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MAIMONIDES AND ISLAM.

BY

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Ladies and gentlemen; before I begin the paper, which is to form the subject of our discussion this evening, will you allow me to express the gratification it affords me to deliver an address in this room. Although born in England, I owe what slight knowledge of our literature I may possess to Germany, but I still see in the prosperity and the development of the Jews' College the prosperity and the development of Judaism in England, and I trust that through this institution and under its excellent and beloved Principal the English language may become for us what Arabic once was, and what German now is, the medium wherein we can learn all that is to be learnt concerning our history and our literature.

Now it is to a short period of our connection with the Arabic language and with the religion of which Arabic became the handmaiden that I desire to draw your attention. I had hoped to begin with a rapid sketch of our early connection with Islam and the influence of Arabian culture upon our own literature; to pass on to Spain, and to say a few words about Chasdai Ibn Schaprut, and the learned Caliph Hakim, about Samuel Hannagid, at the court of Badis, King of Granada, about the Jewish silk merchants who were taught the deceit of a sovereign's smiles when they received favours from the Hajib Al-Mansur; but I must not forget Luther's advice to a preacher, although I am not preaching now, "Begin boldly and leave off quickly." I am therefore unable to dwell even upon the story of those Berbers who came over the straits to assist Mohammedan Spain in its wars against the Christians, the Moravids, or more correctly the Murabitun, "those devoted to religion," from which Arabic word we have the French Marabout, "ugly fellow," but I must begin with the twelfth century, and speak first of the dynasty which conquered the Moravids, the Almohades, and then we shall turn our eyes to a fanatical dynasty "in the land of the South," showing the part Maimonides played in the history of each of them. I do not think that we deal full justice to the important movement in Mohammedan history, which is associated with the Almohades, more correctly Almuvahhidun or Unitarians. That the Almohades were not fanatics pure and simple, we can learn from the ordinary sources, but an article by Prof. Goldziher in a recent number of the Z.dD.M.G., in which important selections are given from the Paris MS. of the works of the Mahdi ibn Tumart, the founder of the Almohades, throws the true light on this great movement. It was a Puritan movement, religious and political. Ibn Tumart was an enthusiast. It is not certain whether he was a pupil of Al-Gazzali or ever had met him, but he had been influenced by this great man, whom I should like to call, roughly speaking, the Cardinal Newman of Islam. The Moravids had not, though at first fanatical, made better Moslems of their subjects. Ibn Tumart accused the Moravid King that his daughter went in public with her face uncovered, that wine was drunk, totally regardless of the Koran, and that the flesh of swine was sold in the open market. Moreover the Moravids could lay no claim to enlightenment, they were Mujassimun or corporealists, that is to say they took the verses in the anthropomorphic

passages of the Koran in a literal sense. Hence the name of the followers of IbnTumart, the Almuvahhidun, or strict Unitarians. In the article in the Z.dD.M.G. we have his Tauhid or formula of unity, and must acknowledge its highly spiritual and almost pantheistic character. It was only later that Mohammed ibn Tumart allowed himself to come forward as Mahdi, and permitted a false genealogy to be made which connected him with Mohammed. But it is with his disciple, Abdul Mumen, with whom we are more immediately concerned. It is he who founded the Almohad dynasty in Andalusia, and compelled the expulsion or conversion of our fathers. The Almohads, as I have said were not common fanatics. We must not forget that a man like Ibn Tofail, the author of the philosophical romance Hai ben Jokdan which has been translated into Hebrew, Latin, Dutch, English, and a man like Averroes during an important part of his life flourished at their court though the latter in the end was banished. It was not a wild orthodoxy which raged at the court of the Unitarians, but an enlightened orthodoxy laying stress, however, on one point that a Moslem state was for Mussulmans and Mussulmans exclusively. Now the Jews of Andalusia and of Barbary had to suffer from the logical consequences of this theory. Either acknowledge that "there is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is the apostle of Allah," or give up hearth and home. Of course there was another alternative—to die. Let me read to you the words of Ibrahim Ibn Daud, the author of the Sepher Hakabbalah, our Jewish source for the early history of the Jews in Andalusia. "After the death of Rabbi Joseph Hallevi, there were, for Israel, years of oppression. And they went forth into captivity from their homes, those who were for death were for death, those who were for the sword for the sword, for famine for famine, for captivity for captivity, and to add to the prophecy of Jeremiah, and those who were to go forth from the community, (let me say here that I have been obliged to work upon the uncritical Prag edition of the Sepher Hakabbalah) to go forth from the community יצאת מן הכלל on account of the sword of Ibn Tumart, who in the year 4902 determined to thrust Israel forth from the general body, and his followers said, "come let us destroy them from among the nations," and they left no name and no remnant for them in all his kingdom." And Ibn Daud adds in another passage, "And the rebels in the land of the Philistines"—he means the land of the Berbers—"crossed over to the land of Spain after they had allowed none to escape in Israel from Tangiers to Mahdia, and they sought to do the same with regard to Israel in all the provinces of the kingdom of Ishmael in the land of Spain." We also know from Mohammedan sources that a Moslem state for the Moslems was the key note of the policy of the Almohades. "In our country" said a writer of the time "we have no church and no synagogue."

