتْ فِيهِمُ الشُّرُوطُ الْمُعْتَبَرَةُ، وَلَمْ يَثْبُتْ عِنْدَ الْبُخَارِيِّ.»

'They said with regard to it: This is a sound tradition according to the canons laid down by Muslim, but it is not sound according to the canons of Bukhari, by reason of the fact that these (relators) are, in the estimation of Muslim, of the number in whom all the important conditions required by Muslim are fulfilled. But it is not attested (as sound) in the opinion of Bukhari.' [1]

This fact is important; for if the two greatest of all the traditionists, Bukhari and Muslim, disagree as to the canons of criticism to be employed in ascertaining the authenticity and credibility of the traditions, then what value can be attached to their respective collections?

An excellent illustration of the way traditions were invented to give authority and precedence to certain collections is given by Al Qastalani. The story is as follows: Abu Zaid Al Maruzi said, 'I was sleeping between the pillar and the place (of prayer) when I saw the prophet of God in my dream. He said to me, O Abu Zaid, how long will you continue to study the book of As Shafi'i and not study my book? So I said, O Apostle of God, and what is thy book? He said, The collection of Muhammad Isma'il (i.e. al Bukhari).' [2]

Of practically equal authority with the collection of Bukhari is that of Muslim bin Hajjaj who was born at Nishapur in Khorasan in 204 A.H., and died in 260 A.H. Out of 300,000 traditions collected by this man, only some 4,000, after deleting repetitions, were retained by him as genuine. Even these, upon his own admission, are open to grave suspicion. Thus his commentator, An Nawawi, reports him as frankly admitting,

وَضَعَ فِيهِ أَحَادِيثَ كَثِيرَةً مُخْتَلَفًا فِي صِحَّتِهَا، لِكَوْنِهَا مِنْ حَدِيثِ مَنْ ذَكَرْنَاهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ نَذْكُرْهُ، مِمَّنِ اخْتُلِفَ فِي صِحَّةِ حَدِيثِهِ.

'He (Muslim) placed in it (i.e. the *Sahih* of Muslim) many traditions about the truth of which people differed, by reason of the fact that they belong to the traditions of those whom we mentioned, and whom we did not mention, about the truth of whose traditions people differed.' [3]

Moreover, it is known that Muslim relied almost entirely upon the judgment of one man, Abu Zar'ah al Razi, in his choice of traditions. Thus it is related by An Nawawi that

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[1] An Nawawi: Sharah Sahih Muslim, vol. i. p. 28.

[2] Al Qastalani: Sharah Sahihu'l-Imamu'l-Bukhari, vol. i, p. 124.

[3] An Nawawi: Sharah Sahih Muslim, vol. i, p. 20.

قَالَ مَكِّيُّ بْنُ عَبْدَانَ: سَمِعْتُ مُسْلِمًا يَقُولُ: «عَرَضْتُ كِتَابِي هَذَا عَلَى أَبِي زُرْعَةَ الرَّازِيِّ، فَكُلُّ مَا أَشَارَ أَنَّ لَهُ عِلَّةً تَرَكْتُهُ، وَكُلُّ مَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ صَحِيحٌ وَلَيْسَ لَهُ عِلَّةٌ خَرَّجْتُهُ.»

'Maka bin 'Abdan said, I heard Muslim say, I referred this book of mine to Abu Zar'ah al Razi. Then everything which he indicated as faulty I abandoned, and everything which he said was authentic and faultless I incorporated it (into my book !)' [1]

Another famous collector of traditions was Abu Da'ud As Sijistani. He was born in Sistan in 202 A.H. and died in 275 A.H. He, like Bukhari, travelled over many countries in search of traditions, of which he collected no less than 500,000. But, like his illustrious predecessor, he found the overwhelming proportion of the traditions pure fiction; and ultimately embodied some 4,800 in his *Sunan*. Not all of these, however, are above suspicion; for he himself admitted the presence of doubtful traditions in his collection in the following words,

ذَكَرْتُ فِيهِ الصَّحِيحَ، وَمَا يُشْبِهُهُ، وَمَا يُقَارِبُهُ.

'I have mentioned in it the authentic, those which seem to be so, and those which are nearly so.' [2]

Ibn Majah, another of the great collectors, whose work the *Kitabu's Sunan* is one of the six standard collections of traditions, was born in 209 A.H. and died in 273 A.H. He retained only 4,000 traditions in his collection, which, like those of Abu Da'ud, An-Nasa'i and Tirmidhi, deals almost exclusively with legal traditions. The collections of Bukhari and Muslim, on the other hand, cover a much wider field, and contain traditions on almost every conceivable subject, from the manner in which the prophet cleaned his teeth to the nature of the heavenly bliss reserved for the faithful.

Another renowned traditionist was Abu 'Isa Muhammad at-Tirmidhi. He was born at Tirmidh (Termez), as his name indicates, in 209 A.H. and died in 299 A.H. His book, the *Jami'*, is still largely used, and is especially useful as pointing out the difference between different schools of Muhammadan law. He was the first to issue a selection of forty traditions, a practice which has been imitated by very many of his successors.

The sixth, and last, of the great collectors was Abu 'Abdu'r Rahman an Nasa'i. This scholar was born at Nasa in Khorasan in the year 214 A.H. and died in 303 A.H. He was, therefore, the latest of the six great collectors. We have already mentioned the tragic circumstances connected with his death. His collection, as it exists to-day, is a revised and . abbreviated edition of a much larger work, and is called the *Sunan*

[1] Ibid. vol. i, p. 27. This tradition is also given by Al Qastalani, vol. I, p. 111.

[2] Tujiyahu'n-nazar ila usulu'l-athar, p. 150.

An-Nasa'i, or *Al Mujtaba*, the selected. It deals particularly with small details of ritual.

The six great collections mentioned above exist to-day under the name of the Al *Kutubu's-sitta*, or 'six (correct) books. They are not all regarded as of equal authority, however; for the first two, those of Bukhari and Muslim, are called *sahih*, sound or authentic, whilst the remainder are simply known as the *sunan*, 'usages'.

The learned Sir William Muir has pointed out that these six collections all came into existence during the 'Abbaside Khalifate, and at a time when 'every word in favour of Muavia (the then deceased Umayyad Khalifa) rendered the speaker liable to death, and when all were declared outlaws who would not acknowledge 'Ali to be the most distinguished of mankind.' It is not difficult to see, how, under such circumstances, an impartial and unbiased collection was quite impossible. As a matter of fact, there were not wanting critics of the very *Sahihain*, the two *Sahihs* of Bukhari and Muslim. Thus Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali bin 'Umar al Daraqutni, in his work entitled *Al Istidrakat wa'l-tatabbu*, proves the uncertainty of two hundred of the traditions accepted in the two *Sahihs* of Bukhari and Muslim! This author was a learned jurisconsult and learned the traditions at an early age at the feet of Abu Bakr bin Mujahid. [1]

Another scholar who criticized the works of Bukhari and Muslim was Al-Bayyi, Qadi of Nishapur. He wrote the *Kitabu'l-Mustadrak* as a criticism of the two *Sahihs* in order to prove that several traditions overlooked in these two works were perfectly authentic and had been wrongly passed over. [2]

It only remains to be said that the Shiahs reject *in toto* the 'six correct books mentioned above, and use in their place the following five collections, upon which they base their civil and religious laws:—

(1) The *Kafi* of Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Ya'qub who died in 329 A.H.; (2) the *Man-la-Yastahzirahu'l-Faqih* of Shaikh 'Ali who died in 381 A.H.; (3) the *Tahzib* of Shaikh Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Husain who died in 466 A.H.; (4) the *Istibsar* by the same author; and (5) the *Nahju'l-Balaghah* by Syedu'r-Razi who died in 406 A.H. It will be noticed that the Shiah collections were all compiled later than the six collections of the Sunnis, and, generally speaking, they are regarded as of less authority and value by non-Muslim scholars—the only ones likely to exercise an independent judgment in the matter.

The collections mentioned above, however, do not exhaust the list. Indeed, it is stated in the *Dictionary of Islam* that, according to the *Ithafu'n-Nubala'*, there are no less than 1,465 different collections in existence. One of the most popular Sunni collections in use today is that known as *Mishkatu'l Masabih*, 'the Niche of Lights'.

