



of the contact of the Arabs with the Jews, in the ordinary dealings of commercial intercourse, or the extraordinary vicissitudes of peace and war.

Thus the prophet Isaiah, when he speaks generally of the coming in of the Gentiles, makes mention of "the rams of *Nebāioth*," the eldest, and "all the flocks of *Kedar* \*," the second of the sons of Ishmael; of the Arab tribes, that is, deriving from these brothers: in another part of his prophecy, he notices "the *cities* of the wilderness, the villages that *Kedar* doth inhabit †:" and again, when, denouncing impending calamity on the land of Arabia, he foretells how "all the glory of *Kedar* shall fail ‡," he employs the name of this single tribe, as synonymous with that of the entire peninsula. Jeremiah, where he predicts a similar national visitation, introduces *Kedar*, in like prominent terms, as a great and powerful people: this prophet graphically depicts these true sons of Ishmael, as "the wealthy nation that dwelleth without care, which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone." || Ezekiel also prophesies conjointly of "Arabia, and all the princes of *Kedar*." § In earlier times of Jewish history, David and Solomon allude to "the tents of *Kedar* ¶," as objects but too familiar and formidable to the eyes of their subjects. Mention of the tribes of *Dumah* and *Tema*, the sixth and ninth sons of Ishmael, is made by Isaiah, in connection with that of *Kedar*: the prophet speaks of "the burden of *Dumah*," and "the inhabitants of the land of *Tema*." \*\* An allusion to *Tema*, as a warlike people of Arabia, occurs so early as in the book of Job: "The Troops of *Tema* looked, the companies of

\* Is. lx. 7.

† xlii. 11. The description corresponds with the site of Mecca, supposed to be the *Mesha* of Scripture. Cf. Gen. x. 30.

‡ xxi. 16, 17.

|| Jer. xlix. 28—31.

§ Ezek. xxvii. 21. It appears incidentally that the *Kedarites* were pastoral *Bedoweens*; since they are introduced by the prophet as supplying the *Tyrians* with "lambs, and rams, and goats." Now the *Bedoweens* are reckoned to this day, among the Arabs, to be the purest of the stock of Ishmael.

¶ Ps. cxx. 5.

\*\* Is. xxi. 11. 14.



Sheba waited for them.”\* This Ishmaelitish tribe is also noticed by the prophet Jeremiah. † Lastly, the tribes sprung from *Jetur* and *Naphish*, the tenth and eleventh sons of Ishmael, are commemorated in the first book of Chronicles; and the intimation there given of the strength of these comparatively unnoticed hordes, may qualify us to form a juster notion, than otherwise we could be prepared to entertain, of the aggregate population, at that period, of Ishmaelitish Arabia. When the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites leagued together in an expedition against these *Hagarites* ‡ (as the sacred history styles them), after a great slaughter in the field of battle, the male captives alone amounted, it appears, to a hundred thousand men. §

The descent of the chief tribes of Arabia from Ishmael is thus sustained and substantiated, by a double chain of scriptural proofs. The *direct* testimony, with great historical exactness, sets forth in detail the whole circumstances of the national pedigree; and supports itself, in its statements, by constant reference to contemporary fact and experience. The *indirect*, corroborates the direct testimony of scripture, at every point, by a series of incidental notices and allusions; relating to times present to the several writers, and to passing occurrences; and testifying the existence, throughout the successive ages of the Jewish polity, of warlike tribes, and powerful nations, of the race of Ishmael, within the Arabian peninsula: facts, leaving not a possibility of any of the writers being themselves deceived, nor a conceivable motive for their attempting to practise deception on others.

Or suppose them, as the consistent sceptic must suppose them, consentient, one and all, in the transmission of a falsehood equally unmeaning and profitless; and see how, on this supposition, the case will stand. On this monstrous supposition, the authors of the Old Testament, one and all, must be understood to speak, to their several contemporaries, of *non-existing* nations, tribes, and armies, as living, moving,

\* Job vi. 19. † Jer. xxv. 23. ‡ Compare App. i. p. 400. ad fin. *note*.

§ 1 Chron. v. 10. and 19—21.



and acting, under their familiar observation! Even the poetry of the Hebrews draws its images and illustrations from "the tents of Kedar;" yet are these tents and their inhabitants a fable or a dream! The force of sceptical credulity itself will hardly accept this hypothesis; yet is this incredible theory the natural and necessary offspring of the doubts, which scepticism has attempted to raise, respecting "the pedigree of the Arabs."

View, then, the question of this genealogy, as tried on the scriptural evidences only: few facts of ancient history, it will on consideration appear, have been subjected to a more searching ordeal; none, it may safely be asserted, have passed more triumphantly through it. For, taking into account the collateral evidences of scripture, the truth of the Mosaic narrative stands here certified, by lights of history, reflected back on it through a period of nearly one thousand years. Such is the case of fact, with which the sceptic has to contend, when he affects to reject the scriptural proof of the Ishmaelitish origin of the Arabians: and the case of fact being such, however questionable the historical morality of the proceeding, we may at least give future objectors credit, on the score of *prudence*, if they elude, as Mr. Gibbon has done, a direct encounter with it.

But the scriptural evidences of the descent from Ishmael will go far to determine a further important question, essentially connected with the subject of the present work; namely, the *proportion* in which the posterity of this patriarch may be understood to constitute the population of *Mahometan* Arabia. For the subsequent diffusion in a given country, of any particular race of men, has generally been found to keep pace with the extent of its political predominance in ancient times.

Now the Hebrew Scriptures abound with every form of proof, that the Ishmaelites, in those remote ages, enjoyed and exercised a paramount sovereignty over the peninsula. So complete, indeed, was their political ascendancy, that, in the idiom of the Old Testament, the term Ishmaelite, or



Hagarite, is used as synonymous with that of Arab. In process of time, the ascendancy of Ishmael appears, from Scripture, to have centered in the family of Kedar\*; and such, thenceforward, became the prominence of this single tribe, that "the tongue of Kedar" is the scriptural equivalent for the language of Arabia; and in the prophets (who expatiate in glowing descriptions of the wealth and glory of this people), Kedar stands as the representative of the whole Arab race. On the ordinary principles of population, consequently, there is conclusive ground to presume, that, with the growth of his power, the blood also of Ishmael diffused itself over Arabia; and that this blood, at the present day, predominates in the veins of the Bedo-weens. In fine, the authority of the scriptural testimonies, concerning the posterity of Ishmael, and their fortunes in the colonization of Arabia, being, on every received principle of historical evidence, unquestionable, the scepticism which presumes to challenge, without the shadow of a proof, the affiliation claimed by the Saracens, must be prepared knowingly and wilfully to run counter to the concurrent experience and judgment of mankind.

2. From the foregoing inquiry into the validity of the proof supplied by the Hebrew Scriptures, respecting the extraction of the Arabs, we now come to the discussion of a separate question, which Mr. Gibbon has thought fit to raise, concerning the independent existence and authority, on the same subject, of Arabian tradition. According to this eminent writer, the Arabs themselves possessed no national tradition, and retained no national memory, of their Ishmaelitic origin: but received, on the contrary, their earliest and only genealogical lights, through the medium of recent Jewish and Christian settlers, in and near the commencement of the Christian era.

\* In a similar manner, the house of Israel merged in the tribe of Judah; and with corresponding effects: the name of *Jew* becoming synonymous with that of *Hebrew*; and *Judea* and *Canaan*, equivalent terms.



The persecutions under Titus and Hadrian had filled Arabia with Jews; those subsequently carried on against the early heretics, with Christian exiles. By both classes of colonists, copies of the Hebrew Scriptures were gradually introduced and circulated, in an Arabic version; and, in the perusal of the Mosaic records, the Arabs made the *discovery* of their Abrahamic descent.\*

Such, in substance, is the gratuitous account, which we are called upon to receive, as a full solution of the acknowledged phenomena; without the production of a single historical fact or voucher to support it. Even on a first view, however, this ingenious theory seems to labour under rather a serious difficulty. For, had the pagan Arabs indeed derived their first acquaintance with the name of Ishmael, and the history of their own origin, from the Jewish Scriptures, and by the instrumentality of Jewish or Christian instructors, it is scarcely credible that they should have gone so far, as to adopt and glory in their Abrahamic pedigree, without being led onward to some acquaintance with the faith of Abraham; and to the recognition, if not the adoption, either of Judaism or of Christianity.

