

ART. XVII.—*On the Origin and Import of the names Muslim and Hanīf.* By D. S. MARGOLLOUTH.

ALTHOUGH the religion founded by Mohammed is called by strangers after his name, its followers designate it differently. There is indeed a name which rarely occurs, *ḥammādūna*, which is applied to them, and which indirectly, at least, is connected with the name of the Prophet. That word signifies “Those who utter the formula ‘Praise be to God,’”¹ and this formula (*al-ḥamdu lillāhi*) has some connection with the Prophet’s name, which was interpreted by his contemporaries as ‘the greatly to be praised.’ The court-poet Ḥassān regards the name Mohammed as derived by God from His own name, ‘the praised,’ in order to do the Prophet honour (ed. Tunis, p. 23)—

شق له من اسمه كى يجله فذو العرش محمود وهذا محمد

“So He that is on the throne is *maḥmūd*, and this is *Mohammed*.”

But we might conversely regard the formula “Praise be to God” as suggested to the Prophet by his own name, and equivalent in his lips to the Biblical “Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy name give glory.”

Sprenger, whose excellent work contains a variety of conjectures, suggested that Mohammed was not the Prophet’s name originally, but one taken by him when he started his mission. This conjecture has found little favour,² and, indeed, should have been recalled by its author. For, first, the name Mohammed (*Μοαμῆδης*) was shown to occur on an

¹ Used by Imru’ul-Kais, xv, l. 1; but the line can scarcely be genuine.

² Hirschfeld (*Beiträge*, p. 72) accepts it.

inscription¹ five centuries earlier than the Prophet's time. Further, the Arab archæologists made lists of persons who bore the name Mohammed before the Prophet: Ibn Duraid² mentions four such persons, one of whom was remotely connected with the Prophet (if the genealogy be trustworthy). Their interest would, however, have been to show (had it been possible) that no one was ever called Mohammed before the greatest wearer of the name: thus there is a tradition which assures us positively that no one was ever called Hasan before the Prophet's grandson;³ and though it is granted that there were Aḥmads before the Prophet, attention is called⁴ to the fact that the name was rare at the commencement of Islam. Further, we find the Prophet's name handled by his contemporaries with a freedom which would only be possible with a familiar appellation. He calls himself both Mohammed and Aḥmad; in contemporary verse he is also called Maḥmūd.⁵ These variations were not uncommon with familiar proper names: thus in the same poem a man is called both Ma'bad and 'Abdallah,⁶ and Farzdaq⁷ calls the Caliph Omar 'Amr; and a man named 'Uthman might be called 'Athm.⁸ But it is unlikely that such license would have been taken with a name chosen for its special import. And, indeed, after the Prophet's time these three names came to be regarded as distinct.

Besides this, the source whence Sprenger drew his conjecture is quite untrustworthy. To Mohammed's contemporaries the name meant 'the greatly to be praised.' "Why have you named your grandson Mohammed," asked the Koraish of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (according to Ibn Duraid),⁹ "when none of your ancestors had that name?" "Because," answered the grandfather, "I desire him to be praised in

¹ Sprenger, 2nd ed., i, 581.

² *Ishṭikāk*, p. 6.

³ Diyarbekri, i, 470.

⁴ Mubarrad, *Kāmil* (Cairo, 1309), i, 241.

⁵ Ibn Ishāk, p. 553, l. 4; p. 659, l. 13; p. 1023, l. 13.

⁶ *Hamāsah*, p. 378; *Christian Arabic Poets*, p. 758.

⁷ Éd. Boucher, p. 37.

⁸ Abu Zaid's *Nawādir*, p. 50; see also Qudāmah's *Naḥd*, p. 87.

⁹ L.c.

heaven and on earth.” Etymologically it very likely meant ‘the greatly desired,’ since ‘to desire’ is the sense of the root in Hebrew, which may here be preserving an old sense; and to this there might seem to be an allusion in a verse of the court-poet ‘Abbās son of Mirdās (Ibn Ishāq, 859)—

ان الله بنى عليك محبة في خلقه ومحمدا سماكا

“God established love for thee in His creation and called thee Mohammed.”

But the biographer Ibn Ishāq quotes a story¹ to the effect that the word for Comforter in St. John’s Gospel, which he cites according to the Palestinian version, means the same as Mohammed. It is certain that the meaning is not the same; hence the name Mohammed would never have been adopted by the Prophet in order to fulfil the announcement of the coming of the Comforter. Nor, indeed, can we without improbable conjectures find any justification for Ibn Ishāq’s statement: it was probably the invention of a Christian renegade, and is on a par for accuracy with numerous other statements made by Muslim authors as to the meaning of words occurring in the books of other communities. Moreover, according to the Koran² it is the form Aḥmad³ which is to be found in the Gospel.

The distinctive names adopted by Mohammed for his community were *Muslim* and *Ḥanīf*. The former is, of course, much the more common, but authors of early date often allude to the latter. Thus Jarīr, in a verse preserved by Mubarrad, speaks of Farazdaq as having become a Ḥanīf against his will (*Kāmil*, ii, 104)—

ان الفرزدق اذ تحنّف كارها

and in one printed in his *Divan* talks of the opposition of

¹ p. 150.

² lxi, 6. Fakhr al-din al-Rāzī (vol. vi, p. 286) shirks the question of the connection of this word with *Paraclete*, but shows remarkable acquaintance with the Gospel.

³ This word occurs with the sense ‘most praiseworthy’ in Al-Akḥṭal, p. 189: *Kāmil*, i, 19.

the Christians to the religion of those who become Ḥanifs (ii, 11)—

خلاف النصارى دين من يتحنف

Of both names it may be said with practical certainty that they existed with religious value before Mohammed's time.