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[1] CLEMENT HUART: Arabic Literature, p. 223.

[2] Ibid., pp. 223, 224.

This work was compiled by Shaikh Waliu'd-Din in 737 A.H. An English translation of it was made more than a hundred years ago; but it is long since out of print, and copies are now rare and expensive.

It must not be thought that the mere compilation of the traditions, the account of which we have been obliged to dismiss in a few lines, represents all the labour bestowed upon the subject by early Muslims. On the contrary, a new science, the science of tradition, was brought into existence in order to sift and classify the enormous mass of traditions then existing. Many men spent their lives in the study of proper names, and for this a separate science, 'the science of men', was invented for the criticism and examination of the authorities by whom tradition was handed down. Thus we read of one Ibn 'Abi Hatim who compiled a work, the *Kitabu'l-jarh wa'l-ta'dil*, the 'Book of criticism and correction' in six volumes. Others wrote biographies of the collectors of traditions, or of the witnesses who handed them down. Some composed works dealing with the obscure expressions in the traditions. Others studied the subject of the abrogation of traditions, whilst others, again, drew up lists of all the traditions relating to medicine; whilst one genius arranged his collection of traditions in such a manner that those which guide to what is right appear on the right side, whilst those which counsel the avoidance of evil are ranged on the left! In another, the *Jam'i as-Saghir*, the traditions are arranged alphabetically according to the first letter of each tradition.

But one thing is the science of tradition did not do. Its exponents did not, and would not, critically examine the traditions themselves. The chain of witnesses was, with them, the supreme test of a tradition. If that chain led up, in unbroken succession, to the prophet, then no inherent improbability, no crass absurdity, and no obvious contradiction was allowed to stand in the way of its acceptance! Yet, as we have seen, the premises upon which this reasoning was based are fundamentally unsound, since the reporters themselves, in some cases the original companions of the prophet, were not trustworthy. It is obvious that, under such circumstances, the existence of an unbroken chain of relators meant little or nothing.

Moreover, a well-known custom soon arose of touching up defective *isnads* by bridging over, as it were, the gap in the chain of witnesses, so that one would relate a certain tradition as from a 'companion' of the prophet, when, perhaps, he had not actually seen the person named, but had only heard the tradition from someone else, who had heard the 'companion' relate it. This practice, which was called *tadlis*, was widely adopted, and was instrumental in securing recognition for many traditions which would otherwise have been rejected.

The science of tradition further classified the traditions, either with reference to the characters of the transmitters, or with reference to the quality of the chain. An exhaustive list of these different classes of traditions is given in the introduction to the *Mishkatu'l Masabih* and in other works. It is too long for quotation here. With

reference to the first class, however, it may be stated that traditions are roughly divided into three classes. The first is the *sahih* tradition, that is, one which has been handed down by a succession of trustworthy witnesses, and is, therefore, accepted as genuine. The second is the *hasan*, the good tradition. The transmitters in this class are not considered of such good authority as the first, but, for all practical purposes, the *hasan* traditions are accepted by Muslims as authoritative. The third class is known as *da'if* or weak. The narrators of this class are considered of doubtful character, or of bad memory; consequently the 'weak' tradition has little value in the eyes of scholars.

There are many other subdivisions of traditions. Thus a tradition generally accepted by many distinct chains of narrators is called *mutawatir*. That which has, at least, three such chains is *mashur*, well known. The *gharib*, poor, tradition is that having only one line of narrators, and so is of doubtful authority, whilst the *maudu'a*, invented, is a false tradition, the falsity of which is beyond dispute. The *maqtu'*, an intersected tradition, is one in the chain of transmitters of which a link is missing, and the *isnad* therefore incomplete.

From what has been written in this chapter it will be seen that an immense amount of labour has been devoted to the study and classification of the traditions. Owing, however, to the refusal of Muslims to subject them to any form of internal criticism, those labours have been rendered largely nugatory.

CHAPTER IV
TRADITION AND THE BIBLE

NO serious student of the development of Muhammadanism can fail to be impressed with the fact that Christian thought and doctrine have exercised a tremendous influence upon the ever-expanding mass of tradition which grew up after the death of Muhammad. He himself knew singularly little of Christian truth. His references to Christianity in the Qur'an are extremely vague and often startlingly inaccurate. Not only does he confuse Mary, the mother of Jesus, with Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, [1] but he mistakenly conceives of the Christian trinity as consisting of the Father, the Virgin Mary and the Son. [2] On the other hand, his references to the birth and infancy of Jesus approximate much more closely to the legends of the Apocryphal writings than to the historical records of the canonical Gospels. His later followers, however, knew better. The conquest of Christian countries like Syria, Palestine and Egypt had brought them into close contact with Christian civilization and Christian doctrine. Not only so, but the large numbers of Christian apostates who had embraced Islam as a result of the Muslim wars of conquest, with their attendant oppressions, were also instrumental in bringing to Muhammadans a more adequate conception of Christian truth. It was impossible for these Christian converts to Islam to abandon in a day their old habits of thought, and to drop entirely the phraseology of the Scriptures with which they had been familiar from childhood. The result is seen in a great influx of Christian thought and sentiment into the body of Islamic tradition, which was then in process of development. Thus it came about that many of the concepts of Christianity were introduced into Islam and exerted a strong formative influence upon the character of Muslim tradition, if not of Muslim canon law.

It does not require a very close acquaintance with Muslim tradition to enable one to perceive something of the process by which, as a direct result of this impact of Christian ideas, the sentiment and teaching of the Christian Church found a place in the body of Muslim tradition, and came, ultimately, to be ascribed to Muhammad himself. There is no doubt whatever, as we shall presently show, that many of the later Muslim theologians and traditionists adopted without compunction those passages of the New Testament which appeared to them as worthy in sentiment and noble in thought, and deliberately attributed them to Muhammad. Hence the Christian reader of Muslim tradition is often startled to meet many of the familiar thoughts, and sometimes the exact phraseology of the New Testament put into the mouth of Muhammad and accepted by later Muslims as historical records of his

[1] Qur'an Maryam 19:27-28.

[2] Qur'an Al-Ma'idah 5:116.

utterances. These utterances thus found a permanent place in Muhammadan tradition; for when the great work of the systemation of the traditions was taken in hand, these Christian expressions, in the form of traditions, with of course complete *isnads* to match, were incorporated into the great body of tradition, and remain there to the present day.

But not only do we find widespread evidence of the actual incorporation of Biblical phrases into the body of Muslim tradition, resulting in the ascription of the words of Christ, or his Apostles, to Muhammad, there is also equally clear evidence of a more general influence of Christianity upon Muslim doctrine, and so upon canon law. It is impossible not to see, for example, that the great controversies concerning the eternity of the Qur'an, which shook Islam to its very foundations, were the direct result of the influence of the Christian doctrine of the eternal *Logos*. As Professor Becker points out, 'The eternal nature of the Qur'an was a dogma entirely alien to the strict monotheism of Islam; but the fact was, never realized, any more than the fact that the acceptance of the dogma was a triumph for Graeco-Christian dialectic. There can be no more striking proof of the strength of Christian influence. It was able to undermine the fundamental dogma of Islam, and the Muhammadans never realized the fact.' [1] We have already pointed out [2] how the Christian doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ was, in a similar manner, responsible for the Muslim conception, certainly never held by Muhammad himself, of the '*Light of Muhammad*' which existed prior to all created things.

We now proceed to place before the reader a few illustrations of the manner in which the traditionists plagiarized from the New Testament, or reproduced the sayings of Christ as they had heard them from the lips of Christians, and then attributed them to Muhammad. It is impossible to be sure whether these plagiarisms were intended to be disguised by judiciously chosen verbal alterations, or whether the changes made in the actual phraseology were due to ignorance on the part of the authors; but we think that no candid reader of these pages can rise from their perusal without fully realizing that such plagiarism did take place. To save space, we shall, generally speaking, omit the Arabic Text; but precise references will be appended for those who are desirous of verifying the quotations given.

