THE FRAGMENTS OF GOETHE'S DRAMA OF MOHAMMED

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The History of Goethe's Mahomet-Fragments

The first of the fragments of Goethe's drama "Mahomet" to appear in print was the dialogue, or alternating song, between Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law, and his wife Fatema, published in Boie's "Göttinger Musenalmanach" in 1773 under the title "Gesang". Its connection with Mohammed was only evident from the names of the singers who were well known through the elaborate works on the Prophet by both Mohammedan and Christian writers, previous to the latter half of the eighteenth century. It seems as if Goethe had written this poem without the intention of making it a part of a drama which he must have planned somewhat later. Therefore, when he drew up his plans, he took it up again and made changes so that it would fit in with the other material. In this process he eliminated the names of Ali and Fatema; and instead of these characters he gave the poem a new title, "Mahomet Gesang". This established a direct relation to the other parts of the drama and in this form it was published in Goethe's "Schriften" of 1790. These two publications were the only evidences thus far of Goethe's intention of writing a "Mahomet" until in 1814 the third volume of "Dichtung und Wahrheit" appeared. In this book Goethe endeavored to show how the idea had occurred to him and how he had planned the whole work. This he did apparently without having any other of the fragments at hand except what had already been published, because the Hymn with which he had intended the drama to begin, he considered lost. In spite of this, Goethe reproduced the contents very
exactly although later investigations have led to the discovery of much material which seems to prove that Goethe's memory must have failed him in certain respects especially regarding the time of his conception of the plan.

The Hymn together with the Prose-scene and certain excerpts of the Koran, which Goethe evidently had translated from the "Alcorani Textus" (1698) by L. Marraccius, because Goethe mentions the translation of this Jesuit in the same connection, was discovered by A. Schöll among the papers which Frau von Stein had left at Kochberg. Schöll published his newly discovered fragments in 1846. However, with the exception of the sixt Sure which he gave out in full undoubtedly for the reason that it appeared to be the source of the Hymn, the other excerpts came out only in short extracts. Regardless of this procedure Schöll's discovery and publication of these fragments was a great step forward to a better elucidation of the subject as it was to be treated in the drama as a whole in comparison with the plan set forth in "Dichtung und Wahrheit". This event also caused others to take up the matter and among these S. Hirzel made the fragments better known and more conveniently accessible through his publication of "Der junge Goethe" in 1875. J. Minor also had them printed in his Weimar edition volume 39; but Max Morris was the first one to publish them wholly complete according to the Hochberger manuscript in his "Der junge Goethe" (1910).

W. F. Biedermann made an attempt in his "Goethe-Forschungen" (Neue Folge) of 1889 to reproduce the action of the drama in conformity with the plan as it is portrayed in "Dichtung und Wahrheit", without doubting its reliability. F. Strehlhe was the first to do
this. He pointed out the fact that the song which Ali and Fatema were to sing, had appeared already in the fall of 1773. It is therefore evident that the idea relating to "Mahomet" must have originated before 1774. This view was further strengthened through L. Urlichs' efforts to solve the problem. He combined a passage in Goethe's letter to Johanna Fahlmer of October 18, 1773 with a note to Lavater in 1774. In both of them he found a dramma mentioned as being almost complete. From this he drew the conclusion that it must have been "Mahomet". Von Loeper, however, objected to this assumption on the ground that, in as much as only fragments of it have been found, Goethe could not have spoken of this drama in that way. Urlichs, on the other hand put the Hymn and the Prose-scene after the song in 1774, asserting that the works of reform of Lavater and Basedow had had such a great influence on the writing of the drama that Goethe had taken it up again and changed the whole plan.

Investigations were carried out extensively and soon the doubts as to the connection of the fragments with the plan described in "Dichtung und Wahrheit" became stronger. Finally H. Düntzer detached the newly discovered pieces from their relation to Lavater and Basedow and fixed the time of their origin in the spring of 1773. This took place after he had brought to light a collection of Goethe's poems which had been written during the first part of his stay at Weimar. According to his opinion Frau von Stein had transcribed these poems for herself in 1777. They are marked "St" in the second Weimar edition. Later the original was found in a note-book in the Goethe-Archives, written by Goethe himself for Frau von Stein probably in 1779 and containing poems both from
his stay at Frankfort and from his first period at Weimar. The mark of these poems in the Weimar edition is "H2". Here the poem which begins with the words, "Seht den Felsenquell" has already received the title "Mahomets Gesang" and the dialogue form has been removed. The manuscript "H4" which contains the poems intended for volume 8 of the "Schriften" was also discovered in the same place, and this manuscript corresponds almost throughout to "H2" "Die neuen Lesarten von H2 und H4 sind in S (1790) geblieben; eine starke Änderung kommt im Druck hinzu"1.

It has been ascertained that Goethe studied the Koran in July 1772. The allusion which Goethe makes to this book in an undated letter to Herder, J. Minor points out, was verbally transcribed from Mergerlin's translation of the Koran. This letter, Saran thinks, was written about the middle of July 1772 because Goethe mentions the fact at the close of the letter that he had just received No. 54 of the "Frankfurter Zeitung" which was issued July 7th 1772. Max Morris agrees to this contention when he says: "Da Mergerlins Vorrede vom 15 August 1772 datiert und das Werk zur Herbstmesse erschienen ist, so sind diese Vorstudien zum Mahomet nicht vor dem Oktober anzusetzen, aber schon in dem Brief No. 92 an Herder, der durch die letzte Zeile auf den Juli 1772 festgelegt ist zitiert Goethe einen Satz aus Mergerlin"2. On the other hand

1. Fr. Saran, Goethes Mahomet und Prometheus (1914) p.5.
J. Minor maintains that this letter could hardly have been written before September 1772 since Mergerlin's translation was not published before the 29th of that month and since its dedication to Emperor Joseph is dated August 15th, 1772. Saran, however, refutes this argument by stating that Goethe had evidently received the proof sheets of the work in advance of its publication which Max Morris contends could have come either from the publisher or from Mergerlin himself because both lived in Frankfort at the time.

Whatever was the actual date when Goethe received Mergerlin's translation of the Koran it could not have been any later than the "Herbstmesse" September 29th 1772, and a year after this date the "Gesang" appeared in the "Musenalmanach". Hence Goethe must have sent the manuscript to the publisher Boie a few months before. That may have occurred in May of the same year. "In Mai 1773 bittet Goethe Kestners auf die Reise von Wetzlar nach Hannover ein Päckchen an Boie mitzunehmen". Therefore it is very probable that the origin of the Song was in the spring of 1773. It may have been written shortly after the publication of the twentieth stanza of Klopstock's "Messias" at the "Ostermesse" of that year, because there is much in this stanza which unmistakably indicates that it was both a model and a source of inspiration for the poem. The same technic is followed: two lovers sing against each other, the one begins the theme, and the other continues while both sing occasionally in unison for the sake of emphasis and at the conclusion of the poem.

Whether the Hymn to which is attached the Prose-scene, was written before or after the Song has not yet been authentically established. Düntzer sets the time for both in the spring of 1773

1. J. Minor, Goethes Mahomet (1907) p.81.
but he gives no special reason for this conjecture. On the other hand, Minor thinks that the Song undoubtedly came before the other fragments without having any connection whatsoever with the plan of the drama. He also claims that Goethe made a mistake when he gave the Song the title "Mahomets Gesang", since Mohammed is obviously not the singer but the object of its contents. Saran, however, objects to this reasoning and points out that this change appeared already in the manuscript of 1777 and that it is incredible that Goethe could have forgotten his plan so soon. Therefore, he seems to be convinced that there was some purpose behind the change made and his strongest point appears to be that Goethe removed the names of the singers at the same time when he made the other change. He contends, furthermore, that the removal of the names of Ali and Fatema destroyed the historical and biographical relations to Mohammed which could scarcely have taken place in 1777 since by that time Goethe's "Mahomet" lay distant from his poetical horizon.