In the case of the word Muslim, this is asserted categorically in the Koran. Abraham himself is said to have styled "you" the Muslims (Surah xxii, 77). And on this subject the Koran is very fairly consistent. In the third Surah it is justly argued that Abraham can have been neither a Jew nor a Christian, since the Law was revealed after his time; he was, it asserts, a Muslim, a Ḥanif. In what appears to be an early Surah containing an error about Sarah which is afterwards corrected (li, 29), it is asserted that the house of Lot was the only Muslim house at Sodom (36). In the second Surah Abraham urges his descendants to become Muslims before they die. In the twelfth Surah Joseph prays that he may be found on his deathbed to be a Muslim. According to a Tradition quoted by Ya'kūbī (i, 259) the Prophet forbade the abuse of the eponymous heroes Muḍar and Rabī'ah on the ground that they were *Muslims*, for which, indeed, another form of the Tradition substituted the phrase "followers of the religion of Abraham." If Mohammed in one place is commanded to be the *first* of the Moslems, the commentators seem justified in interpreting this as the first Muslim among the Koraish, or the first in rank. Although the use of the word naturally grew more frequent as the community became more numerous and important, it cannot be confined to any period of the Prophet's activity.

That it was not at first invented by Mohammed may be inferred from the fact that it is a word of ambiguous meaning, with, indeed, unpleasant associations. The most obvious sense of *Islam* at Meccah was 'treachery,' the abandonment of one's friends to their fate, the refusal of help to those who had a right to demand it.

This sense appears clearly in numerous passages:—

Ibn Ishāḳ (ed. Wüstenfeld), p. 556. The poet Abu 'Azzah, urging the Kinānah to aid the Koraiḥ, says—

لا تُسلموني لا يجلّ إسلام

“Do not betray me: *Islam* (treachery) is not lawful.”

Doubtless there is a reference here to the other sense of *Islam*. In this case *Islam* is used without an object; ordinarily the object is expressed, and with this construction the verb is very common.

Ibn Ishāḳ, 474, *أوردهم ثم أسلمهم* (of Satan), “He brought them to the fray, and then abandoned them.”

Ibn Ishāḳ, 559, “If we knew that you were going to fight,” *لما أسلمناكم*, “we should not desert you.”

Wākidi, ed. Kremer, 278—

أما رسول الله فاصحابه لن يسلموه

“As for the Prophet of God, his companions will never betray him.”

Ibn Ishāḳ, 745—

رايت قوماً لا يسلمونه لشيء أبداً

“I have seen persons who will never abandon the Prophet for any consideration.”

Ibn Ishāḳ, 752—

أسلمتني بيد القوم

“You have abandoned me to the people.”

Other examples occur in the same author: 167, l. 5; 168, ll. 9, 14, 18; 172, l. 3 a f.; 217, 229, 231.

Mubarrad, *Kāmil* (Cairo), ii, 19 (verse of Al-A'sha)—

لن يسلموها لأزهادها

“They will not abandon her because of her poverty.”

Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, ii, 64 (verse of an Asadite)—

وملوك خندف أسلموني للعدى

“The kings of Khindif have betrayed me to the enemy.”

Alif-Bā, i, 380 (after Abu 'Ubaidah), of a man's friends, when robbers approached, اسلماه وهربا عنه, "they abandoned him and fled from him."

The note on *Hamāsah*, p. 115, takes account of this sense: "You say *aslamtu* when you leave a man alone with one who desires to do him mischief." It is, indeed, a synonym of *خذل*, with which it is often used: *Jāhiz*, *Bayān*, ii, 62—

لم يكن عندي حيلة الا خذلانه واسلامه الى الحية

"I had no plan save to betray and abandon him to the snake."

I am inclined to think the most frequent use of this verb is at all times in the sense 'abandon' or 'betray.'

Hamāsah, 576—

اخوسقطة قد اسلمته العوائد

"A sick man whom his habits have given up."

Bayān, ii, 67—

واسلمها الباكون الاحمامة

"All the weepers abandoned her, save a dove."

Bayān, ii, 74 (*Jarīr*)—

اسلمها ما قال طاعنيها

"They were betrayed by what their rebel (*Musaylimah*) said."

Ibn al-Athīr says rightly in his dictionary that the word properly refers to any form of delivery, but the sense of handing over to destruction has become normal—

دخل التخصيص وغلب عليه اللقاء في الهلكة

From the *Divan* of Sibṭ Ibn at-Ta'awidhi, sixth century, it would be possible to collect about a dozen examples of this usage. A child who dies early is said to *aslam* his parents, etc. Probably the old legal use was of a *jar* (client) being handed over by his patron to the vengeance of the persons with whom he had contracted a blood-feud.¹

¹ This subject is well treated by O. Prokesch, *Über die Blutrache bei den vorislamischen Arabern*, Leipzig, 1899. Cf. Imru'ul-Ḳais, lvi, 3; *Aghāni*, x, 27.

Probably, if more of the verses of the opponents of Islam survived, we should find more allusions to the sense 'traitor.' The verse of Abu 'Azzah quoted above is the clearest that I can discover. It is, however, possible that a word *Māsōr*, which should be the equivalent of Muslim in this sense, and which occurs occasionally in the B. Talmud, may be a translation of it. A tradition given in B. *Gittin*, 45*b*, speaks of "a scroll of the Law written by a heretic, a *masor* (traitor), a stranger, an idolator." In the alternative form (*Menaḥoth*, 44*a*) the 'traitor' is omitted. Since it is probable that this tradition refers to religious varieties, it seems likely that *māsōr* stands for Muslim.

Hence it would appear that the name *the Muslims* would most naturally have meant 'the Traitors'; just as the corresponding word in Syriac, *mashl'mānā*, means 'traitor,' and is especially applied to the arch-traitor, Judas Iscariot. Such a name could not have been given voluntarily by a man to a community which he had formed, but he might conceivably take it over from some other community, and endeavour to assign it a less compromising signification. And, indeed, a variety of interpretations appear to have been given the word from early times.