In the collection of traditions entitled *AI Jam'i as-Saghir*, it is related that Muhammad said, 'Be merciful to him who is upon the earth, then He who is in heaven will be merciful to you.' [3] If this be compared with the words of Christ 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy', 'For if ye forgive men their

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[1] BECKER: Christianity and Islam, pp. 92-3.

[2] See p. 20.

[3] AI Jam'i as-Saghir, vol. i, p. 33.

trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you', [1] it will be seen to be an obvious echo of this part of the sermon on the mount.

Another reputed saying of Muhammad is as follows: 'By Him in whose hands is my life, none of you will believe until I become more beloved to him than his father or his son.' [2] This, again, is an imitation of the words of Christ concerning discipleship, that 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.' [3]

It is impossible, again, not to see in the tradition quoted below a manifest adaptation of the words of Christ addressed to doubting Thomas. It is related in the Gospel that after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, one of His disciples, named Thomas, refused to believe, on the sole testimony of his co-disciples, that Christ was indeed alive. He is stated to have said that unless he saw his Master with his own eyes, he would not believe. Later, when brought face to face with Christ, the latter addressed him thus, 'Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed. [4] Such a powerful incitement to faith was just what was needed for the multitudes who, after the death of Muhammad and the conquest of countries contiguous to Arabia, began to press into the fold of Islam; and so the following imitation of Christ's words was devised in the form of a tradition, and then ascribed Muhammad, 'He is once blessed who sees me and believes in me, but he who has not seen me and yet believes in me is seven times blessed.' [5]

Another reminiscence of the sermon on the mount is found in the following words put into the mouth of Muhammad, 'None of you will believe until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.' [6] The Bible record of Christ's words, from which this garbled version was made reads thus: 'Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' [7] Such teaching, however, was so foreign to the whole spirit of Islam that the famous commentator An Nawawi felt compelled to modify its onerous demands. This he did by declaring that the tradition in question merely meant,

حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ مِثْلَ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ.

'Until he loves for his brother *in Islam* like what he loves for himself!' [8]

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[1] Gospel of Matthew 5:7 and 6:14.

[2] Al Bukhari, vol. I, p. 7.

[3] Gospel of Matthew 10:37.

[4] Gospel of John 20:29.

[5] Al Jam'i as-Saghir, vol. ii, p. 47.

[6] Matanu'l-arba'l nu'n-Nawawiyyah, No. 25.

[7] Gospel of Matthew 7:12.

[8] An Nawawi in Sharah Sahih Muslim, vol. i, p. 439.

There is a curious story preserved by Bukhari and purporting to be related by Ibn ‘Umar which is, unquestionably, a later Muslim attempt to comment, for controversial purposes, on one of the parables of Christ. The parable is as follows, ‘For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all day idle? They say unto him, because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even had come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborer’s, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way. I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.’ [1]

The Muslim parody of this beautiful parable runs thus, ‘The people of the Taurat were given the Taurat, and they laboured until, when midday appeared, they grew weak, and they were each given one carat. Then the people of the Injil were given the Injil, and they laboured until the afternoon prayer, when they grew weak, and they were each given one carat. After that we were given the Qur’an, and we worked until the setting of the sun, and we were each given two carats. Therefore the people of the two books (i.e. Jews and Christians) said, O, our Lord, thou hast given these two carats each, but hast only given us one carat each, and yet we have laboured more than they. God most high said, Have I dealt unjustly with you in any way in the matter of your reward? They said, No. He said, This is my grace I give to whom I will.’ [2]

Another reminiscence of the words of Christ, uttered as a warning against a mere nominal faith, is preserved by Bukhari. The original words, which form a part of the sermon on the mount, are as follows, ‘Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which

[1] Gospel of Matthew 20:1-14.

[2] Zubdatu'l-Bukhari, pp. 35, 36.

is in heaven.' [1] This solemn warning of the Messiah is expanded in the traditions into the following ludicrous story. 'A man will be brought on the day of resurrection and cast into the fire; and his intestines will fall into the fire and wander round like an ass walk round a mill. Then the inhabitants of the fire will gather themselves together unto him, and will say, O so and so, what has happened to you? Were you not in the habit of commanding what is right and of forbidding what is wrong? He will say, I used to command what is right but did not do it myself; and I used to forbid what was wrong, but did it myself.' [2]

One of the most remarkable attempts to reproduce the words of Jesus, as if they were the words of Muhammad, is that in which the prayer taught by Jesus to His disciples and used by Christians throughout the world up to the present day, is, in a hideously garbled form, attributed to Muhammad. The prayer taught by Christ is this, 'Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.' [3] This beautiful prayer as it is put into the mouth of Muhammad by later traditionists runs as follows, 'Our Lord God, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom is in heaven and on earth. As thy mercy is in heaven, so show thy mercy on earth. Forgive us our debts and our sins. Thou art the Lord of the good. Send down mercy from thy mercy and healing from thy healing on this pain, that it may be healed.' [4]

Yet another attempted imitation of one of the great classical sayings of Christ is the following: 'To instruct in knowledge those who are unworthy of it is like putting pearls and jewels and gold on the necks of swine.' [5] This, of course, is an attempt to expound the meaning of the following words of Christ, 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.' [6]

One of the most literal quotations from the New Testament to be found anywhere in the traditions is the following, which is put into the mouth of Muhammad, with, of course, a full *isnad* to match! 'God most high said, I have prepared for my servants what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and what hath not entered into the heart of man.' [7] Let the reader compare these words with the following from the New Testament, and he will not have much difficulty in tracing their origin. 'Eye hath not

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[1] Gospel of Matthew 7:21.

[2] Zubdatu'l-Bukhari, p. 157.

[3] Gospel of Matthew 6:9-15.

[4] Abu Da'ud, vol. i, p. 101. Quoted in Goldziher's Hadith and New Testament, p 18. It is also recorded in the Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu'l-Jana'iz.

[5] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu'l-Ilm.

[6] Gospel of Matthew 7:6.

[7] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Bab Sifatu'l-Jannah.

seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' [1]

Another Biblical phrase which appealed to the imagination of later Muslims, and led them to attribute similar words to Muhammad, is the following description of the saints of olden time as men who 'Confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.' [2] This was shortened into the following maxim, and then put into the mouth of Muhammad, 'Be in the earth as if you were a stranger or a pilgrim.' [3]

Yet another obvious attempt to reproduce one of the gems of the sermon on the mount is connected with Christ's teaching regarding almsgiving. His words are, 'But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth'. [4] Thus in a tradition, purporting to come from Muhammad, the man whom God loves is described as 'the man who gives alms with his right hand, hiding it from his left'. [5] Another version of this tradition given in the *Ihya'* still more closely approximates to the words of Christ. It there reads, 'The man who gives alms and hides it, so that his left hand knows not what his right-hand gives'. [6]

Another plagiarism from the sermon on the mount has reference to salt as a preservative from corruption. The well-known words of Christ on the subject are as follows, 'Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.' [7] If Christians were the salt of the earth, argued the fervent traditionists, how much more were Muslims! So a tradition was promptly manufactured, and put into the mouth of Muhammad, who is then represented as addressing his disciples in these words, 'My companions are in my community like salt in food; for without the salt, the food is not fit to eat.' [8]

It is written of God in the New Testament that, 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being.' [9] This, too, was made into a tradition, and now appears in the following form, 'God has servants who eat in God, drink in Him, and walk in Him'. [10]

In the following tradition we have a manifest attempt to quote the words of Jesus, 'And whereunto shall I liken this generation. It is like unto children sitting in the markets and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye

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[1] 1 Corinthians 2:9.

[2] Hebrews 11:13.

[3] Zubdatu'l-Bukhari, p. 266.

[4] Gospel of Matthew 6:3.

[5] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu'z-Zakat.

[6] Ihya, vol. ii, p. 147. Quoted in Goldziher's Hadith and New Testament, p. 13.

[7] Gospel of Matthew 5:13.

[8] Quoted in Goldziher's Hadith and New Testament, p. 30.

[9] Acts 17:28.

