

# **Ten Great Religions**

## ***An Essay in Comparative Theology***

Part I

BY

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Prophets who have been since the world began.—Luke i. 70.

Gentiles ... who show the work (or influence) of the (that) law which is written in their hearts.—Romans ii. 15.

God ... hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth ... that they should seek the Lord, if haply they may feel after him and find him.—Acts, xviii. 24-27.

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### **§ 1. RECENT WORKS ON THE LIFE OF MOHAMMED.**

Dr. Samuel Johnson once declared, "There are two objects of curiosity, the Christian world and the Mohammedan world; all the rest may be considered as barbarous." Since Dr. Johnson's time we have learned to be curious about other forms of human thought, and regard the famous line of Terence as expressing more accurately the proper frame of mind for a Christian philosopher. Nevertheless, Mohammedanism still claims a special interest and excites a peculiar curiosity. It is the only religion

which has threatened Christianity with a dangerous rivalry. It is the only other religion, whose origin is in the broad daylight of history. Its author is the only one among the great men of the world who has at the same time founded a religion, formed a people, and established an empire. The marvelous spread of this religion is a mystery which never ceases to stimulate the mind to new inquiry. How was it that in the short space of a century the Arab tribes, before always at war among themselves, should have been united into an irresistible power, and have conquered Syria, Persia, the whole of Northern Africa and Spain? And with this religious outbreak, this great revival of monotheism in Asia, there came also as remarkable a renaissance of learning, which made the Arabs the teachers of philosophy and art to Europe during a long period. Arab Spain was a focus of light while Christian Europe lay in medieval darkness. And still more interesting and perplexing is the character of Mohammed himself. What was he,—an impostor or a prophet? Did his work advance or retard human progress? What is his position in history? Such are some of the questions on which we shall endeavor to throw light in the present chapter.

Within a few years new materials for this study have been made accessible by the labors of Weil, Caussin de Perceval, Muir, Sprenger, Döllinger, and Arnold. Dr. Gustav Weil published his work<sup>383</sup> in 1843. It was drawn from Arabic manuscripts and the Koran. When Weil began his studies on Mohammed in 1837, he found no book except that of Gagnier, published in 1732, from which he could derive substantial aid. But Gagnier had only collected, without any attempt at criticism, the traditions and statements concerning Mohammed believed by orthodox Moslems. Satisfied that a literary want existed at this point, Dr. Weil devoted himself to such studies as should enable him to supply it; and the result was a work concerning which Milman says that "nothing has escaped" the diligence of its author. But four years after appeared the book of M. Caussin de Perceval,<sup>384</sup> a work of which M. Saint-Hilaire says that it marks a new era in these studies, on account of the abundance and novelty of its details, and the light thrown on the period which in Arabia preceded the coming of Mohammed. Dr. A. Sprenger, an eminent German scholar, early determined to devote himself to the study of Oriental literature in the East. He spent a long time in India, and was for twelve years principal of a Mohammedan school in Delhi, where he established, in 1845, an illustrated penny magazine in the Hindoo language. After returning to Europe with a vast number of Oriental manuscripts, he composed his *Life of Mohammed*,<sup>385</sup> the result of extensive studies. Among the preparations for this work we will cite only one. Dr. Sprenger edited in Calcutta the first volume of the *Içâba*, which contains the names and biographies of *eight thousand* persons who were personally acquainted with Mohammed.<sup>386</sup> But, as if to embarrass us with riches, comes also Mr. Muir<sup>387</sup> and presents us with another life of the prophet, likewise drawn from original sources, and written with learning and candor. This work, in four volumes, goes over the whole ground of the history of Arabia before the coming of the prophet, and then, from Arabic sources, narrates the life of Mohammed himself, up to the era of the Hegira. The result of these researches is that we know accurately what Mr. Hallam in his time despaired of knowing,—all the main points of the history of Mohammed. There is no legend, no myth, to trouble us. M. Saint-Hilaire says that the French are far less acquainted with Charlemagne than the Moslems are with their prophet, who came two centuries earlier.

A Mohammedan writer, Syed Ahmed Khan Bahador, has lately published, in English, a series of Essays on the life of Mohammed, Arabia, the Arabs, Mohammedan traditions, and kindred topics, written from the stand-point of a believer in Islam.<sup>388</sup> He is dissatisfied with all the recent works on Mohammed, including those of Dr. Sprenger and Mr. Muir. He believes that the Arabic sources from which these biographies are derived are not the most authentic. The special objections, however, which this able Mohammedan urges against these European biographies by Sprenger and Muir do not affect any of the important points in the history, but only details of small moment. Notwithstanding his criticisms, therefore, we may safely assume that we are in a condition to understand the actual life and character of Mohammed. All that the Syed says concerning the duty of an impartial and friendly judgment of Islam and its author is, of course, true. We shall endeavor in our treatment of Mohammed to follow this exhortation.