1. In a Tradition given by Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (v, 5) Islam is defined as "letting thy heart be God's *entirely*, and *directing* thy face to God,"

ان يسلم قلبك لله وان توجه وجهك الى الله

Another variety of the Tradition makes it consist in uttering the formula, "I have given over my face to God, and am His *entirely*,"

اسلمت وجهي لله وتخليت

This is really a double interpretation, based on the expression "I have handed over my face to God," repeatedly found in the Koran, iii, 18; iv, 124, etc.; but this expression is a strange one, and we can reconstruct its genesis with some probability. It would appear to be an intentional alteration of the phrase put into the mouth of Abraham (vi, 79), who,

having found the constellations fail to satisfy the conditions of divinity, said "I *turn* my face to God," where the word used for 'turn'¹ is normal and natural. In a similar context the word 'direct'² is also used (x, 105; xxx, 29), "direct your face to the straight religion," which is also normal; another word³ is used by Shanfara (ed. Const., p. 65) and Jarīr (i, 41) with the same sense. The substitution of the word *abandon* or *resign* for *direct* in connection with the face seems due to the desire to give the word *abandon* in the name Muslim some meaning suitable to the new religion. The phrase "abandon the face to God" certainly occurs already in a verse ascribed by Ibn Kūṭāibah (History, Cairo, p. 20) to Mohammed's precursor Zaid, who declared that "he resigned his face to Him to whom the clouds resign theirs"; but it is safest to regard the verses of these 'precursors' as fabrications based on the Koran. The correct inference from the phrase seems to be that the word Muslim was already known, and that it was unknown what exactly a Muslim resigned; and the phrase already put into Abraham's mouth suggested that what he resigned was his face.⁴

2. In Bokhari (Cairo, 1308, iv, 78) a Muslim is defined as "one who leaves other Muslims in safety (*salima minhu*), and does not molest them with his tongue." This definition is the subject of frequent allusion on the part of preachers, e.g. *Bayān*, ii, 89, line 10. It can scarcely be regarded as meant seriously. Tirmidhi (Lucknow, 1299) confines it to the *best* of the Muslims.

3. The theory of which Carlyle made so much, that Islam means *resignation to the will of God*, is not quite without confirmation from the Koran, but it cannot be said to be very familiar to Mohammedan writers. In this particular phrase the *second* conjugation seems to be regularly employed.

¹ وجهت .

² اقام .

³ نصب .

⁴ Mohammed's contemporary, Ḥakīm son of Umayyah, says "face and tongue" (Ibn Ishāq, p. 182).

So *Kāmil*, i, 252—

الصبر والتسليم لله

Bayān, ii, 43—

رضينا بقضاء الله وسلمنا لامره

Mikhlat, 35—

الرضا بقضاء الله والتسليم لقدرته

This sense is also the most natural in Surah xxxvii, 103, where Abraham and his son “resign themselves”; it is, however, read and interpreted differently. The commentators there interpret it by the tenth conjugation.

The sense ‘submit oneself,’ ‘acknowledge authority,’ seems quite clearly to be found in many passages. So Surah xxvii, 31, in Solomon’s letter to the people of Sheba, they are told not to be haughty with him, but to come to him as *muslims*, which from the context appears to mean *humbly* (so Baidāwī, with the alternative ‘as believers’). In verse 38 some one is asked to bring Solomon the Queen’s throne before they come to him as *muslims*, with apparently the same sense. In verse 46 the Queen explains that her *Islām* is to the Lord of the Worlds; and in verse 42 the word *muslims* is again employed, but the clause is unintelligible: whether the words be put in the mouth of Allah, or of Solomon, or of the Queen, they are unsatisfactory. Hence, even in this story the technical sense of *aslama* is not quite absent, but we should probably be safe in asserting that in the first of the verses quoted it means ‘submitting.’ Similarly Al-Khansā (ed. 1895, p. 126) uses it for ‘to be humiliated.’

In this sense there is probably an ellipse of some word, which is likely to have been ‘oneself,’¹ and, indeed, the corresponding Syriac verb is used thus in a religious context (*Apocryphal Acts*, ed. Wright, p. 182, l. 7).² On the other hand, it may be a denominative verb, embodying

¹ Compare the prayer in Bokhari, iv, 62, اسلمت نفسي اليك, where, however, it means “I commit my soul.”

² اسلمته لاس بصعته.

the idiom 'to throw the *salam*,' which occurs in the same sense in Surah xvi, 30. What the *salam* was is not known; clearly it must have been something capable of being thrown. It was something, moreover, the throwing of which had the same signification as the holding out of the white flag in modern warfare.

4. Zamakhshari and other commentators interpret the phrase as 'giving something to God in its entirety,' which would agree well with the sense of the first form, and would be similar to late Hebrew usage. It would also agree well with the leading dogma of Islam, which gives God the universe in its entirety, whereas others are supposed to make Him a shareholder in it. The Koran does not appear to suggest this interpretation, and indeed regularly uses another phrase (*mukhlisīna lahu'l-dīna*) in its place. But, as we have seen above, this interpretation is known to the Tradition.

5. In one passage (xvi, 83) the word appears to mean 'being grateful,' suggesting that *Islām* signifies to pay God His due, whereas Unbelief (*kuf'r*) might be regarded as withholding payment.

Finally, it may be noted that both Jews (Surah xxviii, 53) and Christians (Ibn Ishāq, pp. 209, 210) are represented as declaring that they had *aslam*'d before the Prophet. This the Prophet in the case of the Christians refutes by taunting them with their belief in a plurality of deities, their drinking wine, and eating pork. Evidently in this story the Christians and the Prophet are supposed to mean different things by the word. To the Christians it probably implies monotheism only, whereas the Prophet associates it with a whole set of doctrines and practices.¹

It seems to result from this examination that the word was known to the Prophet (and some other persons) in the sense 'monotheist,' but that he did not know how it came to have that meaning. While adopting it then as a name for his community, he interpreted it differently at different times. So it would be possible to adopt the name Chauvinists

¹ In a verse of 'Abbās Ibn Mirdās (Ibn Ishāq, p. 843) the Ghassan (who were then Christians?) are described as "the Muslims, servants of God."

to designate a patriotic community; but one who was not acquainted with the origin of the name would probably try a variety of hypotheses to bring it into connection with patriotism.¹

The word *Ḥanīf* is harder. In the Koran it is usually used of Abraham, and ordinarily also with some clause following, as though the word were a difficult one, of which the sense might be obscure to the hearer. The opinions collected by the Arabic grammarians show that there was no traditional meaning assigned to the word by ordinary usage, and that its sense had to be divined by them with the aid of the means that are open to us. These are three. Either the word may be interpreted from kindred Arabic words, which explain the sense of the stem to which it belongs. Or it may be regarded as foreign, in which case we go to some other language to discover its meaning. Or, leaving etymology alone, we may collect the passages in which it occurs and endeavour to deduce its meaning from them.

