

MOHAMMEDANISM AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

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THAT Mohammedanism offers peculiar difficulties to the efforts of Christian missions, those most interested in the active work of evangelisation make no attempt to deny. While its political power continues unarrested in the slow and certain process of decay, no successful attack has yet been made in the name of Jesus Christ upon its spiritual dominion. Not only does it maintain its influence over its original conquests, but it continues to put forth amazing powers of expansion. Its adherents to-day can hardly be estimated at less than two hundred million souls.¹ In India and Burmah, in China, in Australasia, it is rapidly advancing, and authorities are agreed that the negro races of Central Africa are destined soon to reinforce its strength. Mohammedanism stands to-day, as it long has stood, one of the most formidable problems of missionary enterprise. And yet, although a clear apprehension of the question obviously constitutes the first step for its final solution, it remains a problem little understood. With the view, therefore, of ascertaining what peculiar difficulties Mohammedanism presents to Christianity, and the basis of these difficulties in the religion itself, I propose to examine, first of all, the religion, and then briefly to notice the ethical and political system in which it logically results.

I.

Though the essence of Mohammedan belief is contained in the famous proposition which constitutes the test of conversion: "There is only one God, and Mohammed is the Prophet of God," the contents of the faith may be conveniently considered under the following divisions: (1) The idea of God. (2) Mohammed and

¹ *Statesman's Year Book.*

the Prophets. (3) The Koran. (4) Predestination. (5) Eschatology.

1. The source of the difficulties which Mohammedanism presents to Christianity unquestionably lies in the nature of its theology. If it be assumed that the diffusion of Christianity is conditioned to a large extent by the previous formation of receptivity for it, an examination of the Mohammedan conception of God at once reveals what formidable obstacles are presented to missionary enterprise.

Without entering into any discussion of Mohammed's religious development, it is enough to state that he early displayed a desire for a higher and more consistent belief than the polytheism of Arabia. After years of spiritual unrest, he reached at length the great conception of the Unity of God. In the words of the Koran: "God is one God, the eternal God; He begetteth not; neither is He begotten; and there is not any one like unto Him."¹ In this rigid monotheism God is conceived as an absolute, transcendent Will. Although He is invested in name with the highest ethical attributes, it is apparent that He is conceived under physical categories. He is a great, self-centred Ego, desiring existence solely for His own advantage. Since the Highest Goodness must by the law of its being go out in relations of love to others, He is not a truly ethical nature, He is not a personal God. The pure transcendence of the idea of God at once rules out all possibility of vital relationship between God and the world. To the Mohammedan mind the problem of how a transcendent Deity can be at the same time immanent, never occurs. The results of this theology are apparent in every department of Mohammedan life. As this investigation proceeds, they will one by one come out. Before entering upon this detailed development, however, it will be advisable to state the characteristics of the Christian conception.

There are essential points of difference. In contrast with the Mohammedan idea of God as an irresistible, transcendent Might, who addresses humanity only through the medium of Law, Christianity presents as its very essence the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood. In the Christian system God is conceived as personal, and therefore as entering into relations of love with men. The Old Testament doctrine of the Divine Holiness is developed in Christian thought into the doctrine of the Divine Personality. The problem of transcendence and immanence is for Christianity an ab-

¹ Sura. CXII. This idea of the Unity of God must have resulted from some conception of the Divine character.

solutely necessary problem. The solution is found in the Incarnation, and the doctrine of the Incarnation results in and is bound up with the doctrine of the Trinity. The divine life enters with all its redemptive energies into the life of man, and its complete revelation is forever sealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

In the attempt to reconstruct the Mohammedan idea of God, the missionary declares the Divine Sonship of Christ. The essence of his message is, that he who has seen the Son has seen the Father, and that he who has faith in the Son shall be justified and made at one with the Father. But in preaching this Gospel he is met at once with a peculiar difficulty. Since the Mohammedan idea of a purely transcendent God affords no basis for an Incarnation, there is the danger, to which experience bears ample witness, that this doctrine will be misunderstood and denied. No pious Mussulman considers the question open. As to the merits of Jesus he has a verdict from the Infallible Prophet, and that verdict rejects altogether the doctrine of His Sonship with God. Upon what grounds is this judgment based? Why did Mohammed reject Christianity?