Something, however, is always gained by hearing what the believers in a system have to say in its behalf, and these essays of the Mohammedan scholar may help us in this way. One of the most curious parts of the volume is that in which he treats of the prophecies concerning Mohammed in the Old and New Testament. Most of our readers will be surprised at learning that any such prophecies exist; and yet some of them are quite as striking as many of those commonly adduced by writers on prophecy as referring to Jesus Christ. For example (Deut. xviii. 15, 18), when Moses predicts that the Lord will raise up a prophet for the Jews, *from among their brethren*; by emphasizing this latter clause, and arguing that the Jews had no brethren except the Ishmaelites, from whom Mohammed was born, an argument is derived that the latter was referred to. This is strengthened by the declaration of Moses, that this prophet should be "*like unto me*," since Deuteronomy xxxiv. 10 declares that "there arose no prophet *in Israel* like unto Moses."

Habakkuk iii. 3 says: "The Holy One came from Mount Paran." But Mount Paran, argues our friend, is the mountain of Mecca.

The Hebrew word translated "desire" in Haggai ii. 7, "The desire of all nations shall come," is said by Bahador to be the same word as the name Mohammed. He is therefore predicted by his name in this passage.

When Isaiah says (xxi. 7), according to the Septuagint translation, that he "saw two riders, one on an ass and one on a camel," Bahador argues that the rider on the ass is Jesus, who so entered Jerusalem, and that the rider on the camel is Mohammed.

When John the Baptist was asked if he were the Christ, or Elijah, or "that prophet," Mohammedans say that "that prophet," so anticipated, was their own.

## § 2. THE ARABS AND ARABIA.

The Arabs are a Semitic people, belonging to the same great ethnologic family with the Babylonians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Hebrews, Ethiopians, and Carthaginians. It is a race which has given to civilized man his literature and his religion; for the alphabet came from the Phoenicians, and the Bible from the Jews. In Hannibal, it produced perhaps the greatest military genius the world has seen; and the Tyrian merchants, circumnavigating Africa, discovering Great Britain, and trading with India, ten centuries before Christ, had no equals on the ocean until the time of the Portuguese discoveries, twenty-five centuries after. The Arabs alone, of the seven Semitic families, remained undistinguished and unknown till the days of Mohammed. Their claim of being descended from Abraham is confirmed by the unerring evidence of language. The Arabic roots are, nine tenths of them, identical with the Hebrew; and a similarity of grammatical forms shows a plain glossological relation. But while the Jews have a history from the days of Abraham, the Arabs had none till Mohammed. During twenty centuries these nomads wandered to and fro, engaged in mutual wars, verifying the prediction (Gen. xvi. 12) concerning Ishmael: "He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him." Wherever such wandering races exist, whether in Arabia, Turkistan, or Equatorial Africa, "darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people." The earth has no geography, and the people no history. During all this long period, from the time of Abraham to that of Mohammed, the Arabs were not a nation, but only a multitude of tribes, either stationary or wandering. But of these two the nomad or Bedouin is the true type of the race as it exists in Northern Arabia. The Arab of the South is in many respects different,—in language, in manners, and in character,—confirming the old opinion of a double origin. But the Northern Arab in his tent has remained unchanged since the days of the Bible. Proud of his pure blood, of his freedom, of his tribe, and of his ancient customs, he desires no change. He is, in Asia, what the North American Indian is upon the western continent. As the Indian's, his chief virtues are courage in war, cunning, wild justice, hospitality, and fortitude. He is, however, of a better race,—more reflective, more

religious, and with a thirst for knowledge. The pure air and the simple food of the Arabian plains keep him in perfect health; and the necessity of constant watchfulness against his foes, from whom he has no defence of rock, forest, or fortification, quickens his perceptive faculties. But the Arab has also a sense of spiritual things, which appears to have a root in his organization. The Arabs say: "The children of Shem are prophets, the children of Japhet are kings, and the children of Ham are slaves." Having no temples, no priesthood, no religious forms, their religion is less formal and more instinctive, like that of children. The Koran says: "Every child is born into the religion of nature; its parents make it a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian." But when Mohammed came, the religion of the Arabs was a jumble of monotheism and polytheism,—Judaism, Christianity, idolatry, and fetichism. At one time there had been a powerful and intolerant Jewish kingdom in one region. In Yemen, at another period, the king of Abyssinia had established Christianity. But neither Judaism nor Christianity had ever been able to conquer the peninsula; and at the end of the sixth century idolatry was the most prevailing form of worship.