Now what was the position of Maimonides during these troublous times. He was born in the year 1135 and consequently must have been about 11 or 12 when Abdul Mumen conquered Cordova. He went into exile. Graetz is of opinion that he tarried some time in Christian Spain, and though there seems to be no direct authority for this, yet we have the distinct assertion of the Sepher Hakabbalah that, owing to the persecutions the heads of the schools went into captivity to the Christian province of Tulaitula (Toledo) and there gathered to themselves disciples, and the author speaks very favourably of Rey Alfonso the King of Christian Spain.

But there is a MS. in the Bodleian which bears the date of 1471 of the Seleucidan Era—1160, and is attributed to Maimon ben Joseph, the father of Maimonides, and is said to have been written in Fez. In 1165 we know that he landed at Acca. Now, what was the position of Maimonides with respect to Islam during the five years he was certainly in Fez. Was he an אנוס, like the majority of his brethren in the land of the Almohades, or was he not? My old teacher, Professor Graetz, goes so far as

to say that it is a mark of "Kritiklosigkeit" to deny that Maimonides wore for a time the mask of Islam. But though Dr. Friedlander's defence of Maimonides must modify this view, I cannot shake off from my mind a very grave suspicion indeed that the accusation against Maimonides is true, still the fact noticed by Dr. Friedlander is remarkable, viz., that in the heat of the controversy between the Maimonists and anti-Maimonists no reference is made to this supposed lapse of Maimonides. Abraham ben David of Posquieres the author of the Hassagot to the Yad Hachazzakah is not at all polite, not once only does he speak of Maimonides as זה האיש "this fellow" and yet he does not refer to the fact of Maimondes being unfaithful, though only apparently unfaithful, to Judaism. This is of course, only negative evidence, but I am inclined to think that if Dr. Friedländer cannot find a reference to a certain fact, nobody can, but still, as I have said, I cannot shake off the suspicion that the accusation is true. There is the אגרת מהשד which is attributed to Maimonides; there is the testimony of Arabian writers. First of all, with regard to the אגרת השמד,—though it has been denied that Maimonides was the author, no other author has been suggested, and there is no suspicion of a conspiracy to fasten upon his memory a pseudographic work. It is true there is an unpleasant trait in it, namely, its legalism, although the same objection might apply to the fifth chapter of Hilchot Jesode Hattorah, to the corresponding subject in the Shulchan Aruch and to the discussion in the Talmud on the important decision arrived at in the upper chamber of Nitza at Lud. The question whether a man should suffer martyrdom or not, seems to me to be a question for feeling and not for law to decide. But for all this there are eloquent passages in "the "letter on conversion." I can partake of the indignation of the author that one who was at ease in his study enjoying life should reproach unsympathetically those who were in sorrow and those who were striving with heart and soul to do what seemed to them their best in their affliction. Of course, that it is only necessary to profess and not believe, that Mahommed was God's apostle, was unworthy of a serious writer, nor does it seem to me very material to the point at issue that Islam is not idolatry. We can all say that "there is no God but Allah," and most of us could say in a sense that "Mohammed was an apostle of Allah"; but still to become Moslems would be a denial of historical Judaism. But there seems to me to be genuine anguish in this passage "God is a witness that if he who had uttered these reproaches against us had uttered many more we should not have sought help for ourselves; we should have said let us lie in our shame, and let our confusion cover us for we have sinned against the Lord our God. We know, O God, that we have done wickedly and had it not been insisted upon that those who pray in these times are committing a transgression, we should have been silent. But will not the ignorant if they hear that to pray is a sin, leave off praying altogether?" Not in a single passage is quietism under persecution justified. The author does not say that Jews should let things take their course. On the contrary. "The advice I give to myself, to those I love, and to those who ask my opinion is that we should go forth from these places, and go to a place where we can fulfil the Law without compulsion and without fear, and that we should even forsake our homes and our children, and all that we possess." The author speaks, too, almost in the same words as are used in the Jad Hachazakah of the duty of יחוד השם, and does not deny that he who dies a martyr's death does sanctify the name of God's. Now was Maimonides the author of the אגרת השמד? In spite of its occasional inconsistencies, and in spite of a few objections, I think he was. With regard to external evidence we have the fact that the MSS. we are acquainted with all bear his name, but I rely more upon internal evidence. There are passages which seem to be almost identical with other passages in the אגרת תימן, of which Maimonides is undoubtedly the author, and this very great similarity is