That the biographical hypothesis of the first manuscript deviates entirely from that of the Hymn and Prose-scene is very easily discernible. In the Song Mohammed is in the midst of his religious and political activities. He is apparently a man of mature age, because he has a family and a son-in-law, whereas in the Prose-scene he appears more like a boy than a youth. This would indicate that Goethe had changed his original plan when he wrote the Prose-scene; and probably he had done this even before he produced the Hymn in as much as they appeared together in the original manuscript. Thus it seems as if the Prose-scene was intended to continue the Hymn and in order to make the Song conform to the other two, Goethe must have made the changes in the Song after the others were
written. On the other hand, although the Hymn and the Prose-scene were thus connected in the same manuscript, J. Minor, nevertheless, thinks that the Hymn was also written separately just like the Song since it contains elements which make the hypothesis for a drama wholly impossible; but this thought seems very ridiculous to Dr. Goebel. Yet, Saran seems to agree with Minor when he says: "Der Auf- und Untergang der Sterne, des Mondea, der Sonne spiele sich in 20 versen ab: auf der Bühne darzustellen, sei schwer möglich. Ferner verhindere die szonische Bemerkung 'Feld, Gesternter Himmel', beide Stücke als zusammengehörig zu betrachten. Die Hymne umspannt die Zeit von 24 Stunden, von einem Abend bis zum nächsten. Halima sucht nun ihren Pflegesohn von Sonnenuntergang an". But Saran lays special emphasis on the difference of time as it is indicated in each fragment; and this causes him to reach the conclusion that the Hymn originated from Goethe's study of the sixt Sure of the Koran as he found it in the translation of Marraccius, that the Prose-scene was added later, and that the final relation of the three fragments was established through the changes in the song.

Apparently the various fragments constitute a whole, but each one is very much independent of the other. To account for this fact undoubtedly the time which elapsed between their production is a very important factor; but their independence is also due in no small degree to the various influences which came from other sources than the biography of the Prophet and his Koran. This is evident especially from such authorities as Minor and Saran even though they do not always agree. Regarding this point Minor believes that the

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Hymn and the Prose-scene were written in the same year as the Song since they disclose not only a quite general knowledge of Mohammed's genius and triumph but already a more thorough study of his life and of the Koran; but Saran argues that the motive of the Hymn particularly conforms better to "Die Älteste Urkunde des Menschen-geschlechts" by Herder, which Goethe did not receive until in the spring of 1774 at the "Ostermesse" in Frankfort. It is therefore very improbable that it was written before Goethe had read this work. He, furthermore, tries to prove that Goethe busied himself with the drama "Mahomet" during the winter of 1774 by referring to two letters, one of which Goethe himself wrote to Johanna Fahlmer January 2, 1774 in which he speaks of having sat "Zwischen Houries bisz ein Uhr Nachts". The Houries are nymphs of Paradise, the reward of the faithful Mohammedan after death. The other letter Fräulein von Klettenberg wrote to Karl von Moser January 21, 1774 wherein this statement appears. "An einem stillen empfindungs-vollen Abend, wo der Mond -- Jupiter und die Prächtige Venus in Nahmenloser Majestät am firmament funklen und mir Jehova! mit starker stimme in mein schmelzendes Herz ruffen". Since this is a striking departure from the natural way of her writing Saran seems to think that Goethe might have recited to her his translation of the sixt Sure of the Koran and thus influenced her to write in this strain.

That it is very difficult to determine the exact date when Goethe planned to write "Mahomet" is obvious from the material available. The same can be said, even probably more so, of the

1. Max Morris, Der Junge Goethe (1912) vol.4 p.3.
2. Fr. Saran, Goethes Mahomet und Prometheus (1914) p.40.
fact that he did not complete it as he did "Faust" and "Götz".
Düntzer seems to think that it was probably due to Merck who advised
Goethe in February 1773 to lay aside "Mahomet" and to have "Götz"
published. Whatever the main reason was, it is evident from
Goethe's own statement in "Dichtung und Wahrheit" that he had been
very much interested in the Prophet of whom so much had been written
that he was more universally known than any other great man.
Mohammed in Literature previous to the 19th century.

The general thought expressed in literature concerning the life and works of Mohammed is that they are better known than the life and works of any other founder of the great religions. Then, for example, Zoroaster and Confusius are less known than Solon and Socrates; the same may be said with regard to Moses and Buddha in comparison with Ambrose and Augustine and, when Christ, the greatest of all founders of religions, is considered, there are many questions about him which always must remain questions. That there are many legends and traditions about Mohammed which arose from party motives has been known for a long time, but with some sifting it has generally been accepted that enough remained so that a much clearer sketch of Mohammed's life could be made than that of any other of the founders of a universal religion. This illusion, however, has been disturbed especially by Prince Caetani and Father Lammens. In their opinion, even the data which has been generally regarded as objective, rests chiefly upon tendentious fiction and during the last few years new sources of information have been found in great numbers so that to-day less can be told about Mohammed's teaching and life than it was possible half a century ago. Indeed extremely little is known of Mohammed before he appeared as a messenger of God and the most reliable information concerning his life after that momentous event is the Koran.

Much could be said of Mohammedan opinions of their Prophet in their literature but the following quotation will probably give a general idea of what the Faithful thought of him.
Kamal ud Din ad Damiri (A. D. 1349-1405) who was a theologian of the Shafi school, says in his "Dictionary of Zoology"; a standard work throughout the Arabic world: "Mohammed is the most favored of mankind, the most honored of all the apostles, the prophet of mercy, the head or iman of the faithful, the bearer of the banner of praise, the intercessor, the holder of high position, the possessor of the River of Paradise, under whose banner the sons of Adam will be on the day of judgment. He is the best of prophets and his nation is the best of all nations; his companions are the most excellent of mankind, after the prophets, and his creed is the noblest of all creeds. He performed manifest miracles, and possessed great qualities. He was perfect in intellect, and was of noble origin. He had an absolutely graceful form, complete generosity, perfect bravery, excessive humility, useful knowledge, power of performing high actions, perfect fear of God and sublime piety. He was the most eloquent and the most perfect of mankind in every variety of perfection, and the most distant of men from meanness and vices".  

Not all Moslem literature is as laudatory as the passage quoted above but the Christian writers have as a rule gone to the other extreme. Already in the "Chanson de Roland", the national epic of France, which was written in the latter part of the eleventh century, Mohammed appears with the chief of the Pagan Gods on the one side of him, and the chief of the devils on the other. Marsillesa, Kaliph of Cordova, is supposed to worship him as a god, and his favorite form of adjuration is made to be "By Jupiter, by Mohammed, and by Appollyon."² In the twelfth century he became a heresiarch

2. R. Bosworth Smith, Mohammed and Mohamedanism (1875) p.81f.
instead of a god. Dante places him in his "Inferno" in his ninth circle among the sowers of religious discord and when the Crusaders returned from their expeditions to the Holy Land all kinds of descriptions and stories about Mohammed and his professors were spread broadcast over the Christian world. That he let himself be worshiped as a God was undeniable according to their testimony. Later when the Turks threatened the very existence of Christianity in Europe, the Koran was generally spoken of as "the Turkish Alkoran". That it originated among the Arabs was scarcely considered. Actual facts were little known because the Koran was kept away from the public and practically the only information available during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was the romances which pictured Mohammed as "a debauchee, a camel stealer, a cardinal, who having failed to obtain the object of every cardinal's ambition invents a new religion to revenge himself on his brethren, etc.".\(^1\)

In Germany the publishing house of Endters at Nürnberg carried on a great business, publishing books about Mohammed. There appeared in 1673 the "Sieges-Säule der Busse und des Glaubens wider den Erbfinde christlichen Mamens", written by Katharina Regina von Greiffenberg of Austria. She tells of Mohammed's life and teaching in a way which puts him in a better light than the other writings of the time. In general, he was looked upon as a false prophet who had assumed this title himself. The names "false Prophet" and "Arch-Deceiver" are seldom absent from the title pages and all kinds of devices are employed to avoid mentioning his proper name. Bodily he is afflicted with epilepsy which he is reported as having wished to conceal from his wife and others by pretending religious convul-

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visions and high revelations at the appearance of the angel Gabriel. Great emphasis is laid upon this story almost everywhere in the older sources even by Gottfried and Bayle; but Ockley and Gibbon think that it is merely a distasteful slander of the Greeks.

