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Mohammed, 1925.

"MOHAMMED."

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING,

MARCH 8, 1925, CLEVELAND, O.

WRHS

AMERICAN JEWISH
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JOSEPH T. KRAUS
Shorthand
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This morning I shall speak of Mohammed, the last of the founders of the great religions of mankind. Mohammed was by no means the last of the great spiritual leaders of the world. There were many after him who perhaps excelled him in spiritual gifts and insight, but he was the last of the founders of great religions. All those who followed him were great religious reformers, who succeeded perhaps in establishing denominations or in setting in motion tendencies within the great faiths established by these founders of whom I have spoken.

From Moses, the first of the great founders, to Mohammed, the last, a period of about two thousand years elapsed. It took mankind two thousand years to pass from idolatry to ^{unreflective} ~~automatic~~ tribal custom to dynamic, purposeful ethics. By the time of Mohammed the great religious principles and the great ethical doctrines were all made known and manifest; not that the world universally accepted these principles, believed in them and practiced the ~~high ethical doctrines~~ which these founders announced, but ~~that~~ with Mohammed the standards are all set; the ideals are all expressed and known, and it now remains for mankind to realize them, to live them, to embody them in their institutions and in their lives.

We of the twentieth century have very little

to add to the subject matter of religious ~~ideals~~ or ethical ideals. That might sound rather discouraging, and yet it should not be. We of today have very little to improve and can improve very little on "Love thy neighbor as thyself; ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy; ye shall do no manner of unrighteousness of judgment; justice, justice, shalt thou pursue; love thine enemy"; or "good thoughts, good words, good deeds" of Zarathushtra. There is nothing to add to them. It is the task of our century, and perhaps of all future centuries, to discover the method by which this program, announced centuries ago, may actually be realized. In other words, it is for us to discover the technique; ~~it is for us to find~~ the means, the agencies, the institutions which will express evermore perfectly in actual life these exalted ideals, which for all time will remain ~~the beacon lights~~, the ^{heights} mountain ~~tops~~, which we cannot and need not ^{attempt to} transcend.

Mohammed, ~~of whom I shall speak this morning,~~ was also a child of the East. ~~You will recall that~~ ^{or will speak} ~~all the~~ ^{as founders of} ~~six personalities of whom we spoke in this series of lectures~~ ^{religion} were children of the East; Moses, Zoroaster, the Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, ~~and now~~ Mohammed. The East is the home of religion. Europe ^{and the} ~~of the~~ western world may have made contributions to mankind, but its contributions are certainly not those of religion or ethics; and it is well for our eager Nordic champions to remember this fact. Civilization is a composite, a mosaic, to which every race contributes an essential part, without which contribution the mosaic remains

permanently incomplete; and no race, however dominant at a given moment of history, however proud in its momentary achievements, ought to, and can by right, lay claim to priority in all departments of human life. Without the religion and ethics of the East and Asia, Europe today would still be steeped in idolatry, superstition and barbarism.

Mohammed was born towards the close of the sixth century of the common era, around the year 570, in the city of Mecca, ~~which is, as you know,~~ in Arabia--Arabia, the great home of the Semitic people^s; Arabia, the home of our own ancestors. Up to his fortieth year Mohammed's life was quite uneventful; he was born of humble parents; he was orphaned while still a child; he was reared by his uncle; his education was very meager; he probably could neither read nor write. *He refers to his illiteracy more than once*
The ability to read and write is not an indispensable qualification of spiritual greatness. Jeremiah had to employ a scribe to write down his prophecies, and Jeremiah was the greatest of the literary prophets of the Bible. *creative power* Given ~~an~~ *active* mind, an alert ~~mind~~ *and* an inquisitive mind and a winged imagination, in a world where most knowledge was handed down orally, *at all hands a man, to* illiteracy did not ~~at all spell ignorance~~. Very few, even among the wisest men of antiquity, could read or write.