At this time Mohammed appeared, and in a few years united in one faith all the warring tribes of Arabia; consolidated them into a single nation, and then wielded their mighty and enthusiastic forces against Syria, Persia, and North Africa, triumphant wherever they moved. He, certainly, if ever man possessed it, had the rare gift of natural empire. To him, more than to any other of whom history makes mention, was given

"The monarch mind, the mystery of commanding,  
The birth-hour gift, the art Napoleon,  
Of wielding, moulding, gathering, welding, banding,  
The hearts of thousands till they moved as one."

### § 3. EARLY LIFE OF MOHAMMED, TO THE HEGIRA.

But it was not as a soldier or ambitious conqueror that Mohammed began his career. The first forty years of his life were passed in the quiet pursuits of trade, or taking care of the property of Khadijah. Serious, thoughtful, devout, he made friends of all about him. His youth was unstained by vice, and his honorable character early obtained for him the title, given him by common consent, of Al Amîn, "the faithful." At one time he tended sheep and goats on the hills near Mecca. At Medina, after he became distinguished he referred to this, saying, "Pick me the blackest of those berries; they are such as I used to gather when I fed the flocks at Mecca. Verily, no prophet has been raised up who has not performed the work of a shepherd." When twenty-five years of age, he entered into the service of Khadijah, a rich widow, as her agent, to take charge of her merchandise and to sell it at Damascus. When the caravan returned, and his adventure had proved successful, Khadijah, then forty years old, became interested in the young man; she was wise, virtuous, and attractive; they were married, and, till her death, Mohammed was a kind and loving husband. Khadijah sympathized with her husband in his religious tendencies, and was his first convert. His habit was to retire to a cave on Mount Hira to pray and to meditate. Sadness came over him in view of the evils in the world. One of the Suras of the Koran, supposed to belong to this period, is as follows:—

#### *Sura 103.*

"By the declining day I swear!  
Verily, man is in the way of ruin;  
Excepting such as possess faith,  
And do the things which be right,  
And stir up one another to truth and steadfastness."

About this time he began to have his visions of angels, especially of Gabriel. He saw a light, and heard a voice, and had sentences like the above put into his mind. These communications were accompanied by strong convulsions (epilepsy, says Weil), in which he would fall to the ground and foam at the mouth. Sprenger considers it to have been a form of hysteria, with a mental origin, perhaps accompanied with catalepsy. The prophet himself said: "Inspiration descends on me in two ways. Sometimes Gabriel cometh and communicateth the revelation, as one man to another. This is easy. But sometimes it is as the ringing of a bell, which rends me in pieces, and grievously afflicts me." One day, when Abu Bakr and Omar sat in the Mosque at Medina, Mohammed came suddenly upon them, lifting up his beard and looking at it; and Abu Bakr said, "Ah thou, for whom I would sacrifice father and mother; white hairs are hastening upon thee!" "Yes," said the prophet, "Hûd" (Sura 11) "and its sisters have hastened my white hairs." "And who," asked Abu Bakr, "are its sisters?" "The *Inevitable*" (Sura 56) "and the *Striking*" (Sura 101), replied Mohammed. These three are called the "terrific Suras."

But these last Suras came later than the period now referred to. At this time his visions and revelations possessed *him*; he did not possess nor control *them*. In later years the spirit of the prophet was more subject to the prophet. But the Koran is an unintelligible book unless we can connect it with the biography of its writer. All the incidents of his life took shape in some revelation. A separate revelation was given to encourage or to rebuke him; and in his later years the too subservient inspiration came to appease the jealousy of his wives when a new one was added to their number. But, however it may have been afterward, in the beginning his visions were as much a surprise to him as to others. A careful distribution of the Suras, according to the events which befell him, would make the Koran the best biography of the prophet. As we said of David and his Psalms, so it may be said of Mohammed, that his life hangs suspended in these hymns, as in votive pictures, each the record of some grave experience.<sup>389</sup>