[10] Al Fashani, p. 52. Quoted in the Hadith and New Testament, p. 33.

have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.' [1] In the tradition the following words are said to have been sent down upon Jesus, 'We filled you with longing desire, but ye did not desire; and we mourned unto you, but ye did not weep.' [2]

One of the aphorisms of the Messiah contains a striking figure of speech about a camel passing through the eye of a needle. It is as follows, 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.' [3] Muhammad appears to have heard this from the lips of some Christian. At any rate he produced the following as a revelation, 'Verily they who have charged our signs with falsehood, and have turned away from them in their pride, heaven's gates shall not be opened to them, nor shall they enter paradise, until the camel passeth through the eye of the needle.' [4] Upon this Qur'anic passage the commentators and traditionists have expended a wealth of ingenuity and fancy, all of which, in the form of a tradition, is ascribed to Muhammad. Thus he is represented as saying, 'Verily when an infidel servant is about to part from the world, and bring his soul to futurity, black-faced angels come down to him, and with them sack-cloths. Then they sit from the dead as far as the eye can see; after which the angel of death comes, in order to sit at his head, and says, O impure soul, come out to the wrath of God. The prophet of God said, Then the soul is disturbed in the infidel's body. Then the angel of death draws it out, as a hot spit is drawn out of wet wool, part of which sticks to it at the time of pulling out. Thus, the soul of the infidel, when drawn out from the veins with strength and violence, pulls out part of the veins with it. Then the angel of death takes the soul of the infidel, and having taken it, the angels do not allow it to remain with him the twinkling of an eye; but they take it in the sack-cloth; and a disagreeable smell issues from the soul, like that of the most fetid carcasses that can be met upon the face of the earth. Then the angels carry it upwards, and do not pass by any assembly of angels who do not ask, whose filthy soul is this? They answer, such a one, the son of such a one; and they mention him by the worst names that he bore in the world, till they arrive with it at the lowest heaven, and call for the door to be opened; but it is not done. Then the prophet repeated this revelation, "heaven's gates shall not be opened to them; nor shall they enter paradise, till the camel passeth through the eye of the needle."' [5] Comment upon this ludicrous and unscientific parody of inspiration is surely needless. No intelligent Muslim reader will believe that the spiritual part of man called the soul has either ponder ability or smell! The whole tradition furnishes an excellent illustration of the manner

[1] Gospel of Matthew 11:16-17.

[2] Al Aqadu'l-Farid, vol. i, p. 297.

[3] Gospel of Mark 10:25.

[4] Qur'an al-A'raf 7:40.

[5] Mishkatu'l-Masabih, Kitabu'l-Jana'iz.

in which ignorant and unscrupulous men fabricated traditions, and then, to gain them acceptance, attributed them to Muhammad.

It is written in the Gospel that one of the disciples of Christ once came to him, saying, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven.' [1] The Muslim version of this incident, as ascribed to Muhammad, is as follows: 'A man came to the prophet and said, O Messenger of God, how many times are we to forgive our servant's faults? He was silent. Again, the man asked; but his highness gave no answer. But when the man asked a third time, he said, Forgive your servants seventy times every day. [2]

Perhaps one of the most striking passages of the Bible inculcating the duty of practical benevolence is that in which Christ is pictured as the Judge at the last day, who renders to every man according to his works. The words of Christ are these, 'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divided his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me. I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we there an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you; because ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren; ye have done it unto me.

'Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison; and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when we saw there an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.' [3]

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[1] Gospel of Matthew 18:21-22.

[2] Mishkatu'l-Masabih, Kitabu'n-Nikah.

[3] Gospel of Matthew 25:31-45.

After all that has been written in this chapter, the reader will scarcely be surprised to learn that the striking passage which we have just quoted has been plagiarized by Muslim traditionists, and attributed, in a sadly mutilated form, to Muhammad. This tradition is preserved in the *Mishkat*, and purports to have been transmitted by the notorious Abu Hurairah. The story, as it there appears, runs thus, 'Verily, God will say, at the day of resurrection, O sons of Adam, I was sick, and ye did not visit me. And the sons of Adam will say, O our Defender, how could we visit thee? for thou art the Lord of the universe. And God will say, O men, did you not know that such a one of my servants was sick, and you did not visit him? Did you not know that had you visited him you would have found me? And God will say at the resurrection, O sons of Adam, I asked you for food, and ye gave it me not. And the sons of Adam will say, O our Patron, how could we give thee food, seeing that Thou art the Cherisher of the universe? And God will say, Do you not know that such a one of my servants asked you for bread, and you did not give it him? Did you not know that had you given him victuals, you would have received it (i.e. its reward) with me? And God will say at the resurrection, O sons of Adam, I asked you for water, and ye gave it me not. They will say, O our Cherisher, how could we give thee water, seeing Thou art the Cherisher of the universe? God will say, Such a one of my servants asked you for water, and you did not give it him. Did you not know that had you given it him, you would have received it with me?' [1]

Comment on this obvious appropriation of Bible teaching is surely unnecessary. It will not escape the notice of the observant reader that theological bias was not altogether inactive when the tradition was put into its final shape. Hence, we find Christ, as Judge, displaced by the Muslim God; whilst, in the tradition, far greater emphasis is laid on the Muslim doctrine of salvation by works.

One or two more quotations must suffice before we close this chapter. One of the most striking incidents in the Gospel narrative of Christ's death is that in which He is reported as praying for His murderers in the following words, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do', [2] Even this incident has been put into the form of a tradition, and then foisted upon Muhammad. Thus, he is represented as saying, 'The people of a certain prophet smote him, and wounded him, as he wiped the blood from his face, and said, O God, forgive my people, for they know not.' [3]

The prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, as He contemplated His approaching death, is familiar to all students of the Bible. It is recorded in the Gospel in these words, 'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not, my will, but thine, be done.' [4] What, we wonder, will educate and intelligent

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[1] Mishkatu'l-Masabih, Kitabu'l-Jana'iz.

[2] Gospel of Luke 23:34.

[3] Zubdatu'l-Bukhari, p. 175..

[4] Gospel of Luke 22:42.

Muslims say to the following ludicrous parody of that touching story. In the earlier part of this so-called tradition, it is said that the angel of death, when he approached Moses, in order to claim his body, was struck in the eye by the great lawgiver; and then, the tradition proceeds,

وَلَعَلَّ عِيسَى بْنَ مَرْيَمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَدْ لَطَمَ الْأُخْرَى فَأَعْمَاهُ، لِأَنَّ عِيسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ كَانَ أَشَدَّ لِلْمَوْتِ كَرَاهِيَةً مِنْ مُوسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، وَكَانَ يَقُولُ: «اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كُنْتَ صَارِفًا هَذِهِ الْكَأْسَ عَنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَاصْرِفْهَا عَنِّي.»

'Jesus the son of Mary struck the other (angel) in the eye and blinded him; because Jesus abhorred death even more than Moses did, and prayed to God, saying, O God, if thou, canst take away this cup from any man, then take it away from me!' [1]

It would take us far beyond the limits of this essay to notice the influence of Christianity upon late Muslim literature represented by such works as the Qisasu'l-Anbiya.It must suffice to remark here that, although such books profess to be based upon earlier sources, yet they reveal a much more intimate knowledge of Gospel history, albeit modified and mutilated in the interests of Muslim dogma, than was ever possessed by Muhammad. Those desirous of further information about this chapter should consult Zwemer's the Moslem Christ and Koelle's Mohammed and Mohammedanism.

[1] Tawil Mukhtalifu'l-Hadith, p. 351.

CHAPTER V
TRADITION AND THE QUR'AN

IT is no easy task to define the relationship between the traditions and the Qur'an. On the one hand, a large body of tradition is obviously an expansion of the teaching of the Qur'an. This is very evident in those sections which treat resurrection and judgment, and in the descriptions of Paradise. Most of the social legislation of the Qur'an has also been defined and expanded in hundreds of traditions which are attributed to Muhammad. Thus, as has been already pointed out in an earlier chapter, [1] the traditions have, to a large extent, exercised the functions of a commentary. Indeed, it is to the traditions that the earliest commentators of the Qur'an refer for the exegesis of difficult passages and the historical setting of innumerable personal allusions in the Qur'an. There they found, readymade, and stamped with the imprimatur of the prophet himself, solutions to all the difficulties of Qur'an exegesis. It mattered not that a certain tradition transgressed every canon of decency and morality, or that it taught an absurd science, or a false cosmogony: there it stood, with its *isnad* leading up to the prophet, and, therefore, must be accepted without question or demur! Only thus can one account for the presence in the commentaries of the Qur'an of the puerilities and obscenities which disfigure those works. We shall revert to this subject in the succeeding chapter; but we just note, in passing, that one of the principal functions of the traditions was to preserve the alleged comments of Muhammad upon various passages of the Qur'an.