Mohammed when a young man was a camel driver. It seems that the greatest revelations have come to mankind from herdsmen and shepherds and carpenters and camel drivers ~~and peasants~~; it seems that one has to be very close to the heart of the toiling masses of mankind before one can be very

close to the heart of God. At the age of twenty-five Mohammed entered the service of a rich Meccan widow, Kadija, whom he later married; At the age of forty Mohammed began his ministry of preaching. For many years prior to that time Mohammed meditated, communed with himself and his maker. Very frequently he would go to a cave outside of the city of Mecca, and there for hours and days, amidst the wild desert scenes of mountains and the wilderness, stretching for endless miles about him, he would brood over those mighty problems ~~he~~ of existence which the world of God and the world of men thrusts upon every sensitive soul; and it is out of these years of meditation and study and brooding and contemplation that his revelations came to him, and for twenty-two years he strove to impart the message which had come to him--~~his vision, his apparition~~ to his fellowmen; first at Mecca, and then at Medina, amidst struggle and persecution and furious warfare, ~~Mohammed tried to preach the new truth which had come to him.~~

What was that new truth? The people of Arabia to whom Mohammed came with his new revelation was an idolatrous people. The ~~the~~ numerous tribes and clans, some nomadic and some town-dwelling, who inhabited the great land of Arabia, were idol worshippers--tribes who had their local cults built around some sacred tree or cave or rock or spring or mountain. Nature worship! You will recall that Mecca, the modern holy city of the Mohammedan world, was a holy city long before the days of Mohammed. In Mecca there was a sacred rock at the Kaaba, and outside of Mecca there was a sacred mountain--



Then was in Arabic Trans. & Soup is
clasp & M- M. more quotes Soup. Apparently
Only one actual quotation - And his Soup,
References are intertwined with later legends
found in ^{Midrash} Talmud and Midrash - & in
Christian legend -

The Semitic people had nature deities who dwelt on mountain tops, like Sinai, Nebo, Carmel, or in caves or in springs or in trees, and around these sacred objects, shrines were built, and altars and sanctuaries; ~~and the rituals~~ ^{this} and polytheistic, or rather polydemonistic religion was the religion of the Arabs to whom Mohammed came. While Judaism had ~~close onto a~~ ^{by that time and for more} thousand years preached monotheism, and Christianity for almost six hundred years had preached an attenuated form of monotheism, the Arab world still clung to ~~its paganism~~ ^{his heathenism}.

There were many Jews and Christians in Arabia in the days of Mohammed; some of them had settled centuries before, some of them had come as travelers in pursuit of trade, and the Arabs were in touch with these Jews and Christians and knew of their faith, ~~and~~ It is perhaps the very presence of Jews and Christians in Arabia which tended to undermine slowly the ~~paganism~~ ^{heathenism} of the natives.

Mohammed was in close contact with Jews and Christians; Mohammed knew the scriptures of Jews and Christians--not in a correct form but in a distorted form, ~~but~~ ^{from reports & hearsay} nevertheless he knew them, and The Koran, which is the repository, rather chaotic and fragmentary, of Mohammed's preachments, is ample evidence to the fact that he was acquainted with the religion of Judaism and of Christianity.

^{# whole Suras devoted} Now Mohammed brought to this idolatrous people--not a people, really, but a group of unorganized, ~~disjointed~~ tribes and clans, frequently at war with one another, having no sense of national unity.--Mohammed brought to them the gospel of the

Sura 112

Say: He is God alone
God the eternal
He begetteth not, and He is not begotten
And there is none like unto Him



← oneness of God, the unity of God. ~~That is the burden and the refrain of almost every one of these great leaders.~~ He warned his people against the folly of idolatry; he urged them to surrender the pagan beliefs and practices. "There is no God but God." There is the mighty refrain which has echoed down the ages. "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his messenger."

Idolatry--or, as he calls it the "adding of gods unto God"--was to Mohammed the one unpardonable sin, the unforgiven sin. It is true that Mohammed did not have a very exalted or spiritual conception of this one God; Mohammed was not a philosopher or a mystic, but he did have an overpowering, overwhelming sense of ^{the} oneness of God--the one God, the all-Wise, the all-Powerful, the all-Merciful. And that faith he brought to his people.

Mohammed attacks Christianity because it is not sufficiently monotheistic. Thus he says: "O ye people of the book, overstep not bounds in your religion, and of God speak only truth. The Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, is only an apostle of God, and his word which he conveyed unto Mary and his spirit proceeded from himself. Believe, therefore, in God and ⁱⁿ His apostles. And say not there is trinity. Forbear. It will be better for you. God is only one God. Far be it from His glory that He should have a son. His is whatever is in the heaven and whatever is in the earth, and God is a sufficient guardian." ~~And so throughout He was jealous of the unity of his God.~~

Sura 3

"It deserveth not a man, that God should
give him the Scriptures, and the wisdom, and the
gift of prophecy, and that then he should
say to his followers "Be ye worshippers of
me, & as well as of God."

"I am only a man like you"
be repeatedly proclaimed.