If, indeed, we admit the pre-existence of traditional lights on the subject, this consequence will not equally follow.† But assuming, with Mr. Gibbon, the discovery of the origin to have been *recent* in the first century, it seems unavoidable. National vanity must, on this supposition, have combined with missionary zeal, to open the hearts of the Arabs

\* Compare *Decline and Fall*, ch. 1.

† *Time*, on this supposition, may be conceived to have hallowed the national corruptions of the true doctrine; and, like the Jewish and Romish traditionists, the idolatrous Arabs might contend, that *their superstition* was the true Abrahamic faith. On the other hand, had the very notion of an Abrahamic origin been new, the Saracens could hardly have persuaded themselves that their idolatry was the genuine religion of Abraham; but would rather be led to look for instruction from the Jews and Christians, from whom they received the story of their pedigree.



to the reception of the religion professed by their father Abraham, as revealed in the Old Testament, and confirmed by the New. No trace, however, of so natural a result is to be found among the idolaters of Mecca. With the tribe of Koreish, which valued itself so highly on its derivation from Ishmael, the direct contrary is ascertained to have been the case. The worship of the Koreish, from time immemorial to the age of Mahomet, consisted in the rites of a gross, unrelieved heathenism; where *Abraham* and *Ishmael*, according to the most approved accounts of the Caaba\*, stood conspicuous among the idols.† Such was the state of religion in ante-Mahometan Arabia: it may safely be left to the decision of common sense, how far this state of religious belief consists with the hypothesis framed by Mr. Gibbon.

But the hypothesis involves a consequence, which brings it at once to the practical test of historical fact and experience. For it plainly assumes, and rests itself on the assumption, that the Arabs, until the age immediately prior to the Christian era, remained wholly in the dark on the subject of their Ishmaelitish parentage: it prepares us to be informed, and purports indirectly to inform us, that no traces of this parentage, previously to the time above specified, are discoverable in the national rites or usages of a people, proverbially tenacious of their ancient customs; and whose manners in their native deserts, like the inflexible laws of

\* It is a noted fact, that Mahometans constantly maintain, that the Caaba was built or restored, by Abraham and Ishmael. On this tradition, the learned Reland observes, — “*Credibile est hanc domum fuisse aliquis ex patriarchis gentis Ismaeliticæ, quam posteris uti sacram coluerunt.*” *De Relig. Mohamm.* p. 118. *note m.* The conjecture would be a still more probable one, had he supposed it to have been originally a *place of worship, or temple*, erected by some later patriarch descended from Ishmael. Its *antiquity*, as a temple, is certainly high. See Diodorus Siculus, as quoted by Mr. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, vol. ix. p. 245.

† Abulfed. *Annal. Muslem.* tom. i. pp. 150—153. Cf. Ebn Al Athir, and Al Jannabi, ap. Pocock, *Specim.* p. 98, 99.



the Medes and Persians, have been never known to favour or endure a change.\*

The inquiry remains open to us, whether the ascertained facts of Arabian antiquity correspond with this arbitrary theory; whether such notices of the customs of the ancient Arabians, as history has transmitted, be compatible with that state of unconsciousness, in which they are represented to have lain, down to a comparatively recent date, on the subject of their descent from Ishmael and Abraham?

The question may be brought to a compendious issue, upon a well-known national custom; the practice, by the ancient Arabs, of the rite of circumcision. There has been some waste of learning, on the part of writers of a certain class, with a view to invalidate the divine institution of this rite, as practised originally by the Jews: and Moses is gravely convicted of having borrowed it from the Egyptians, among whom, in common with the Ethiopians, Arabians, and other eastern nations, it was primitively in use. Now, it might have been remembered, that the divine institution of any rite or observance, may consist, quite as much, and as well, in something peculiar in the *mode* of its performance, as in the mere fact of the appointment. Isaac, for example, was circumcised, by God's commandment, on the eighth day after his birth; the period of his circumcision passed as a law to all his posterity; it became incorporated with the law of Moses; and this divinely-authorized peculiarity served and sufficed, to distinguish the Jewish rite, from the various modes of circumcision in use among Gentile nations.

As Isaac, according to the commandment of Jehovah, was circumcised on the eighth day, so Ishmael, in obedience to the same divine authority, had been previously received

\* Let Mr. Gibbon himself be our authority for the statement: "The same life is uniformly pursued by the roving tribes of the desert; and in the portrait of the modern *Bedoweens*, we may trace the features of their ancestors, who, *in the age of Moses or Mahomet*, dwelt under similar tents, and conducted their horses, and camels, and sheep, to the same springs, and the same pastures." *Decline and Fall*, vol. ix. p. 223, 224.



into covenant with the God of his father Abraham, by the same rite of circumcision, in his thirteenth year. The sign itself, it is certain, remained among his reputed descendants. But whether it remained in use, as transmitted from him, is a question which can be determined, only by our knowledge of the received origin, and the manner of administering the rite, as it was preserved in the practice of the ancient Arabs. Now their national usage and tradition on this highly important point of evidence, it fortunately happens, are among the few scattered fragments of Arabian antiquity, which have escaped the ravages of time, and which stand incidentally recorded, by writers of competent and independent authority; living sufficiently near, also, to the country and the times of which they treat, to rank as authoritative witnesses.

Josephus has a very remarkable passage, touching on the origin of circumcision among the Jews and Arabs: in which he first makes mention of the circumcision of Isaac; then introduces that of Ishmael; and states concerning each, as matter of universal and immemorial notoriety, that the Jews and the Arabians severally practised the rite, conformably with the precedents given them, in the persons of their respective fathers. His words are these: — “Now when Sarah had completed her ninetieth, and Abraham his hundredth year, a son (Isaac) is born unto them: whom they forthwith circumcise on the eighth day; and from him the Jews derive their custom, of circumcising children after the same interval. But the Arabians administer circumcision at the close of the thirteenth year: for Ishmael, the founder of their nation, the son of Abraham by his concubine, was circumcised at that time of life.” \*

\* Ἄυτη μὲν γὰρ ἔνενηκοντα εἶχεν ἐτη, ἑκατόν δὲ Ἀβραμὸς. τικτεται δὲ παῖς ἑκατέρων τῶ Ἰσακῶ εἰτε· ὃν εὐθύς μετ’ ὄγδοην ἡμέραν περιτεμνοῦσι. καὶ ἐκεῖνου, μετὰ τῶσαντας ἡμέρας, εθὸς εχουσιν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, ποιεισθαι τὰς περιτομὰς. Ἀραβες δὲ, μετὰ ἐτος τρισκαίδεκατον· Ἰσμαῆλος γὰρ ὁ κτιστὴς αὐτῶν τοῦ ἐθνους, Ἀβραμῶ γενομενος ἐκ τῆς παλλακῆς, ἐν τούτῳ περιτεμενεται τῶ χρόνῳ. Flav. Joseph. Antiq. Jud. l. i. c. x. § 5, p. 26. ed. Hudson.



This testimony occurs in the first century of the Christian era; that is, nearly at the *commencement* of the period, from whence Mr. Gibbon has undertaken to date the first discovery to the Arabs, of their Ishmaelitic origin. It records an existing national usage, as, from time immemorial, obtaining throughout the peninsula; which, if it prevailed according to the circumstances stated by Josephus, must be finally decisive of the question. For, if the Arabians of old circumcised their children at the age of thirteen years, in consequence and commemoration of their descent from Ishmael, who was himself circumcised at that period, there can no doubt remain on any reasonable mind, that the memory of their origin was preserved among them by an independent tradition. But the circumstances under which he wrote are conclusive to show, that the statement of Josephus, in this instance, gives a correct representation of the facts. This historian lived in the adjoining country of Judea, where the customs and manners of Arabia, from constant intercourse with its inhabitants, must have been perfectly well known. He composed his history pretty obviously with a view to the information of his Roman masters; and was little likely, therefore, to insert a figment relating to his own times, and which could be at once exposed by every Arab soldier in the camp, or slave in the court, of Vespasian.

But the matter itself held out no temptation for a fabricator; since the question about the descent of the Arabs from Ishmael had not been so much as raised: and Josephus introduces the fact, and the custom arising out of it, in that incidental way, which bespeaks a perfect unconsciousness of their being applicable to any use, beyond an ordinary historical illustration. The position and opportunities of the writer, the notoriety of the matter of fact asserted, the facilities of exposure, if untrue, and the dearth of motives, in this instance, for the fabrication of a falsehood, thus combine to establish the authority of this testimony; and, in so doing, to demonstrate the independent existence, in Arabia, of an unbroken tradition, preserving among the Arabs, through

the surest possible medium, that of a permanent national rite, the memory of their descent from Ishmael.