In the seventh Sure Mohammed calls himself an illiterate prophet. This was seized upon as something which troubled his spiritual and moral plans and it was aided by a deep malice which made a mockery of his beautiful name, Mahomet—the celebrated. He was blamed for everything the Turks did in his name in Europe, etc. He was looked upon as the destroyer of Christian churches and schools. Sweigger called him a second Horostratus. It was said that he banished entirely from his own domain learning and art. All he did was make war, rob, kill, commit adultery, and rape women and girls. H. Prideux, his English biographer, called him not only a false prophet and a sly deceiver but a criminal whose only motive was ambition and carnal appetite. Christian writers considered his teaching as the most ridiculous and foolish, as vain works of fiction and reverie. In contrast to the Christian Holy Scriptures his Koran was in their opinion "Ein verführerischer Menchentand", "Ein geflickter Bettlersmantel" of which expression Goethe was very fond. It was, furthermore, held as an established fact that the Koran was put together partly from Jewish sources, partly from heretical Christian writings and partly from Pythagorean teachings with the help of the Nestorian monk Sergius.

Even if Mohammed sometimes speaks of Christ in the Koran it was claimed that he did this only with the aim of deceiving the Christians under the pretext that there was, after all, a very small difference between his teaching and theirs. That Islam, Mohammed's
Gospel, spread very extensively in a short time was attributed, in the first place, to Mohammed's permission of polygamy and divorce and in the second place to this promise of sensual satisfaction in Paradise, and thirdly because he not only permitted robbery and the use of force in bringing people under his sway but gave orders to resort to such tactics in order to enhance his power. Therefore, what else could he have been but a tool of the devil for the purpose of destroying Christianity, a true Antichrist. Such was the Christian opinion of Mohammed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in the eighteenth, Goethe was able to get this view from Gottfrieds "Altväterischen Chronik" (1743, vol. I p. 428f) and from Bayle's "Dictionnaire" translated by Gottsched in 1743. In this work Bayle has a higher opinion of the ethic of Islam than Prideux, et al, but he finally seems to concur in Prideux' judgment of the prophet, namely that he was a mere deceiver who made use of religion as a means only for his earthly greatness and that he continued to play the comedy to the end. His use of soldiers for the spread of Islam Bayle considers as advantageous for his cause but he also regards him as an enthusiast who really believed in himself.

The views set forth by Christian writers regarding Mohammed's character and teaching were for a long time due not merely to their zeal against the Arch-enemy of Christianity but also to their ignorance of the exact contents of the Koran. The Catholic church did whatever was possible to prevent its translation and printing. During his occupancy of the papal chair from 1655 to 1667 pope Alexander VII issued an order to this effect. But it was impossible to confine the Koran to Arabia. In 1550 Bibliander, a Zürich priest, had published a Latin translation which the Abbot
Peter of Cluny had caused to be made four hundred years before and the Protestants finally took it up and made a number of translations but they were accompanied, as a rule, either by a Refutation setting forth the Christian point of view or by a strong introduction. That it was not very safe even for the Protestant translator Pastor Hinckelmann experienced in Hamburg as late as 1694 when his translation from the Arabic original nearly cost him both his office and honor.

When the Catholics had come to the conclusion that their efforts to suppress the Koran in Europe were in vain, some of their dignitaries took up the work of translating it and providing it with their own Refutations, etc. In 1698 Ludwig Marracciuis, the Confessor of pope Innocent XI, published a translation of the Koran and each single Sure from the original Arabic text, to which he appended a Refutation and a description of Mohammed's life from the account of the most illustrious Arabian writers but only as they had pictured him a godless person, a hypocrite, and a robber. This work was translated into German by David Nerreter in his "Neu eröffneten Mahometanischen Moschea" (1703). But the publishers had to state expressly their opposition to the Arch-deceiver and his teaching.

For the most part a Refutation or a Confutation or a Censor stated the Christian point of view but in addition to this the authors often tried to make themselves more secure by dedicating their works to some exalted personage, Emperor or Prince, etc. Yet these precautions did not bring lasting results. Thorough investigations as to whether the Mohammedans really believed everything attributed to them by the Christian writers finally turned the
Refutations, etc. against themselves. In this connection Mohammed also appeared in a different light. A Dutch scholar, H. Reland, was instrumental in bringing this about through his rejection of the many stories which had sprung up around Mohammed, after he had made an extensive investigation. This led J. Gagnier, professor of Oriental languages of Oxford, England, to open up new sources of Mohammed's life and in 1732 he published his "Life of Mohammed". The material for this work Gagnier procured from the Koran, the Sunna, several of the best Arabian writers, for example Abulfeda, and from the Arabic Talmud. He is the most impersonal of Mohammed's Christian biographers up to this time. He takes either a middle ground between Marracius and Prideux on the one hand, and Boulainvillier on the other, or he leaves the judgment to the reader himself. Only in the Preface, where he attacks Boulainvillier, Gagnier expresses the opinion that Mohammed was a deceiver with the weapons in his hands. He also compares him in the same connections with Confusius, Solon, Lycurgus and Numa whom he considered to have been just as good lawgivers if not better.

Boulainvillier claims in opposition to Prideux that if Mohammed was a deceiver, yet he must have had many high and splendid qualities which enabled him to give his deception an appearance of truth and thus win the people. This would have been impossible if he had been such a debased person as he was depicted by the Christians. Rather his fanaticism drove him on; and through his perfect knowledge of the people as well as through the power of his eloquence he understood how to fill his followers with the drunkenness with which he himself was affected. But instead of a tool of the devil to hurt Christianity as the Christian theologians had painted
Mohammed, Boulainvillier considered him in his "Vie de Mahomet" (1730) as a tool of God to spread the knowledge of the Unity of God from India to Spain and to put an end to the faith in the Stars and to the worship of many gods. Gagnier, however, could not refrain from taking issue with him on this point and wrote into his Preface that instead of being a tool of God Mohammed was a second Attila, a scourge of God forced against the Romans and Persians, when he was urged to take up the unfinished work of Boulainvillier.

Against the unfavorable comparison between Mohammed and Confusius, et al, which Gagnier had made, George Sale makes it more favorable to Mohammed in the notes and explanations to his translation of the Koran (1734). Not ambition and carnal lust but the idea of the Unity of God was Mohammed's strongest motive. However, in order to confirm his teaching he makes use of deceit and merely pretends a higher revelation. Yet Sale gives him credit for having given his people the best kind of religion possible for them at the time, or in any case much better than the old lawgivers before him.

The change in the opinions about Mohammed were also visible in Germany where Gottsched seems to have assented to Boulainvillier's statements regarding the Prophet. But even twenty years before Gottsched Leibniz acknowledged in his "Theodizee" that Mohammed had nowhere departed from the fundamentals of the natural religion and that his professors rather had the merit of having spread the belief in the Unity of God, in the immortality of the soul, and in the retribution in the life beyond. This is also the judgment of Islam in the period of the Enlightenment. Lessing contends in his "Cardanus" that Mohammed was no mad deceiver, that his religion was
no mere fabric of badly connected absurdities and falsifications, and that rather everything agrees with reason throughout. Reimarus, the author of the Wolfenbüttel fragments refers to the Englishman Hyde who had considered Mohammed the restorer of the true religion of Abraham. He also regards the belief in the One God as the foundation of the teaching of Islam and his opinion is that the ethical prescriptions of the Koran could also probably be observed by a Christian. Indeed he even ventured to develop from the Koran the most important of the natural religion and to demonstrate that almost everything essential in Mohammed's teaching terminates in a certain way in that religion. Boysen, on the other hand, thinks that Mohammed wanted to introduce "a philosophical religion"; but Turpin agrees with Lessing and others that the most important fundamentals of Mohammed's teaching come from reason. Oelsner goes still farther in stating that Mohammed succeeded in founding a pure Deism through action only in the Orient, whereas it has always remained a question of theory in Europe.