Yet this is only a very partial statement of the connection subsisting between the two. It has already been remarked that a very large number of the traditions are directly opposed to the teaching of the Qur'an, and must, therefore, according to the dictum of the prophet himself, that 'what does not agree with the Qur'an is not true' be rejected as false. Some of these traditions were the result of controversy: the direct offspring of a diseased imagination which insisted upon the glorification of Muhammad at all costs, and his exaltation in rank above all other prophets. In this class must be placed that large group of traditions which professes to describe the alleged miracles of Muhammad. We have already shown in an earlier chapter [2] that, in the Qur'an, Muhammad consistently disclaimed the power to work miracles. Yet a very large number of traditions have been manufactured for the purpose of exhibiting the prophet of Islam as a great wonderworker. These are obviously the invention of a later age; and we do not propose to deal further with the subject here.

Another class of traditions voices the felt needs of the human heart needs which failed to be met by the teaching of the Qur'an. In this class must be placed the many

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[1] See page 22.

[2] See p. 9.

traditions which picture Muhammad as the great intercessor for sinners at the last day. This felt need of the Muslim heart for a mediator refused to be satisfied with the cold negations of the Qur'an; and the many traditions which now declare that Muhammad will intercede stand as a mute witness to the strength of this great hope of forgiveness through the merits of another. It is admitted that the testimony of the Qur'an on this subject is not always consistent; yet there are not a few passages which state unequivocally that there will be no intercession. Thus, we read,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ أَنفِقُواْ مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُم مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لاَّ بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلاَ خُلَّةٌ وَلاَ شَفَاعَةٌ.

'O believers, give alms of that with which we have supplied you, before the day cometh when there shall be no trafficking, nor friendship, nor intercession.' [1] Again, we read,

ثُمَّ مَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ يَوْمَ لاَ تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِّنَفْسٍ شَيْئاً وَالأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ.

'Who shall teach thee what the day of judgment is? It is a day when one soul shall be powerless for another soul. All sovereignty on that day shall be with God.' [2]

If these statements of the Qur'an be compared with the traditions, the reader will be able to appreciate the vast and essential difference which exists between the teaching of Muhammad and that of his later disciples on this important subject. For example, in a tradition, the following words are ascribed to Muhammad, who, after describing how, in turn, at the last day all other prophets will decline to intercede on account of personal unworthiness, relates that, 'Then the Mussulmans will come to me; and I will ask permission to go into God's court, which will be given. And I will see Almighty God. I will prostrate myself before Him, and He will keep me, so long as he wills, and then will say, Raise up your head, O Muhammad, and say what you wish to say; it will be heard and approved; and ask grace for whoever you like, it will be approved; and ask what you want, it shall be given. Then I will raise up my head, and praise and glorify my Cherisher in a strain which he will teach at that time. After that, I will intercede for them, and God will say, Intercede for a particular class. Then I will come out from the presence and bring that particular class out of hell-fire and will bring them into paradise. After that I will go to God's court to ask grace for another particular class, and will bring them out of hell, and enter them into paradise. After that, I will go into paradise; and in this way will I do for all Mussulmans, so that none but the infidels will remain in hell.' [3] Another tradition makes Muhammad to say, 'I am the beloved of God, and without boasting; and I shall be the bearer of the standard of praise on the day of resurrection; and under it

[1] Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:254.

[2] Qur'an Al-Infitar 82:19. (+ 18-19).

[3] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Bubu'l-Haud wa's-Shufa'at.

will be Adam, and all the prophets besides. And I shall be the first intercessor, and the first whose intercessions will be approved of on the day of resurrection.' [1]

These traditions, and scores of similar ones, voice a deep-seated need of the human heart for a mediator. This cry of sinful souls refuses to be stifled; and, despite the teaching of the Qur'an to the contrary, all over the Muhammadan world to-day men and women are looking to the fancied intercession of their prophet to save them from the consequences of their sins. Man in all parts of the world, and in all ages, has felt his need of a savior; and Muslims, like the rest, have clung to a belief in the mercy of God mediated through the person of a divinely appointed saviour. Thus, the traditions of Islam reflect the thoughts and hopes of Muslims, who have worked out in fulsome detail stories such as those we have quoted above.

Another felt need, deep-rooted in the heart of man, is the need of an atonement for sin. All down the ages men have clung to the conviction that only through the shedding of blood can there come the remission of sins; and sacrifice, in some form or other, has been found almost everywhere where the human race exists. The Qur'an, however, gave the lie to this God-given instinct, and taught that there is no atoning efficacy in sacrifice. Thus, we read, 'And the camels have we appointed you for the sacrifice to God. Much good have ye in them. Make mention therefore of the name of God over them (when ye slay them) as they stand in a row; and when they are fallen over on their sides, eat of them and feed him who is content (and asketh not) and him who asketh. Thus, have we subjected them to you, to the intent ye should be thankful. By no means can their flesh reach unto God, neither their blood; but piety on your part reacheth him.' [2]

But here, again, the Muslim heart refused to be deaf to the voice within, and so the traditions are full of the subject of substitutionary sacrifice, and picture Muhammad as offering sacrifices both for himself and for his people. That he slaughtered camels in sacrifice is probably historically true, but it is difficult to believe, in face of the Qur'anic passage just quoted, that he uttered the words attributed to him in the traditions. At any rate, the fact stands clear that the great central festival of the Muslim world to-day is the '*Idu'l-Azha'* or Feast of Sacrifice. It is to the traditions, and not to the Qur'an, that we must go for details, albeit mixed up with much legendary material, of the institution of this great festival; and it is the traditions which put into the mouth of Muhammad sentiments far removed from the doctrine of sacrifice set forth in the passage of the Qur'an we have just quoted. Thus Muslim has preserved a tradition to the effect that Muhammad, when offering sacrifice,

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[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Bab-Fadd'il Saiyyidu'l-Mursalin.

[2] Qur'an Al-Hajj 22:36-37.

أَخَذَ الْكَبْشَ فَأَضْجَعَهُ، ثُمَّ ذَبَحَهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: «بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، اللَّهُمَّ تَقَبَّلْ مِنْ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَمِنْ أُمَّةِ مُحَمَّدٍ»، ثُمَّ ضَحَّى بِهِ.

'Seized the ram and threw it on its side; then he slaughtered it. Then he said, In the name of God, O God accept (this) from Muhammad and from the family of Muhammad, and from the people of Muhammad. Then he offered it as a sacrifice.' [1] In another tradition Muhammad is reported to have sacrificed two rams, saying, as he did so,

اللَّهُمَّ مِنْكَ وَلَكَ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدٍ وَأُمَّتِهِ، بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ.

'O God (this) is from thee, and for thee on behalf of Muhammad and the people of Muhammad. In the name of God. God is great.' [2]

It is noteworthy that 'Abdul-Haqq, the commentator of the *Mishkat*, renders the words 'from thee' and 'for thee' by the words 'from thy favor, and for thy satisfaction.'

Another striking utterance attributed to Muhammad by later Muslims, and handed down in the form of a tradition, is the following: 'Man hath not done anything on the day of sacrifice more pleasing to God than shedding blood; for verily the animal sacrificed will come, on the day of resurrection, with its horns, its hair, and its hoofs: and verily its blood reacheth the acceptance of God before it falleth upon the ground.' [3] This tradition, it will be noticed, contains a specific verbal contradiction of the Qur'an statement that neither the flesh nor the blood of the victim sacrificed reaches unto God; in other words, it directly inculcates a belief in the atoning efficacy of sacrifice.