To this testimony of Josephus, may now be added a similar testimony from Origen. This learned ancient merely touches upon the point, in the way of illustration. But the incidental manner of his evidence sensibly augments its value. "The natives of Judea," Origen states, "generally circumcise their children on the eighth day: but the Ishmaelites, who inhabit Arabia, universally practise circumcision in the thirteenth year. For this," he subjoins, "*history* tells us concerning them."\*

This writer, as well as Josephus, lived near the spot; and had, probably, himself opportunities of learning particulars respecting the Arabians. But his testimony is chiefly valuable, as showing that, in his day, the beginning of the third century, the original testimony of the Jewish historians, as to the tradition possessed by the Arabians of their descent from Ishmael, was credited and uncontradicted.

But Josephus further establishes the existence of an unbroken tradition in Arabia, respecting the descent from Ishmael, in another important statement; resting, like the former, on his own knowledge of the facts, as they still existed in his day. It is where, following the narrative of Genesis, he makes mention of the names, and settlement in

\* Origen introduces the two national customs, in illustration of the absurdity of astrological calculations. *Ουκ οίδα δ' ὅπως δυνήσονται σωσαι, το των μεν εν Ιουδαία σχεδον παντων τοιωνδε ειναι τον σχηματισμον επι της γεννησεως, ὡς οκταημερον αυτους λαμβανειν περιτομην . . . . των δε εν Ισμαηλιταις τοις κατα την Αραβιαν, τοιωνδε, ὡς παντας περιτεμνεσθαι τρισκαδικαετης. τουτο γαρ ιστορειται περι αυτων.* Origen. in Gen. Op. tom. ii. p. 16. ed. Bened.

The reader will not fail to contrast the expression *σχεδον παντων*, applied to the circumcision of the Jews, with that of *ὡς παντας*, when speaking of that in use among the Arabs. According to Origen, the eighth day was only the general period among the Jews, but the thirteenth year, the universal period among the Arabians, for practising the rite of circumcision. For the connection of this national usage with Ishmael and Abraham, cf. Id. tom. i. p. 614.



Arabia, of the twelve sons of Ishmael. They occupied, he tells us, the country between the Euphrates and the Red Sea; and gave this region the name of Nabatena. These patriarchs, he adds, conferred their own names upon the entire nation of the Arabs, and upon their several tribes.\* By which last remark, the historian plainly intends to intimate, that the Arabian tribes deriving from Ishmael, were, in his time, severally known and distinguished, by the names of those sons of Ishmael, who were their respective progenitors. The fact is abundantly authenticated by subsequent authorities.

In the fourth century, Saint Jerome, in his commentary on Jeremiah, describes Kedar, as a country of the Arabian desert, inhabited by the Ishmaelites, who were then termed Saracens.† The same Father, in his comment on Isaiah,

\* Ανδρωθεντι δη τω παιδι γυναιον αγεται, τω γενος Αιγυπτιον· ενθεν δ' ην και αυτη το αρχαιον. εξ του παιδες Ισμαηλω γινονται δωδεκα παντες· Ναβαιωθης, Κηδαρος, Αβδηλος, Μαβσαμας, Ιδουμας, Μασμαος, Μασσαος, Χοδαδος, Θεμανος, Ιετουρος, Ναφαισος, Καδμας. ουτοι πασαν την απ' Ευφρατου καθηκουσαν προς την Ερυθραν θαλασσαν κατοικουσι, Ναβατατηνην την χωραν ονομασαντες, εισι δε ουτοι οι των Αραβων εθνος, και τας φυλας απ' αυτων καλουσι. δια τε την αρετην αυτων, και δια το Αβραμω αξιωμα. Ant. Jud. l. i. c. xii. § 4. p. 30. Where Josephus does not deny the existence of other tribes, but asserts the *supremacy* of the Ishmaelites. The fact is equally legible in heathen writers. Thus Plutarch speaks των Αραβων, τους καλουμενους Ναβατατιους, in Demetr. p. 895. And Strabo observes Ναβατατιοι εισιν οι Ιδουμαιοι. See the names Ναβαιωθης and Ηδουμας, in the catalogue given by Josephus of the sons of Ishmael. Antiq. Jud. lib. i. cap. 13.

† “ *Onus in Arabia, &c.* Quærenti mihi, et diu cum deliberatione tractanti quæ esset Arabia, ad quam propheticus sermo dirigitur, utrum *Moabitæ*, an *Ammonitæ*, et *Idumæi*, cunctæque aliæ regiones, quæ nunc et Arabia nuncupantur, occasionem tribuit in hac eadem Visione quod sequitur: *Auferetur omnis gloria Cedar, et reliquæ numeri sagittariorum fortium de filiis Cedar imminuentur*: ISMAELITAS debere intelligi. Liber Geneseos docet ex Ismaele, Cedar et Agarenos, qui, *perverso nomine*, Saraceni vocantur, esse genitos. Hi per totam habitant solitudinem. Latissima eremus ab India ad Mauritaniam usque tendatur, et Atlanticum Oceanum, quod puto Jeremiæ titulum sonare: — *Ad Cedar, et ad regna*



again speaks of Kedar, as the country of the Saracens, who in Scripture are called Ishmaelites. And observes of Nabaioth, that he was one of the sons of Ishmael, after whose names the Arabian desert is called.\*

We possess, then, it appears, unexceptionable testimony to this fact, that various districts of Arabia retained, to a period comparatively modern, designations originally derived from the sons of Ishmael, by whom Scripture states them to have been peopled. Over and above the notices of these districts by their several names, to be found in the Old Testament, we have historical mention of some of them, in uninspired writers.† One appellation, in particular,

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*Asor, &c.* Totum prophetiæ testimonium de Jeremia posui, ut quæ sit Cedar indubitanter intelligas. Et considera quomodo Ismaelitarum, hoc est Saracenorum, proprie gentem descriperit, *qui habitant in tentoriis,*” &c. S. Hieron. in Jerem. Op. tom. iv. pp. 217, 218. edit. Veron. 1735.

\* “*Madian et Epha* regiones sunt trans Arabiam, fertiles Camelorum, omnisque provincia appellatur Saba, unde fuit et Saba regina, quæ venit sapientiam audire Salomonis : et ipsa deferens aurum et thus, pacifico regi multa deportans, et ab eo majora suscipiens. Cedar autem regio Saracenorum est, qui in Scriptura vocantur Ismaelitæ. Et Nabaioth unus est filiorum Ismael, ex quorum nominibus solitudo appellatur, quæ frugum inops, plena est pecorum.” S. Hieron. Comment. in Isai. lib. xvii. cap. ix. Op. tom. iv. p. 721, 722.

“Strabo frequently mentions the Arabian *phylarchs*, as he denominates them, or rulers of tribes. And Melo, quoted by Eusebius from Alexander Polyhistor, a heathen historian, relates, that Abraham [Ishmael], of his Egyptian wife, begat twelve sons ; who, departing into Arabia, divided the region between them, and were the first kings of the inhabitants ; whence even to our days, the Arabians have twelve kings, of the same names as the first.” Bp. Newton on Proph. v. i. p. 223.

† The testimony of Strabo, so far as it goes, is in substance the same as that cited from St. Jerome. Πρωτοι δ' ὑπερ της Συριας Ναβαταιοι και Σαβαιοι την ευδαιμονα Αραβιαν νεμονται, και πολλακις κατετρεχον αυτης, πριν η Ρωμαιων γενεσθαι — Μητροπολις δε των Ναβαταιων εστιν η Πετρα καλουμενα — Εξω δε του περιβολου, χωρα ερημος η πλειση, και μαλις η προς Ιουδαιαν. Geograph. l. xvi. p. 1106. ed. Oxon. 1807.

Having noticed in another passage, the neighbourhood of the Sabæans to the Bedoweens,—[Τοις Νομαδοις] συναπτει δ' η των Σαβαιων ευδαιμονεοτατη



given by Josephus as the most prominent, that of Nabatene, or Nabatea, from Nebaioth\*, the eldest of the sons of Ishmael, is familiar to the learned at the present day, as the *classical* name for Arabia Petraea.

Now, evidence of this kind, once clearly brought out, is peculiarly forcible and conclusive. For there are no land-

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(p. 1105.), Strabo thus describes these wandering tribes, — *Και μετα ταυτην κολλοι τινες, και χωρα Νομαδων, απο καμηλων εχοντων τον βιον· και γαρ πολεμουσιν απ' αυτων, και οδευουσι, και τρεφονται τω τε γαλακτι χρωμενοι, και ταις σαρξι.* p. 1104.

