

Toward the One, the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,
the Only Being, United with All the Illuminated Souls
Who Form the Embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance.

The Prophet and the Spirit of Prophecy

It is claimed by those who follow the path of Islam that the Prophet was the best of all prophets and that he was the "Seal of the Prophets." Whether this be true or not, and whether the epithet 'best' can be applied to prophets at all, it is noteworthy that today we find the message of God in some form reaching all the corners of the globe. At this hour the mullahs and imams have gone into the darkest recesses of Africa where no missionary of any religion has gone heretofore and the inhabitants of those regions are fast becoming converted.

What matter if the savage does not fully understand the Unity of Allah and the mission of Mohammed! He must first learn this simple lesson before he can grasp the intricacies of doctrine, and in all religion there is nothing so simple as the proclamations of Islam. The native African can hardly understand our more subtle or complicated theologies, but he is being slowly but surely being raised from darkness. The mullah gives his Message to the Negro—his Message is a simple one, easily understood: God is not in the form but in the formless; He has no partners and none are like Him; Mohammed was the prophet who gave this lesson to the world that mankind might benefit.

When we study the life of the Prophet, we find that it was with this in view—to raise the standard of his race—that he brought this Message. He brought it for them, and legal codes and complicated theologies came later. His Message was very simple, easily understood, readily acceptable, and his opposition to Christianity and Judaism was bases in great part to the complications which had entered into these cults, complications of which their Founders knew naught.

Perhaps there has not been a "prophet" since his time, perhaps because the Spirit of Prophecy seems to have departed from the earth; we are more apt to criticize and judge one who is revered by millions as the greatest soul who ever appeared on earth. Indeed, if there ever was, if there be such a Spirit as the spirit of Prophecy, one can hardly exclude Mohammed from the ranks of the prophets.

The ancient Hebrews, filled with the spirit of Jehovah, went forth and preached their Message. It was a simple one, clearly understood. There can be little doubt as to their sincerity, no question as to their purpose, and it is evident some deep, stirring force roused them to leave the hills and fields and go forth and preach. Above all else, they abhorred idolatry; they inveigled bitterly against the association of any one or anything with their God—to them infidelity and immorality went hand in hand.

The Message of Mohammed in no way differed from that of the earlier Hebrews; it was not a different Message but it was a different Mission. They came to the Beni Israel, he to the sons of Ishmael. We can neither compare nor contrast them to advantage. We know much more of Mohammed, his "virtues" and "vices." Many were the prophets of Israel, but alone he presented the doctrine of Islam to men. It was necessary for him to experience all the vicissitudes of life, but seldom did he stand alone—not that he was afraid or unwilling to stand alone, as in the case of his perilous mission to at Ta'if. But he gained followers and friends, and among his associates were some of the noblest men of all history.

The Prophet and the Spirit of Prophecy

Little is it understood how the Spirit of Prophecy arises in man. It is too easy to judge and condemn the non-present, and because the Message of God has in some form reached all the corners of the globe no further prophet is necessary in the earlier sense. But the Spirit of Prophecy has always lived and there are in these times—just as there were in the past—men ready and willing to listen to the voice of God within themselves and go forth and preach the Doctrine.

We are beset with many difficulties at this point. Historians have too often been not so much scientists as propagandists or panegyrists. The point of view of most men is limited and few; even among our psychologists few have grasped the significance of the Spirit of Prophecy and probably none of them have carefully studied the life of Mohammed.

Mohammed has been called an epileptic, a cataleptic, and by one widely read modern essayist—he can hardly be called a biographer—it has been suggested that he may have been a paranoiac and certainly was a medium. This constant misuse of psychological and psychiatric terms by those who have not studied these sciences serves an excellent purpose. It destroys the falsehoods which they insinuate or openly uphold. Where in all history have we an epileptic who gained the hearts of the most sincere and noble men in his vicinity? Where else have we a cataleptic who was able to govern with reason and justice and become head of a mighty cause? Where have we a paranoiac who was so popular that every one wanted to be with him—whose greatest pleasure was to play with children, and who won over many of his most bitter enemies? Where have we had a medium who has been so successful, who has thought in so universal terms, who was able to do so much lasting good?

