

Home of the Pocket Bard

Mohammad tricks the Saracens into thinking he is chosen by the Holy Spirit

Pocket Bard's notes: I love reading Christian stories that try to make sense of (or sometime disparage) other religions. In this case, *The Golden Legend* digresses into a discussion about Muslims, including their history, their habits, and their laws. Naturally, Voragine considers the whole religion to be the highest form of heresy, and consequently their origin story is equally spurious. But I think the idea of training a dove to recognize Mohammad is pretty ingenious... and also pretty funny.

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The Golden Legend, Volume II, trans. William Granger Ryan, p.370

It was in the time of Boniface IV, about the year of the Lord 610, when Phocas was dead and Heraclius reigned in his place, that Magumeth (Mahomet, Muhammad), a false prophet and sorcerer, began to lead into error the Agarenes or Ishmaelites, whom we call Saracens. This, as we read in a history of Magumeth and in a certain chronicle, came about in the following way. A very famous cleric, who was angry because he had been unable to obtain the honors he desired in the Roman Curia, took flight to the regions beyond the sea and drew great numbers of followers after him by his deceptions. He met Magumeth and told him that he wished to put him at the head of his people. He then put seeds and the like into Magumeth's ear, and trained a dove to pick them out. The dove became so accustomed to this that whenever it saw Magumeth, it lighted on his shoulder and thrust its beak into his ear. Then the cleric called the people together and told them that he would put over them the man whom the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, would point out. He secretly released the dove, which flew straight to Magumeth, perched on his shoulder, and put its beak to his ear. Seeing this, the people thought it was the Holy Spirit descending upon him and bringing him the words of God. In this way Magumeth deluded the Saracens, and under his leadership they invaded the kingdom of the Persians and swept through the eastern empire as far as Alexandria. This at least is the popular story, but the following account is closer to the truth.

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