

at other times he was restored by being drenched with cold water. At one time for a period of two years he was in such a mental condition—subject to hallucinations—that he doubted his own sanity, believing himself to be possessed by evil spirits, and contemplated suicide. “It is disputed whether Mohammed was epileptic, cataleptic, hysteric, or what not. Sprenger seems to think that the answer to this medical question is the key to the whole problem of Islam.” (“Mohammedanism,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*.) To how many other systems might such an answer be the key?

We are told that ordinarily his body had but little natural warmth, but that whenever the angel appeared to him, as the Mohammedan biographers express it, the perspiration burst out on his forehead, his eyes became red, he trembled violently, and would bellow like a young camel—all the accompaniments of the most violent epileptic fit. Usually the fit ended in a swoon. There is no question that he was sincere in his claim of divine inspiration. His last hours were serene and peaceful, and there is no evidence of the slightest misgiving on his part as to the reality of his mission as a prophet sent from God. Some of his inspiration came in dreams, and he was accustomed to say that a prophet's dream is a revelation. At times the revelation came to him without any painful or strange accompaniment.

The fit during which he received the revelation of his religious mission is thus described, as it came to him after a long period of despondency and mental hallucinations: “In this morbid state of feeling he is said to have heard a voice, and on raising his head, beheld Gabriel, who assured him he was the prophet of God. Frightened, he returned home, and called for covering. He had a fit, and they poured cold water on him, and when he came to himself he heard these words: ‘Oh, thou covered one, arise, and preach, and magnify thy Lord;’ and henceforth, we are told, he received revelations without intermission. Before this supposed revelation he had been medically treated on account of the evil eye, and when the Koran first descended to him he fell into fainting fits, when, after violent shudderings, his eyes closed, and his mouth foamed.” (*Gardner, Faiths of the World*.)

Solitude also had much to do with his visions, as a great part of his early life was spent in the lonely occupation of a shepherd among the Arabian mountains. Like other prophets he asserted that the various angels had offered him control over the stars, the sun, the mountains, and the sea. Further, it is claimed most positively by all his followers that his great ascent into the seven heavens was made bodily and in full wakefulness, and not merely in spirit while asleep, and this assertion they supported by “the declarations of God and his prophet, the imams of the truth, the verses of the Koran, and thousands of traditions,” as earnestly as religious enthusiasts the world over have ever backed up the impossible.

The kinship of the late Semitic idea to the old is well exemplified in Mohammed's account of this vision, in which he is conducted to Mount