Surprise is often expressed at the rise of an independent monotheistic faith six centuries subsequent to the foundation of the Christian Church. If Christianity in its purity had reached Arabia, it may well be questioned whether history would have known Mohammedanism. Unfortunately, however, as Mohammed saw it, the original spirituality of the faith lay obscured beneath a fungus growth of superstition. Far from affecting Arabian heathenism, it rather itself exhibited a thinly disguised idolatry. Vows were openly paid to relics and images. A long train of martyrs, saints, and angels interrupted the communion of the human spirit with its God. From Judaism the great iconoclast derived much of his system, but Christianity he saw only as a warning and a failure. His conception of God was formed independently of Christian thought. And the views concerning fundamental Christian doctrines which he has transmitted to his followers are the results of the test which he applied to those doctrines in his great premise of God as a transcendent Will.

Mohammed took up the history of Christ and set the stamp of his authority on a Christology which is the despair of modern missions. Of the Canonical Gospels¹ he apparently knew little or noth-

¹ Stanley's *Eastern Church*, p. 263. The only passages of the N. T. suggested in the Koran are those referring to the Paraclete in St. John and the account of the birth of the Baptist in St. Luke. See also Sir William Muir's *Mohammed*, Vol. II., pp. 313 and 278.

ing. Taken as his ideas were from the traditions based on the Apocryphal Gospels, he had poor guides in the attempt to measure the proportions of that great figure. In Christ, however, he acknowledged the highest merit. Next to himself, He was the greatest of the Prophets.¹ He had the power of performing miracles.² He was taken up into the immediate Presence of God.³ The miraculous nature of his birth is repeatedly affirmed,⁴ and the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin is all but accepted.⁵ But on the premises of his theology which admitted of no real communion between God and the world, and which is opposed in its essence to the doctrine of a Divine Spirit indwelling in humanity, the ascription to Christ of Divine Sonship appeared to Mohammed nothing less than a blasphemous insult to the uniqueness and unity of God. He refused to believe that Christ claimed it Himself, and he was led to understand it, as Islam understands it still, in the sense of physical paternity. On this point the Koran is explicit: "Those who dare to say Jesus, the son of Mary, is the son of God, are infidels."⁶ And again: "They say the Merciful hath gotten offspring; now have ye done a monstrous thing; almost might the very heavens rend thereat and the earth rend asunder, and the mountains fall down in fragments, that they ascribe a son to the Merciful, when it becometh not the Merciful to beget a son. Verily there is nobody in the heavens nor in the earth that shall approach the Merciful but as a servant."⁷ Such is the attitude of Mohammed and Mohammedanism on the Incarnation. Herein is presented to Christianity a peculiar difficulty; for it is obvious that from no religion except an abstract monotheism could such a difficulty be advanced.

It is significant also that Mohammed denies the Crucifixion. To his theology it could have no relation and it is out of harmony with the position which he assigns to Christ as his own greatest forerunner. We have in this an illustration of the peculiar opposition with which Islam meets Christianity at so many points. In addressing Mohammedanism the conditions are very different from those which attend the preaching of the Gospel to a people who know nothing of Christ. In the latter case no settled presuppositions weaken the force of the message. However great the other

¹ Sura II., 254.

² *Ibid.*, III., 40

³ *Ibid.*, XIX., 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, III., 30.

⁵ *Ibid.*, III., 30.

⁶ *Ibid.*, V., 19.

⁷ *Ibid.*, XIX. Mohammed held that some one else who deserved such a death, even Judas himself, was substituted for Christ on the cross. Christ was taken up into heaven, and at the last day will accuse the Jews because they rejected him as a Prophet, and the Christians because they received him as God. *Ibid.*, III., 49. IV., 156.

difficulties, at any rate the real doctrine of Christ has not been anticipated by a false one, nor receptivity for the whole truth deadened by the prior acceptance of a half-truth. Mohammed, however, passed judgment on the Christian revelation. Islam has a Christ of its own. And because of the very recognition He receives as Man and Prophet, missionaries find it all the more difficult to obtain for Him recognition as God and Redeemer.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the theological bulwark of the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ. In view of the Mohammedan attitude on the Incarnation, a presentation to Islam of the Trinitarian concept of God is absolutely necessary. History, moreover, forces the discussion. The echoes of the Athanasian struggle penetrated to Arabia, and Mohammed came in contact with Christianity at a time when the standing of a Christian was determined by his attitude on the Trinity. He has accordingly pronounced upon it, and the Mohammedan world is by no means unaware that such a doctrine is characteristic of Christianity. Everything in the relations between Christianity and Islam points to another Trinitarian controversy.