140 Mohammed claimed to be the messenger and the prophet of this God. He never claimed for himself divinity. Mohammed held that God reveals himself at great moments in human history to great leaders. He speaks through them and imparts his soul to them. And so Mohammed is quite ready to accept all the prophets and seers of the Old and the New Testament and invite them into his faith. Abraham was an authentic prophet of God; and so was Moses; so was Elijah; so was Daniel; so was John the Baptist; and so was Jesus. And he, Mohammed, was the last of these messengers and spokesmen of God. But none of them was divine; they were only the bearers and the repository of divine revelation. And neither was he, Mohammed, divine. So he says in one of his suras: "It seemeth not a man that God should give him the scriptures and the wisdom and the gift of prophecy, and that then he should say to his followers, 'Be ye worshippers of me as well as of God,' but rather, 'Be ye prophetic in things pertaining to God, since ye know the scriptures and have studied deep.' "

The ethics of Mohammed, while not prophetic or exalted, are still a vast improvement over the practices and conduct of his fellow countrymen of his day. Mohammed sought to control the tempestuous passions of his fellow Arabs; Mohammed tried to teach them moderation in the art of living. Mohammed was not an extremist, in theory, at least, either as regards asceticism or as regards self-indulgence. He looked with contempt upon the monastic life, even as he looked with abhorrence upon the life of over self-indulgence.

Mohammed tried to mitigate the evils of blood-sacrifice, which is the curse, as you know, ^{was practiced among} ~~of~~ the tribal Arabian ^{people} ~~world~~. Mohammed decreed the abolition of infanticide, the slaying of children, which was quite prevalent in Arabia in his day, as it is still prevalent in some parts of the Asiatic world. Mohammed forbade all intoxicating liquors. He was the first great prohibitionist of history; and the strangest part about it all is that his prohibition is observed. "O believers, surely wine and games of chance (gambling) and statues (the making of images) and the divine arrows (divination) which, hand in hand with idolatry, are an abomination (or satan's work) avoid them that ye may prosper."

Mohammed condemned all forms of hypocrisy. He taught charity; he taught fair dealing among men; he taught a most beautiful love of parents. "The Lord hath ordained," he says in one of his prophecies, "that ye worship none but him, and kindness to your parents, whether one or both of them. When one or both of them attain to old age with thee, say naught to them, aye, neither reproach them, but speak to them both with respectful speech and defer humbly to them out of tenderness, and say, 'Lord have compassion on them both, even as they reared me when I was little.'"

→ In some of his teaching Mohammed shows himself to be extremely tolerant, which was a rather strange phenomenon in his day, as it perhaps is still in our own day. ~~This~~ ^{is a} ~~unusual~~ ^{unusual} phrase coming from a religious leader of the sixth century: "Verily, they who believe (i.e. Moslems) and

they who follow the Jewish religion and the Christians and the Safaites, whoever of these believeth in God on the last day (i.e. judgment) and doeth that which is right, shall have their reward with the Lord. Fear shall not come upon them. Neither shall they be grieved ." That is more than some of our good old-fashioned fundamentalists of our own day would say,--those people who have taken out an option on heaven and admit only those ^{who belong to} of their own little creed and their own little denomination. Mohammed at least invited all good children of God, whether Mohammedan, Christian or Jew, into the circle of the blessed.

There is an echo there of the old Jewish rabbinic doctrine: "The righteous of all nations will have a share in the world to come." But Mohammed, tolerant in his teaching, was not so tolerant in his practice. Mohammed was a missionary; he was determined to make his faith regnant, by all means at his disposal. He at first was kindly to Jew and Christian, thinking that they ultimately would be converted to his faith; the Christian would accept his absolute monotheism, and the Jew would accept him, Mohammed, as one of the prophets of God. When Mohammed ~~began to~~ realize^d that the Jews would not be converted, he, like Luther, who also was at first favorably inclined towards the Jew, hoping for their conversion, and when that hope vanished he turned and became their bitterest enemy,--Mohammed, too, turned against them and accused them of maligning him, of being the enemies of true Mussulmen; of perverting the scriptures in order to

incommode and confuse his followers, and began to persecute them. Of the three Jewish tribes that lived around the city of Medina, ~~perhaps~~ for centuries, two of ~~these tribes~~ he banished and confiscated their property, and the third he annihilated. Some six or seven hundred were beheaded in one horrible day of battle.