Now, it is impossible to read the detailed accounts of this part of the life of Mohammed, and have any doubt of his profound sincerity. His earliest converts were his bosom-friends and the people of his household, who were intimately acquainted with his private life. Nor does a man easily begin an ambitious course of deception at the age of forty; having lived till that time as a quiet, peaceful, and unobtrusive citizen,<sup>390</sup> what was he to gain by this career? Long years passed before he could make more than a handful of converts. During these weary years he was the object of contumely and hatred to the ruling tribe in Mecca. His life was hardly safe from them. Nothing could be more hopeless than his position during the first twelve years of his public preaching. Only a strong conviction of the reality of his mission could have supported him through this long period of failure, loneliness, and contempt. During all these years the wildest imagination could not have pictured the success which was to come. Here is a Sura in which he finds comfort in God and his promises.—

### ***Sura 93.***

"By the rising sunshine!  
By the night when it darkeneth!  
Thy Lord hath not removed from thee, neither hath he been displeased.  
And verily the future shall be better than the past....  
What! did he not find thee an orphan, and give thee a home?  
And found thee astray, and directed thee?"

In this Sura, Mohammed refers to the fact of the death of his mother, Amina, in his seventh year, his father having died a few months before. He visited her tomb many years after, and lifted up his voice and wept. In reply to the questions of his companions, he said: "This is the grave of my mother; the Lord hath permitted me to visit it, and I asked leave to pray for her, and it was not granted. So I called my mother to remembrance, and the tender memory of her overcame me, and I wept." The child had been taken by his

grandfather, Abd al Mut-talib, then eighty years old, who treated him with the greatest indulgence. At his death, shortly after, Mohammed was adopted by his uncle, Abu Tâlib, the chief of the tribe. Abu Tâlib brought him up like his own son, making him sleep by his bed, eat by his side, and go with him wherever he went. And when Mohammed, assuming his inspired position, declared himself a prophet, his uncle, then aged and universally respected, protected him from his enemies, though Abu himself never accepted his teaching. Mohammed therefore had good reason to bless the Providence which had provided such protectors for his orphaned infancy.

Among the earliest converts of Mohammed, after Khadijah, were his two adopted children, Ali and Zeid. Ali was the son of his guardian, Abu Tâlib, who had become poor, and found it hard to support his family. Mohammed, "prompted by his usual kindness and consideration," says Mr. Muir, went to his rich uncle Abbas, and proposed that each of them should adopt one of Abu Tâlib's children, which was done. His other adopted son, Zeid, belonged to a Syrian tribe, and had been taken captive by marauders, sold into slavery, and given to Khadijah, who presented him to her husband. After a while the father of Zeid heard where he was, and coming to Mecca offered a large sum as ransom for his son. Mohammed had become very fond of Zeid, but he called him, and gave him his choice to go or stay. Zeid said, "I will not leave thee; thou art in the place to me of father and mother." Then Mohammed took him to the Kaaba, and touching the Black Stone said, "Bear witness, all here! Zeid is my son. I shall be his heir, and he mine." So the father returned home contented, and Zeid was henceforth known as "Zeid ibn Mohammed,"—Zeid, the son of Mohammed.

It is reported that when Ali was about thirteen years old Mohammed was one day praying with him in one of the retired glens near Mecca, whither they had gone to avoid the ridicule of their opponents. Abu Tâlib, passing by, said, "My nephew! what is this new faith I see thee following?" "O my uncle," replied Mohammed, "it is the religion of God, his angels and prophets, the religion of Abraham. The Lord hath sent me as his apostle; and thou, uncle, art most worthy to be invited to believe." Abu Tâlib replied, "I am not able, my nephew, to separate from the customs of my forefathers, but I swear that while I live no one shall trouble thee." Then he said to Ali, "My son, he will not invite thee to anything which is not good; wherefore thou art free to cleave to him."

Another early and important convert was Abu Bakr, father of Mohammed's favorite wife, Ayesha, and afterward the prophet's successor. Ayesha said she "could not remember the time when both her parents were not true believers." Of Abu Bakr, the prophet said, "I never invited any to the faith who did not show hesitation, except Abu Bakr. When I proposed Islam to him he at once accepted it." He was thoughtful, calm, tender, and firm. He is still known as "Al Sadîch," the true one. Another of his titles is "the Second of the Two,"—from having been the only companion of Mohammed in his flight from Mecca. Hassan, the poet of Medina, thus says of him:—

"And the second of the two in the glorious cave, while the foes were searching around, and they two were in the mountain,—

And the prophet of the Lord, they well knew, loved him more than all the world; he held no one equal unto him."<sup>391</sup>