As it attracted the attention of Mohammed, the doctrine of the Trinity had undoubtedly degenerated into tritheism. The sect of the Collyridians, which became notorious in Arabia, openly adored the Virgin, and the Trinity as it was presented to Mohammed consisted of God, Christ, Mary. Under any circumstances the difficulty will be so to explain the doctrine that it may not be mistaken for tritheism. To every Mohammedan the words of the Koran are likely to recur: "They surely are infidels who say that God is the third of three; for there is no God but one God." "Say not three; forbear; it will be better for thee. God is only one God."¹ After the example of Mohammed, his followers are jealous of the great canon of the unity of God. How to present the doctrine of the Trinity so as to give no foundation for the view that it threatens the divine unity, is the problem which confronts Christianity.

Here, then, is a situation of peculiar difficulty. To the adherents of a religious system which involves in its thought of God neither an Incarnation nor a trinity, is to be preached a religion which is bound up with both. When the attempt is made to reconstruct the thought of God peculiar to the former, it is absolutely necessary for the missionaries of the latter to preach both the Incarnation and the Trinity. And yet the difficulty is that with the

¹*Ibid.*, V., 77. IV., 6.

adherents of the former both these doctrines are in danger of being rejected for the express reason that they are inconsistent with its conception of God.

It is not, however, by any abstract analysis that the full significance of this Mohammedan idea of God for the present discussion can be understood. In order to estimate the fanaticism it inspired, and the true measure of that hostility towards Christianity in which it resulted, it is necessary briefly to consider its history.

Mohammedanism in its very origin was a protest. Bursting forth as the culmination of religious forces which had long been preparing Arabia for monotheism, it came as a revolt from all that threatened or denied the Divine Unity. It was the impassioned assertion to a world, which knew not or had forgotten God, of the Divine Existence and Omnipotence, of the reality of man's dependence, and the necessity of his submission.¹ No existing system displayed the truth. The religions of the world were corrupt and abominable. Idolater and Magian, Jew² and Christian, each in his way denied or insulted the unapproachable majesty of Allah. The time of vindication had arrived. God, through Mohammed, had decisively spoken. And the nations must be brought by those who heard to a speedy recognition of the one true faith.

Not only does the fundamental religious duty of submission to God take the form of devotion in extending his kingdom upon earth,—it distinctly justifies the use of force for religious ends. The Christian revelation of the Divine Love must secure its converts by the agency of spiritual influence. Its only triumphs must be moral triumphs. The Mohammedan faith, on the contrary, knows nothing of true personality. The Supreme Spirit does not condescend to enter into the life of humanity, and through a spiritual process win humanity to Himself. God is rather conceived as the type of an Eastern despot. Refusal to do him homage is rebellion, and rebellion must be suppressed by the sword. Such was the theory which Mohammed, after the Hegira, urged both by precept and example. It was a theory thoroughly congenial to the military temper of the Saracens. It inspired and appropriated to the cause of religion a tremendous secular force. But it is unnecessary to claim for it anything of conscious adaptation. Instead of marking

¹ Maurice, *Religions of the World*, p. 23. An admirable discussion of this point. The terms "Islam" and "Moslem" are both derived from a root meaning "submission to" and "faith in God."

² Mohammed accused the Jews of worshipping Ezra. *Ibid.*, IX., 30.

a decline in the Prophet's moral enthusiasm, it springs spontaneously from the character of his theology. As the result of that theology the Church and State are one, and the use of force in the cause of religion becomes a sacred duty. God demands a Holy War. "Fight on, therefore, till there is no temptation to idolatry and the religion becomes God's alone."¹

From these circumstances there resulted a mood of fanaticism, the most intense and sustained in the history of religion. That fanaticism, unfortunately for the missions of to-day, was early directed against Christianity. I have already given the grounds upon which Mohammed rejected the Christian religion. Upon those grounds the conquest of Christendom became the settled policy of Islam. In Syria and Egypt, in Africa and Spain the Mohammedan arms were successful. Moslem historians relate of the Caliph Omar that, during the ten years of his reign, 1,036 towns were captured, 4,000 Christian churches destroyed, and 4,000 mosques erected in their stead. In the Middle Ages the Christian crusades deepened the sense of hostility. And when, finally, the Ottoman Turks rose to predominance in the Mohammedan world, they vigorously took up the policy of universal domination, captured Constantinople, and menaced for two hundred years the safety of Europe.