I think, more than chance can account for. In both letters the author insists upon the duty of emigration to freer lands, where a Jew can live in accordance with his convictions without fear. In both letters the author warns those he is addressing not to trust that the Messiah will come and deliver them, for he says that the advent of the Messiah has no fixed time that men should depend on it and say it is near or far off. The writers of both letters use the Talmudical sentence שמדא עביד דבטיל "Religious Persecutions soon pass by." The author of the אגרת השמד, writes thus: "It is the duty of everyone during these times to obey as many of the divine precepts as he can and if it happens to him that he has committed many transgressions, if he has for instance desecrated the Sabbath, he shall not throw off the observance of the other lighter precepts, he shall not say because I have broken more important commands, I may break this small one, but he shall keep what he is able and know that this is an עיקר מעיקרי הדת, a fundamental principle of the Law that Jeroboam was punished for setting up the calves at Dan and Bethel, and also for neglecting עירוב תבשילין." Maimonides uses almost exactly the same words in the אגרת תימן except that instead of taking "עירוב חב" as an illustration he uses the case of building a סוכה for the Feast of Tabernacles.

I think that these points of contact are more than chance can account for, and we must suppose either identity of authorship or imitation. But here let me add that even if Maimonides be the author (and the author does speak *pro domo*), he would have been shocked at the thought that possibly Jews might take his words as an excuse for denying their Judaism absolutely in order to satisfy their ambition. The most which the אנוסים permitted themselves was to pretend to deny their Judaism before non-Jews, never forgetting that they were really Jews, and striving with every fibre of their bodies to lead more consistent lives.

Now with regard to the Arabic authors. Abu-Oseiba in his history of the physicians says in a passage quoted from Abul-Pharaj Bar Hebraeus in Pococke's "Specimen Historiæ Arabum," that Maimonides was compelled to go over to Islam, therefore he professed it openly, while being secretly attached to Judaism. It has been pointed out that Abu Oseiba gives no authority for his statement, and therefore on Abu Oseiba alone we would not rely. But Munk has shown from Al-Qifti that Maimonides in Fez had intercourse wfth distinguished Mohammedan physicians. Now the position of the אנוסים during the time of the Almohads was unsatisfactory even from a worldly point of view. They were looked at askance. We know from Al-Makkari that a revolution at Granada during this dynasty was attributed to the Jews who were certainly pretended Moslems. I do not therefore see how Maimonides could have been friendly with Moslem physicians in Fez and still have *professed* Judaism. We must always bear in mind that the Gihad was a primary duty of the Unitarians—not such a Gihad as that defined by an Indian Maulawi and quoted in the recent articles in the *Times* on "The India of the Queen,"—but a Gihad in its orthodox sense without a legal fiction—a war against unbelievers. I also think that the passage referred to by previous writers from the "Sepher Charedim," in which Maimonides when he landed at Acca said "I have been rescued from apostacy" is almost a confession of having been, till his arrival in Palestine, not quite faithful to Judaism. It, however, is not this piece of evidence taken alone or each piece of evidence taken separately, which makes me believe that the assertion made against Maimonides is true, but the fact that without any suspicion of bias or collusion in the evidence, all the evidence converges to the one point. But still I have not forgotten the silence of the ראב"ד, and therefore I hesitate to say that we have demonstration in the matter. Very probably the publication of the letter known by the