Out of a foolish tell-tale the religion of Mohammed became in the opinion of Christian writers a pure religion of reason. The period of enlightenment had much to do with this change. Voltaire, its Matador, also took great interest in Mohammed but his critical mind prevented him from taking the Prophet's part against the lies and slanders of the Christian authors, nor was he very consistent in his dealing with the subject, except in his contention that the word far more than the sword had won the Orient for Mohammed. In the beginning, however, he regarded the personality of the Prophet simply as a sublime and bold charlatan, as a deceiver under the mask of hypocrisy, who did not shrink from making war on his native land
and that in the name of God. Like all enthusiasts he presented at first his ideas in good faith, but when he was placed before the choice of becoming either a martyr or a deceiver, he saw himself forced to uphold the doctrine which he himself considered to be right and best through deceit. Thus out of a prophet he became a deceiver, out of a preacher a warrior, and out of a fugitive a conqueror. Such, in brief, is Voltaire's opinion of Mohammed.

Much has been written about Mohammed in prose but he has also been treated in verse. In Jena 1730 the students sang:

"Hat uns nicht Muhammed schändlich betrogen,
Da er den Wein in Verachtung gebracht,
Hat der Verführer nicht schändlich gelogen,
Da er aus Saufen hat Sünde gemacht!"¹

He also appears in a French drinking song with the title "Ronde de Table"

"Souvent ma raison se soumet
A l'Alcoran de Mahomet;
J'en crois quelques passage.
Je crois à son chapitre dix
Oui, nous promet paradis
Pavé de pucelages:
Mais je le crois un sot enfant
Ce prophète quand il nous defend
De chanter: bon!
Que le vin est bon!
Et d'en boire à tout âge".²

1. J. Minor, Goethes Mahomet (1907) p.17.
2. Erich Schmidt, Quellen und Parallelen zu Lessing, Euph. vol.VIII p.619
Friedrich von Hagedorn also makes himself merry over the Prophet in an epigram, called "Mahomet und der Hügel". Here Mohammed appears before his professors and calls upon a mountain to come to him, but when it remains in its place he decides to go there himself:

"Auf Hügel, Höre mich! Vernimm, du Kind der Erde, Vernimm der Schöpfers Ruf! Der Ruf erschallt durch mich: Er will, das diesem Volk ein Wunder sichtbar werde, Erscheine hier vor uns! Auf, Auf! Erhebe dich!"

At first, information about Mohammed and his work came to Germany through Latin, Italian, French, Dutch, and English literatures. First in 1772, the first German translation of the Koran from the original by David Friederich Mergerlin appeared in Frankfort. His opinion of the Prophet is similar to the most of his predecessors. To be sure, Mohammed is the false Prophet, the Antichrist. The translation of the "Lügenbuch" as Mergerlin called the Koran he dedicated to Joseph II. It was heavily censored in the "Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen" December 22, 1772 which originated in the Goethe circle; but Minor thinks that the date would indicate that the review was not made by Goethe and that the attack on Sale whose translation Mergerlin had used to a certain extent, would prove that it was not even Herder who did it because he drew from Sale in writing his "Ideen" and the comparison which Minor makes between Goethe's own translation and that of Mergerlin shows that Goethe did not reject his work as it has been supposed. On the contrary Goethe has taken much directly from this translation.

The sixt Sure alone Goethe translated from the Latin translation by Marraccius.

A year after Mergerlin's translation appeared in print. Friederick Eberhard Boysen published his translation. His desire was to help in removing the old, deep-rooted and rigid prejudice against Mohammed and his book. In the Preface to his second edition he rejoices over the fact that he had really succeeded in contributing something towards a more correct understanding of the Koran. On the whole, the Koran was considered as completely godless even though it speaks of God with deepest veneration but Boysen thinks that, after the Christian religion, what Mohammed taught is most rational, and that it has done humanity a great service. That Mohammed was deceitful when he appealed to the inspirations given him by the Angel Gabriel, Boysen does not doubt; but he contends that Mohammed was certainly convinced that he needed that to reach his goal. He also lays great stress on the poetical beauty of the Koran; and he is well aware that it is very difficult to make such a translation as would reproduce the noble and fiery spirit of the original. The Lemberger Bibliothek of 1774 (VI p.189) takes an exception to this way of treating the subject and ridicules Boysen for not representing Mohammed as a heretic instead of describing him as a man of taste and dwelling upon the poetic beauty of the Koran or "Turkish Bible" as it has been called. In Schirachs Magazine of 1774 (III p.225), it was claimed that the praise of Mohammed as a writer had been exaggerated; for such an undertaking he was too confused, too rhapsodical, and too much of a teacher of the great mass of the people.

There remained for Mohammed the fame of a strong Oriental
imagination and the praise of harmonious speech, of which Boysen left no trace in his translation; but he sent his proof-sheets to Gleim and they affected him just like Mergerlin's proof-sheets did Goethe. Gleim made a couple of pendants in verse, which Boysen, who had happily struck the solemnity and simplicity of the Prophet, could include in his Preface. In the course of the summer of 1774 such imitations increased in numbers. Gleimm's Koran under the title "Holadat oder das rote Buch" appeared in 1774, which he recommended to be read in the schools. Herder criticises Gleim by comparing him to the Prophet. But Herder's statement: "Sie haben wirklich Morgenlands Posaune aus der Hand des Engels erhalten!" Minor thinks, was probably only a very friendly misjudgment; for he adds: "Nur in den ersten Gedichten steigt Gleim wie Mahomets Abraham und wie Goethes Mahomet in der Hymne aus der Natur (den wolken und winden, dem Gewitter und dem Regen u.s.w.) zum Himmel und zum Gedanken an den Einen Gott empor. Bald wird er auch hier wieder ein Lehrer heiterer Lebensweisheit, der Freundschaft und der Liebe zum Vaterland. Nur das Kostüm des Anakreon, des Petrark und des preussischen Grenadiers hat er mit dem Mantel des Propheten vertauscht, der ihm recht lose um die Schultern hängt". 1

Goethe reports in his "Dichtung und Wahrheit" that shortly before he had begun writing "Mahomet" he had read and studied the life of the Prophet with great interest. Minor believes that the biography available could scarcely have been any other than the "Histoire de la vie de Mahomet" by M. Turpin, the first two volumes of which appeared in 1773. In this biography Turpin places Mohammed upon

the wide pedestal of an Arabian effigy of culture and gives him far nobler features than any of his other Christian biographers. Of the defects of epilepsy and ignorance Turpin believes himself able to rid his hero by referring to the use which he made of his reason. In regard to the much disputed question as to whether he was a deceiver and an enthusiast or not, Turpin, to be sure, expresses himself very carefully. He thinks, however, that in the beginning Mohammed was fully convinced of the legitimacy of his mission and that he was only guided by the idea of the unity of God and that from the start he was an "esprit fort" who wished to set up a worship of God purged by reason, to take the place of a worthless superstition; but being misled by his lively imagination, he soon became an enthusiast. Like Bayle, Turpin cannot judge the Koran as the work of a deceiver but only as of an intoxicant. Being the first victim himself, he afterwards drew countless others with him through his power over the hearts and minds of the multitudes. At first he captivated them through describing the wonderful. He recognized that this was the only way to success in his undertaking but also that it was not sufficient. In addition, it was necessary to stoop to the impotence of his fellow citizens and to encompass his pure teachings with the most peculiar ceremonies which he had to declare holy. Finally, he was compelled to have recourse to criminal dexterity in order to get the people wholly on his side. Thus, he gradually became a deceiver of others, and through the misuse of his great gifts he led the ignorant multitude behind the ligat, even his own relatives. He did this evidently either because he considered it permissible to deceive the people for their own reformation and happiness or because he had already become accustomed
to this procedure. Therefore, if Turpin is unable to spare the Prophet the reproach of deceit and the use of bad means to gain the end in view, he leaves no doubt as to the grandeur of his ultimate aim. In contrast to the comparison of Mohammed with such men as Numa, Theseus, Orisis, Zoroaster, Confusius, Minos, Lycurgus, Solon, etc. which Gagnier, Sale and Voltaire had made, Turpin claims that they were all insignificant to Mohammed because their fame was confined to the narrow limits of their native land, whereas Mohammed's work extended over a great part of the whole world. Such a conception of the Prophet and lawgiver could not be anything but captivating for the young Goethe.