The first method is on the whole the most in favour with the Muslims. Arabic words of the same root mean 'contorted,' of the feet, when the big toes turn towards each other. This is said to be the sense of the name Al-Aḥnaf, and its diminutive Ḥunaif. 'Contorted' or 'distorted' is not a promising word from which to derive 'orthodox.' But philology easily finds expedients, and two such are obvious. One is to alter the standard. If the standard be straight, then what is distorted is doubtless unorthodox; but if the standard be crooked, then what is distorted from it may perhaps be straight. Hence a Ḥanīf is usually said to be one who *diverges* from *false* religions.

The other expedient is to adopt the principle that things may euphemistically be called by their contraries. According to this the word Ḥanīf properly means 'straight,' and is *euphemistically* applied to feet that are distorted.

These suggestions are clearly too fanciful to deserve serious

¹ The discussion of the meaning of the word Muslim in Hirschfeld's *New Researches* is not affected by the present discussion, since his purpose is to find out its *theological* value.

consideration. Nor does the suggestion of Mr. Koelle (*Mohammed*, p. 25) that the word meant 'Dissenter' seem to accord with the facts.¹

The verb حنف, which is not common, seems to mean 'to bend' or 'lean.' So A'shā of Kais in *Christian Arabic Poets*, 385—

كفوا إذ انى الهامرز تحنف فوقه كظل العقاب إذ هوت وتدلّت

"They fought well, when Hamarz came, with something, like the shadow of an eagle when it swoops, bending over him."

This would seem to refer to some sort of royal umbrella.

Ibn Duraid, *Ishtikāk*, 20, quotes a saying of Omar—

احنفوا واحشوشنوا وتمعددوا واقطعوا الركب

in which the Arabs are advised to lead a rough life. Since the verb حنف gives no appropriate sense here, it is to be corrected from *Bayān*, ii, 54, where the same tradition occurs, to احفوا 'go barefoot.'

Of foreign etymologies there are two that are promising. The *Lisan al-'Arab* records an etymology which made the word mean 'heathen'; which is, indeed, the ordinary sense of the Syriac *Ḥanpā*, occurring in the Peshitta, where the Greek has 'Gentiles' or 'Greeks.' This etymology is adopted by Grimme in his life of Mohammed,² who suggests that the Koranic phrase

حنيفا وما كان من المشركين

should be rendered "a ḥanīf, yet not a polytheist." This theory has much in its favour. The word is usually applied to Abraham in the Koran; and by calling Abraham a heathen the author would be alluding to a favourite topic of Christian apologetics, first suggested, it would seem, by St. Paul. In Rom. iv, 10-12, it is argued that Abraham's

¹ Cf. Muir-Tisdall, *The Sources of Islam*, p. 96.

² i, 13. It is worth observing that an Arab pagan is called a 'Greek' by Evagrius; T. Wright, *Christianity in Arabia*, p. 144.

faith was accounted unto him for righteousness before he had received the mark of Judaism, so that he might be the father of all non-Jewish believers; and with this (verse 18) the prophecy that he should be the father of many nations (the word sometimes rendered in Syriac by *hanpē*) is connected. This argument would have by no means been valueless to Mohammed, though he cannot have been accurately acquainted with it; but the Christian insistence on the fact that Abraham was a *Gentile* would give a good reason for the name Ḥanīf being applied to him by Mohammed.

This theory, however, seems to be seriously opposed by the occasional employment of the word in the Koran *without* the addition "and not one of the polytheists." And where men are told to be "Ḥanīfs unto God" (xxii, 3), what sense would the word have if it meant 'heathen'?

A more attractive suggestion is that of Sprenger, which would want a very little external evidence to turn it into history. This is that the word Ḥanīf is the Hebrew *Hānēf* (hypocrite or evil-liver), and was at first applied by the Jews to some heretical sect, probably professedly followers of Abraham, to whom strangers afterwards applied the term without evil intent. Mr. Cunninghame Graham¹ similarly tells us that in Morocco the name 'Epicurus' is familiarly used for Christian missionary, having been at first applied by the Jews to the missionaries who came to work amongst themselves. This very word 'Epicurus' is used in the *Yalkut Shim'oni*² to gloss the word *Hānēf*; and a tradition embodied in the *Midrash Rabbah* states that wherever the word *Hānēf* occurs in the Old Testament it refers to religious dissent (*mīnūth*).³ Hence this word is exceedingly likely to have been applied reproachfully by the Jews,⁴ who may have been misunderstood by the Arabs of Arabia, just as are their brethren by the Arabs of Morocco. Sprenger also, with justice, calls attention to the verse (Surah iii, 61)

¹ *Maghreb el-Akhsa*.

² Isaiah, § 304.

³ Genesis, § 48.

⁴ Who themselves are designated 'the Hypocrites' in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles; *Supernatural Religion*, 1902, p. 151.

where the followers of Abraham are clearly distinguished from "this Prophet and those who believe"; for this text most naturally would imply the existence of a community of Abrahamists. He further calls attention to the citations from the Rolls of Abraham in early Surahs (liii, 37; lxxxvii, 18), which might conceivably be the Sacred Books of such a sect,¹ though it is equally likely that they are an unscientific name for the Old Testament. What follows in Sprenger has since been exploded; but the conjecture up to this point seems to account for many facts exceedingly well.

Thirdly, attempts have at many periods been made to guess the meaning of the word from its usage without reference to etymology.