It is not the historian, the philologist, the Orientalist nor the Muslim Panegyrists we must turn to understand the life and mission of the Prophet, although each has its value. We must examine the contributions of psychology. Unfortunately we are here still beset by those whose narrowness of vision determines their standards of normality. So long as scientists allow themselves to be deceived by the “egocentric predicament,” they are not true scientists. Before we can rightly decide what is normal and natural, we must study and judge all men, not those of a few races, or a limited area, or a few centuries, but all men of all races of all climes and all times.

Two outstanding episodes in the life of the Prophet have marked him out for slander, calumny and hostile criticism on the one hand, or extreme eulogy, panegyrics, or the merit of Divinity on the other: his claim to Prophethood through the mediation of the Angel Gabriel, and his “miraj” when he claimed to be taken up into Heaven and also visited the temple at Jerusalem. These very episodes hold the key to his secret and must be examined before judgment is rendered.

Mohammed was employed as a shepherd; out in the hills in solitude he dwelt, seldom coming in contact with men. He was considered trustworthy, sincere and sober by his neighbors and acquaintances who called him El Amin. He was reflective by nature and on one occasion felt himself suddenly filled with a mighty spirit and henceforth preached his Message which is recorded, and which he declared was a Revelation from Allah.

This experience has within itself all the elements of a true mystical vision. The first essential for a mystic are a noble character, high ideals and solitude. Then through reflection and contemplation there comes a time when a spirit takes hold of one and he is led to do the uncommon. But the uncommon is not the impossible or the unnatural. Our study of comparative religions has not yet brought us to the examination of comparative or universal Mysticism. Yet students of mysticism are

The Prophet and the Spirit of Prophecy

finding that there are remarkable parallels between all those who lived the Inner Life or experience the Divine Vision. Such scholars are never confused to classify mystics who experience great expansions of consciousness and excitations to great missions with mediums, who pass into subliminal worlds. Not does the fact that a few mystics of a certain age were not balanced constitutionally give any warrant for holding this over them universally. Krishna, Moses and Mohammed all had to appear on battlefields and submit to every physical rigor.

The Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Guidance is for all men. The experiences of the Prophet do not differ in essence from those of Buddha or Jesus or Lao-Tse or the Prophets of Israel. As Professor Hocking states in *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* (page 511):

“The prophet is but the mystic in control of the forces of history, declaring their necessary outcome: the mystic in action is the prophet. In the prophet, the cognitive certainty of the mystic becomes historic and particular; and this is the necessary destiny of that certainty: mystic experience must complete itself in the prophetic consciousness.”

Those who regard the Holy Spirit merely as an essential element in Christian theology fail to see that the doctrine of the existence of the Holy Spirit was held long before the coming of Christ. It is that spirit that seizes one, uniting him to the All in consciousness, and so changing his nature that he will act from a universal point of view, instead of from a limited point of view. The effect of this seizure has been different because each prophet came to a different country or in a different age to meet the needs of that day. Nor can Mohammed be condemned, if in the eyes of his readers, he seems to have confused the Holy Spirit with the Angel Gabriel, for such is the nature of these experiences, often so confusing to the average man.

So long as the possibility of Cosmic Consciousness is overlooked, there will be many characters in history whose greatness will not be realized. Some schools deter from even studying consciousness, some schools examine the problem and conclude that the experience of mystics and prophets can be categorized within the spheres of our accepted knowledge, overlooking:

1. That there is practically no psychological doctrine accepted universally in the sense that Newton's Laws are accepted.
2. That the infinite cannot be expressed in finite terms.

There was no confusion on the part of Mohammed in regard to the Angel Gabriel and the Holy Spirit. Whatever and “angel” is, whether a being or an essence or a feeling or inner urge, the experiences of the Cosmic State can with difficulty be put into terms for common acceptance. To deny the existence of angels is to fall into the “egocentric predicament;” all who have passed into other stages of consciousness, in trance or ecstasy or meditation have reported the existence of creatures not perceptible to all people in the waking state.

(Note: Psychics, as well as the majority of ‘uncivilized’ people who constitute a large portion if not a majority of the people of earth claim to see other beings. This does not mean that they see angels, but merely that we are forced into solipsisms from insisting only upon the existence of elements or creatures of which we have direct or “reasonable” knowledge.)

In any case there are certain data which must be examined in analyzing the character and import of the Prophet. First there is the Qur'an. Controversy over the appearance of this work may continue for centuries. So long as any one admits the possibility of Revelation, it is difficult, nay

impossible to exclude this work from among the revealed books, unless one is biased. But that is revelation? Revelation is that which is written through the experience of cosmic consciousness. Generally it is meant all that is written by one who has experienced this state, although in point of fact this stage is not sustained. The word particularly applies to the works of those who, having experienced this state, have founded religions or world movements.