Edward Gibbon takes the same view of the Prophet as Turpin in his history of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" (1777-78). He thinks that the foolish Christian slander of Mohammed had increased his prestige rather than diminished it; but he is not certain whether Mohammed was a deceiver or an enthusiast, since between the two there is only one step. As a middle ground between self-deception and intentional trickery, he refers to the demon (daemon) of Socrates, which the authors of the Storm and Stress period so readily evoked. On the other hand there was no possible doubt in Herder's mind that Mohammed was an enthusiast. The self-deception and the makeshift into which he himself first fell and later induced others to follow are a sufficient explanation to Herder to reach this conclusion. Depending, as it were, upon Herder's opinion K. E. Oelser wrote his prize essay on Mohammed's religion, "Des effets de la religion de Mohamed" (1809). He, therefore, also described the Prophet as an enthusiast who found evidence for his mission alone in the power of his faith, and as a
man who can very easily be taken for a mere deceiver. Even if no ambitious designs at first drove him, yet they followed the inspiration very closely and in the same measure as the ardour for the affairs of God or of his native country cooled in him, his egoistic aim was strengthened through all the auxiliary means which his earlier fiery zeal had procured for him. But Oelsner thinks that the moment, when he began to deceive his fellow men, is difficult to determine; still he is inclined to attribute to mere prudence the convulsions which Mohammed is said to have had at the visit of the angel Gabriel and at the revelations of the Koran, in order that he might establish himself with the highest prerogatives. This behavior Oelsner calls one of the boldest strokes which were ever made in a ruse. From this point of view it follows that all the means of which Mohammed availed himself in the spread of his doctrine must be attributed to the trickery of an Arch-deceiver. Like Herder, Oelsner describes how the lofty conception of One God of whom Mohammed could not even give any philosophical account, which view conceived in the midst of an idolatrous people, could very easily lead him to the madness of attributing it to supernatural causes. That he otherwise knew how to act properly in practical matters, Oelsner does not, like Bayle, consider as an indisoluble psychological contradiction. In the first place Mohammed made use of man's inclination to baseness because he knew that it would beget thousands of servants as soon as one such thought was allowed to rule the heart; and furthermore, his Koran contains only commands and threats. He was also a master in diplomatic transactions and knew very well how to make use of even the most insignificant and vile to further his own cause. Ingenious in his plans and with a
sharp insight into the affairs of a statesman and of a commander of an army he won through his just dealings the general confidence and love of his people; and the mercy and charity which he bestowed on some of his conquered enemies, caused them also to do him homage. However, he was often compelled to sacrifice his conviction for mere advantage; and like any ambitious person, crimes did not deter him if his cause was thereby advanced. Yet only necessity forced him to do this and the hatred of his adversaries alone moved him to exchange the word for the sword. Thus out of a religion of peace which condemned war, grew up a religion of the sword. But in this connection it might be well to think of George Eliot's noble words: "No man, whether prophet, statesman, or popular preacher, ever yet kept a prolonged hold over a mixed multitude without being in some measure degraded thereby. His teaching or his life must be accommodated to the average wants of his hearers and not to his finest insight. But, after all, we should regard the life of every great man as a drama, in which there must be important inward modifications accompanying the outward changes". ¹ A christian poet has also well asked--

"What keeps a spirit wholly true
To that ideal which he bears?
What record? not the sinless years
That breathed beneath the Syrian blue". ²

Oelanger, like Voltaire, does not think that Islam owes its success to the sword alone. Circumstances gradually forced

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² R. Bosworth Smith, Mohammed and Mohammedanism (1875) p.118.
Mohammed, like other founders of religions, to keep his own greatness in view first of all so that he might establish his authority over his people. When Klinger found out Oelsner's opinions of the Prophet he wrote: "Welche Männer enthält Deutschland! Ein jahrtausend wurde über Mahomet geschimpft und gefaselt.- Der Deutsche kam um den Einzigen, der er war, darzustellen und alle vorigen zu Boden zu treten".\(^1\) In high old age Goethe wrote in a letter to Reinhart that he had known Oelsner's work for a long time, and that he had made use of it in his "West-Östliche Divan", and that Oelsner had completely met with the idea which he himself had conceived of that extraordinary man whom he had chosen to be a hero of a tragedy.

\(^1\) Cf. Minor, Goethea Mahomet (1907) p.80.
III

The Fundamental Conception of Mohammed as a Prophet.

Goethe's "Mahomet" was never finished. Only three fragments remain of what Goethe had intended to write about this truly remarkable man; but from what has come down to us we can see that Goethe indeed admired the splendid qualities which Mohammed must have possessed no matter how much he has been belittled by his adversaries. Goethe's beautiful picture in "Mahomets Gesang" of a stream which has its source somewhere in the mountains and on its way toward the sea becomes the chief among all other rivers and brooks within its reach, Minor contends, does not merely depict the ravishing power of Mohammed's genius and gigantic career but a symbol: "Denn der Strom, der die Brüder die sich nach dem alten Vater sehnen wie dieser nach ihnen, dem erwartenden Erzeuger ans Herz trägt, ist zugleich auch der Prophet, der die Kleinen und Schwachen mit sich fortreisst zu dem Einen Gott, zu dem sie ohne ihn nicht den Weg und die Kraft gefunden hätten".  

Franz Saran does not agree with C. Wolff "in was er über Mahomet als Naturwesen, die Schöpfung eines neuen Wassermhythus, dessen Held Mahomet sei und über Mahomet als Flussgott sagt", but he seems to agree with Minor when he says that Goethe in "Mahomets Gesang" describes the origin, the appearance and activity of a religious genius until his return to God. Just as there are many obstructions which hinder the stream in its course toward the ocean,

1. J. Minor, Goethes Mahomet (1907) p.28.
so the Mediator has many obstacles to overcome which seem unsurpassable at times before he has fulfilled his mission. It is not enough that he return to his Father alone. He must bring others along with him; at least as many of his brethren as he possibly can. He has been endowed with special gifts by his Father which he must use to the utmost in order that the reunion between Him and his children may take place without delay. Although the Mediator's origin is unknown, he is nevertheless one with his people. They are his brothers because they also sprung from the same Father. At first they may not heed him, but when they see that he pursues his course unfalteringly, they cannot help but feel that he is destined to be their leader; and when he is finally conscious of this fact he does not hesitate to act:

"Und mit Führertritt
Reiset er seine Brüderquellen
Mit sich fort".

His professors increase constantly in numbers as he fearlessly continues his work. In a short while those that stand afar recognize his divine mission and great multitudes rejoice and make haste in coming to join him. They all cry with one accord: "Nimm die Brüder mit! mit zu deinem Vater!" He welcomes them all no matter whence they come. But through this vast increase in adherents his selfconsciousness and inner power rises and his immense success gives him extensive political sway over his fellow man which he makes use of in naming provinces after himself, in building cities, castles, palaces, and temples, and in his kindness he spreads culture far and wide until at last his powerful and good works extend over the whole world. But, after all, that is not the goal
of the Prophet or divine hero. It is not reached before he has brought his brothers to God and until the abyss is closed which has prevented God's lost children from returning ever since they took the first misstep on their journey through life.

"Mahomets Gesang" was written probably before Goethe had thought very seriously of writing the "Mahomet". A striking evidence for this supposition seems to be the small connection which exists between it and the other two fragments in which Mohammed appears entirely different. The Hymn, the first of these two fragments, R. M. Meyer says, shows that "der grosse Mann, der für Voltaire's Rationalismus nur ein Betrüger war, ist dem jungen Goethe einer jener auserlesenen die Gott selbst schauen". 1 Saran quotes J. Volkelt in regard to the Hymn when he says: "Wenn auch Sterne, Mond, Sonne sich verhüllen, Er der Erschaffende bleibt! Ihn umfasst Mahomet in anachtsvoller Entzückung". On the other hand, Saran himself thinks that the Hymn illustrates the Prophet's advance from the worship of the created things to a purer conception of God. Hitherto he has shared the religious views of his people but his feeling has now forced him to acknowledge that the gods which he and his people have worshiped are deaf and dead and therefore nothing but stone and clay. In his search for a living and true God he is therefore obliged to turn away from his former objects of worship. He searches in vain for something which can embrace him with its love. In the deep darkness which surrounds him he beholds the starry heavens but not one of its bodies can fully satisfy his feeling. He is unable to descry anything permanent and true. When the stars, the moon, and the sun in turn appear in the heavens he

has great hopes but these are quickly shattered when darkness re-appears. Apparently he is now in the same condition as he was before but the seeming relapse unexpectedly gives him a feeling of something higher than he has ever felt before. Unconsciously he has been drawn away from the polytheistic worship of his people's gods step by step until finally a thought comes to him of the one, eternal, true, all powerful and all loving God who is the creator and preserver of the whole world and of man above all creatures. It is therefore evident that the ennobling of Mohammed's conception of God did not come through abstract and intellectual reasoning but through sight and feeling under the direction of the beautiful creation.