~~You see~~, Mohammed was not a suffering saint; he was not at all of the type, say, of Jesus--a man content to preach his doctrine and suffer for it, and let the truth itself win its way into the hearts of men. Mohammed was determined in his own life to make converts. When he was driven from Mecca in 622 and fled to Medina, he was not content to remain in Medina a quiet, patient preacher of his truth, but he became a marauding bandit, a robber, attacking the caravans on their way to Mecca in order to ~~inconvenience~~ and trouble the Meccans as much as he possibly could. Two years after the Hegira he waged a battle against the Meccans and won, and eight years after the Hegira he entered Mecca as a conqueror.

By the sword Mohammed established his supremacy in the Arab world, and by his sword he made his numerous converts. But it would be folly to assume that only the sword won adherents for Mohammed. Mohammed had a real message for his people. His people were ^{ready} ~~ripe~~ for that ~~real~~ message. Idolatry was fast breaking up in the Arabian world, and Mohammed was ~~that~~ ^{the} man at that great crises who had the vision and seized the opportunity and converted his people.

Mohammed, like Moses, was not only a founder of a great faith, but a founder of a great nation. Mohammed found an Arabic race; he left an Arabic people--a nation. He inflamed his fellow Arabs with a passion for political unity and for conquest; he made them feel their racial and their political oneness, and he set them upon a road of world conquest, which in two or three generations enabled the Arabs to sweep through Arabia, through Palestine, through Syria, through Persia to the doors of ^{India and Pakistan} ~~Egypt~~, through Egypt and Greece and northern Africa into Spain, into Sicily.

Mohammed built an empire, ~~even as he built a great faith, which is today the faith of two hundred millions of men;~~ and the empire which he founded was a blessing to mankind. When Europe was steeped in darkness, when Europe, after the collapse of the Roman empire, entered its dark ages, the Arabs, who loved ^{life and} ~~light~~, who loved art, who ~~and~~ ^{loved} literature, whose minds were alert, inquisitive ~~and~~ ^{and} searching and eager to learn,--the Arabs began to build universities in Bagdad, in Egypt, in Cordova in Spain; began to cultivate arts and sciences, medicine, mathematics, history, geography; became the translators of Aristotle and Plato, and the medium through which the philosophy and sciences of ancient Hellas passed ^{preparing the way for the} ~~on~~ into Europe ^{renaissance, the day of modern Europe.} ~~unto the day of the~~ And the Jews ^{too} profited exceedingly. The greatest periods in Jewish history were those periods which were spent in Mohammedan lands under Mohammedan rulers. Taken by and large, the Mohammedan was

much more tolerant to Christian and Jew than the Christian was to Mohammedan and Jew. When the Jew was driven out of Spain in 1492, after he had lived there for over eight hundred years,--driven out by fanaticism and bigotry and religious intolerance, he found a refuge in Mohammedan lands in northern Africa and in Turkey. The Golden Age of Spain, the age which produced our greatest philosophers and poets and scientists, was the Mohammedan age. *from 10 C. on -* *stop*

We have now, friends, told the story briefly, and only sketchily, of the six greatest religious personalities of mankind. They present much which differentiates one from the other. They are not all alike, by any means. They were all preachers of their time and of their place, bearing the stamp of individuality, both subjective as out of themselves and objective as being moulded and fashioned by their environment. No two men are alike; certainly no two great men are alike. And yet all have many things in common--Moses, Zoroaster, Gautama, the Buddha, Confucius, Jesus and Mohammed. In the first place, they all established great faiths; they all influenced the course of human life; they all determined to a large degree the destinies of the human race; they all received at some moment in their life a revelation--whence we know not. But that they received a revelation which took complete possession of them, which became the overpowering motif of their lives, that we are certain of, because their lives are evidence of the fact, and their words are ample testimony of that.

Somehow divinity sweeps over an individual and saturates his being completely, and he becomes a channel of revelation, a vessel in the hands of an unknown but omnipotent power--a tool; and we call him prophet or messenger. Not all men are blessed with such revelation. "Many are called but few are chosen." But he who is chosen knows it beyond a shadow of doubt that he is a marked man, and that he must pass through hell itself and carry on until the words which burn like a consuming fire in him are imparted to mankind. And so all of them suffered. Every man who is burdened with the load of an ideal suffers. They had that in common.