He adds, that the Arab tribes are distinguished from each other, by names of remote antiquity; and, from his mention of the Nabateans, it is a fair presumption, that, had he completed his catalogue, the names of other sons of Ishmael (agreeably to the statements of Josephus, of Origen, and of St. Jerome) would have occurred in it. That we do not meet them in the classics, is not, however, to be wondered at; for the Grecian geographer loftily apprizes us, that he cannot charge his tongue or his pen with such obscure and unpronounceable appellations: *ου λεγω δε των εθνων τα ονοματα παλαια δια την αδοξιαν, και αμα ατοπιαν της εκφορας αυτων.* p. 1104. Perhaps, indeed, we should not have been much enlightened by his nomenclature, if we may judge by a specimen, — *καλουνται δε Δεεσαι.*

But Strabo's words, which recognize *των εθνων τα ονοματα παλαια*, in conjunction with the known derivation of one country and people of Arabia mentioned by him, viz. *Ναβατηνη*, and *Ναβαταιοι*, from Nebaioth, are a highly valuable confirmation of the Jewish and Christian testimonies, to the existence of Arab nations named after the sons of Ishmael, down to so late a period as the first ages of the Christian era.

Upon one national appellative occurring in Strabo, learned conjecture has been busy: it is where he speaks of the expedition of Gallus: *η δε εξης ην εκπει Νομαδων ην, ερημος τα πολλα ως αληθως, εκαλειτο δε Αραρηνη. βασιλευς δ' ην Σαβος. και ταυτην ανοδιας διηλθε, κατατριψας ημερας πεντηκοντα, μεχρι πολεως Αγρανων.* Lib. xvi. p. 1109.

For *Αγρανων*, one editor proposes to substitute *αγραιων*, and another, *Ατρανων*, vel *Ατρηνων*. Both various readings would seem to explain the *ignotum per ignotius*. In a case of confessed difficulty, the author may venture to submit as his conjecture,— for *Αραρηνη*, read *Αγαρηνη*, and for *Αγρανων*, *Αγαρηνων*·— which restores a consistent sense, and re-conducts us to the Ishmaelitish origin of the Arabian family. So Psalm lxxxiii. we find, “the *Ishmaelites* and *Hagarenes*.”— LXX. *οι Αγαρηνοι*.

\* So, again, *Iturea*, from *Jetur*.



marks of history more universal, or more permanent, than the names of countries affixed by original settlers. We may as justly question the derivations of Hungary from the Huns, France from the Franks, England from the Angles, Turkey from the Turks, or, to come nearer to the point in question, of Judea from Judah and the Jews, as those of the several districts of Arabia, from the respective sons of Ishmael. The proof drawn from Scripture is thus, therefore, corroborated and completed, by a collateral and independent proof derived from Arabian tradition.

A new and broader light is thrown on this branch of the argument, when we proceed to connect these external evidences of a constant tradition among the Arabs, on the subject of their Ishmaelitic parentage, with the internal marks of the existence of such a tradition\*, which abound in the Koran, and in the early Mahometan writers.

The Koran contains a great variety of particulars relating to preceding Prophets; partly corresponding with Scripture history; but presenting, in the great majority of examples, either gross corruptions of, or total departures from, the sacred text. Many of these stories relate spe-

\* A correspondence of a different kind from any noticed in the text, may here be mentioned, which seems peculiarly corroborative of the common origin of the Jews and the Arabians. The computation of time is among the most general, and the most fixed, of national usages: in few respects have nations been less disposed to vary, or to borrow from each other. But in their calendars, the Jews and the ante-Mahometan Arabs coincided; and the Arabic division of months is ascertained by the learned, to have been *the only division of time* coincident with that of the Hebrew Scriptures. See Hyde, *De Religione Veterum Persarum*, p. 239.

Another strong mark of common origin and common moral law, may be seen in the agreement between the Jews and the ante-Mahometan Arabians, respecting *the prohibited degrees of marriage*. Compare Sale, P. D. p. 181., with the prohibitions of the Mosaic law.

A third indication of their Abrahamic origin might be noticed, in the abstinence from swine's flesh, which was not more religiously observed by the Jews, than by the ancient Arabians. See Mill, *De Mohamm. ante Mohamm.* § xx.



cially to Abraham and Ishmael; and purport to give their history, as connected with the Arabians. These last accounts, Mahomet is generally, and not unreasonably, supposed to have borrowed from the Hebrew Scriptures; which he thus perverted, to accommodate them to his own purposes and views. The Koran itself, however, has some internal marks, which render it more than doubtful, that this could have been uniformly the case. For it repeatedly appeals to the acquaintance of the pagan Arabs themselves, with the stories it relates, as matters of old national tradition; and it introduces the still stronger evidence of their own testimony, to the same effect, in their constant reply to Mahomet and his doctrines, that what he taught them was nothing more than "fables of the ancients." So in the chapter intitled *The Bee*:—"When it is said unto them (the pagan Arabs) what hath your Lord sent down unto Mohammed? they answer, *Fables of ancient times.*"\* Again, in the chapter termed *The true Believers*:—"But the unbelieving Meccans say, as their predecessors said: they say, When we shall be dead, and have become dust and bones, shall we really be raised to life? We have already been threatened, and our fathers also heretofore: this is nothing but *fables of the ancients.*" †

From these passages, as indeed from the general structure of the Koran, it seems unquestionable, that Mahomet's habit was to re-produce to his idolatrous countrymen, in his pretended revelation, national traditions with which the Arabs were prescriptively familiar. ‡ For it is perfectly in-

\* Sale's Koran, vol. ii. p. 78.

† Ibid. pp. 183, 184.

‡ "The learned Levinus Warnerus, in his treatise of the manners of the Arabians before Mahometanism, asserts, that the Korisians or Korish, the most noble tribe of that great peninsula, had preserved themselves from idolatry; that they had constantly used circumcision, ever since the time of Ishmael; that they were frequent in prayer, were very bountiful in their alms, and that the more devout among them never drank wine." Vertot, *History of the Knights of Malta*, vol. i. p. 230. English Translation.



credible that he should appeal, as he has done, to their own knowledge of the relations which he makes, and publish written statements, of the admission of these relations, by his adversaries, as known traditions, if his assertions were unsupported by facts. The narratives of the Koran also bear strong internal marks of this traditional origin. In particular, they introduce names of ancient people, and ancient prophets, as proverbial among the Arabians, which no where occur in the Old Testament. They must have formed a very inadequate idea of the character and genius of Mahomet, who can suspect him of attempting on his contemporaries so palpable and clumsy an imposition. The novelties really broached in the Koran, he could afford to hazard : for they are, from their nature, beyond the reach of direct contradiction. But, had he presumed to erect his system on a newly-fabricated tradition, its fall must have been as that of a house whose foundation is on the sand. On the other hand, the constant references of the Koran to popular national traditions, are in perfect accordance with the general tenor of Mahomet's policy and procedures. The same motives, which induced him to adopt the temple of Mecca, and the pagan rites of the Caaba, as the groundwork of the ceremonial part of his religion, would naturally suggest the adoption of Arabian tradition, as the basis of his doctrines and precepts in the Koran. In point of fact, Mahomet professed to rest his faith on both foundations ; and the reality of the one, supposes and establishes the reality of the other.

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According to this representation, Mahomet found the platform of his religion laid to his hand, in the opinions and usages which prevailed among the members of his tribe. For Islamism is very nearly reducible to the particulars here enumerated ; viz. the acknowledgment of the Divine Unity, circumcision, stated prayers, alms-giving, and abstinence from wine. It is, however, a clear over-statement to say, that the Koreish were not idolaters.

The temple of Mecca, lastly, contained sensible vouchers of the existence of a genuine tradition in Arabia, commemorating the descent of its tribes from Ishmael and Abraham.\* The high antiquity of the Caaba is undisputed. The permanent character of its rites, is certified by our knowledge of the adherence of the Arabs, in every age, to their ancient customs. But, from the uniform consent of Mahometan writers, it further appears, that the statues of Abraham and Ishmael, which, from remote antiquity, had held a conspicuous place in the Caaba, and constituted the principal object of its idol-worship, remained to the time of Mahomet, and were there found by the Mussulmans, after the capture of Mecca. Mahomet, Abulfeda tells us, when he took Mecca, in the eighth year of the Hejra, found and destroyed in the Caaba, on his entering the temple, the image of Abraham †, holding in his hand seven arrows with-

\* In the ante-Mahometan romance of *Antar*, the genuine antiquity of which is established by the strongest internal evidence, e. g. by the almost total absence of allusions to Mahometan notions or usages, — we find the descent from *Ishmael* affirmed, vol. i. p. 1.; the veneration in which *Abraham* was held by the Arabs, the tradition of the Caaba having been his dwelling-place, and descriptions of the pilgrimages to the shrine of this patriarch at Mecca, before the time of Mahomet, vol. i. pp. 11—38. of Mr. Terrick Hamilton's English translation.