As the result, therefore, of the historical situation in which the Mohammedan idea of God took form, it encouraged the feeling of superiority, stimulated and justified aggression, and brought with it to the Islam of to-day a deep sense of enmity towards the Christian faith. Christian missionaries stand face to face with the most discouraging of all difficulties, that of a relentless opposition to their efforts, based on history, and kept alive by religious zeal. Nor is there satisfactory evidence that this spirit is on the wane. In 1857 it instigated the Indian mutiny. In 1884 it inflamed the Soudan. It is seen to-day in the Armenian massacres. In independent Mohammedan states it is a crime for a Moslem to become a Christian. In Morocco the Government has ordered the missionaries to withdraw. In Algeria, owing to popular tumult, the French discourage all missionary effort.² The most extensive work in the Mohammedan field is that of the Church Missionary Society, and to the spirit of fanaticism the last report bears painful witness. One convert in Persia is imprisoned; another beaten by a mob; several have actually been murdered.³ Even in India Missionaries

¹ *Ibid.*, VIII., 40.

² *Methodist Review*, July, 1896.

³ Church Missionary Society Report, pp. 116, 119.

are threatened and subjected to violence ;¹ converts are persecuted and their lives attempted.²

2. A further examination of this religious system reveals a still greater difficulty. In presenting the doctrine of the person of Christ, missionaries find confronting them the doctrine of Mohammed's supernatural call, and the whole power of his influence on the Moslem world.

Though the founder of a religion, Mohammed occupies in it no such position as that of Christ in Christianity. Not only is He the founder, Christ is also a constituent element and the central fact of His faith. Among the religions of the world Christianity stands distinct as pre-eminently the religion of redemption. Its characteristic feature is the union of the divine and human in the person of Christ, the Redeemer and Perfecter of humanity. When compared with Christ, Mohammed discharges no strictly religious function, just as, when compared with Christianity, Mohammedanism is not strictly a religion. But from the relative point of view, the function which he does discharge is just as important for such a religion as Mohammedanism, as that of Christ is for such a religion as Christianity. The Mohammedan idea of God, indeed, postulates the prophetic office. To an Incarnation it is opposed. But God, though transcendent, does not remain altogether aloof from the life of man. He requires obedience and worship, and His will is declared by his prophets. While of these Mohammed recognises no less than 124,000, he singles out for special distinction the five great names of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Christ, who successively mark the five periods into which, as his philosophy conceives, all previous history falls.³ To these five periods correspond five revelations, each of which, though adequate for its age, is superseded in the succeeding era. Nor does the world receive the full revelation, until he himself comes forward, with the commission of God, to speak the final word, and establish the absolute religion. As revelation reaches its height in him, it therefore closes with him. He is the last and the greatest of the prophets. He is in fact The Prophet. In the great dogma which constitutes the Mohammedan confession of faith, his position is defined with emphatic precision: "There is only one God, and Mohammed is The Prophet of God." He has united himself in popular imagination with the name of God Himself, and founded his influence on the vitality of a religious principle.

Mohammedanism, therefore, is based on the authority of Mo-

¹ *Ibid.*, 170, 181.

² *Ibid.*, 185, 207.

³ Sale's Koran, The Preliminary Discourse, p. 99.

hammed. While that authority stands, the religion will stand. Upon his word all questions, religious and moral, depend for an answer. In every controversy a reference to that word is the one and only procedure. Beyond the limits therein set down the human spirit cannot advance. The search for truth resolves itself into the function of interpretation. It is not by an appeal to reason that such a system can be shaken, because it is not by such an appeal that it is defended. Its apologetic is that of a great scholastic philosophy, which substantially accepts as its premises the positions already assumed by an ecclesiastical power. The task of Christianity would be simpler if Islam did not so rigidly exclude the idea of the efficacy of the human reason as a medium for the testing of truth. The very fact that the adherents of an alien faith are willing to submit their claims to rational consideration, is itself an indication of intellectual receptivity, and therefore a condition favorable to the extension of the Christian religion. But the premises of Mohammedan controversialists are always dogmatically assumed. From the doctrine of a transcendent God the conception of authority logically results. Where the ideas of a distant Deity and a finished revelation prevail, the past inevitably enslaves the present, and the human mind, dominated by the dogma of infallibility, and fixed in the contemplation of the faith once for all delivered, loses the incentive and the means of progress.