name of the Letter of Consolation attributed to the father of Maimonides to which we have already referred, would assist us to settle the question. It is in Arabic, but Hebrew excerpts have been published by Edelman in his Chemdah Genuzah. One passage is remarkable. The writer lays stress upon the duty of prayer, and exhorts these to whom he is writing to be careful about the prayer הבינינו, and if they are unable even to utter that short prayer to repeat the following "Our God, and the God of our fathers, the needs of thy people of Israel are great, and their knowledge is scant, grant O Lord the satisfaction of our wants, and give us our due sustenance and hear our prayers. Blessed is he who listeneth to prayer." This would seem to show that at Fez at any rate it was impossible for Israelites as Israelites to assemble together to worship, and to bear out the fact quoted from a Moslem source 'In our land there is no church and no synagogue."

It is worth while noticing that we Jews have always been charitable towards אנוסים. We never speak even now of the Marannos in Spain unless with respect and sympathy. And I am inclined to believe that Moslems would have acted in the same way towards their own אנוסים. Prof. Nöldeke, in his Life of Mohammed, states that the Apostle, before his successful days at Medina, permitted those of his converts who were hard pressed, to save themselves by publicly denying him, so long, he added, as they acknowledged him in their hearts. Prof. Nöldeke does not state the Hadith upon which he makes his assertion, but Nöldeke is so safe a guide that we may be certain it is founded on a credible tradition. Now, the position which Moslems took with respect to the whole question could not have been without influence upon the action of Jews in Moslem lands. The Moslems think there is no sin in being an אנוס, why then should we? And if we turn to the Responsa of our Rabbis when the question of the position of the Marannos became a practical, a burning question, we seldom find one hard word used against them. They are always regarded as Jews. A Responsum of Isaac ben Sheshet is in reply to the question whether a גט, the witnesses to which are אנוסים, is a גט which permits a woman to marry. The answer given is in the affirmative, supposing the אנוסים are real אנוסים, that is to say, supposing they are using every effort to emigrate to a land where they can practice their faith without fear. In this Responsum the אגרת השמד is referred to as the work of Maimonides.

A similar question is answered in a Responsum of Saadiah ibn Danan of Granada. Is a woman whose husband dies without children, and her brothers-in-law are אנוסים, זקוקה ליבום? The answer is given in the affirmative, and in this Responsum the אגרת השמד is also referred to as the work of Maimonides, and with the fullest respect and admiration.

We shall now pass from the West to the East, from Andalusia and the Barbary coast to Arabia, to Yaman, the land of the South, to Yaman the happy, Arabia Felix. The Jews were persecuted in Yaman most probably under the dynasty which having lasted fifteen years was exterminated in the year 469 of the Hegra, about 1173, in the reign of Abdu-Nabi by Shamsu-Douli Turan Shah, the elder brother of Salah-ed-din. We have an account of the fanatical principles of the Yaman dynasty of the Mahdi in the annals of the celebrated Arabic historian, Abul-Fida, and we can well believe that it was a time of trouble and affliction for non-Moslems. We are told that anyone who drank wine and listened to music was executed, and that even Moslems who did not hold the peculiar doctrines of the founder of the dynasty were put to the sword, their wives ravished, their property confiscated. The reputation of Maimonides who was then living in Egypt, had spread to Yaman through his Arabic commentary on the Mishnah and his advice on the situation was asked through a certain Jacob Al-Fayyumi. The response of Maimonides is the celebrated

letter we now know by the name of אגרת תימן or "The Letter to the South," "the letter to Yaman," and also by the name of פתח תקוה, "Gate of Hope." It was written in Arabic, but we have three different Hebrew versions. That generally printed is by Rabbi Nahum of the Moghreb, two of whose Piyutim have been published by Sachs, but there is also a version by Samuel Ibn Tibbon, which was published in the *Hashachar* by David Hollub. There is in Munich a MS. version by Abraham ben Chasdai of Barcelona, who translated into the Hebrew among other books a work of Algazzali. The translation of Rabbi Nahum is certainly more pleasant reading than that of Ibn Tibbon, though this seems more exact. Mr. Schechter informs me that there is also a MS. translation in the British Museum.