Perhaps the most remarkable statement, however, in the traditions regarding the *expiatory* value of sacrifice is that contained in the following tradition, in which Muhammad is represented as affirming that, at the resurrection, Jews and Christians will be cast into hell as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of Muslims!! The tradition, which is preserved by Muslim, is as follows,

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ دَفَعَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ نَصْرَانِيًّا فَيَقُولُ هَذَا فِكَاكُكَ مِنَ النَّارِ.

'The apostle of God said, At the day of resurrection God will hand over a Jew or a Christian to every Muslim, and will say, This is a (means of) your redemption from

[1] Sahih Muslim, vol. ii. p. 162.

[2] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Babu'l-Adhiyyat.

[3] Ibid.

hellfire.' [1] In this tradition we have substitutionary sacrifice taught to its fullest extent, for, as 'Abdul- Haqq, the commentator remarks *in loc*,

گویا کافر عوض اور بدل مومنوں کے ہیں۔ بیچ جگہوں ان کے کہ دوزخ میں ہیں۔

'It is as if the Kafirs became the substitutes of the believers in their place in hellfire.'

Another Muslim custom, mentioned in the traditions, but originally derived from Arab heathenism, is the ceremony known as '*aqiqa*. This consists in shaving the head of an infant child on the seventh day after birth and then offering in sacrifice on its behalf one or two sheep according to the sex of the child. It is distinctly stated in the *Mishkat* that this was a pre-Islamic custom. Thus, we read that, Buraidah said, We used, in the times of ignorance, when a boy was born to any one of us, to slay a goat and rub his head with the blood. Then when Islam came, we slew a goat on the seventh day and shaved the child's head and rubbed saffron on it.' [2] This rite does not seem to be even alluded to in the Qur'an, but the traditions have laid the foundations for a practice that has become almost universal amongst Muslim. Our interest in it here arises from the fact that it, too, bears clear testimony to a doctrine of *substitutionary* sacrifice in Islam. In the traditions Muhammad is represented as sacrificing a ram each for Hasan and Husain. He is also reported to have instructed his followers to sacrifice for their children, in these words, 'He to whom a child is born should sacrifice on its behalf. Let him sacrifice two sheep for a son, and one sheep for a daughter.' [3] In another tradition from Samra the prophet is represented as saying 'Every male child shall be redeemed by his *'aqiqa*, which is to be sacrificed for him on his seventh day; and so evil shall be removed from him.' [4] The following prayer, which is offered at the '*aqiqa* ceremony, leaves no doubt as to the modern significance of the rite, and shows how far Muslims have outgrown the Qur'anic conception of sacrifice. 'O God, this is the '*aqiqa* sacrifice of my son so and so; its blood for his blood, its flesh for his flesh, its bone for his bone, its skin for his skin, its hair for his hair. O God, make it a redemption for my son from the fire; for truly I have turned my face to Him who created the heavens and the earth, a true believer.' [5]

Thus, in the conception of sacrifice found in the traditions we see the Muslim response to that innate belief in the atoning efficacy of sacrifice which is all but universal amongst the nations of the earth. If that belief, implanted there by God

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[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Babu'l-Hisab.

[2] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu't-Ta'amah.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Zwemer in the Moslem World, vol. vi, p. 238.

[5] Quoted by Zwemer in the Moslem World, vol. vi, p. 249.

Himself, contradicts the teaching of the Qur'an, then—so much the worse for the Qur'an!

Any careful comparison of the traditions with the Qur'an will reveal innumerable discrepancies and contradictions. Many of these have particular reference to the person of Muhammad, who, in the traditions, has been almost deified and raised to a place of honour almost equal to that of God Himself. It would take us too far to attempt a detailed exposition of this point here. Some idea of the extravagance of language used in these traditions may be gained from the following, which is put into the mouth of Muhammad. 'I am the first man in point of coming out from the grave, and am the guide to man, when he shall go to God's court. And I am the speaker of grace for men near God, when the prophets will be silent, and I am the asker of grace, when men shall be made to stand up. And I am the giver of joyful news to man of grace, when he shall despond of God's mercy, and the key of paradise will be in my hand, and all the standard of praise. And I shall be the greatest of the sons of Adam near my Cherisher, particularly on that day; and I shall have a thousand servants waiting upon me, you might say like scattered pearls.' [1] So great is the prophet's glory that his very disciples and wives are made to share, for his sake, in the encomiums of God. Thus, for example, Muhammad is represented as addressing a disciple, Ubai bin Kab by name, in these words, 'Verily, God has commanded me to read the Qur'an to thee.' 'Did God mention me by name to thee?' came the astonished reply. 'Yes' said the prophet. 'Then I have been mentioned by the Lord of the Universe!' replied the awed Ubai, as he burst into tears. Bukhari mentions another 'companion', at whose death, so the tradition runs, 'the throne of God trembled'! [2] In a still more blasphemous tradition, the angel Gabriel is represented as coming to Muhammad and asking him to convey the greetings of God and himself to Khadija, the wife of the prophet; and, continued Gabriel, 'Give her the good news of an abode in heaven.' [3]

We have already remarked that the Muhammad of the Qur'an, in sharp contrast to all the above, is a weak, erring mortal, whose prayers for pardon are again and again recorded, and who is represented as, on one occasion, being reprehended by God for his unjust treatment of a poor blind beggar. [4] The Qur'an knows nothing either of the miracles or the intercession of Muhammad; whilst the traditions are full of both, and in the traditions, we have a theory of the substitutionary value of sacrifice which is altogether alien to the Qur'an. Yet the value of contemporary evidence must outweigh that of later times; and there can be no question that the

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[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Bab Fada'll-Sayyidu'l-Mursalin.

[2] Zubdatu'l-Bukhari, p. 181.

[3] Ibid. p. 189.

[4] Qur'an 'Abasa 80:1-11 and Tafsir Baidawi, in loc.

Qur'an represents, much more nearly than the traditions, the real teaching of Muhammad.

One other remark must be made before bringing this chapter to a close. We have referred to the universal belief in mediation and atonement. This great hope of the human heart cannot be permanently stifled; and if earnest Muslims fail to find in the Qur'an any adequate expression of this God given means of salvation, then it is surely their highest wisdom to seek elsewhere the satisfaction of this great instinct of the human heart. They will find it in Christ, who gave His life a ransom for sin, and now sits at the right hand of God, ever living to make intercession for us.

CHAPTER VI
THE TRADITIONS AND REASON

IN the previous chapters we have shown that large portions of the traditions, far from being a divine revelation mediated to the world by the prophet Muhammad, are the fabrications of a later age. We have also seen that many of the sayings ascribed to Muhammad are gross plagiarisms from the Christian Scriptures. Other traditions, again, directly contradict the teaching of the Qur'an, so that it is obviously impossible for the sincere Muslim to accept both. In the present chapter we propose to approach the subject from another angle, and to ask whether the traditions, as they stand today, can be accepted as a revelation from the standpoint of reason. Are they of such a character that educated and intelligent men can accept them as indeed a divine revelation? We propose, in this chapter, to very largely let the traditions themselves supply the answer. For ourselves, we are convinced that it is pure ignorance of the contents of such standard collections as those of Bukhari and Muslim—not to mention other less well- known collections—which allows many intelligent Muhammadans to subscribe to the general Muslim belief that the traditions are inspired, and, therefore, to be accepted as a divine rule of faith and practice.

We now propose to quote a number of traditions which are palpably false, because contrary to fact. Others, which we shall quote, are obviously equally false as being a jumble of the most puerile superstition; whilst still others contain such dishonoring representations of God that it becomes impossible for intelligent men to accept them as inspired.

We have already referred to the large number of traditions which describe the fabulous night-journey of Muhammad to Jerusalem, and thence to heaven. In the *Siratu'l-Halabiyya* [1] and other works it is distinctly stated that Muhammad, having arrived at Jerusalem, tied his wonderful steed, Buraq, to the very post at the temple gates to which previous prophets were wont to tie their steeds, after which, he entered the temple and performed his prayers. Now this tradition is demonstrably false, because the Jewish temple was destroyed by the Roman general Titus in 70 A.D., and was never afterwards rebuilt; consequently, there was no temple standing at the time when Muhammad is supposed to have entered it!

