

Reflections on John Milton and Muhammad and Joseph Smith

Recent reflections on the genius and daring of Joseph Smith prompts to me turn to his model, Muhammad, and consider a tribute to him.

I juxtapose Muhammad and Smith and find that they are contradictory so that at least one of them must be false. I accept the falseness of Smith as very compelling (due to DNA evidence, i.e., no evidence of Jewish blood among the natives of the Americas, which was called for by Smith's story). And I also realize that if Smith is false, that doesn't mean that Muhammad is true, for if Smith concocted a story which is superior to that of Muhammad, Muhammad could have concocted a compelling story also on his own. Indeed the very fact that Smith trumps Muhammad in storytelling suggests (but certainly does not prove) that Muhammad's story is also false, for there is a generally understood claim in Islam that no one can write a story superior to the dictation of Muhammad.*

* Actually I understand that the marvel of the Muhammad dictation is its beauty, and which presumably is better than Smith's dictation which seems to be a take off on the King James Bible style popular in his time.

Someone might want imagine Muhammad as an artistic genius (of at least the caliber of John Milton) who also happens to possess the compassion of Buddha and who is willing to tell a lie, like Plato, in order to bring an end to discord on earth, the so-called [Noble Lie](#). This would suggest that he would have been troubled by the various and conflicting claims concerning God and gods and would have decided that if God could not make his will clear, he, Muhammad, would do so in his place, and if God did not like it he, God, could kill Muhammad.* He would have done this in total faith, believing that any success would be proof that God approved and that he, Muhammad, had gotten it perfectly right, i.e., Muhammad was able to imagine and sincerely believe that God was working through Muhammad's story to make his word clear.

* See the "Acting In Faith" section of [My Take On Islam](#).

Mohammed's revelation story of Gabriel-in-the-Cave is similar to that of Smith's Jehovah-in-the-Woods* and won't be discussed here.**

* Muhammad reports having met a being in a cave, which identified itself as an angel named Gabriel, while Smith meets two beings in the woods, who declare they are Jehovah and Jesus.

** This similarity does not have to do with the content of the respective revelations of Muhammad and Smith, but the mechanics of the transmission of the revelations.

I am taken by the incredible, really marvelous, power of words and ideas and expressions of John Milton of the 1600's. This man, in dictating his [Paradise Lost](#), would have a scribe with him each morning, and after the scribe left, having transcribed Milton's dictation, Milton would express his idea further to himself and compose it in his head and memorize it and the next day would dictate it to the scribe. Each day. And this, I maintain, suggests that Muhammad could be doing the same thing, that he figured out what he wanted to say each day and night, and figured out the

many things that needed to be included, and then mentally outlined a presentation, which had to change with changing conditions, of course, and after some 20 or so years of contemplation and hearing and thinking had decided on a course that God might have taken in order to tame humanity and make it get along in peace. If Milton did it, and Smith did it on a much more conventional level (the prose of the [Golden Plates](#)), why not Muhammad doing it also and with great artistry?*

* Many people, e.g., Jesus, Confucius, Buddha, Smith, Muhammad, Plato, have come up with systems designed to reduce or even eliminate the suffering due to people's interactions. And artistic geniuses such as Shakespeare and Goethe and Bach and Milton and Smith are rare, but they do pop up now and then. And so why not also Muhammad?

So here, accordingly, Muhammad will have figured out that either there is no God or this God is not very clear to people (or perhaps is sleeping), and will have decided that it was time for someone to make things clear once and for all. It was troublesome to people to hear the Christian tales and then the Jewish tales (not to speak of the tales of many others) and then how each group had its subgroups with their tales and stories and illusions and treacheries. It was time to clean up the mess.*

* John Milton may have been trying to do something similar to this, working with the Pilgrims to clean up the world and to make things finally clear again to all, except for those who are evil in their hearts.

Plato inspired the notion of the noble liar, that by telling a certain lie it might be possible to bring peace and contentment to the entire human race. It's possible that Muhammad may very well have decided to do just that, to dream up a masterpiece and to recite it as a poet and do it not for gain, but for the sake of peace among people. This, I suppose, might be said of many religious leaders.

It makes you wonder about the Christian's resurrection story. Could this have been a Smithian ruse used by the disciples to wow the people, this story of Jesus being raised by God? And then to instill the things that people need to do in order for there to be a peaceful and loving world?*

* The evidence is a bit stronger for authenticity here, I think, due to the fact that the alleged team of "benevolent deceivers" included the enemy named Saul (who becomes Paul and attests to the resurrection in the change of his own orientation, from zealous foe to friend). The general attitude of all the witnesses went from despondency to victory overnight. And it is far more difficult to perpetrate a fraud when you have many participants involved, as was the case of the witnesses of the events surrounding the reported resurrection.

Muhammad's approach, if I remember correctly and understand him, is to not to call on miracles. And rather than depend on luck, his approach was to base his appeal on the beauty and expanse and depth and unity of his recitations.

So, if this were all true (that Muhammad composed the Quran rather than received a dictation from an angel), then we would be dealing with a compassionate and artistic genius who dared to

try something sort of scary (for any believer), i.e., daring God to stop him, and doing so for the sake of mankind. A bold man indeed, and one of great compassion!*

* Another hypothesis is that Muhammad is exactly what we have learned about him, and it is the being calling itself the angel Gabriel which composed the Quran and asserted that it was composed by Allah.

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