1. The word Ḥanīf is interpreted 'straight,' because the phrase *kayyim* appears to be used in the Koran as its equivalent. This theory is clearly the source of the line ascribed to Ka'b son of Mālik in Ibn Ishāq, 871—

يقوم الدين معتدلا حنيفا

"Religion stands even, erect."

A line is quoted in the *Lisan* where it is used of a *straight* road; but it is on the authority of Abu Zaid, a notorious fabricator of verses.

2. In Surah xxx, 29, the Prophet is told to "direct his face to the religion, a Ḥanīf, the creation of God, wherein He created mankind." From this passage it was inferred that a Ḥanīf was *a man as nature made him*; and, indeed, a tradition is quoted in the *Lisan* to the effect that men are by nature Ḥanīfs, and only made Jews or Christians by their parents. There are two passages that illustrate this use. *Kāmil*, i, 253, the poet 'Amr Ibn Za'bal says—

انى احاجيك ما حنيف على الفطرة باع الرباح بالغبن

"Verily I will ask thee: What is a Ḥanīf, as nature made him, who exchanges gain for loss?"

¹ Ibn 'Arabi, *Musāmarāt*, i, 55, says this book was revealed 700 years before the Law. Gastfreund (*Mohammed nach Talmud*, etc., ii, 16) follows Sprenger.

In Diyarbekri, ii, 177, some verses are quoted by Ibn 'Umair al-Yashkuri, not later than the year 12 A.H., so popular that women, children, and slaves were in the habit of reciting them. The poet says—

ان تكن ميتتى على فطرة الله حنيفا فاننى لا ابالى

“Provided I die a Ḥanīf, as God made me, I reckon not.”

And, indeed, in Bokhari, iv, 60, *Al-Fiṭrah* (the creation) is defined as including five observances. Cf. iv, 88.

3. Professor Wellhausen, in his *Reste Arabischen Heidenthums* (2nd ed., p. 239), inferred the sense ‘ascetic’ from three passages. Grimme finds in all three the sense ‘heathen.’ One is unwilling to differ from either of these authorities: since it is impossible to agree with both, the passages must be considered. They are the following:—

(a) Abu Dhu'aib, cited in the *Lisan*—

اقامت به كمقام الحنيف شهرى جمادى وشهرى صفر

“She abode there, as the Ḥanīf abides, during the two months Jumādā and the two months Ṣafar.”

According to *Aghāni*, vi, 58, this poet died in the year 26 at the age of 26; hence he may well have meant *Mohammedan* by this word. Without the context it is impossible to be sure of the sense. The ‘abiding’ will have reference to the *Kiyām* of Ramaḍan.

(b) Hudh., xviii, 11 (of a cloud)—

كان تواليه بالمالا نصارى يساقون لأقوا حنيفًا

One of the commentators states that a *Ḥanīf* means here a *Muslim*. The extremities of the cloud on the ground are compared to “Christians who, while toasting each other, meet a Ḥanīf.” The best sense is elicited if we suppose the Ḥanīf to be one who is a total abstainer; probably then all the Christians endeavour to ply him with wine, whereas there is no such concentration of force on their part with regard to each other. There is no reason for supposing that the prohibition of wine was connected with the term Ḥanīf

before Mohammed's Medinah period. Hence the rendering 'Mohammedan' seems well ascertained in this poem.

(c) A verse of Ayman Al-Asadi, a poet sufficiently late to have imitated Ibn 'Abbās, a younger contemporary of the Prophet, quoted *Aghāni*, xvi, 45; *Yāqūt*, ii, 51—

وصهبا جرجانية لم يطف بها حنيف ولم ينغر بها ساعة قدر
 ولم يشهد القس المهيمن نارها طروقا ولا صلى على طبخها حب

“And wine from Jorjan, which no Ḥanif ever hawked about, with which no kettle ever boiled, whose fire was never witnessed by faithful priest coming at night, and over whose cooking no Rabbi ever prayed.”

The sense of *yaṭuf*, 'hawked about,' seems here secured by a verse of Al-A'sha, cited in the *Tāj*, i, 342—

وصهبا طاف يهوديها وابرزها وعليها ختم

It might, however, mean 'made circuit round,' with reference to the ceremony of the Circuit or *Tawāf* round the Ka'bah. Whichever of these be right, the rendering 'Mohammedan' seems correct.¹ Hence from these verses we can learn nothing more than that the name Ḥanif was commonly employed in the first century of Islam for 'Muslim.'

To these Grimme adds the passage in *Kāmil*, i, 135, where Bisṭām, son of Kais, a Christian, says, "I will become a Ḥanif if I return." Al-Mubarrad seems to interpret the word here as 'Mohammedan,' for he adds in explanation that Bisṭām was a Christian, and that the event occurred after the mission of the Prophet had begun.

Further, it should be noticed that the Arabs (Ibn Ishāk, p. 152) identify the phrase *taḥannuth*, which occurs twice in the Tradition, with *taḥannuf*, which is used with the sense 'to be devout.' There can be no doubt that this word is a derivative from the root which appears in *ḥinṭh*, 'a crime,'

¹ On the rest of the verses it is unnecessary to comment here, but they need explanation badly.

‘perjury,’ and that the fifth conjugation has the curious privative sense which is found in the similar verb *taharraja*. It seems, however, quite possible that the Hebrew *ḥānēf* may be connected with this root.

Early commentators, quoted in the *Lisan* (and also by Ṭabari in his Commentary on ii, 129), say that Ḥanīfism consists in either or both *pilgrimage* and *circumcision*. In the latter we can see the influence of a Jew who interpreted *millat Ibrahim* as the Hebrew מִלַּת אַבְרָהָם, or circumcision of Abraham. The former is merely an inference from Surah xxii, 28.