In the same way, the traditions contain not a few egregious blunders with regard to the anatomy of the human body. Thus, for example, Muhammad is reported to have said that

فِي الْإِنْسَانِ ثَلَاثُمِائَةٍ وَسِتُّونَ مَفْصِلًا، فَعَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَتَصَدَّقَ عَنْ كُلِّ مَفْصِلٍ مِنْهُ بِصَدَقَةٍ.

[1] Siratu'l-Halabiyya, vol. i. p. 403.

'There are in man three hundred and sixty joints, therefore it is incumbent upon him to give alms for each one of them.' [1] Now, seeing that there are only about two hundred bones in the human body, it would puzzle Abu Da'ud, who is responsible for preserving this tradition, to explain to us how there could be nearly double that number of joints!

An equally absurd statement, which is attributed to Muhammad, and claims to have been related by 'Ayesha, is to the effect that, 'The breaking of the bones of a dead body is the same as breaking the bones of the living.' [2] That is, as Abdu'l-Haqq, the commentator of the *Mishkat,* explains, 'The dead feels pain just as the living does!'

In another tradition Muhammad is reported as saying, 'If a fly falls into the drink of any one of you, then let him fully immerse it, after which let him take it out; for verily there is disease in one of its wings, and healing in the other.' [3] According to another tradition, Muhammad is responsible for saying, 'Do not bathe in water warmed by the sun, because it causes leprosy.' [4] Muhammad's knowledge of medicine, or rather the knowledge of those who fabricated the traditions and then foisted them on to the prophet, may be gauged by the following, 'God has sent down no pain without sending down a remedy for it.' 'Fever is from the burning heat of hell, therefore cool it with water.' [5] The reader will please notice that this childish statement is attested by both Bukhari and Muslim as coming from the prophet himself. Either then, Muhammad did really utter these words, or else Bukhari and Muslim were both mistaken in accepting the tradition as genuine. In either case the Muhammadan is landed in a serious difficulty; for if Muhammad did really utter the words attributed to him, then they are words which no sane man can accept as inspired. If, on the other hand, he did not utter them, then what value can he attached to the collections of Bukhari and Muslim, or to the canons employed by these men in determining the truth or falsity of the traditions? On the whole, if the traditions are to be believed, Muhammad had more faith in spells and charms than in medicine for the cure of disease, and there are many sayings attributed to him which make one wonder at the credulity of those who gave such traditions a place in their collections. Thus, for example, we read that Muhammad allowed the use of charms in the case of the evil eye, the bite of scorpions, and boils'. [6] He is even reported to have allowed spells which were commonly used amongst the idolatrous Arabs of pre-Islamic days.

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[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Bab Salatu'd-Duha.

[2] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Bab Dafanu'l-Mait.

[3] Zubdatu'l-Bukhari, p. 160.

[4] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu't-Taharat.

[5] Zubdatu'l-Bukhari, p. 157.

[6] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu't-Tub wa'r-Ruqqa.

Another illustration of the nonsense to be met with in the traditions is the following reported utterance of Muhammad: 'When God created the earth, it began to tremble, therefore He created the mountains, and placed them upon the earth. Then the earth became firm.' [1]

Not more scientific is Muhammad's explanation of meteors. He declared that meteors were nothing more than darts cast at the devils by the angels, when the former draw near to the portals of heaven to listen by stealth to the converse of the celestial regions! Thus, it is stated in a tradition, preserved by Muslim, that, 'Whilst his majesty's friends were sitting with him one night, a very bright star shot. Then his highness said, what did you say in the days of ignorance (i.e. before Islam) when a star shot like this? They said, God and his messenger know best. We used to say, A great man was born to-night, and a great man died. Then his majesty said, you mistook, because the shooting of these stars is neither for the life nor death of any person; but when our Cherisher orders a work the bearers of the imperial throne sing hallelujahs, and the inhabitants of the regions who are near the bearers repeat it till it reaches the lowest regions. After that the angels which are near the bearers of the imperial throne say, what did your Cherisher order? Then they are informed, and so it is handed from one region to another, till the information reaches the people of the lowest region. Then the devils steal it and carry it to their friends (that is) magicians; and these stars are thrown at these devils; not for the birth or death of any person. Then the things which the magicians tell, having heard from the devils, are true but these magicians tell lies, and exaggerate what they hear?' [2] Unfortunately for Muhammad, the same superstition is also found in the Qur'an, so that, in this case at least, he cannot be excused its authorship, on the ground that the tradition is not genuine. We refrain from commenting further on this story, which is surely worthy of a place amongst the thousand-and-one tales of the *Arabian Nights.*

There are few more favorite subjects with the authors of traditions than the great enemy of mankind; and many are the stories in which his name appears. For downright absurdity the following tradition, related by Bukhari, will be difficult to beat. 'The prophet said, when any one of you awakes, and after that performs the *wudu'* (i.e. ablutions) he must blow his nose, after throwing water into it, because verily the devil takes his post in the nose at night!' [3]

Another equally absurd statement is to the effect that the prophet said, 'When you hear the cock crow, then supplicate God for an increase of his beneficence; because the cock sees an angel, and crows at the sight. And when you hear an ass

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[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu'z-Zakat.

[2] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu't-Tub wa'r-Ruqqa. Another form of this tradition is given in the Siratu'l-Halabiyya, vol. i, p. 231. See also, Qur'an as-Saffat 37:6-10 and Qur'an Jinn 72:9.

[3] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu't-Taharat.

bray, seek protection with God from the devil, and say, I take protection with God from the cast-out devil, because the ass has seen the devil'. [1]

Another tradition, in which the devil prominently figures, runs as follows, The prophet said, Ye must not say your prayers at the rising or the setting of the sun. Then when a limb of the sun appeared, leave your prayers, until his whole orb is up; and when the sun beginneth to set, quit your prayers until the whole orb have disappeared; for verily he riseth between the two horns of the devil'. [2] The reason for this prohibition, as given by the commentator of the *Mishkat,* 'Abdu'l Haqq, is worthy of the tradition, and is to the effect that the devil takes his post in the air near the sun, and puts his head close to that luminary at the time of his rising and setting; so as to front those who worship the sun at those times, and receive their prostrations. Therefore, Muhammad forbade his disciples to pray at those times, that their prayers might not be confounded with those who adored the sun!

The late Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, in his *Essay on Mohammedan Tradition,* has expressed the opinion that many traditions were invented by early Muslim preachers with a view to collecting large congregations around them, and of amusing their hearers'. What, we wonder, could have been the object in manufacturing the following absurd tradition, which, we are gravely asked to believe, represents the words of Muhammad addressed to a certain writer: 'The apostle of God said, Put the pen upon your ear, because it assists epistolary style.' [3] Such puerility is only equaled by the following, which is likewise attributed to the prophet: 'Whoever eats in a dish, and licks it afterwards, the dish intercedes with God for him.' [4]

In another tradition it is stated that when Muhammad announced that, at the last day, both sun and moon would be cast into hell, Hasan Basri, who heard the tradition from Abu Hurairah, asked in astonishment, for what sin would the sun and moon be thus punished? This, Abu Hurairah was unable to say. [5] The commentators, however, have not been slow to find a reason. Thus 'Abdul-Haqq gravely informs us that some of the learned have written that the reason of their being cast into hell is that the sufferings of the inhabitants of hell might be increased by their heat!'

One of the saddest, and at the same time most astonishing, characteristics of traditions is the absolute lack of any moral perspective: the failure of those who manufactured them to appreciate moral values. This strange confusion of thought caused them to place, on one level of wickedness, serious moral crimes and mere accidental omissions in ceremonial observances. With them the slightest breach of some absurd detail of ritual is as heinous a crime as the infraction of any grave moral

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[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitab Asma' Allah Ta'ala. This tradition is also given Zubdatu'l-Bukhari, p. 160.

[2] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu's-Sujud.

[3] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu'l-Adab.

[4] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu't-Ta'amah.