† The original words of Abulfeda are too remarkable and expressive to be intrusted to a mere reference: —

ودجل الكعبة وراي فيها الشخص علي صور الملايكة  
 وصورة ابراهيم وفي يده الانزلام يستقسم بها فقال قاتلهم  
 الله جعلوا شيعتنا بالانزلام ما شارح ابراهيم والانزلام،  
 ثم امر بتلك الصور فطمست وصلي في البيت

“Dein ipsam intrabat Cabam, ubi efficta ad angelorum imaginem simulacra numinum conspiciens, et *Abrahami statuam*, sortilegii sagittas manu tenentem, quas in ambiguis rebus tanquam oraculum solebant consulere: Scelesti, aiebat, venerabilem nostrum senem dominum et patrem, [*Anglice our Sheik*] fecerunt sortilegum! quid Abrahamo rei cum sortibus?



out heads or feathers, such as the Arabs use in divination; and surrounded with a great number of angels and prophets, as inferior deities, among whom, as Al Jannabi and other writers add, was Ishmael, with divining arrows also in his hand.

This incidental mark of the Abrahamic derivation, both of the ancestry, and the primitive worship, of the ancient Arabs, receives valuable light and confirmation from the one grand principle, which is ascertained, by a variety of evidence, to have lain at the root of that worship, even in its most debased and corrupted form. In proposing, for the adoption of the Arabs, his doctrine of the Divine Unity, Mahomet professed only to revive and recommend anew to his countrymen the faith, which their fathers had held in its original purity, and which they themselves still retained, although clouded and concealed beneath the gross darkness of their idolatrous superstitions. The patriarchal doctrine of one supreme God, therefore, according to Mahomet, was, down to his time, still distinctly recognized in Arabia.\* And,

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Quibus dictis, protinus dirui et exturbari jubebat statuas ex æde, in qua, sic lustrata et repurgata, ipse deinceps preces peragebat." *Annal. Muslem.* tom. i. pp. 150—153.

\* Koran, *passim*. M. Oelsner regards the idolatry of Arabia as, in great part, a comparatively recent departure from the patriarchal faith: "C'est ainsi que le culte des Mages c'étoit introduit dans plusieurs tribus, et que les Chaldéens en avoient engagé d'autres, deux ou trois siècles avant Mohammed, à renoncer AUX LUMIÈRES D'ABRAHAM, pour embrasser le polytheisme Sabéen." *Effets de la Relig. de Mohamm.* p. 8. But the prevalence of the belief in the Divine Unity among the pagan Arabs, to the time of Mahomet inclusive, may be deduced from a genuine popular source recently opened to general readers, the A. M. Bedoween romance of Antar. By the mere collation of the numerical proportion, in this native production, between the invocations to idols, and the addresses to the one supreme God, we may at once perceive the preponderance of the patriarchal belief over idolatry, even in the latest and worst age of pagan Arabia. The result supplies a decisive practical confirmation of what has been commonly alleged on this subject, upon the authority of the Koran and tradition. "The very curious romance of Antar," remarks Mr.



not to adduce here any collateral testimonies to this fact, the appeals of the Koran to contemporary practices and usages, supply irrefragable proof that the fact was strictly so. The prayer used by the ancient Arabs when addressing the Allah Taâla, or "Most High God," has been preserved by Shahrestani \*; and the usage is brought in evidence against their idolatry, by Mahomet in the Koran. "It is your Lord," exclaims the pretended prophet, "who driveth forward the ships for you in the sea, that ye may seek to enrich yourselves of his abundance by commerce. When a misfortune befalleth you at sea, the false deities whom ye invoke are forgotten by you, except Him alone: yet when He bringeth you safe to land, ye retire afar off from Him, and

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Hallam, "written perhaps before the appearance of Mohammed, seems to render it probable, that, however idolatry, as we are told by Sale, might prevail in some parts of Arabia, yet the genuine religion of the descendants of Ishmael was a belief in the unity of God, AS STRICT AS IS LAID DOWN IN THE KORAN ITSELF; and accompanied by the same antipathy, partly religious, partly national, towards the fire-worshippers, which Mohammed inculcated. This" Mr. H. concludes "corroborates what I had said in the text before the publication of that work." History of the Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 166.

The Count de Boulainvilliers attempts to account for the phenomenon, by assigning *their solitary life* as the cause of the preservation of theism in such force among the Arabs! "Je reviens volontiers à la louange de la solitude des Arabes. Elle a conservé chez eux *plus long temps*, et avec *moins de mélange*, le sentiment naturel de la véritable Divinité." Vie de Mahom. p. 147. With the Quixotic theories of this ingenious enthusiast we have no concern: his admission of the fact in question is enough for our end. The matter of fact once ascertained, its true solution is obvious; viz. the *patriarchal origin* of the religion of Arabia.

\* لبيك اللهم لبيك لا شريك لك الا شريك هو لك  
تملكه وما ملك

"i. e. Cultui tuo me dedo, O Deus, cultui tuo me dedo. Non est tibi socius, nisi socius quem tu possides, et una quicquid ille possidet." Shahrestani, ap. Pocock. Specim. p. 111.



return to your idols." And again, "When they (the idolaters) sail in a ship, they call upon God, sincerely exhibiting unto Him the true religion: but when He bringeth them safe to land, behold, they return unto their idolatry."

The Greeks and Romans, in their extremity, applied for succour to the deity appropriated to the specific case; thereby evincing that the prevalent belief had completely sunk to the level of their established mythology. But the Arabs, it appears, untutored and barbarous as they were in other respects, still preserved among them a practical sense of the existence, and the providence, of the One Supreme Being. They wanted, indeed, with their idols \*, in times of security; but they instinctively betook themselves to "The Most High God †" in the hour of peril. For a single proof, stronger internal evidence needs not be desired than this fact supplies, of the alleged derivation of the faith of the Arabs from their father Abraham.

Various *external* signs betokening its patriarchal origin, may be traced in the ante-Mahometan worship of the Caaba. Among these, one custom is sufficiently remarkable, to claim a distinct notice in this place, inasmuch as it has been alluded to, and censured, in the Koran. The pagan Arabs were used to compass the Caaba naked, because

\* The *apology* of the pagan Arabs for their idol-worship is preserved in the Koran: "We worship them only that they may bring us nearer unto God." Sale's Koran, ch. xxxix. ad init. conf. ch. xliiii. ad init. Does this differ widely from the apology of the church of Rome?

† The celebrated symbol of the Mussulman faith,  $\text{الله لا اله الا الله}$  "There is no God but one God," was the confession in use among the ancient Arabians, from whom it was borrowed by Mahomet. See Mill. § viii. In this formulary, the discrimination between the terms  $\text{الله}$  and  $\text{اله}$  is peculiarly observable:  $\text{اله}$  signifies merely a God, any Deity;  $\text{الله}$  invariably denotes the Most High God, and Him alone. " $\text{الله}$  pro  $\text{الله}$ , 'O  $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ , DEUS ILLE OPTIMUS MAXIMUS. *Fitque peculiari sua forma nomen proprium, respondens τῷ ΙΕΗΟΒΑ.*" Golius in voc.



clothes, they said, were the signs of their disobedience to God. The celebrated black stone of the Caaba also, the primitive source and object of Arabian idolatry\*, strongly indicates the origin to which it has been uniformly referred. The Arabs attribute its introduction into the temple of Mecca, to the immediate posterity of Ishmael. The peculiar kind of superstition is just what might be expected to arise from the abuse of an early patriarchal custom, that of setting up stones, on particular spots, in honour of the true God. † While the connection is further made out, by the exact correspondence, in this particular, between the idolatry of the ancient Israelites, and that of the ante-Mahometan Arabians. Their identity might be largely shown, from the Old Testament: but a passage from the prophecy of Isaiah will suffice. The prophet thus indignantly reproves the Jews for their idolatry: — “Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion: they, they, are thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink-offering, thou hast offered a meat-offering.” ‡

To recapitulate, in a few words, the state of the evidence for the descent of the principal Arab tribes from Ishmael, I

\* ‘Ο δε ῥηθεις λιθος—π α λ α ι προσεκυουν οι Ισραηλιται. Euthym. Zygabem. in Panopl.