Much of the Qur'an was probably written when the Prophet was not in the Cosmic State, but this is also true of all other Scripture. (Many parts of the Bible are really not "revealed" from any point of view, as "Ruth," "Chronicles," etc.) The Prophet came to a people divided politically; there was no social state, no universal religion, every man was against his brother. This was far different from the people visited by Krishna or even Moses and Jesus. Mohammed had to function objectively, and for this reason at certain periods the standard of his writings appears far below those composed at other seasons. There is nothing unusual about this; the poet or author who has been writing out in the solitude of hill or forest, forced to live in the busy city and engage himself in the traffic and affairs of men could hardly create compositions of equal merit to those of the former environ.

Another factor not fully analyzed has been the acceptance of his Mission by Khadija and Waraka. Who was this Waraka, the cousin of Khadija? He has been claimed as a Christian and a Jew. He certainly was a believer in Allah and not an idolater. The suggestion is that he was one of the Hanifs to which group Mohammed claimed he belonged and who still preserved the pure doctrine. Indeed the readiness with which he accepted the Prophet leads to the conclusion that he was the spiritual teacher of Mohammed.

The existence of spiritual teachers (Guru, Sheikh, Pir, etc.) is known throughout the Orient. No one seems to have risen to the highest states of consciousness and sustained it without having had a teacher. When he has so risen, without having had an instructor, disaster or unbalance may follow him (e.g. Walt Whitman). Even Jesus, Buddha and Moses had teachers at some state in their development. Sometimes these teachers are very real men but sometimes they are of a type seldom manifesting to humankind and this has influenced people to seek for "masters" in far away or out of the way places. Among the Sufis, Yogis and some Buddhists at this day we find masters or teachers of some kind.

When one reads a sympathetic translation of the Qur'an or one in which the chapters are arranged in as near historical order as possible, the spiritual growth of the Prophet is evident. The "miraj" experience can also be better understood. This experience was in no sense a "mirage." Whatever changes took place inwardly in him, after having had his vision, he established certain institutions which hardly were in his mind up to that time.

1. The institution of prayer.

Prayer not only furnished the opportunity for rest from work but gave mental rest and relaxation. We must remember that one cannot fight while praying, so it serves as an excellent means of cooling tempers. The Islamic postures are among the best "setting-up" exercises ever devised for keeping the physical body in good condition.

The Prophet and the Spirit of Prophecy

2. The institution of ablutions.

One reflects with sadness the absence of the bath or even of washing among some Christians until very modern times. No one has ever insisted as Mohammed on the need of cleanliness both within and without.

3. The moral code.

People would not and never have accepted moral codes unless convinced they have been "revealed." Indeed the coming of the Prophet and the presentation of the moral code are ever connected.

To those who are unconvinced, or who would even place the experimenter without the bounds of sanity, it may be objected as follows:

1. That none of them has gone into the solitude of desert, mountain or forest for a long period and meditated on their highest ideal.
2. That Hocking and James and those who are trying to examine the world from a universal viewpoint, which is the only scientific way, admit its validity.
3. That to deny the existence of a state or condition because not experienced oneself, forces one into a logical dilemma and invalidates their work.
4. They fail to see that ordinary reason cannot cope with the Infinite or understand Love and grasp the essence of Consciousness.
5. The laws of the Cosmic State bear the same relation to the laws of the "normal" state as the mathematics of Infinity and the Fourth dimension to those of finitude and the third dimension.
6. There is always an unconscious assumption that what we "know" is all there is to be known.

The writer of *Awarifu-l-Ma'arif* by Sheikh Shahabu-d-din 'Umar bin Muhammad-i-Sohrwardi said: "By perfection of following and by the link of union with the souls of sheikhs, whoever gained union with the soul of "Muhammad—in him appeared love for God ..." (H. Wilberforce Clarke's translation, p. 129) This doctrine of Oneness with the Prophet exists in each religion—the bhikku united with the Tathagata, the Yogi with Siva, the monk or nun with Christ. The Prophet is the one who is "The Gate." The understanding of this from inner experience or outward toleration will lead far more to peace than any patchwork of human minds or the continuance of assumed superiority which unfortunately seems to be a mark of human nature.