Saran, furthermore, quotes passages from Herder's "Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts" the fundamental thought of which agrees throughout with that expressed by Goethe in the Hymn: "Die ganze Welt ein dunkles Geheimnis: Aufschluss, Erste Sprache Gottes zu diesem Geheimnis—Licht! Licht das allweite, feine, schnelle, wunderbare, ewig unergründliche Organ der sich den Menschen offenkundenden Gottheit.—Der Gott, der Lehrer dieses Menschen, soll ihn lehren, wodurch? nicht durch Schlüsse und Abstractionen, von denen er, wie kein Unmündiger, weiss! die uns eben ermatten und hindern und erblinden—allein durch Gegenwart und Kraft! Das er (der Mensch) auf Alles, was um ihn ist, worauf er sich wie ausgeschlossen fühlt, allmählich geleitet und gelenkt werde! Dass ihm die ganze Welt von Bildern die sein Auge bestürmte oder bestürmen würde in sanfter Ordnung wórücke und es sodann Jedes in seiner ganzen Gegenwart mit Sinn und Kraft erfasse—Himmel! für diesen Unmündigen für den Blinden, der sehen lernt, welche weisere väter-lichen Ordnung in Himmel und Erde! Wie ihn der Nachtschaur be-
reitet nun ein sanfter Lichtstrahl ihm das Auge öffnet; er sich nun Bläue des Himmels allrählich aus dem Grau entwölken jetzt die Erde vorgehen sieht—and nun bleibt sein Auge auf dem ersten Segen, der erfrischen den Grasegrüne ruhn, bis er gewapnet ist, Sonne zu sehen, und das Lebensgewühl aller Schöpfung zu empfinden. Es thüte mir leid, wenn man dies Bild nur als Bild nähme. Nach aller Natur unserer Sinnlichkeit müsste sich das Auge mit der Seele dem Unterricht Gottes also öffnen!—So lehret Gott! durch Bilder! Sachen! Begebenheiten! die ganze Natur—mit welcher Kraft und Eindrangel!... Alle Naturkräfte, seine Engel! alle Begebenheiten der Welt seine Wunder und Thaten!... so sahen die ältesten Morgenländer in das grosse Buch der Schöpfung."

Unlike Herder Goethe leaves aside the fantastic and miraculous interference of God in such a way that God's assistance in bringing Mohammed to the true light is very obscure. He allows the events to take their natural course and Saran says that Goethe's sharp turn to naturalism shows "Dass er in Mahomet, dem Stifter der Religion des Islam, das Gegenbild zum Messiah, dem Stifter der christlichen Religion, zeichnen, dabei aber seine Anschauung von Wesen und Wirken des Religiösen Genies im Gegensatz besonders zu Klopstock geben will. Auch sein Mittler ist göttlicher Natur—das Genie ist ja göttlich, aber der Weg des Genius zu Gott führt nicht durch Elend, Tod und Grab, weltverneinend über das Erdewesen hinweg, sondern weltbejahend und freudig hinein in Natur, Leben, Kultur, Welt und durch sie hindurch aus Herz des ewigen Vater". On the other hand, Düntzer's idea of Goethe's description of the

1. Fr. Saran, Goethes Mahomet und Prometheus (1914) p.23.
Prophet in "Mahomet's Gesang" does not seem to stretch beyond Mohammed's remarkable career as a conqueror of the world, but it is evident that this poem gives a vivid picture of Mohammed from his mysterious beginning to his return to God from whom he originally sprung. The Hymn, on the other hand, depicts him as searching for the true light which can dispel the darkness from his heart, and shows how he gradually attains the goal through his feeling, whereas in the Prose-scene there is no such gradual transformation. He is no longer alone in bringing about the desired result. "Er findet diesen (Gott) nicht aus eigener Kraft, sondern erst in einem durch die Gnade Gottes selbst bewirkten Durchbruch des Liebesgefühls.\(^1\) Mohammed not only feels God but he sees Him everywhere especially in the beautiful nature which surrounds him. He feels that God's love embraces him and that he can approach Him everywhere. Even on the lonely field where darkness envelops him, he knows that God is present and willing to hearken to his prayers, that his foster-mother and his people may also come to feel the same as he has felt.

That Goethe felt that Mohammed was sincere in his belief that he was chosen by God to lead his people, the Arabs, to the true light, is evident not only from Goethe's own statement in "Dichtung und Wahrheit" that he had never been able to consider him a deceiver but also the fragments themselves bear out this fact. The argument that the moment was ripe for changes in Arabia in manner of worship as well as in the mode of life, does not deprive Mohammed of the title or gift of a prophet. "What are prophets gifts", says H. C. Potter, "but that divine insight, that swift and heavenborn intuition which is your rarest gift, your loftiest endowment?"

\(^1\) Fr. Saran, Goethes Mahomet und Prometheus (1914) p.42.
Mohammed, who was born ca. 570 A. D. in Mecca of noble rank, became an orphan at the age of six, we are told. As he grew up, he had the opportunity of coming in contact with people who held different beliefs from his own. He also saw that their mode of living was different. In contrast to this he gradually became aware of the misery of his own people. He began to realize that the fault did not lie so much in their social and economic life as in their religious life. Goethe describes this period of Mohammed's life very strikingly in a few words in the Prose-scene where Mohammed addresses his foster-mother: "Halima, mir war's wie dem Kinde das ihr in enge Windlen schränckt ich fühlte in dunkler Einwickelung Arme und Füsse, doch es lag nicht an mir mich zu befreien". He felt that something must be done in order to lift up his people from the wretched state into which they evidently had fallen. But he also saw that he could not release himself from the mysterious wrappings in which he was enveloped. Where was he to find help in this dilemma? No doubt he had been taught to pray to the gods which his people worshiped; but his intellect told him that they were without feeling, devoid of memory and other qualities which he himself possessed, through which they could take a conscious part in his life. Therefore he understood that they were unable to assist him, no matter how much he invoked their aid. Still he felt that he had to do something. He turned to the stars, the moon, and the sun which according to Plotinus are divine beings emanated from the world soul, visible gods as opposite the invisible One; but Mohammed soon discovered that they were not much different from

1. Margaret L. Bailey "Thesis" on Arnold's Kirchen und Ketzerhistorie (1910)
those made by hand when it was a matter of feeling and love. At last something told him to act in accordance with an advice given centuries later by Thomas Carlyle, namely "let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light and prays vehemently that dawn may ripen into day lay this precept well to heart: 'Do the duty which lieth nearest to thee', which thou knowest to be a duty. Thy second duty will already have become clearer".

Mohammed turned to the one God who alone is able to help. At first he sought Him distant from his own habitation as the Hymn indicates; but in the Prose-scene God is everywhere near Mohammed after he has found Him through God's own condenscension; and Emerson remarks about the nearness of God to his created beings and their obligation to the Creator when he says:

"So close is glory to our dust,

So near is God to man,

When Duty whispers low, 'Thou must',

The youth replies: 'I can'.