They had in common also this conviction: that the time had come for their people to rise above the religious notions which they had carried with them, perhaps, for fifty thousand years or more, through the earliest periods of human history. Mankind evidently had come to a cross-road; mankind was entering upon a new period--Moses first sensed this fact--and that in this new era idolatry, which was sufficient and adequate for man up to that time, was no longer adequate, and that if man is to advance to the dawn of the new day, if he is to discover new worlds, he must surrender his past completely and take on this new faith. That was the idea common to all these founders. Monotheism in one form or another must now supplant polytheism, polydemonism, henotheism, the belief in many gods, the belief in tribal gods, the belief in idolatrous representation of gods, the belief in

nature worship,--that regime, that spiritual discipline in which mankind lived for perhaps tens of thousands of years,--that must end.

They had in common, too, this thought: that the ethics, the conduct, the relationship between man and his fellowmen, must no longer be merely a matter of custom, of group practice, something inherited, something automatic, something unintelligible--just a matter of habit, but ethics must become an intelligent, purposeful ideal--a program. Man must add to or improve upon or revise these inherited group customs and group practices and group habits which have come down to him from primordial eras. Ethics must become evolutionary, dynamic--a process constantly advancing; man must rise on the scale of moral life to higher levels and purer air constantly. That was a note which all these great religious leaders struck. They set up new goals, new standards; they knew full well that mankind could not realize them all at once; they knew full well that as far as perfect realization of these ideals, perhaps mankind will never realize them; but they set up the standards nevertheless. There they are, and mankind must not rest content with doing the things it has been doing for thousands of years in the old conventional, traditional way, sanctioned and hallowed by years and centuries; but it must free itself, rise above itself, and climb up as near as it can to those mountain peaks of justice and truth and beauty and peace and holiness.

I hope that our study of these six divine men has led us to the realization that while the expressions of religion are many, as they must be, the heart of religion is one. I, for one, do not look forward to a time when all people will worship in one church. I think that is rather a naive and childish anticipation. It has always been my conviction that the more civilized and advanced men become the more differentiated and individualized they become. The expressions of religions will continue to increase in number and variety, but the heart of religion is one, will be one, and man will some day realize that it is one. To be different does not mean to be divided; differences should not be divisible but should rather reinforce and stimulate.

What matters it whether one insists upon calling his deity Allah, and another Ahura Mazda, and still another Yarovah? What matters if one continues to worship in a cathedral, and another in a mosque, and still another in a synagogue? What matters it if my prayer book is in the vernacular, and another is in the Latin, and still another is in the English, and still another is in the Arabic, or in the Persian, or in the Chinese? What matters it whether I worship on the Sabbath, and another on Sunday, and another on a Friday? What matters it whether my ritual which is come down through the ages has certain particularities and certain characteristics which are dear to me, which I love, and which I wish to keep, and another has a ritual which is dear to him, and for the self-same

reason?

These facts lead men to the one incontrovertible truth: that back of all these externalities and within all these sanctuaries, books and scriptures and prayers, there is one impulse, there is one mood, there is one aspiration--the urge which man feels to reach up and touch divinity; the urge which man feels to adjust himself to the vast mysteries of the universe; the urge which man feels for communion with a power greater than his and a strength mightier than his own.

That is religion. Some day men will all recognize this truth. Let each man walk in the name of his God; provided each man realizes what God asks of him: to do justice, to love mercy, and in humility to walk constantly with Him.

--o--

M/Oh = Semitic Rel -
Other - Indo-Germanic
Turanian

209 millions

5 Europe
160 - Asia
44 - Africa }
}

Islam = obedience to will of God - submission.
{ Moslem - "salama" - to submit to God.
Muslim



1. "Lord's Prayer" - p. 28.
2. Judgment- Great Day - Heaven & Hell - p. 65
3. His religion a continuation - p. 154.
4. Ethics - p. 166
Charity - p. 31
5. Fatalism - p. 398



Koran - "that which is to be recited" - not a book - collection
jotted down by amanuensis - covering 21 years -
collected, edited 634, by order of Abu Bakr - his
mediator succeeding M. - Various readings -
Caliph Othman, 642. - standard text.
- work, one man -

Sura - chapters.

- "a potpourri of myths, legends, variations, legal statutes, ethical precepts, ceremonial instructions
- not arranged either chronologically, or topically.
except that Suras placed first

Carlyle - "a wearisome, confused jumble; endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement, most crude and venal, unsupportable stupidity in short"

3 Sections

- 1- Earliest - doubt etc, agree with enthusiasm regarding his vision.
- 2- Calm, dispassionate argument - progress/peace
- 3- Conciliatory - compromise for further peace
viewed - political etc.