The letter to the South is full of interest. It is interesting in illustrating to us how a Mahdi in Islam was often accompanied by a Messiah in Judaism. It is interesting in showing us how just as biblical passages are torn from their context by zealous but silly Christians to convert us to Christianity, so in Mohammedan countries the same thing, *mutatis mutandis*, was done for a like purpose. There was nothing new in all this. In the second Sura of the Koran, Mohammed had said in God's name, "Those to whom we have given the Scripture know our Apostle even as they know their own children, but some of them hide the truth, although they know," meaning as the commentators remark, that passages had been wilfully corrupted; and in the 61st Sura, Jesus is made to say that he brought good tidings of an Apostle, who would come after him, and whose name should be Ahmed. In Yaman, as is often the case, there was some Apostate Jew, who was assisting in the work in order to curry favour with his new coreligionists. We know the Arabic title of a work written by such an Apostate. It runs thus: "Exemplification of the faults of the Jews, the disproval of their reliance upon the Torah, and a list of the passages where their Law has been wilfully changed." The verses chiefly relied upon were the following: "I will multiply thee במאד מאד applied in Genesis to Ishmael, the words במאד מאד being in Geometria מחמד; the verse in Deuteronomy "He shone forth from Mount Paran" הופיע מהר פרן, the verse also in Deuteronomy, "I will raise unto thee a prophet from amongst thy brethren." Sprenger, in his "Leben und Lehre Mohammed's, states that Emanuel Deutsch had written to him that the verse in Haggai ובאו חמדת כל הגוים had also probably been used by Mohammedans as bearing reference to the coming of Ahmed. Maimonides in his אגרת תימן shows how false such interpretations are. For us, these proofs possess no interest except an historical one, just as a scientific exegesis will, in time, make the Christological interpretations of the Old Testament the mere fossils of an unscientific age. Maimonides answers the question respecting the so-called Messiah who had risen in Yaman and says that he considers him to be a madman. Let me call your attention to a contradiction of Maimonides pointed out by Geiger. In the אגרת תימן Maimonides describes the enthusiast of Yaman as a pretended Messiah. In another of his letters he refers to him as a pretended forerunner of the Messiah. Maimonides in our letter notices the harm which these enthusiasts had wrought in Israel. First there was the Messiah in Ispahan. This Messiah is noticed by the Arab historian, Takyu-ed-din Makrizi, in his "Chronicle of the Jews and their Festivals." as the founder of a Jewish sect. There was a Messiah in Fez, a Messiah in Cordova, a Messiah in France. Maimonides fully describes the characteristics of the true Messiah that he should be strong, rich and wise, explaining these terms in the well-known figurative sense. It is curious that in this passage Maimonides makes no reference to David Alroy. Jacob Alfayyami had written to him respecting the calculations which had been made as to the time when the Messiah would appear. Saadiah Gaon in the eighth book of the אמונות ודעות had endeavoured to interpret the time of the קץ, as the time of the Messiah is called, from the well-known passages of the