The result of this examination of passages would appear to be that the real sense of the word was known to few persons at the time of the composition of the Koran. The early poets who used the word were willing to gather its sense from the Koran: in the first century of Islam it was commonly used for ‘Muslim.’ To Mohammed it meant monotheist; and it is open to us to conjecture how he came to attach to it that sense. Whether there were any persons who called themselves Ḥanīfs must remain somewhat uncertain, since the Mohammedan historians constantly interpret the past from notions familiar to themselves. In an interview (reported by Diyarbekri, ii, 144) between the Prophet and the ‘Christian’ Abu ‘Amir of Medinah, each claims to be a maintainer of the true *Ḥanīfiyyah*: Abu ‘Amir accuses Mohammed of having introduced into that religion matter which did not belong to it. Similarly the other precursors of Mohammed are supposed to have been seekers of the Ḥanīfiyyah or religion of Abraham. Umayyah, like Abu Ṣalt his father, is supposed to be the author of a verse in which it is declared that every religion save that of the *Ḥanīfah* would be shown to be false on the Day of Resurrection (*Aghāni*, iii, 186). To Mu‘adh Ibn Jabal the Koranic description of Abraham as a Ḥanīf was applied (*Uṣd al-Ghābah*, iv, 378), but not before conversion to Islam. He signalized himself as a Ḥanīf by smashing idols, which is curious if the word had even a flavour of ‘paganism’

attaching to it. In Ibn Ishāk, 982, Abdallah Ibn Unais describes himself as a Ḥanīf, but explains this as “a follower of the religion of the Prophet Mohammed”—

حنيف على دين النبي محمد

The suggestion which this paper is to put forward is that the names Muslim and Ḥanīf originally belonged to the followers of *Musaylimah*, the Prophet of the Banu *Ḥanīfah*. The word *Musaylimah* is a diminutive of *Maslamah* (given to *Musaylimah* in *Kāmil*, ii, 32; *Balādhuri*, 422), a name used in *Yemāmah* and elsewhere, and signifying ‘Safety,’ being a derivative from a root which is the source of a number of proper names. As we have already seen, names from the same root were regarded to some extent as interchangeable at this period; and I think there would be little difficulty about regarding Muslim as meaning a follower of a man named *Maslamah* or *Aslam*; just as we find that ‘to Omar’ (in the second form) can mean ‘to kill Omar,’¹ and verbs of the fourth form are formed from many names of places signifying ordinarily to go there, but sometimes to dwell there. Similarly, the word Ḥanīf might stand for a follower of the religion of a man of the tribe *Ḥanīfah*, without great straining of the grammatical conscience; different writers speak of the religion as the *Ḥanīf* religion and the religion of the *Ḥanīfah*,² and the Ḥanīfī religion, which last is right according to the classical grammar. The names would then correspond with Christian and Nazarene, standing for follower of Christ and follower of the Prophet of Nazareth. How easily the name of the Banu *Ḥanīfah* can get confused with the religious name appears from a story in *Palgrave’s Travels*,³ in which, after telling the tale of *Musaylimah*, the narrator says that after his defeat his native valley was called the valley of *Ḥanīfah*, or ‘Orthodoxy.’ Doubtless the name of *Musaylimah’s* home was the *Wādī Ḥanīfah* in the sense of the valley of the Banu *Ḥanīfah*.

¹ *Kāmil*, i, 229 (ed. Wright, 220, 12).

² *Supra*, p. 484.

³ i, 385.

Probably this is the same as the Wadi Ḥanīf of which Yāqūt had heard.

Palgrave's *Travels* promise some fresh information on the subject of Musaylimah, whose followers would from that book appear to be not quite extinct. The great traveller asserts that he heard many parodies of the Koran by Musaylimah still recited there, which, however, he did not think worth preserving. This might be true so far as their literary merit went, but for the early history of Islam their preservation would be very desirable. We may, however, doubt whether he heard more parodies than those which shall presently be described, which many authors have handed down.

In the first place, then, does this conjecture (the plausibility of which seems to me to lie in the fact that it explains at once *the two names* Muslim and Ḥanīf) conflict with the chronology of Islam? Certainly we do not hear much about Musaylimah till late in the Prophet Mohammed's career; but then Dr. Hirschfeld¹ has called attention to a tradition in Ibn Ishāq² that the Meccans accused Mohammed of having been instructed by the *Raḥmān of Yemāmah*, i.e. Musaylimah. Some commentaries allude to this on Surah xxv, 61 (a Meccan Surah): "When they are told to prostrate themselves to the Raḥmān, they say what is the Raḥmān?" This means, says Baghawi,³ "the only Raḥmān of whom we know is the Raḥmān of Yemāmah, i.e. Musaylimah the Liar." These statements imply that a tradition existed according to which Musaylimah's career as Prophet was either *contemporary with* or *earlier than* Mohammed's; for clearly the charge that Mohammed was a pupil of Musaylimah's must have had some sort of colour, which it would have lacked entirely if the latter had not come forward till long after Mohammed's quarrels with the Meccans had been settled and even forgotten.

¹ *New Researches*, p. 25, n. 30.

² p. 200.

³ Copied by Al-Khāzin.

The author of the interesting Adab-book called *Alif-Bā*¹ devotes some pages to the story of Musaylimah, and confirms the supposition that Musaylimah was a prophet *before* Mohammed to an almost alarming extent. He assumed the title Raḥmān, this author tells us, before the birth of Mohammed's father, Abdallah, and he lived to the age of 150. Since he died in the year 12 of the Hijrah, he would, according to this, have been 87 years old when Mohammed was born, and have taken a wife in his 148th year, besides fighting bravely and managing affairs with skill for some time afterwards! Yet we learn from the commentator on Ḥarīrī, Sherīshī,² that these statements go back to a very excellent authority, *Wathimah, son of Musa*,³ who wrote a history of the rebellions after Mohammed's death, and whose death-date is given as 237 A.H. by Ibn Khillikan; his work, which would be an early specimen of Mohammedan history, appears to have been known to many Spanish writers, among whom the two authors cited, Sherīshī and the author of *Alif-Bā*, count, but it appears to have attracted less attention in the East.⁴ Of course, the statement that Musaylimah lived to the age of 150 must be rejected as a fable, in spite of the early character of this authority, for though the most recent statistics admit the possibility of men living to that age, we cannot well credit a man with taking a leading part in war and politics at such an age. The story that he set up as Raḥmān before the birth of Mohammed's father must also be rejected; for since Mohammed's father cannot well have been born after 550 A.D., as Musaylimah died in 634, even supposing him to have started his career as Raḥmān in his twentieth year, he would have been 104 at his death. Although, then, we must reject Wathimah's numerals, we may follow him so far as to suppose that Musaylimah was well on in years at the time of his death, and for the present purpose it will be sufficient to halve the number 150 and

¹ Cairo, 1287; ii, 244-246.