From his authoritative position as the mediator of an absolute revelation, three other lines of influence proceed which converge to support the ascendancy of the Prophet.

(1) The belief is held that on the Day of Judgment he will act as Intercessor on behalf of the faithful.¹

(2) Attention is fixed upon him as the highest type of moral excellence. His example, as embodied in the Hadis, or Sacred Traditions, is held to be absolutely binding in the conduct of life. The study of these traditions is a distinct science, and their administration a regular profession.

(3) In current legend the historical Mohammed has been idealised into a being endowed with supernatural attributes. This mythical Prophet has been formed on the model of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of Pre-existence takes the form of the theory of the "Light of Mohammed" which was with God before Creation. Like the birth of Christ, his birth was announced from above. He was subjected to a Satanic temptation. He was able to solve enigmas put to trouble him. Unclean spirits obeyed him and he had

¹ T. P. Hughes. *Notes on Mohammedanism*, p. 260.

the power of performing miracles. His death was accompanied by portents, and he rose again from the dead. Of the difficulty which springs from this tendency, Dr. S. W. Koelle, long a missionary to Islam, remarks: "It is mainly this unnaturally magnified, this un-historical and fictitious Mohammed, who sways the hearts of the Moslems and keeps them from recognising in Jesus Christ the true Saviour of man."¹

The very abstractness of the Mohammedan idea of God tends to concentrate the imagination of the faithful upon the figure and history of Mohammed. It must be acknowledged that in this sense Islam is a personal religion. Personal it can never be in the sense of bringing man into living communion with God. But personal it is, since it was founded by a person, and since the mind of its adherents is fixed upon him. The theory of Mohammed's imposture is no longer tenable. He made, however, high claims, which, if Christianity is to prevail, must be discredited. And yet, behind what fortifications those claims lie entrenched!

3. The pretensions and doctrines of the infallible Prophet are definitely embodied in an infallible book. The missionary who defends the claims of Christ with the Christian Bible, is met by the disciple of Mohammed with the Koran. Shortly after the Prophet's death his utterances were collected by Abu Bekr, his successor, into a single volume. Othman, the third Caliph, revised this edition, ordered the destruction of all existing copies, and sent out the Koran to the faithful with the great advantage of a uniform text.

The Mohammedan theory of inspiration goes beyond those extreme positions still held concerning the Scriptures by conservative Christians. The Koran was not only verbally inspired; it existed from all eternity. To Mohammed its various lines or Suras were revealed in ecstasy, or dictated by the angel Gabriel. Against the New Testament, Mussulman theologians claim that it does not contain the original Gospels, but merely the *Hadis* or traditions of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Any such conception as that of personal inspiration is of course foreign to the thought of Islam. To question the so-called divinity or "uncreated nature" of the Koran is the height of blasphemy.

The doctrine of the divinity of the Koran is supported by its literary beauty. Its poetic quality delights the Eastern imagination. Since no translation can reproduce that quality, those unacquainted with the original have often advanced unfavorable opin-

¹ S. W. Koelle. *Mohammed and Mohammedanism*. London. 1889. P. 245.

ions.¹ But where Arabic culture prevails the verdict is unanimous. As to the merits of the style even Mohammed's enemies agree with his friends, and may fairly be said to have confirmed his boast: "If men and genii were assembled together that they might produce a book like the Koran, they must fail." And again, in support of his prophetic claim: ² "If ye be in doubt as to our revelation to our servant then produce a Sura like unto it, and summon your witnesses."³

In Judaism, after the exile, the growing transcendence of the idea of God coincided with the formation of the Canon, and it is certain that the canonised text of the Koran is the result of the concept of God, to which it bears witness. Of this theology and the whole system of Islam, the sacred book is the bulwark. Its precepts are thoroughly disseminated throughout all classes of Mussulman society. In that society it constitutes the norm of thought and action. And its possession of absolute authority, inseparably associated with the power of Mohammed, lies directly in the path of Christianity.