There seems to be no question but Mohammed saw that it was up to him to do something for his near and dear ones; and when Halima, his foster-mother, approaches him in the lonely field where he has been communicating with God all night, he attempts to give her an insight into what he has experienced in the presence of God. All in vain, she is neither willing nor able to comprehend what he has felt since his heart was made accessible to the feeling of God's love. As he is unsuccessful in persuading her to believe his testimony, he prays to God for help in behalf of his unhappy and unfortunate people who are bound heart and soul to the images of stone and clay. She, however, remains unmoved. His expostulation
against the worship of the many gods has no effect on her way of reasoning and he soon realizes that he is unable to lead the people to God in his own strength and through his own persuasion. Therefore being conscious of their wretchedness, their longing for the one God, and his own inability to turn their thoughts to Him, he again turns to God in prayer: "Erlöse du, mein Herr, das Menschengeschlecht von seinen Banden, ihre innerste Empfindung sehnt sich nach dir". Mohammed loves humanity. His feeling stretches beyond his own relatives, tribe, and nation to all the wretched and unhappy. Instead of thinking for all, he feels for all. It is not the cold intellect which urges him on but his inner glow which the people are unable to comprehend. Schiller says: "Allen gehört, was du denkst, dem eigen ist nur was du fühlest: Soll er dein eigenthum sein fühle den Gott den du denkst--Stimme des Ganzen ist deine Vernunft dein Herz bist du selber. Wohl dir wenn die Vernunft immer im Herzen dir wohnt." ¹ In "Faust" Goethe also places feeling above everything else just as he does in the Hymn when he says:

"Erfüll davon dein Herz, so gross es ist,
Und wenn du ganz in dem Gefühle selig bist,
Nenn' es dann wie du willst,
Nenn's Glück! Herz! Liebe! Gott!
Ich habe keinen Namen
Dafür! Gefühl ist alles;" ²

Mohammed's feeling seems to control his entire being and whatever doubt may be placed on his motives after he gained a large

1. Cf Grimm's Wb. "Gefühl" 2163
2. Goethe's Faust 1.3451 f.
number of adherents, unbiased authorities believe that he was honest and sincere when he began to cry to his people for their repentance. "In his first preaching", says one authority, "the announcement of the Day of Judgment is much more prominent than the Unity of God; and it was against his revelations concerning Dooms-day that his opponents directed their satire during the first twelve years". ¹ He has been scorned because he fled from Mecca when his adversaries sought his life; but Hurgronje says that "it was not only the anxiety for his own lot but for that of those who were dear to him in the future life, that forced him to seek a solution of the question: who shall bring my people out of the darkness of antithesis into the light of obedience to Allah?"

Goethe undoubtedly thought the same when he began to write "Mahomet"; and although he did not complete the drama, nevertheless it seems to me that the remaining fragments bear out this statement by Hurgronje; and that Mohammed would gladly have laid down his life for the sake of his people's welfare, does not seem improbable if he had known that this supreme sacrifice would have been better for them than his escape from it. Therefore it does not appear as if self-preservation alone prompted his flight. He felt that he alone was chosen by God to make Him known to the people in the Arabian peninsula in their own tongue. This is chiefly brought out in his Koran which was written in the Arabic language, the purpose of which Goethe quotes an eminent authority when he says: "Die Hauptsabsicht des Korans scheint diese gewesen zu sein, die Bekennner der drei verschieden, in dem volkreichen Arabien damals herrschenden

¹ C. Snouck Hurgronje, Mohammedanism (1916) p.34.

The entire contents of the Koran Goethe maintains lies in the beginning of the second Sure where Mohammed says: "Doubt is not found is this book. It is a teaching of the pious, who consider the secrets of faith true, who observe the time set for prayer and distribute alms of that which was sent to the prophets before you have sure affirmation of the future life; these are directed by their Lord and shall be happy and blessed. Concerning the unbelievers, it will be of no consequence to them whether you admonish them or not; they will nevertheless not believe. God has sealed up their

1. Goethe's Werke (1828) vol. 3 p.35.
hearts and ears. A darkness covers their countenance and they will suffer a hard punishment." According to Sir W. Muir's interpretation of the Koran the unbelievers were not only to be punished for rejection of the Koran but also for that of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. ¹ The Koran is merely an attestation to the revelations which God had made to the prophets who preceded him." It was not because the previous Scripture was defective—(on the contrary, it is stated to be perfect in all that is excellent, an explication of every matter, a guide and a mercy)—that the Koran was sent to the Arabs, but because it was written in a foreign tongue."²

A part of the contents of the Koran were revealed to the Prophet in Mecca and the other part in Medina after the Hegira. For twelve years Mohammed continued to inweigh in the name of Allah against the wickedness of the people in the place where he was born in spite of derision and contempt. Finally he was compelled to flee on account of the people's ingratitude and hatred and the words which Goethe wrote during his 'Hegira' i.e. flight from Carlsbad to Italy (1786): "Man verdient wenig Dank von den Menschen, wenn man ihr inneres Bedürfnis erhöhen, ihnen eine grosse Idee von ihnen selbst geben, ihnen das Herrliche eines wahren edlen Daseins zum Gefühl bringen will," might well have been uttered by Mohammed in his Hegira to Medina 622 A. D. Although the people were more willing to receive him in Medina than in Mecca, nevertheless his teaching was not accepted as implicitly as he wished. He, therefore, saw himself compelled to resort to the use of force to which he knew

1. Sir W. Muir, Coran (1903) p.94
2. Sir W. Muir, Coran (1903) p.111.
many of the Old Testament prophets had to have recourse when the people were obdurate to their pleadings. The Hebrew teaching was that "God chastises by physical suffering those who persist in rebellion and unbelief;" and when soldiers were recruited and offered to him by his friends, he received them as a godsend and set out to promulgate the truth by force just as it is often done even in our twentieth century both by individuals and nations; but it happens frequently as the poet says:

"Dem Herrlichsten, was auch der Geist empfangen,
Drängt immer fremd und fremder Stoff sich an...
Die uns das Leben gaben, herrliche Gefühle
Ersterben in dem irdischen Gewühle".

Mohammed's exalted feeling undoubtedly lost some of its better qualities when he started out with an army to make the heathen Arabs, et al., accept Islam. Hurgronje, however, says that nowhere in the Prophet's life can a point of turning be shown; even after he became militant he was still the same Mohammed. On the other hand there is a gradual changing of aims and a readjustment of the means of attaining them. ¹ He never pretended to preach a new religion but he demanded in the name of Allah the same submission to his teaching as Moses and other prophets had demanded of their people. Especially, at first he appealed to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures as confirming the truth which he was promulgating. Sir W. Muir makes the statement that "Mohammed could not have made this appeal had he suspected that they contained anything either

¹ C. Snouck Hurgronje, Mohammedanism (1915) p. 38 ff.
originally or by interpolation, favoring else but the pure worship of the One only God." ¹ Being a more or less unlettered man he may not have had complete access to the contents of these writings but the following lines in Goethe’s "Faust" can unquestionably be applied to those who have held him up to ridicule:

"Steh beachämt, wenn du bekennen musst:
Ein guter Mensch in seinem dunklen Drange
Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst". ²

On the other hand the following words seem equally applicable to Mohammed: "Jeder Mensch von edlen lebendigen Kräften ist Genie auf seiner Stelle...und wahrlich die besten Genies sind ausser der Bücherstube"; ³ and Lessing speaks in a somewhat similar strain in a poem "An Herrn Baron von Sp":

"Die schule macht den Dichter? nein.
Er, welchen die Natur zu ihrem Mahler wählet,
Und ihn, ein mehr als Mensch zu sein,
Mit jenem Feuer beseellet."

Mohammed was one of the few who are born geniuses and who come into prominence on rare occasions. Great works were, therefore expected of him by his contemporaries; and posterity has attributed more to him than he actually performed. In spite of the efforts of his Faithful to enhance his prestige by reporting a number of miracles which he is said to have wrought, he himself never laid any claims to such merits, competent authorities tell us. The only thing which seemed a miracle to him and upon which he relied for the support of his mission, was that he found the form for the

¹ Sir W. Muir, Coràn (1903) p.83
² Goethe’s Faust l.327 ff.
³ Grimm’s Wb. "Genie" (9).
revelation of what he held to be the contents of the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians; and he did this because he did not realize in the least that the contents of his inspiration from Heaven were nothing but the result of what he had himself absorbed. 1 "He was undoubtedly", says Washington Irving,"a man of great genius and suggestive imagination but it appears to us that he was, in a great degree the creature of impulse and excitement, and very much at the mercy of circumstances." 2 Even the fact that the seed of the universal creed which Mohammed had sown, ever germinated was due to circumstances rather than to design, according to Sir William Muir. Whether he was conscious of the universality of his mission, authorities differ. When Goethe wrote "Mahomet's Gesang", he seems to have held the opinion that Mohammed's mission was to affect the whole world; and in his last prayer in the Prose-scene Mohammed invokes God to release the human race from its chains. The fragments however, as a whole indicate that Mohammed was chiefly concerned with the welfare of his own race of people. No divine message had been sent to them as yet in their own tongue which could put them on a level with the Jews and Christians who had had numerous revelations sent them from Allah.