Book of Daniel. Maimonides absolves Saadiah from any evil intention in the matter, but he says, "know that no one can find the end of things, for it is closed and sealed from the eyes of all living even until the end cometh." But Maimonides himself is not altogether free from a tenderness for such calculations. One, at any rate, he prefers above the other, viz., that which is founded upon the words of Balaam. "In the same time it shall again be said to Jacob." If, then, we double the time which elapsed since the creation till the time of Balaam, we shall, according to this view, have the era of the Messiah counting from the creation of the world. There is a slight variation upon this point in the two translations. According to the version of Rabbi Nahum this event was to take place A.M. 4496, according to that of Samuel Ibn Tibbon 4492. The difference must be owing to a gloss on the part of the translators. One reckoned that the prophecy of Balaam took place in the year 38 of the Exodus the other in the 40th year. But the passage itself must have stood in the original. There is, however, evidence that Maimonides was not very certain himself about the value of the calculation. In the version of Ibn Tibbon the passage concludes: והשם יתי יודע האמת "God knoweth the truth." Those who have peeped into the Arab historians will be aware that whenever a writer is not quite sure about a statement he always adds, "But Allah knoweth." The translation of Nahum reads וברוך היודע "Blessed be He who knoweth," where the sense is not so clear. The final advice of Maimonides respecting the Messiah is excellent. "Therefore be ye strong and firm all who hope in the Lord, and have faith in the coming of the גאל, the Deliverer, and even if he delay wait for him, for God will not forsake us, nor will He forget us. "And even though the days of the Captivity should be prolonged, still the prophet says in God's name, Can a women forget her suckling child, so that she has no compassion on the son of her womb. These may forget, but I will not forget Thee." Excellent also is the following: "And now, my brethren, be strong and firm, and let not the strength of the enemy put you to fear, for all this matter is but a trial and a temptation, in order that you may show to the world your faith and your love. Therefore, O our brethren of the house of Israel, who are scattered to the extremities of the earth, it is your duty to strengthen each other, the great the small, the few the many, and to raise your voice in a faithfulness which shall never fail and which shall make known publicly that God is a Unity, unlike all other unities, that Moses is his prophet who spoke with him, that he is the Master of all the prophets and the most perfect of all of them, that the law, from בראשית to לעיני כל ישראל was spoken by the Creator to Moses, that nothing was to be abrogated in it, nothing to be changed, nothing to be added thereto nor taken therefrom, that no other law than His will ever come from the Creator."

The following view of the persecution we have had to endure is interesting, Nations have risen up against us, because they envy us on account of the Law, which God has given us, and Kings of the Earth have armed themselves against us for the same reason; they desire to contend not with us but with God, but with Him they cannot contend."

Maimonides insists that Judaism does not found its truth upon its miracles, but upon the historical fact of the revelation at Sinai, and he says that even if all the miracles ascribed to Jesus were proved he still would not be the Messiah.

In answering the question of falsification of verses in the Scriptures, Maimonides argues that the Torah had been translated into Aramaic, Persian, and Greek, hundreds of years before Mohammed, and we do not find the slightest variation in these translations. There may have been a Persian translation before the time of Mohammed. We have no copy of it; but surely Maimonides could not have

meant by the Greek translation the LXX., when he says that there was no variation from the text.

At the close of his epistle, our author begs Al-Fayyumi to send copies of it to every congregation, to be careful that it should not become publicly known to the Mohammedans, lest the disturbances should be renewed. The אגרת תימן is not a perfect work. Possibly its greatest fault is the want it evinces of a scientific exegesis. It is curious that Maimonides, with his wonderfully logical and systematic mind does not feel that it is quite as much an *ad captandum* argument to apply the little horn of Daniel to Mohammed, or to say that the Psalmist's words אויה לי כי גרתי משך שכנתי עם אהלי קדר applied to the afflictions we endured from Ishmael, as for Moslems to take veres from the Bible and apply them to him who was משגע, as Maimonides in the *Iggereth Teman* always calls the founder of our younger daughter religion. It is noteworthy that when Maimonides calls Mohammed משגע, he was but applying to him the term which the Kureish had applied to him when he first appeared in the role of a prophet, Majnun, one who is possessed by the jinn.

But in spite of its weakness the "Gate of Hope" deserves to be remembered. It is not a monument to the genius of Maimonides like the יד החזקה or the מורה נבוכים, but it proves to us how sincerely he loved his people and was beloved by them; and whether he had been an אנוס or not, one thing is certain that he was a thorough Jew with all his heart, and far more sympathetic than we generally hold him to have been, and that he followed the dictates of Hillel: "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving God's creatures, and bringing them near to the Law."

The interference of Maimonides in the affairs of Yaman was beneficial to his brethren. Owing probably to his influence with Salah-ed-din, the persecutions ceased, and there was a tradition repeated by Nachmanides in one of his letters on the anti-Maimonist controversy that the congregations of Yaman used to insert the name of Maimonides in the Kaddish by saying

