

were ever noted by Muslim investigators. In the sixth century Arabia was surrounded on all sides by nations of a higher civilization, the Empires of Byzantium, Persia, and Abyssinia possessed most of her fertile territory, and mighty religious influences, both Jewish and Christian, were at work in the peninsula at the time when Muḥammad was born. In his young manhood Muḥammad was greatly impressed by this higher civilization and particularly by the religion of the great Empire of Roum, and there can be no serious doubt that his conception of his mission, as he first clearly outlined it for himself, was to provide for the Arabs the benefit of this religion and in some measure this civilization.¹ It was therefore natural that the Qur'ān should contain a large number of religious and cultural terms borrowed from these surrounding communities. This religion, as he insists over and over again in the Qur'ān, is something new to the Arabs: it was not likely, therefore, that native Arabic vocabulary would be adequate to express all its new ideas, so the obvious policy was to borrow and adapt the necessary technical terms.² Many of these terms, as a matter of fact, were there ready to his hand, having already come into use in Arabia in pre-Islamic times, partly through Arab tribes who had accepted Christianity, partly through commerce with Jews, Christians, and Persians, and partly through earlier inquirers interested in these religions. In fact it is very probable that if we knew more about those elusive personalities—Umayya b. Abī-ṣ-Ṣalt, Musailama, and the Ḥanifs, we should find that there was in Arabia at that time a little circle of seekers after monotheism who were using a fairly definite vocabulary of religious terms of Jewish and Christian origin, and illustrating their preaching by a little group of stories partly of Judæo-Christian, and partly Arabian origin. In the beginning Muḥammad but followed in their footsteps, but he grasped the political arm and became a figure in the world, while of the others we can now discern but the hazy outlines, though they so largely prepared the way for him.

It is clear also that Muḥammad set himself definitely to learn about things Jewish and Christian,³ and thus undoubtedly himself

¹ Bell, *Origin*, 98, 99.

² "Thus the Qur'an appeared so foreign to everything with which Arabic thought was familiar, that the ordinary vernacular was inadequate to express all these new ideas," Hirschfeld, *New Researches*, p. 4.

³ Hirschfeld, however, goes a little too far when he says, *New Researches*, 13, "Before entering on his first ministry, Muhammed had undergone what I should like to call a course of Biblical training."