² Cairo, 1306; ii, 191.

³ Wüstenfeld, *Geschichtschreiber*, No. 55.

⁴ Ibn Hajar often cites it, e.g. iii, pp. 5, 6, 7, 18.

suppose him to have been 75. This will make him ten years Mohammed's senior, and if he began his Prophetic career in his thirtieth year, his views would have been more than twenty years before the world before Mohammed had his call.

In the histories¹ and books of Tradition Musaylimah first figures as a member of the Legation of the Banu Ḥanīfah to the Prophet. The accounts of this embassy contain a glaring contradiction, causing the familiar device of the harmonist, duplication of the narrative, to be employed. One account makes Musaylimah demand recognition from the Prophet with a promise of succession, for which Musaylimah received a severe reproof. According to the other account, he remained to guard the baggage while the embassy had their audience of Mohammed, who told them that not the worst of them was with the baggage. On the strength of this compliment, we are told, Musaylimah, when he returned to Yemāmah, declared that Mohammed had associated him in the empire of the world with himself. Yet a third story, which is obviously inconsistent with both these, is that Musaylimah wrote from Yemāmah to Mohammed, as from one Prophet of Allah to another, suggesting that they should divide the world between them, to which Mohammed gave a scathing reply.

Of these three stories the third is probably nearest the truth, and we may at least infer from it something confirmatory of the traditions which make Musaylimah start as Prophet before Mohammed, for had he been merely an imitator he would scarcely have ventured on so insolent a proposition; the other false Prophets seem to have waited to come forward till Mohammed was gone. On the other hand, if he had been in the business before Mohammed started it so much more effectively, he might have had some hope that Mohammed would acknowledge his claims to be a Prophet.

Of the sayings ascribed to Musaylimah, probably the largest collection is that put together by the historian

¹ Wellhausen, *Skizzen*, iv, 157 (Ibn Sa'd), etc. The inconsistency is observed by Ḥalabi.

Diyarbakri, who, according to his wont, combines the statements of a number of writers.¹ Some of these are given by Ṭabari, and several are of a style which agrees fairly well with Palgrave's description of what he heard as still current in Yemāmah. The following are some specimens:—"The elephant, what is the elephant, and who shall tell you what is the elephant? He has a poor tail, and a long trunk: and is a trifling part of the creations of thy God." "Croak, frog, as thou wilt: part of thee in the water and part in the mud: thou hinderest not the drinker, nor dost thou befoul the stream." "Verily we have given thee the jewels: so take them to thyself and hasten: yet beware lest thou be too greedy or desire too much." That these three specimens of Musaylimah's style, all of which are recorded with the various readings which never fail where texts are handed down orally, are closely connected with some of the short Surahs of the Koran, is clear; since, however, it is not apparently the intention of Musaylimah to say anything ridiculous, we can scarcely describe them as parodies of the Koran; to the unprejudiced reader they are of the same intellectual merit as the similar Surahs. About the same may be said of some other fragments which are introduced with a variety of fantastic oaths, very similar to the style of some of the Surahs; Musaylimah swears by various animals, and by persons who perform a variety of agricultural and domestic operations, just as Mohammed swears by winds, stars, etc. The question of priority is by no means a simple one: it is regularly assumed by Mohammedans and others that Musaylimah is in these passages imitating or parodying the Koran, but the tradition to which Hirschfeld has called attention, according to which Mohammed in the early days of his Meccan career was charged with having gone to school with Musaylimah, makes it possible that the imitation was the other way. And, indeed, Wellhausen observes with justice that the style of the early Surahs is really a relic of the style of the Arabic

¹ *ii*, 175, 176.

Kahins, whence both Prophets may have drawn their earliest inspirations. What is clear from the fragments of Musaylimah that are handed down is that there is no tradition of his having imitated the style of the *later* Surahs, which, as constituting the *grandvet* of Islam, should have served as a model to the rival Prophet, if he indeed was merely an imitator of Mohammed.

The great mass of the matter given in Ṭabari and elsewhere about Musaylimah is evidently fabrication; it assigns him certain verses which Sir William Muir rightly characterizes, and tells a whole series of fables showing how when Musaylimah tried to work miracles he always caused mischief by his attempts, whereas when Mohammed blessed the results were always felicitous. Possibly slightly more importance attaches to the statement that Musaylimah was a conjuror, and indeed there is a curious Persian word for conjuring tricks¹ which figures in all these stories, showing that the traditions all come from the same source. He is supposed to have astonished those who saw him by getting an egg inside a bottle, with the use of chemicals, and to have cured wounded birds. Probably these tales all go back to Wathimah, but it is beyond our power to assign them their proper degree of credibility.

Of his doctrines also we can glean very little. Sprenger fancies² he was more moral in some ways than Mohammed; but the Moslems declare that he permitted wine, and declared prayer unnecessary. He is also supposed to have consecrated a sanctuary in Yemāmah, bearing some resemblance to that of Meccah; and he is said to have imitated the Mohammedan call to prayer, in confirmation of which a proverb is cited,³ of which, however, both reading and interpretation are uncertain. Since in any case he was a far less energetic reformer than Mohammed, there would be no difficulty about the supposition that he might have borrowed some details from the more successful Prophet, even though he had

¹ *Nayranj*.

² In agreement with Ibn Athīr.

³ Balādhuri, p. 90.

prophesied at an earlier period. If the story of the call to prayer be true, we should be compelled to admit this, since there seems no doubt that this was a distinctly Mohammedan institution.