בחייכון וביומיכון ובחיי דרבנא משה בר מייכון

Let me just show you now how a total unacquaintance with Arabic may be a great disadvantage to us in works like the אגרת תימן. In one passage Maimonides says: "The fact that we do not believe in the prophecy of Zaid or Omar is not due to the circumstance that they are not of the seed of Israel as the multitude believe, for Job and Bildad and Eliphaz are prophets with us, although they are not Israelites, but we judge a man's inspiration by his prophecy itself and not by his race." Now David Hollub in his notes to Ibn Tibbon's translation puts himself to much trouble in endeavouring to explain who Zaid and Omar were. Zaid he identifies with Asad, a *Lakab* or nickname of Ali, who was the husband of Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed, and whose neglect by the first Caliphs caused the foundation of the Shiite sect; and he identifies Omar with the second Caliph. But all this is absurd. Zaid and Omar are simply names used by the Arabic writers when they want to say "Mr. so and so." Zaid and Omar are used just as we say, A and B, or the Roman jurists, Titius and Sempronius, or Hebrew writers, Reuben and Simeon In the well-known 72nd chapter of the first book of the Moreh Nebuchim, Zaid and Omar occur in the Arabic text; but Reuben and Simeon are substituted for them in the Hebrew versions.

Maimonides refers to his letter to Teman in his correspondence with the Rabbis of Marseilles, respecting astrology. He relates there the end of the pretended Messiah. The Messiah of Jaman had so much faith in himself that he told the King his head might be cut off and he would still live. The experiment was tried, but in this case faith produced no miracle. The author of the "Shebet Jehudah"

tells this tale on the asserted authority of Maimonides about David Alroy. Ibn Virga has clearly confused the Messiah of Yaman with the celebrated Persian Messiah.

The congregations of Yaman wrote again to Maimonides as we know from his letter on the Resurrection in the year 1503 of he Seleucid era (1188), asking whether the soul roturned to the body at the Resurrection. Maimonides replied in the affirmative.

Now just a few words in conclusion about the relationship of Maimonides to Islam generally. In this matter we have the letter of Maimonides to a proselyte from Islam who complains bitterly to him that his Jewish teacher had told him that Moslems were idolaters. Maimonides answers this question unreservedly in the negative. "The Moslems," he says, "ascribe to God a perfect unity, a unity in which there is no stumbling block." It is a sign of Maimonides' fairness that he will have nothing to do with the *tu queque* argument to which polemical writers are so fond of having recourse. "Because the Ishmaelites have told lies and I have asserted that we believe in a son of God (in the Koran it is stated that the Jews worship Uzair 'little Ezra' as they call him, as God's son), it is no reason for us to tell lies in return and proclaim that they are idolaters." I am sorry that when the superstition question was raging a month or two ago that this letter to the proselyte was not referred to. Maimonides says there in effect that granting the Caabah and the Black Stone had once reference to Saturn worship, or the throwing of stones into the valley of Mina during the Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca referred to the worship of Mercury, yet if the worshippers have no longer these things in their minds we cannot accuse them of being idolaters. In short, the superstitious origin of a certain custom dees not at all prove that people who now follow that custom are necessarily superstitious.

Maimonides is not the only writer who does full justice to the doctrine of the יחוד השם as held by the Mohammedans. Jehudah Hallevi in his Cusari also acknowledges that Moslems fully recognise God's unity, but notes the supposed sensuality of their paradise. Maimonides refers also to this latter fact in the *Hilchot Teshuba*, and Pococke considers that there is a hint to Mohammed's multiplication of wives in the 20th chapter of the second book of the Moreh Nebuchim, in which Maimonides insists that sexual purity is an absolute condition of the divine spirit of prophecy resting on man. And now, noting that Maimonides does justice to Christianity in his Responsum as to whether a Jew may instruct a non-Jew in the Law, by saying that Christians believe in the divine character, both of our Law and Prophets though they explain them arbitrarily, let me conclude with the celebrated passage from the *Hilchot Melachim*, in which the Rambam gives his opinion as to the mission of our two daughter religions. "The teachings of the Nazarene and the Ishmaelite, who arose after him, serve to bring to perfection all mankind, so that they may serve God with one consent. For in that the whole world is full of the words of the Messiah, of the words of Holy Writ and the Commandments —these words have spread to the ends of the earth, even if many deny the binding character of them at the present day. And when the Messiah comes all will return from their errors."

Ladies and gentlemen. I have finished. I hope I have not wearied you. I do not expect that I have told most of you anything new or anything particularly interesting; but I am sincerely grateful for the attention you have accorded me and for the opportunity you have given me of spending amongst you a very pleasant evening.