† For the Arabian custom, see Pocock. Spec. p. 113; where the learned author, with great manliness and candour, vindicates the Mahometans from the imputation of idolatry. After Maimonides, he most truly affirms, that, “Error eorum, et stultitia eorum, consistit, non tam quod falsa numina, quam quod falso verum colant.”

‡ Isaiah lvii. 6. Compare De Marlès, tom. i. pp. 36, 37. Mr. Selden has incidentally noticed an etymological proof of the common origin and character of the idolatry of the Israelites and the Arabians: “Bethshemesh, Palestinæ urbs non semel in sacris memorata, a solis in eo fano, ni fallor, dicta est. Uti et Βαισαμψα Arabum, ad Mare Rubrum sita, quod a Bethshemesh corruptum; ὁ εστιν Οικος Ἡλίου, ut recte Stephanus in De Urbibus.” De Diis. Syr. Op. tom. iii. p. 310. Here we have the adoption, by the Arabs, of an Israelitish idol; no light presumption of a continued connection between the Jews and Ishmaelites, in matters of religion generally.



would observe, that the pedigree is authenticated, 1., by the direct, and 2., by the indirect testimony of Scripture: 3., by the rite of circumcision, as practised among the Arabians, from time immemorial, prior to the Christian era; whose peculiar practice, together with their reasons for it, is stated incidentally by Josephus and Origen: 4., by the further testimony of Josephus, Saint Jerome and others, to the existence in Arabia, of the tribes sprung from the sons of Ishmael, distinguished severally by their names: 5., by the names of ascertained districts, corresponding with those of tribes: 6., by internal marks of a genuine Arabian tradition \* discoverable in the Koran, and in Mahometan writers: and, 7., by visible signs of the same tradition, among the idols of the Caaba, taken in connection with the ascertained belief in the one Supreme God, which still subsisted under the incumbent weight of heathenish superstitions.

By way of counterpoise to this accumulation of proofs, Mr. Gibbon has contented himself with opposing the gratuitous expressions of his own scepticism, as to the foundation of the national pedigree; and the modest force of his own unsupported assertions,—that the Arabs drew their first notions of the obnoxious origin, from the Hebrew Scriptures, somewhere within the first centuries of the Christian era; and that the discovery was made by them, in the perusal of these Scriptures in an Arabic version, of whose existence, even his own ingenuity is unable to frame the fair semblance of

\* Can a curious Arabian tradition, mentioned by Strabo, have any connection with the story of Hagar and Ishmael? Speaking of a district bordering on the Red Sea, he proceeds, *ενταυθα δε και την ευκαρπιαν των φοινικων ειναυ θαυμαστην προεστηκασι δε του αλσους ανηρ και γυνη, δια γενους αποδεδεγμενοι, δερματοφοροι, τροφην απο των φοινικων εχοντες κοιταζονται δ' επι δενδρων καλυβοποιησαμενοι, δια το πληθος των θηριων.* Strab. Geograph. lib. xvi. p. 1103.

This strange story bears a singular resemblance to that of Ishmael and Hagar. The destitute condition of the Arabian patriarch and his mother, after their banishment into the wilderness, may be discerned dimly in the distance, through the mist of a remote national tradition, imperfectly preserved by a Greek writer.



a proof! How far he has, in this instance, faithfully discharged the duty of an historian, a pretty exact judgment may be formed, by a simple comparison of the evidence adduced in the present dissertation, with the doubts and insinuations gratuitously advanced in the fiftieth chapter of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

In the discussion of this essential topic, it is the insidious aim of Mr. Gibbon, to confound the distinct and unequal authorities, of history and heraldry; to identify the broad question of national origin, with the narrow one of family descent. The studied ambiguity of his style seems wilfully to leave it doubtful, whether he intends to assail the single steps of a pedigree, or the entire foundation of the national tradition. Yet it is palpable, that the reasoning which might subvert the one species of authority, would leave wholly unaffected the evidences of the other. The Jews, for example, have long lost their pedigrees: but who presumes to question their national derivation? With as little reason can flaws in their genealogies be adduced, to bring under suspicion the national descent of the Arabs.

The personal descent of Mahomet is placed eminently above question, by the establishment of the Ishmaelitic origin of the chief Arab tribes. For he was an Ishmaelite of the wide-spread stock of Kedar; an inhabitant of the Hejaz, the original settlement, and a native of Mecca, the primitive metropolis, of that once powerful people. In his own genealogy, in particular, "he could produce many generations of pure and genuine nobility: he sprang from the tribe of Koreish and the family of Hashem, the most illustrious of the Arabs, the princes of Mecca, and the hereditary guardians of the Caaba."\* The national origin,

\* Gibbon. The Koreish may be styled the Pharisees of Arabia. Like that Jewish sect, they claimed a spiritual superiority over their countrymen; and prided themselves above all things, on their zeal for God and religion.

Hence they obtained the lofty title of *أهل الله* "The people of God."

See Mill. De M. A. M. § v.



therefore, once confirmed, the genealogy of Mahomet holds an undisputed precedence: he was, to borrow a Hebrew form of expression, an Ishmaelite of the Ishmaelites \*; uniting by birth-right, in his person, the princely and the priestly honours of his race.

Before I close this dissertation, I have briefly to notice two important particulars connected with the original settlement of Arabia: first, the account given by the Arabs themselves, of the early peopling of the peninsula; and, secondly, the accessions to its Ishmaelitish population, at subsequent periods, of tribes also descending from Abraham, and eventually blending with the Ishmaelites, as the offspring of this common father.

The old Arabians, by native writers, are generally subdivided into three classes: the lost Arabs; the pure Arabs; and the naturalized or mixed Arabs. The extinct class is stated to have derived its origin from Shem, the son of Noah: the second class from Kahtan or Joktan, the son of Hud or Heber: the third class alone are properly the Ishmaelites. Some Mahometan historians, however, reckon the lost tribes, as the only pure Arabians; esteeming the posterity of Kahtan and of Ishmael as alike adscititious, or grafts on the primitive stock. Ishmael, the Arab writers further relate, by marriage with the daughter of Modad the Jorhamite, blended the Hebrew stock, with this second branch of the Arabian family. On the principle that the term Hebrew is derived from Heber, the distinction, it has been remarked, seems a fanciful one; since Peleg, the ancestor of Ishmael, and Joktan,

\* The Koreish were remarkable for their commercial habits; and especially for their trading expeditions between Egypt and Syria. The habits of this tribe strongly remind us of the Ishmaelites described in Genesis, xxxvii. 25, &c. Compare Josephus, Antiq. Jud. tom. i. p. 52. and Sale, Prelim. Disc. p. 33. The hereditary transmission of habits and pursuits, so observable among the Arabs, is no inconsiderable presumption in favour of the direct descent of the Koreish from those first Ishmaelitish traders. It is observed by M. Niebuhr, of Mahomet, that his calling of a *dealer in camels*, proves him to have been a sheik of the first nobility of his tribe.



the ancestor of Modad and the Jorhamites, were themselves the sons of Heber. The Ishmaelite tribes, according to the unanimous sense of native authorities, confirmed by the whole tenor of Scripture testimony, rapidly gained ascendancy both in power and population. So much so, that, in the language of the Old Testament, as has been already noticed, the name of Ishmaelite became an equivalent for that of Arab; and the tongue of Kedar, for the language of Arabia. The early attainment of this ascendancy, we may now observe, appears to be intimately connected with a separate providential provision, to which we shall, in the next place, proceed: I mean, the influx into Arabia, at and after the time of Ishmael, of collateral branches of the posterity of Abraham.

The six sons of Abraham by Keturah his second wife, we are told in the book of Genesis, were dismissed by the patriarch "eastward into the east country."\* They quickly sprang up into tribes and people. They dwelt beside the Ishmaelites; and so early did some of them blend into that elder settlement, that, in the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis, we find the terms *Ishmaelite* and *Midianite*, in the age of Jacob, already interchangeable denominations of one and the same people.† The same national identity, under these two names, recurs in the book of Judges.‡ The descendants of Sheba and Dedan, the sons of Jokshan, are frequently adverted to by the prophets,§ under the names of Sabæans

\* Gen. xxv. 6. So Arabia was termed by the Jews.