How difficult it was for Mohammed to renounce his belief in idolatry, Goethes Hymn gives a graphic picture; but the feeling of his soul for the erring multitudes drove him on until he found Allah and became conscious of his mission to lead the people out of darkness to the eternal light. It is said that his first convert was Kadijah, his wife, who is also reported to have told him when he

1. C. S. Hurgronje, Mohammedanism (1916) p.36
delivered his message to her: "Fear not, for joyful tiding dost thou bring. I will henceforth regard thee as the prophet of our nation"; and Professor Weil says: "In so far as Mohammed brought the most beautiful teaching of the Old and New Testament to a people which was not illuminated by one ray of faith, he may be regarded, even by those who are not Mohammedans, as a messenger of God".

Mohammed's experience as a propagator of his own idea of God taught him to be wary at all times because his foes were ever ready to seize upon any act which did not in their opinion conform to his preaching. As a human being Mohammed was not faultless but the words which Pope uttered in his "Essay on Criticism",

"Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend
And rise to faults true critics dare not mend,
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art," illustrate to some extent what he accomplished under great handicaps both on account of his own frailty and the hostility of the people. The greatest victory, he won, was when he conquered himself, overcame the inherited belief in idolatry.

"Die Freiheit wohnet nicht in allen Seelen.
Zählt sie bei einem ein,
So kann er sich mit recht zu diesem zählen,
Die etwas mehr als Menschen sein".

According to Valentine Weigel a knowledge of self is the key to the knowledge of the world. The reality of all knowledge

1. R. Rosworth Schmith, Mohammed and Mohammedanism (1875) p.102.
2. Grimm's Wb. "Genie" (9)
3. Canitz, Vorzug der Freiheit.
is in the observer or subject; the object is only the existing cause of knowledge. But God is both subject and object, and since there is, inborn within us all, the spirit or "inner light" from Him we can know all things as well. Man's conscience tells him whether a thing is right or wrong; and Colberg says: when a man recognizes that he is living in a foreign place, he is then able to begin purifying himself from his body. Mohammed learned both from observation and experience that he dwelt in a place foreign to his better self, that the miserable life which the inhabitants of Arabia led was contrary to their welfare both in this world and in that beyond. He, therefore, felt that it was his duty to warn them of the consequences which would eventually follow if they persisted in continuing their idolatrous worship. According to some authorities many of the Arabians had lost faith in their gods when Mohammed was born. Therefore it is evident, as has already been stated above, that the time was ripe for a change in the mode of worship in Arabia when Mohammed accepted the call to bring it about. The same may be said to have been true in other countries when a great leader or genius arose and carried on extensive reforms. It often takes centuries to develop these geniuses and therefore their field of labor is somewhat prepared in advance; but still they are to be sure creatures of fate and providence. Through them the greatest changes in the moral world arise, new religion, customs, laws, taste, in short, a new system of men.

Goethe always had a great admiration for such geniuses.

2. Colberg I 5
From the very beginning of his career as an author he selected such personages as Faust, Socrates, Mahomet, "Der Ewige Jude" and Prometheus, etc. as objects for his writings. In "Dichtung und Wahrheit" he tells the occasion for the rise of the idea in his mind of writing the drama "Mahomet". He relates the experience which he had with his two traveling companions, Basedow and Lavater, during the summer of 1774 on a journey from Ems along the Rhine. Among other things, he observed that his venerable companions did not shrink from making use of spiritual means for earthly purposes or vice versa just so that they could attain the desired results. They were not equally rash, however, in their procedure, but even though Lavater had really higher aims in view than Basedow he nevertheless was often compelled to have recourse to politic means, so that consequently the purpose had to sanctify them. This caused Goethe to realize that in order that the divine which is in the human endeavor may spread beyond itself and have an effect upon the world, the superior man must place himself on a par with the world and sacrifice the heavenly to the earthly. In this way, Goethe says, he was reminded of Mohammed and therefore resolved to write a drama in which he could develop these observations and ideas. Yet there must be something amiss in regard to the actual facts concerning the time and circumstances which brought about the contemplation of writing the "Mahomet". As has already been stated above that the time especially is out of harmony with Goethe's statement in "Dichtung und Wahrheit", other facts also indicate almost conclusively that it was not from his observations of Basedow and Lavater that he conceived the idea but that he had already beforehand seen Mohammed in this light. Minor claims that it was
not Mohammed who seemed to Goethe like Lavater but on the contrary it was Lavater who appeared like Mohammed particularly after Goethe had learned to know him thoroughly which he could hardly have done before 1793. He thinks, however, that Goethe might have told him of his contemplated drama "Mahomet" as he was wont to discuss his dramas with him. Later discoveries seem to prove that the existing fragments two of which correspond to Goethe's statement in "Dichtung und Wahrheit" were already written before the above mentioned Rhine trip. The poem had actually appeared in print the year before; and it is known that he studied the life and the works of Mohammed previous to this time.

Goethe himself mentions the fact that he had studied the life of the Oriental Prophet before his trip with Lavater and Basedow, but the mere reading of the Koran and the studying of Mohammed's biography, says Dr. Goebel, could not have been sufficient to cause Goethe to write even the poem; he must have had a deep interest in the subject beforehand. His letters to Herder also indicate that Goethe was thinking of Mahomet already in July 1772 when he writes: "Ich möchte beten, wie Moses im Koran: 'Herr mache mir Raum in meiner ängen Brust'!" Yet even before this Goethe felt that life, after all, is limited and that there is something mystical about it. As early as in 1769 he received instruction in this line from Fräulein von Klettenberg but he also read mystic writings of his own accord. That he knew of Gottfried Arnold's "Kirchen-und Ketzergeschichte" is evident from his own testimony to that effect: "Einem grossen Einfluss erfuhr ich dabei von einem wichtigen Buche, das mir in die Hände geriet, es war Arnolds "Kirchen-und Ketzergeschichte". Deiser Mann is nicht bloss ein
reflektierender Historiker, sondern zugleich fromm und fühlend. Seine Gesinnungen stimmte sehr zu den meinigen, und was mich an seinem Werk besonders ergetzte, war, dass ich von manchen Ketzern, die man mir bisher als toll oder gottlos vorgestellt hatte, einen vorteilhaftern Begriff erhielt.

There were many other mystic writings which Goethe could not help but know something about. In 1770 there appeared in the "Strassburger Ephemeriden" citations from Arndt's "Bedenken über Taulers Theologie", Peter Boiret, Thomasius as a mystic, and Jean de Rernieres Louvignies "Das verborgene Leben mit Christo in Gott." The interest in Mysticism once aroused Goethe could not stop with these and similar works. He had to penetrate deeper into the subject; and his "Mahomet", "Prometheus", and "Faust" particularly show that he was familiar with the "Emanationsystem" which forms the background of the Christian mysticism the most essential thoughts of which had been revived through Milton's "Paradise Lost" and Klopstock's "Messias". The twentieth canto of the latter work especially roused Goethe to write the poem, later called "Mahomet's Gesang". In this Canto he observed how the Mediator brings human souls to God, preparing the way and drawing to Him those who languish in wretchedness distant from their Creator. Goethe, however, could not depict his mediator in the same way as Klopstock. He, therefore, made a sort of a counterpart; Saran calls it "Ein naturalistisches Gegenstück zum 20. Gesänge der Messiade".

Klopstock undoubtedly had much to do with the use of the prophet-idea but Herder probably more than any other roused Goethe's

interest in prophets during 1770-1771 when he had the opportunity of meeting Goethe in Strassburg and share with him many of his noble and lofty ideas. Besides the Koran and the Prophet's biography, Klopstock, Susanna v. Klettenberg, and Herder were chiefly influential in the writing of the Mahomet-fragments but Goethe drew also from many other sources which have not been touched upon in this thesis.
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