Nothing could more clearly prove how these influences have fixed the character of Islam than the famous episode of the Matozilites. In their history the difficulties of Christianity in its conflict with Mohammedanism are in a manner foreshadowed. Under the influence of Greek philosophy they arose in Persia during the eighth century. Their true distinction lay in the effort to develop the ethical aspects of the conception of God. But it was the intellectual modifications which this involved that gave them prominence. Their efforts bring out in striking relief the essential unity of the rational spirit and the ethical will. Aiming to moralise the idea of God, they inevitably vindicate the rights of reason. Styled by themselves "defenders of God's unity and righteousness," they are named by others "the freethinkers of Islam." Though it is important to notice that they rejected the doctrine of predestination, the most significant of all their positions, as suggesting what chiefly retarded intellectual and moral advance, was their attitude concerning the Koran. They rejected the doctrine of its eternal existence, declaring that it had been "created" and was therefore liable to error. For a time they were supported by the more liberal Caliphs, but they eventually succumbed to the invincible orthodoxy of Islam. Their teaching, indeed, was out of harmony with its genius. "Not in the God of the Matozilites, whose essence was righteousness, but in that of orthodoxy, the

¹R. B. Smith. *Lectures on Mohammedanism*, p. 151. ²Sura, XVII., 90. ³Sura, II., 21.

Almighty God, bound to no law but His own arbitrary will, did the great multitude recognise their Allah and the Allah of Mohammed. Unfortunately they were not mistaken.”¹

4. The idea of the freedom of the human will depends upon the conception of a personal God. God’s Love conditions His Omnipotence, and that love demands the free response of moral beings. As to God, the emphasis in Islam is altogether upon the fact of Supremacy; as to man, upon the duty of Submission. That life of spiritual communion which demands the fact of freedom is altogether foreign to its thought. We have, as a result, the doctrine of God’s Absolute Decree and Predestination both of good and evil. Whatever has or shall come to pass in this world, whether good or bad, proceeds entirely from the Divine Will, and is irrevocably fixed and recorded in the “preserved tablet.”²

There are two directions in which this belief operates against the progress of Christian missions. One is characteristic of that revived and militant Mohammedanism which recalls in its missionary activity the early victories of the faith. The other is a mark of those countries and classes in which Islam has run its course and produced its normal effect. Instead of the positive opposition which springs from enthusiasm, they present the inert resistance of that moral paralysis which results from fatalism.

(1) In its impression on strongly religious natures the doctrine of predestination intensifies the idea of the Greatness of Allah, and renders those who hold it fiercely and irrationally opposed to the advances of other systems. Particularly is this the case with the great reforming sect of the Wahabis, a body of zealots who reproduce the mood of the primitive Mohammedans, and constitute the true spiritual force of modern Islam. They advocate a return to the simplicity of the original Mohammedan Church, and above all to its determination to spread the Truth by the sword.³ The conviction that everything has been ordained makes them indifferent to consequences, and, as the history of India proves, they are ready to take any risk in their hatred of Christianity. They have immense influence in Bengal, where through their efforts Mohammedanism has at length become the dominant religion.⁴ And that influence is employed with telling effect to the prejudice of the Christian religion.

¹ Kuenen. *National and Universal Religions*, p. 52.

² Sura, LXXXV., 22.

³ Sir William Hunter. *Our Indian Mussulmans*, pp. 50, 58, 60, and 64.

⁴ The last Indian census (1891) proves this. In a population of 40,000,000 they outnumber the Hindus by 1,500,000.

(2) From the dualism which ultimately results where God is conceived as the author both of good and of evil, the Mohammedan mind has struggled in vain to escape. During the period of first enthusiasm that dualism remains implicit, as it did with the Saracens, and as it does with the Wahabis. But in the course of normal life it is bound to emerge. The pressure of physical evil soon brings the problem home, and the descendants of those who counted it the highest happiness to die for the cause of God find themselves—

Impotent pieces of the game He plays
Upon this checker-board of nights and days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays;
And one by one back in the closet lays.¹

Man looks in, to himself, and beyond, to the world, and seeks in vain to reconcile his environment and his will. There is a power in the universe making for evil, and against that power it is hopeless to strive. The consequent fatalism develops in two extremes, each the logical complement of the other, and each unfavorable to the advance of Christianity—immorality on the one hand, and monasticism on the other.²

5. An elaborate and decisive eschatology crowns the Mohammedan system. In support of his religion the Prophet enlisted the aspiration for immortality, and set forth a view of the future state peculiarly adapted both by hope and fear to strengthen the hold of his faith on the Oriental imagination. For this reason the doctrine is related to the present discussion. Because it assists Islam, it is a difficulty for Christianity, and therefore demands consideration.