[5] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Bab Sifatu'n-Nar.

law, such as adultery. We need scarcely point out what an aspersion this casts on the character of God, and how far short it falls of the teaching of the New Testament. The Pharisees, who found fault with Jesus for healing the sick upon the Sabbath day, were not to be compared in crass inconsistency with those super-Pharisees who were the authors of so many of the traditions and were the greatest adepts at straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel, that the world has ever seen. Thus, we are told by these same people, in the name of Muhammad of course, that, 'One dirhem of interest. which a man eats, knowing it to be so, is a more grievous offence than thirty-six adulteries.' [1] Another tradition relates that Muhammad said, 'The taking of interest has seventy parts of guilt, the least of which is this, that a man commit incest with his own mother.' [2]

As an instance of the extraordinary confusion of thought which places the infraction of mere ceremonial law on a level with the gravest sins, we note the following tradition from 'Abdu'llah bin 'Umar, who said, 'I returned with the prophet from Mecca to Medina. When we arrived at some water which was in the Mecca Road, a party hastened to perform *wudu'* for the afternoon prayers; and they did so in a hurry. And we came up to them and found that they had not wetted them under part of their feet. The prophet said, Alas on the soles of the feet, for they will be in hell fire. Then he ordered them to perform the *wudu'* thoroughly, without the least deviation, so that not even the breadth of a fingernail be dry.' [3]

According to these same legalists, one of the gravest sins is that of wearing the trousers long; for, they make Muhammad to say, 'That part of the trousers below the ankle is in hell fire.' [4]

In no subject has the imagination of the traditionists run riot more freely than in dealing with the subject of paradise. It is, moreover, significant that the pleasures of paradise are depicted, in the traditions, as almost entirely corporeal, and often grossly sensual. Thus, 'If you are taken into paradise,' said Muhammad to a man who loved horses, 'you will be given a ruby horse with two wings, and you will mount him, and he will carry you wherever you wish.' [5] To another, he is reported to have said, 'When a Muslim shall wish for children in paradise, the pregnancy and birth will take place in one hour.' [6] Whilst, to a third, who loved cultivation, it was promised that, when he reached paradise, 'He will be permitted to cultivate. And he

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[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Babu'r-Riba.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu't-Taharat.

[4] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Kitabu'l-Libas.

[5] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Bab Sifatu'l-Jannah.

[6] Ibid.

will sow, and then, quicker than the twinkling of an eye, it will grow, be ripe, and reaped like mountains.' [1]

Just because the pleasures of the paradise of traditions are sensual, there are whole sections which are so grossly obscene, both in thought and language, that we dare not translate them here. This remark applies with equal cogency to other sections of the traditions, particularly to those dealing with ceremonial ablutions. Many of these traditions are unutterably vile, and we cannot believe that any pure-minded and God-fearing Muslim can ever accept them as of divine origin. For the sake of the reputation of his prophet we imagine he will be unwilling to accept them as genuine reports of his utterances. And yet many of these traditions rest on the same authority—that of Bukhari and Muslim—as do those dealing with canon law. Therefore, they stand or fall together. The honest Muslim is thus left with no alternative but to discard the whole body of tradition, together with the Muslim *shari'ah* founded thereon. This is the only course open to those who value truth above expediency.

Some of the stories told in the traditions reveal an almost incredibly perverted view of the character of God. We have no space for more than two or three illustrations here. The reader will find fuller details in the author's *God in Islam.* There is a story, preserved by Muslim, to the effect that a certain Muhammadan, who had, on account of his faith, been released from the fire of hell, was told by God to enter paradise. When the fortunate man arrived at the portals of paradise, it appeared, in his eyes, to be quite full; so he returned and informed God that he found no room there. He was ordered to go again; and again, he found heaven full and returned and reported the fact to his Creator. Then God once more repeated the order, assuring the man, as he did so, that he would receive equal to the whole world and ten times more. To this the man is reported as replying,

أَتَسْخَرُ بِي أَوْ تَضْحَكُ بِي؟

'Are you scoffing at me, or laughing at me?' Then, continues the supposed narrator of the tradition, Uthman bin Abi Shaibat,

لَقَدْ رَأَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ضَحِكَ حَتَّى بَدَتْ نَوَاجِذُهُ.

'I saw the apostle of God laugh until his teeth appeared.' [2] Apparently, Muhammad, if he be indeed the author of the legend, treated it as a huge joke; and yet this tradition has been gravely handed down through all the centuries as the true report of an actual occurrence!

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[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Bab Sifatu'l-Jannah.

[2] Sahih Muslim, vol. i. p. 68.

In no set of traditions has the character of God been more maligned than in those relating to fate. According to them man is in the grip of a cruel and unrelenting fate which takes no account of his actions but works out its predestined course with unerring and unfaltering precision. Man, himself is but a puppet whose every act, both good and bad, has been predestined from all eternity, and written down upon the preserved table long before the creation of the world. The authors of these traditions apparently failed to see that such a conception of man's relation to God inevitably leads to the obliteration of all moral distinctions and undermines all sense of human responsibility. Not only so, but carried to its logical conclusions, it makes God the author of sin, and leaves man impotent for either good or evil. We now proceed to give illustrative quotations to show the lengths to which this doctrine, which undoubtedly has its genesis in the Qur'an itself, has been carried in Muslim tradition. There is a tradition in the *Mishkat* to the effect that, 'The prophet said, Verily God created Adam, and touched his back with his right hand, and brought forth from it a family. And God said to Adam, I have created this family for paradise, and their actions will be like unto those of the people of paradise. Then God touched the back of Adam, and brought forth another family, and said, I have created this for hell, and their actions will be like those of the people of hell. Then a man said to the prophet, Of what use will deed of any kind be? He said, When God created His servant for paradise, his actions will be deserving of it until he die, when he will enter therein; and when God created one for the fire, his actions will be like those of the people of hell till he die, when he will enter therein.' [1] That this teaching of the prophet did not meet with universal approval is evident from the objections of Abu Khizamab, who is reported as asking what, if everything be pre-destined, could be the use of the medicine he drank, or of the shield he used in battle? This was a poser for which the prophet was ill-prepared; and there is a tradition from Abu Hurairah that, 'The prophet of God came out of his house when we were debating about fate; and he was angry, and became red in the face, to such a degree that you would say the seeds of a pomegranate had been bruised on it. And he said, Hath God ordered you to debate of fate, or was I sent to you for this? You forefathers were destroyed for debating about fate and destiny. I adjure you not to argue on those points.' [2]

In another tradition God is represented as pointing out to Adam the spirits of his descendants and dividing them into two hands, one black and the other white. Then pointing to the white children on the right hand he said,

إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَلَا أُبَالِي.

'To paradise, and I care not!' Whilst to those on the left hand he said,

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[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Babu'l-Qadr.

[2] Ibid.

إِلَى النَّارِ وَلَا أُبَالِي.

'To hell, and I care not!' [1]

Still another tradition is to the effect that 'there is no one amongst you whose place is not written by God, whether in the fire or in paradise.' [2]

We do not care to comment further on these dishonoring representations of God. We believe that no earnest and intelligent Muslim who really appreciates their implications will be willing to accept them as the inspired utterances of Muhammad. Like the great bulk of traditions, they are the fanciful creations of a later age.

To sum up: a great part of Muslim tradition is, first of all, false in claiming to be the record of what Muhammad said and did. It was, as we have shown, the product of a later age, much of it the result of Christian influence. In the next place, many of the traditions disagree with the Qur'an, and are, therefore, for Muslims, ruled out of court. And lastly, as we have seen in this chapter, the traditions are full of puerilities and absurdities, which are as derogatory to any claims to divine authorship as are the obscenities which disfigure so many of the reputed utterances of Muhammad.

Let the honest Muhammadan ponder these facts, and he will realize that, for him, there can be no compromise. The traditions must go, and with them the whole superstructure of the canon law reared thereon. He will then be left with a prophet without miracles, who repeatedly asked pardon for his sins, and, in the most explicit language, repudiated the power to intercede at the judgement day. Such a renunciation will not be easy; but he, who is loyal to truth, will have naught to regret and naught to fear.

[1] Mishkatu'l Masabih, Babu'l-Qadr.

[2] Ibid.

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