What is meant by his being called the *Rahmān* of Yemāmah is of course obscure. The fact is certified by Balādhuri, who (p. 105) asserts that another false prophet, Al-Aswad al-'Ansi, called himself the *Rahmān* of Yemen in imitation. There might be something to be said for connecting *this* word with the *Menahmānā* or 'Comforter' of St. John's Gospel. In that case he will have even forestalled Mohammed in the appropriation of the prophecy.

The Banu Ḥanīfah were a tribe of considerable importance, since in the year 12 A.H. they could bring 40,000 men into the field (Ibn Athīr, ii, 275). According to Al-Kalbi (quoted by Kādī Šā'id, translated by Schefer, *Chrestomathie Persane*, i, 145) they worshipped an idol made of a paste of dates kneaded with milk.¹ "During a famine it was eaten by the members of the tribe, which caused a poet to say 'the men of Ḥanīfah in a time of stress devoured their god.'" This story is also told by Ibn Rusteh (*Bibl. Geogr. Arab.*, vii, 217), and earlier still by Ibn Kūtaibah (Cairo, 1300, p. 305). Hence they are not enumerated with the Christian Arabs,² yet some of them must have been Christians, since Mohammed commanded their envoys to pull down their *Bī'ah*, or church (Wellhausen, *Skizzen*, iv, 157); and of some of the members of the tribe this is expressly stated; so of the poet Musa Ibn Jābir (*Khizānat al-Adab*, i, 146), and their chieftain Haudhah, son of 'Ali (Ibn Athīr, ii, 165). In the accounts of their dealings with the Prophet we hear nothing of bishops and priests, as in the case of Najran. Their Christianity would appear to have been of a very rudimentary sort, since the annals of the tribe exhibit a rather *outré* form of Paganism. In a story told in the *Kāmil* (i, 210), 'Umair Ibn Sulmi, the Ḥanafite, promises

¹ Modern writers on Arabic antiquities seem to reject this. But many religions exhibit traces of the deification of objects used in ceremonies.

² And, indeed, the tribe attended the pagan festival at Mina (Ibn Ishāk, p. 283).

protection to one of the Sawākīṭ (visitors), who came to his country in one of the sacred months; this was done by writing on an arrow, "So-and-so is my Guest." The guest's brother (a Kilabite) was killed by 'Umair's brother Ḳarīn; the surviving Kilabite took up his station at the tomb of 'Umair's father, demanding vengeance; 'Umair and the other Ḥanafites offer blood-money, but it is refused; they double and treble their offers, but with no better success; Ḳarīn seeks the protection of his maternal uncle, but he does not grant it; and so 'Umair at last ties his brother to a palm-tree, and allows him to be slain. If there be any truth in this story, it shows that conversion to Christianity made very little difference in the normal institutions of Arabia, except that a pagan tribe would probably not have handed the murderer up to vengeance. A story told in *Aghāni*, xvi, 79, of the above-mentioned Haudhah is still less edifying. He was on friendly terms with 'Kisra,' and to please the monarch treacherously murdered a number of Sa'dites. This same man was warmly praised by Al-A'sha (*Kāmil*, ii, 26). The poet Jarīr, whose opinion of them at times was favourable (*Divan*, i, 28), also satirized them (*Bayān*, ii, 74), and taunted them with being civilized and knowing more about the ploughshare than about the sword, a charge which at the time of their war with Khalid was certainly ill-grounded.

Probably (or rather certainly), then, Musaylimah, like Sajāḥ (Ibn Athīr, ii, 269), whom he afterwards married, got some of his religious notions from the Christians. Indeed, when the Arabs had once learned the Biblical genealogies (and we need not doubt that these were to them as new and important as they were to the Armenians), the notion of going back to the religion of their father Abraham was not far to seek. If the reasons suggested by Sprenger for the dislike of Christianity by the Arabs be sound, the idea that the religion of their father Abraham was more suitable would have suggested itself quite naturally when once the Biblical genealogies had been accepted as a true account of their origin; and of any scepticism on this subject there

appears to be no trace. The notion, however, of restoring the religion of Abraham is more likely to have occurred first in a tribe which was partially Christian than in one of which only a few members had any acquaintance with the Christian religion. It is, therefore, worth while suggesting that the man who first raised the standard of the Abrahamic religion was Maslamah, the Hanafite, after whom the Arabian monotheists were at the first called, though not many were aware of the origin of the appellation.

The suggestion, then, which I should offer for the explanation of these terms is that some twenty years before Mohammed's mission some sort of natural monotheism was preached by Musaylimah, whose followers being called Muslims and Hanifs, these words were supposed to signify *monotheist*, and as such were adopted by Mohammed, who, owing to the comparative obscurity of Musaylimah, had at least at first no knowledge of their origin, and afterwards felt bound to assert positively that they were both in use in Abraham's time. The Meccans' taunt that he was instructed by the Raḥmān of Yemāmah may be interpreted as a fairly correct account of the facts, if we suppose Musaylimah's Surahs to have been the earliest Arabic literature connected with monotheism, on which Mohammed modelled his early Surahs; naturally, as we can learn from Hirschfeld and others, he underwent a number of influences during the time in which he composed his Koran, and found it expedient to desert Musaylimah for the Old and New Testaments and the sayings of the Jewish fathers. I fear that in any question of literary ownership there must be a presumption against Mohammed, for in cases where we know his sources he indignantly denies the use of them; hence, where we do not know them quite certainly, there is a suspicion that he is the imitator rather than the imitated. If this be so, the figure of Musaylimah becomes rather a pathetic one. Quite late in life he will have tried to play the part which by right of priority he might have played much earlier, had he had the energy of his disciple. When after Mohammed's death he was in a position to attempt the part of conquering Prophet,

he was near the end of a long life; he acted with remarkable skill and vigour, but the general sent against him was one of the ablest ever produced by Arabia, and his cause was seriously hurt by treachery. If it be true that his name is still revered in Yemāmah, this will be another example of the tenacity with which sects survive.