Mohammed's eschatology is in thorough harmony with his idea of God. Where God enters into no relations with men in this world, no basis is afforded for a consummation of relations in the next. A theology which forbids true ethical life in time and space knows nothing of spiritual growth or perfected union with God in the life beyond the grave. The conception of Heaven is static and sensuous. The conception of Hell, with one arbitrary exception, is static also. The Day of Judgment makes the cardinal division between Believers and Infidels. Those of the former who have obeyed the Law pass at once over the Bridge of Sirat³ into the

¹ The verse of Omar Khayyam is a suggestive commentary on Mohammedan theology.

² There are thirty-two leading orders of Dervishes, all rigidly ascetic. (Hughes's *Mohammedanism*, p. 237.)

³ Sale's *Preliminary Discourse*, p. 120.

bliss of Heaven; those who have not fall into the purgatorial fire of the first circle of Hell. Their faith, however, and the Prophet's intercession will ultimately procure for them admission into paradise. No Believer, whatever may be his sins, will be condemned to eternal damnation. From this fate, on the other hand, no Infidel can possibly escape. The intensity of the torture will accord with the magnitude of the aberration, and in connexion with the efforts of Christian missions it is important to observe that conversion to an alien religion marks the climax of human turpitude. For Apostates, for those "who have become Unbelievers after they have embraced Islam"¹ is reserved the supreme agony of Hawia, or the Bottomless Pit.

The Mussulman is persuaded to steadfast allegiance, not only by the threat of torments to be suffered, but also by the promise of pleasures to be enjoyed. If he continues faithful, all the delights of a carnal paradise will be his forever, and a divine dispensation will avert the disaster of satiety. The descriptions of Mohammed are conceived in a vein of true Eastern imagery, and exercise the greatest influence over the sentiment of the people.

The power of these beliefs is not to be destroyed by preaching, as against them, the eschatology of Christianity. That eschatology is a corollary from the conception of a personal God. And it is the doctrine of a personal God and His manifestation in Jesus Christ that must primarily be proclaimed to Islam. Against the acceptance of this doctrine Mohammedan eschatology directly and indirectly operates, and therefore deserves the brief notice it has here received.

Besides the doctrinal positions above examined, Mohammed instituted a system of practical religion which controls the daily lives of his followers and militates through the mechanical force of custom against the formation of receptivity for Christianity. The five "pillars" of practice are: (1) The Recital of the Creed. (2) The Five Daily Prayers. (3) The Legal Alms. (4) The Fast of the month Ramazan. (5) The Pilgrimage to Mecca.

Concluding at this point the investigation of Mohammedanism in its purely religious aspect, there yet remains briefly to be considered the bearing of its ethical and political developments upon the problem of Christian missions. The difficulties already brought out are directly due to the religion. Those about to be suggested are its indirect results.

¹ Sura, IX.

II.

True morality must always rest, not on the submission of humanity to an Omnipotent Will, but on the relation of humanity to a Personal God. True morality, therefore, Islam has not, and on its premises can never have. Its ethic is necessarily legalistic and external. Mohammed set forth what he conceived to be the will of God in a definite code, and compliance with its regulations is the highest reach of Moslem virtue. To this entire conception Christianity is of course opposed. In particular, however, there are three positions which occasion difficulty to Christian missions: (1) Mohammed's legislation as to slavery. (2) As to the use of liquor. (3) As to the position of women.

1. By regulating, Mohammed recognised the institution of slavery. As to the treatment of slaves he made several salutary reforms, and undoubtedly his system marks a relative advance. But he implanted no ethical principle which could result in enfranchisement. The slavery of Islam is bound up with the Law of Sale, the Law of Marriage, and the Law of Inheritance. And Christianity, which in its essence makes for freedom, is on that ground resisted by all the power of a vested interest.

2. Nothing is more characteristic of Mohammed's legislation than his prohibition of the use of liquor. Drunkenness is the one vice really feared in tropical countries and generally condemned as a breach of divine law.¹ The Mussulman moralist, in that spirit of adaptation which so deeply influenced his policy, appropriated this dominant idea, and forbade the use of wine. He sowed no seed which would result in temperance or abstinence, and Christianity, though it sows this spiritual seed and creates the character that makes in all things for moderation, is condemned and opposed because, as to the use of wine, it declares no absolute veto.