† "Hierosol. Paraphrast. Gen. xxxvii. 25. pro *Ismaëlitis* habet יִשְׂמָאֵלִי Saracenos; neque id malè. Apparet enim ex versu 28., promiscuè usurpari *Ismaëlitas* et *Madianitas*, quos Chusæis accenseri probavimus ex Num. xii. et Hab. iii. 7. Itaque *Madianitas* et *Saracenos* Augustinus pro *isdem* habet (in Num. ix. 21.) 'In his,' inquit, 'locis dicitur eos persecutus Israël, ubi *Madianitæ* habitant, qui nunc *Saraceni* appellantur.' Utut enim Chusæi, *Madianitæ*, *Ismaëlitæ* fuerint diversi generis, tamen promiscuè habitaverunt; et in unam *Saracenorū nationem* coaluerunt." Bochart. Phaleg. p. 213, 214.

‡ Judges, viii. 1. 24, &c.

§ Isaiah xxi. 13. xlv. 14. Jer. xxv. 23. xlix. 8. Ezek. xxiii. 42. xxv. 13. xxvii. 20. Joel iii. 8.



and Dedanim. But all these families appear to have eventually merged in the stock of Ishmael.

In a later age, Esau and his posterity poured a fresh, and still more formidable supply, of Abrahamic colonists into these parts. It is remarkable, that a promise was given to Esau concerning Edom, similar to that which had been given to Ishmael relative to his posterity.\* Esau was to break his brother's yoke from off his neck. The Edomites, or Idumeans, accordingly, including the Amalekites and other off-sets from Esau, appear also to have blended into one people with the Ishmaelitish Arabs.† After various lesser accomplishments, the two predictions had thus a common grand fulfilment, in the union of these nations, under Mahomet, in arms against Judaism, Christianity, and mankind. The inter-community of national names is undoubted. Strabo mentions the Nabataeans as the same people with the Idumaeans ‡: and we learn from Theophanes, and from an Arabic au-

\* In this connection, it is a most interesting fact, that Esau should have married a daughter of Ishmael; and that, thereby, his race became incorporated with the stock of the Ishmaelitish Arabians. Compare Gen. xxviii. 9. xxxvi. As Esau had *his* covenant, corresponding in character with that of Ishmael; so both covenants eventually found their common fulfilment in Mahometanism. On the partnership of Esau in the covenant of Ishmael, the reader may consult Bp. Sherlock on Prophecy, pp. 116—122.

† In the eighty-third Psalm, there is mention made of a grand confederacy of all these Abrahamic tribes, in conjunction with the Philistines, the Phenicians, and the Assyrians, for the utter extirpation of the Jews. The Psalmist specifies, as leagued together in this unholy conspiracy, “the tabernacles of the *Edomites* and the *Ishmaelites*; the *Moabites* and *Hagarenes*; *Gebal*, and *Ammon*, and *Amalek*; the Philistines, with them that dwell at Tyre. Assur also,” he adds, “is joined with them; and has holpen the children of Lot.” Ps. lxxxiii. 6—8. This Psalm is thought to have been composed in the reign of Jehoshaphat. See Calmet, Dict. of Bible.

‡ *Ἡς δὲ Ἰουδαίας τὰ μὲν ἑσπερία ἀκρὰ τὰ πρὸς τὴν Κασίω κατεχούσιν Ἰδουμαῖοι, τε καὶ ἡ Λίμνη. Ναβαταῖοι δ' εἰσὼ οἱ Ἰδουμαῖοι.* Strab. Geogr. lib. xvi. p. 1081, 1082.



thority translated by Mr. Ockley, that, on their first irruption into the empire, the *Saracens* were styled *Amalekites* by the Greeks.

The Ishmaelites more correctly so termed, occupied the entire of Arabia Petræa, or Nabatea, and parts also of Arabia Felix. But it is agreed on all hands, that Arabia Deserta, or Hejaz, was their primitive and proper seat. The Bedoweens who inhabit this wilderness, are allowed, by the universal consent of authorities, to be, above all the other tribes, the pure and genuine posterity of Ishmael: so that it is to the sons of Ishmael, in the strictest sense, the prophecy in Genesis is applicable, which so graphically depicts the erratic lives, and predatory habits, of his descendants. But over and above the Ishmaelites, who, as Calmet remarks, peopled the greatest part of Arabia; the sons of Abraham and Keturah, of Lot, and Esau, and some of Nahor's, dwelt in the same country, and extirpated part of the old inhabitants.

By this conflux of successive colonists, the old inhabitants must have been extirpated in no ordinary degree. To be heard of, as we afterwards hear of them in the Old Testament, as great and powerful nations, these colonies must have occupied Arabia, much in the same way that Palestine was occupied by the Israelites; by excision of the aborigines. But the point here to be remarked is, that the entire of the new settlers are found to have been of the seed, or the lineage, of Abraham. The fact is curious as it is undoubted. The reflecting reader, with the case fully before him, can hardly fail to be impressed by this far-removed, yet fixed and regular, convergence of circumstances, and concurrence of events, to make of Ishmael in truth "a great nation;" to fill the ranks of the Saracens, on every side, from the stock of Abraham; and to swell the destroying swarms of Mahometan Arabia, with so many and diverse nations of his kindred and blood.

On the subject of the descent from Ishmael, I would add one more internal mark of truth and authenticity, in the



national tradition of the Arabs. This descent was in all times serious matter of national pride. Yet none of the Arabians, be it observed, pretended to the distinction, excepting those who stood traditionally recognized as so descended. The circumstance is no slight voucher in support of the genuineness of the claim: since, where the pedigree was a point of so great honour and account in the eyes of the nation at large, had the tradition been at all a vague one, *all* the tribes would infallibly have set up, and put in their claims.

The foundation, certainty, and extent of the national pedigree of the Arabs, have been investigated so much at large in this critical essay, mainly with a view to the exposure of the idle doubts insinuated by the sceptic, and to the removal, from candid and impartial minds, even of momentary hesitation, on a genealogy, which, in fact, constitutes the basis of the present work, and which is essential to each step of the entire argument. This proof of the descent from Ishmael, therefore, is submitted for the consideration of the few who doubt; in the humble hope, at the same time, that it may contribute somewhat to the satisfaction of the many who believe. It may be satisfactory to the Christian reader, to know how completely this ground-work may be made good against the unbeliever: though, to his own mind, the authority of Scripture will be decisive and final.

The reader, then, will please to recollect, that, in the fundamental question of the descent of the Arab tribes from Ishmael, the sceptic alone can stand in need of the historical proof now laid before him. The argument of the work, so far as it rests on the alleged pedigree, must be recognized as valid by all believers in revealed religion; inasmuch as the Ishmaelitish origin of the Arabians is substantiated by the unvarying testimony of the entire canon of the Old Testament. To the Christian, the foundation of this argument cannot, by possibility, be matter of question: he has only to see that facts be fairly stated, and inferences



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fairly drawn, to warrant him in receiving the case as so far proved. Antecedently, therefore, to any proofs here advanced, if the matter-of-fact parallel be adequately made out, the rise of Mahometanism, including all the phenomena, will, on the principle laid down in these pages, stand sufficiently cleared and accounted for, to the whole Christian world.



## No. II.

SCRIPTURAL INDICATIONS OF THE PATRIARCHAL ORIGIN  
OF RELIGION AMONG THE ANTE-MAHOMETAN ARAB-  
BIANS.

THE establishment of the descent of the chief Arab tribes from Ishmael, and from other members of the Abrahamic family, will suggest and sanction the further inference, that the *religion* which obtained in ante-Mahometan Arabia, however grossly corrupted and disfigured, must have emanated originally from the patriarchal revelation.

In the preceding number of the Appendix, this conclusion received incidental confirmation, both from Jewish history, and from Arabian tradition. It now remains, that we examine, how far it may be strengthened and illustrated, by evidence drawn from Scripture. For the scriptural intimations respecting the patriarchal faith of the ancient Arabs have been held purposely in reserve, until the question of their Abrahamic descent should have been cleared from the cavils and objections, with which it had been industriously embarrassed, by the arts of the sceptic.

In this dissertation, then, it shall be my object to trace the origin and primitive character of the belief of the ante-Mahometan Arabians, by the lights of Scripture history : a path of inquiry, in which the original connection with the faith of Abraham may be discerned, and the historical proof of this



connection may be carried down, from the age of Moses, to the advent of Christ.

