

A VISIT TO THE GRAVE OF AL GHAZZALI

PROFESSOR MACDONALD of Hartford characterizes Mohammed Al Ghazzali as the greatest Mohammedan theologian. Professor Browne says, "He did more than any one else to bring an end to the reign of philosophy in Islam, and to set up in its stead a devotional mysticism which is at once the highest expression and the clearest limitation of the orthodox Mohammedan doctrine." According to the *Kitab al Shams* (the Book of the Sun), the Persian authority that I have at hand, "Mohammed ibn Mohammed ibn Ahmad Al Ghazzali, an Asharite, a Shafi'ite, was one of the foremost men of the world. He was the author of remarkable books and scholarly treatises."

Nevertheless, after nearly two years residence in Meshed, which lies only sixteen miles from ancient Tus, the birthplace of Al Ghazzali, I am willing to hazard the statement that it is easier to get an intelligent answer from Mohammedans round about Meshed concerning the life and work of the apostle Paul than it is to get a correspondingly accurate answer concerning the teachings or achievements of Al Ghazzali. The reason is that Al Ghazzali has been forgotten. His books were written in Arabic and are read here by a very narrow circle. I have before me a list of eighty-five of his works that have been collected in Cairo, but as far as I can learn by investigation here, none of them are now available in Persian, whereas in the course of this article I hope to show how it is that the inhabitants of the fanatical Mohammedan province of Khorasan have acquired a sufficient knowledge of the Bible to know something of the apostle Paul.

After a brilliant literary career that took him among the most learned and influential circles of Baghdad and Nishapur, Mecca, Jerusalem and Damascus, Al Ghazzali returned to Tus, where he carried on his writing until he

died in 1111 A.D., so it is about 806 years since his tombstone was laid in Tus.

In connection with village itinerating in the vicinity of Meshed it was my privilege to visit the ruins of Tus and to find and identify the tombstone of Mohammed Al Ghazzali. In the words of Mr. J. B. Frazer, who made this trip nearly a hundred years ago, "on the way from Meshed, we passed the large village of Khoshmaitee about half way." But instead of passing this village we stopped there for a night, and preached and sold five copies of Scripture. The next morning, as we approached Tus, we saw the ruins of its mud walls in the distance, and our caravan slowly wended its way toward them. These walls enclose an area about one mile square. On the site of the old city we saw sheep and camels grazing and oxen pulling the plough.

In investigating what remains of the ancient ruins we walked through one of the holes in the Northeast wall and went straight for the fort, the commanding position of which had attracted our attention. We found it surrounded on all four sides by a moat and a wall. A large courtyard lies within, and in this courtyard were growing the best watermelons we have eaten in Persia and *Kharbuseh* (a variety of canteloupe) of no mean quality. The walls of the fort proper are now standing in four gigantic corner-fragments of a fortification that once afforded considerable protection. The enclosed area is forty yards square, but there is a protruding circular tower at each of the four corners. In the midst of the débris of bricks within these old walls, we found interesting fragments of pottery and felt keenly the desire to see what pick or shovel and patience might reveal concerning this ancient city, that fell into the hands of the Arabs in 650 A.D. and was destroyed in the Mongol invasion of 1220 A.D.

Beyond the western wall of the fort was a second protected courtyard. This we passed as we went to the large bridge that lies outside the southwest gate. The stream that it spans is called the *Kashaf Rud* and flows into the *Hari Rud* of Afghanistan. This bridge is on a caravan road that continues its course diagonally across the city.

Alongside the main road, which is still in use, is the most outstanding feature of the present ruined city, the old shrine. According to the *Kitab al Shams*, this shrine was built originally by Jamshid, the most famous of the legendary monarchs of Persia, the same Jamshid who is credited with the building of Persepolis, the introduction of the solar year, and the accidental discovery of wine. Later the shrine of Tus was rebuilt by Nasr, the governor of Khorasan in the latter part of the eighth century A.D.

When we reached the shrine and entered it, we surprised a band of grave robbers, who had opened the two graves within, which were marked by large gravestones. They found nothing but bones whereas they had hoped for treasure.

But where was the tomb of Ghazzali? The villagers could tell us nothing. The two tombstones inside the shrine were inscribed with other and more recent names. We located another grave north of the city, marked with a large stone, but it also was too recent by several centuries. At last, however, we found that one of them was inscribed with the name of a Ghazzali who was called Abu Hamid. A hasty and unsuccessful effort appears to have been made to cut off the part of the stone which bears Ghazzali's name. This happened approximately five hundred years later, when the stone was used to mark the grave of a certain Hadji Mohammed who died 1007 A.H.

The evidence on the tombstone as to the spelling of the name of the great theologian and mystic is that it should be spelled Ghazzali rather than Ghazali. The *tashdeed* is clearly seen on the rubbing.

To many of the readers of *THE MOSLEM WORLD* the interesting facts concerning the history of Tus and the biography of Al Ghazzali are accessible in Professor Jackson's "From Constantinople to the Home of Omar Khayyam," in Sykes "History of Persia," or Macdonald's article on Ghazzali in the new *Encyclopedia of Islam*. The best modern Persian authority is the *Kitab al Shams* by Mohammed Hasan Khan.

The particular observation I wish to make in this

article is that while the books of Ghazzali are being forgotten by the Shiah Mohammedans the Bible is being sold widely in Eastern Persia.

Since the beginning of the work of the American Presbyterian Mission in Khorasan, with the sacred city of Meshed as a base, 24,363 copies of Scripture have been sold. On tours throughout the province during the past year the sales amounted to 1,630 copies.

Since the opening of the new mission hospital in Meshed less than two years ago, 7,208 Scriptures have been sold to the patients and their friends by the missionaries in charge of evangelistic work in the waiting rooms, and during the last year 1,795 copies have been sold directly into Afghanistan.

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