3. In regard, finally, to the position of women, it must be conceded that Mohammed remedied grave abuses. He gave women rights of property. He placed restrictions on polygamy. He regulated divorce. Here again, however, the fatal defect of his theology appears in his ethic. It does not ground the principle of individuality. It does not stimulate progress. Woman remains in Islam to-day just where Mohammed left her. And, after all, he

¹ In the South Sea Islands there is a curious illustration of this sentiment; one of the most common "taboos" is that on liquor. The Mormon Church is increasing there owing, for one reason, to its veto on drink. See Stevenson's interesting discussion in *The South Seas*, Chapter IV.

made large concessions to lust. He fixed the number of wives at four; but he set no limit to the property of masters in their female slaves. As in the prohibition of wine his moral law satisfied the prevailing idea, so here it gratifies the prevailing passion, of the tropics. In opposing the advance of the Christian religion, with its high ideal of womanhood and its spiritual conception of marriage, Islam is reinforced by the strength of a natural appetite to which its own ethic allows immoderate satisfaction.

III.

On the political side, Islam has not essentially advanced beyond the stage of tribalism. All law is divine. Church and State are identical, and the result of their union is the peculiar institution of the Caliphate. The Sultan of Turkey is the Caliph of Islam, whose duty it is to enforce all the provisions of Sacred Law. For a Moslem to become a Christian is not only a sin; it is also a crime. And within the jurisdiction of the Caliph, now *de facto* confined to Turkey, that crime can be punished with death. It is true, indeed, that, on certain terms, Christianity has always been tolerated in Mohammedan states. The Prophet expressly enacted that conquered Christians who refused to embrace Islam should be allowed, nevertheless, on the payment of a tax, to reside in the dominions of the Caliph. But this toleration was never intended to imply that a Mohammedan subject could become a Christian convert. For diplomatic reasons the Sultan has from time to time modified the law. That these concessions were only apparent came out in 1875, when, in reply to the complaints of missionaries, it was declared through the British representative that "the right of making proselytes from the religion of the state neither had been nor was intended to be granted by the Turkish Government."¹ In confirmation of this, Dr. Koelle, an eminent missionary already referred to, reports to his society that "no church or special building intended for public Christian service for Turks would have any chance of being authorised by government. Any government in Turkey which would carry out the principles of religious liberty faithfully, openly, and fully, would be accused by every conscientious Moslem of infidelity to their religion and of treachery to their state."² Missionary effort in Turkey is accordingly confined to the Oriental Christians. In its political manifestation the Mohammedan religion is unalterably opposed to the advance of Christianity.

¹ Diplomatic Correspondence, 1875.

² Report to the Christian Missionary Society.

In accordance with the plan originally suggested, I have attempted to point out the difficulties which Mohammedanism presents to Christianity. In this investigation it has been my aim to show how these difficulties logically result from the fundamental antagonism between the idea of God in the one religion, as Absolute Will, and the idea of God in the other, as Absolute Personality. Rejecting the possibility of a living relation between Deity and humanity, the Mohammedan conception develops the doctrine of a completed revelation, places the world under the dominion of law, and renders equally impossible both the progress of thought and the growth of a truly moral order. Not only, therefore, does it summarily deny the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity, characteristic of the Christian theology, but, in its reliance on dogma in matters of belief and on legalism in matters of life, it displays tendencies the very opposite of those which are required to win acceptance for Christianity.

From this examination, however, made, as it necessarily has been, from the standpoint of Christianity, the absolute religion, it would be erroneous to conclude, either that the Mohammedan system has not even relative merit, or that the fixed character of that system presents to Christianity an insoluble problem. In many countries Mohammedanism proved, and in many it proves to-day, a relative benefit. It freed Arabia from idolatry and Persia from Zoroastrianism. It releases the Hindu from caste, and raises the negro above fetishism. This benefit, however, is no more than relative. Neither in its theology nor in its morality, can it seriously be argued that Islam is a universal religion. Impervious though it appear to be, when its course is run it will be disintegrated. And Christianity, adjusted to races whose needs Mohammedanism can no longer supply, will take its place.