On reference to the scriptural chronology, it appears, that, in the time of Moses, the Ishmaelites and Midianites, or the descendants of Abraham by Hagar and Keturah, had been already seated, for more than six hundred years, in Arabia : where, from the interchange of names observable when these nations are spoken of in the Pentateuch \*, they seem, all along, to have dwelt together as one community. After his flight, from Egypt, into the desert, Moses married into the family of Jethro, the Midianite. But Jethro, he informs us, was also the *priest* of Midian. † And, as the faith professed by their priesthood will generally be found a pretty certain index to the national belief of any people, we are furnished, in the example of Jethro, with good means of learning the general state of religion, at the period when Moses wrote, among the Midianitish, or Ishmaelitish, Arabians.

Now, whoever will read, with common attention, the eighteenth chapter of Exodus, must perceive, that Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, and the priest of Midian, knew and worshipped the one true God ; even the same Jehovah whom Moses and the Israelites served. His familiar acquaintance with the being and nature of the God of Abraham appears from the whole manner of the sacred narrative. And the soundness of Jethro's faith seems established, by two decisive facts : first, that he was specially invited to advise and direct Moses, in his administration of the government over the chosen people, a trust committed, by Jehovah himself, to the Jewish lawgiver, as his peculiar care ; and, secondly, that he was further permitted to officiate publicly, in his sacerdotal character, within the camp of the Israelites, and to offer a burnt-offering and sacrifices before God, in presence of Moses, and Aaron, and all the elders of Israel. ‡

\* See Gen. xxxvii. 25—36. ; and compare Judges, viii. 1—24. See also Bochart, Phaleg. pp. 213, 214. ; and Josephus, vol. i. p. 52. ed. Hudson.

† Exod. ii. 15, &c. iii. 1.

‡ Exod. xviii. 12.



These scriptural facts seem altogether irreconcilable with any conclusion but one; namely, that the religion professed by Jethro and the Midianites, was derived from the genuine patriarchal revelation, and still retained so far its primitive character, as to be, in substance, the same with the creed of Moses and the Israelites.\*

In the scriptural account of Jethro, we have, then, an example of the existence of the patriarchal religion, to so late a period as the age of Moses, among the Abrahamic tribes which inhabited the Arabian desert.

We shall, in the next place, find that early example illustrated, on an enlarged scale, in the book of Job.

The remote antiquity of this sublime production is equally allowed, by the believer and by the sceptic.† The reality of the persons introduced into its dialogue has been ably and successfully argued, by several Scripture critics. And, by a train of the most conclusive reasoning, the era of the Arabian patriarch seems to be at length finally placed, either prior to, or, at the latest, contemporary with, the time of Moses.‡ Any lights, therefore, thrown, by this inspired

\* This legitimate inference may be further corroborated, from the history of the Kenites and Reehabites; people subsequently noticed in the Old Testament, as the posterity of Jethro; to whose history we will come presently, in the order of time.

† "The divine attributes," observes Mr. Gibbon, speaking of the vaunted composition of the Koran, "exalt the fancy of the Arabian missionary; but his loftiest strains must yield to the sublime simplicity of the book of Job, composed in a remote age, in the same country, and in the same language." *Decline and Fall*, vol. ix. p. 269.

‡ See, on this subject, the convincing argument of Archbishop Magee, in his work "On Atonement and Sacrifice." The simple fact of the existence, from so remote antiquity, of the book of Job, supplies a strong presumption in favour of the preservation of vestiges of the true religion in Arabia, to much later times. For it is most unlikely, that a narrative such as this, containing the story of a native Arab, should not have been largely known, and long recollected, in the popular traditions of the Bedoweens. But, so long as the Arabs preserved the book itself, or even a clear tradition of it, the patriarchal religion *could not* be lost among them.



book, upon the co-existing state of religion in the Arabian peninsula, may be received as safe and authoritative guides.

Let us now examine the nature and amount of the evidence furnished, on the present question, by the book of Job. The author of the book appears to have been an Edomite, or Idumæan Arab; and, consequently, of the posterity of Esau; although Mahometan writers make both Job and Jethro to be descendants of Ishmael.\* The religion of the patriarch of Uz will admit of no dispute. The purity and perfectness of his belief are inscribed on every page, in every line we might rather say, of the history which records it. The case of Job, therefore, presents a further and independent example of an Arabian emir, descended from Abraham, and living in or near the age of Moses, who preserved, in its full and unalloyed integrity, the faith of his illustrious ancestor, the father of the faithful.

But the individual example of Job is only a first step in the proof, which the book at large contains, respecting the state of religion throughout Arabia, in his day. In the dialogue of this sacred drama, four interlocutors are introduced, members of as many distinct Arab tribes; who (and the fact is deserving of the most serious attention) all unite in acknowledging the one true God, — the same great Supreme, whom the pious patriarch himself acknowledged and adored. The conversation of Bildad, Zophar, Eliphaz, and Elihu, no less than that of Job, abounds with allusions to the creation, and to the revealed history, of the world. These dialogists discover a practical sense of a superintending Providence, of the presence and the ways of God among men. And they speak, moreover, on these mysterious subjects with an ease and fluency, which mark their familiar acquaintance with them.

Three, at least, of the speakers, were of the stock of Abraham. Bildad, the Shubite, being descended from Keturah; Eliphaz, the Temanite, from Esau; and Elihu, the Buzite, from Nahor, the patriarch's brother.

\* The Saracens were termed *Amalekites* by the Greeks. Cf. Theophanes, p. 276.



But the circumstance respecting them, which most peculiarly claims observation, is, that they all agree in confirming their arguments, by an appeal to the authority of ARABIAN TRADITION. "Eliphaz," says Bishop Sherlock, "tells Job, *they were no strangers to the ways of God; but had heard as much from their fathers, as Job had.*" The appeal of Bildad to the ancients, in support of his reasonings, is still more forcible and striking: "For inquire, I pray thee, *of the former age; and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers: Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?*" \*

Such being the tenor of their advice to Job, it can, therefore, be no secret, *whence* his friends derived their own knowledge, such as it was, of God, and of religion. It may be added, by the way, as a remarkable proof of the unchangeable permanency of Arabian customs and traditions, that *Mahomet* was reproached by the Koreish, for appealing, in like manner, to the authority of "the ancients," and drawing the materials of the Koran, from remote national traditions.

Now, whether the book of Job be, or be not, a real history, is a question which, for our purpose, comes to the same thing. For the persons unquestionably speak *in character*. And their conversation represents, if not the actual sentiments of individuals, certainly the popular notions and opinions prevalent among the tribes, to which the speakers purport severally to belong, upon the great subject of religious belief. But the evidence supplied by their collective discourses amounts to nothing short of a moral demonstration, of the patriarchal or Abrahamic origin † of those national notions and

\* Job, viii. 8—10. cf. xv. 9, 10, 17, 18. — These references to traditional authority are exactly to the same effect, as those in the other Jewish Scriptures: so the Psalmist: —

I will open my mouth in a parable;

I will utter *dark sayings of old*:

Which we have heard and known;

And our fathers have told us. Ps. lxxviii. 2, 3.

† Cf. Michæelis, Not. et Epimetr. p. 181. ap. Abp. Magee, vol. ii. p. 58.



opinions : since, notwithstanding an intermixture of much imperfect theology, these discourses contain views of the nature of God, and of His providence and goodness, such as are not to be met with elsewhere, excepting in the page of Revelation.

The soundness of many of the principles laid down in these conversations is fully proved by the fact, that they have been copiously cited, both in the Old Testament, and in the New. The remark particularly applies to the first discourse of Eliphaz ; from which several noble passages are taken by Saint Paul, and by him employed to illustrate some of the profoundest moral truths of Christianity. Again, from the speech of Zophar, the Naamathite, the same Apostle has borrowed one of his sublimest passages,—the matchless expression of the mystery of divine love, which occurs at the close of the third chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians.

That their knowledge of the true belief was traditional, appears manifest from sundry expressions and allusions ; especially from one of Eliphaz, to man's apostasy and to the deluge \* ; and from a distinct reference in a discourse of Zophar, to the same account, with that which Moses has given, of the creation of our first parent. †

On the whole, it appears, from this part of the canon of Scripture, that, down to the time of Moses, the religion of the Abrahamic family in Arabia still preserved unimpaired the proof of its patriarchal origin ; still rested on the same divinely-constructed foundation, with the faith of Abraham, their father.

As a poetical composition, the book of Job has been classed, by universal consent, with poems of the highest order. But it is still more remarkable for the depth of its theology, than for the sublimity of its thoughts and diction. This characteristic feature is peculiarly apparent, in the clear insight which it gives us into the circumstances and consequences of the Fall ; and in the lively anticipations which it contains

\* Job, xxii. 15, 16.

† Job, xx. 4. cf. x. 8, 9.