Abu Bakr was at this time a successful merchant, and possessed some forty thousand dirhems. But he spent most of it in purchasing and giving freedom to Moslem slaves, who were persecuted by their masters for their religion. He was an influential man among the Koreish. This powerful tribe, the rulers of Mecca, who from the first treated Mohammed with contempt, gradually became violent persecutors of him and his followers. Their main wrath fell on the unprotected slaves, whom they exposed to the scorching sun, and who, in their intolerable thirst, would sometimes recant, and acknowledge the idols. Some of them remained firm, and afterward showed with triumph their scars. Mohammed, Abu Bakr, Ali,

and all who were connected with powerful families, were for a long time safe. For the principal protection in such a disorganized society was the principle that each tribe must defend every one of its members, at all hazards. Of course, Mohammed was very desirous to gain over members of the great families, but he felt bound to take equal pains with the poor and helpless, as appears from the following anecdote: "The prophet was engaged in deep converse with the chief Walid, for he greatly desired his conversion. Then a blind man passed that way, and asked to hear the Koran. But Mohammed was displeased with the interruption, and turned from him roughly."<sup>392</sup> But he was afterward grieved to think he had slighted one whom God had perhaps chosen, and had paid court to a reprobate. So his remorse took the form of a divine message and embodied itself as follows:—

"The prophet frowned and turned aside  
Because the blind man came to him.  
Who shall tell thee if he may not be purified?  
Or whether thy admonition might not profit him?  
The rich man  
Thou receivest graciously,  
Although he be not inwardly pure.  
But him who cometh earnestly inquiring,  
And trembling with anxiety,  
Him thou dost neglect."<sup>393</sup>

Mohammed did not encourage his followers to martyrdom. On the contrary, he allowed them to dissemble to save themselves. He found one of his disciples sobbing bitterly because he had been compelled by ill-treatment to abuse his master and worship the idols. "But how dost thou find thy heart?" said the prophet. "Steadfast in the faith," said he. "Then," answered Mohammed, "if they repeat their cruelty, thou mayest repeat thy words." He also had himself an hour of vacillation. Tired of the severe and seemingly hopeless struggle with the Koreish, and seeing no way of overcoming their bitter hostility, he bethought himself of the method of compromise, more than seven centuries before America was discovered. He had been preaching Islam five years, and had only forty or fifty converts. Those among them who had no protectors he had advised to fly to the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia. "Yonder," said he, pointing to the west, "lies a land wherein no one is wronged. Go there and remain until the Lord shall open a way for you." Some fifteen or twenty had gone, and met with a kind reception. This was the first "Hegira," and showed the strength of faith in these exiles, who gave up their country rather than Islam. But they heard, before long, that the Koreish had been converted by Mohammed, and they returned to Mecca. The facts were these.

One day, when the chief citizens were sitting near the Kaaba, Mohammed came, and began to recite in their hearing one of the Suras of the Koran. In this Sura three of the goddesses worshipped by the Koreish were mentioned. When he came to their names he added two lines in which he conceded that their intercession might avail with God. The Koreish were so delighted at this acknowledgment of their deities, that when he added another line calling on them to worship Allah, they all prostrated themselves on the ground and adored God. Then they rose, and expressed their satisfaction, and agreed to be his followers, and receive Islam, with this slight alteration, that their goddesses and favorite idols were to be respected. Mohammed went home and began to be unhappy in his mind. The compromise, it seems, lasted long enough for the Abyssinian exiles to hear of it and to come home. But at last the prophet recovered himself, and took back his concession. The verse of the Sura was cancelled, and another inserted, declaring that these goddesses were only names, invented by the idolaters. Ever after, the intercession of idols was condemned with scorn. But Mohammed records his lapse thus in the seventeenth Sura of the Koran:—

"And truly, they were near tempting thee from what we taught thee, that thou shouldst invent a different revelation; and then they would have inclined unto thee.

And if we had not strengthened thee, verily thou hadst inclined to them a little.

Then thou shouldst not have found against us any helper."

After this, naturally, the persecution became hotter than ever. A second body of exiles went to Abyssinia. Had not the venerable Abu Tâlib protected Mohammed, his life might have been lost. As it was, the persecutors threatened the old man with deadly enmity unless he gave up Mohammed. But Abu Tâlib, though agreeing with them in their religion, and worshipping their gods, refused to surrender his nephew to them. Once, when Mohammed had disappeared, and his uncle suspected that the Koreish had seized him, he armed a party of Hâshimite youths with dirks, and went to the Kaaba, to the Koreish. But on the way he heard that Mohammed was found. Then, in the presence of the Koreish, he told his young men to draw their dirks, and said, "By the Lord! had ye killed him, not one of you had remained alive." This boldness cowed their violence for a time. But as the unpopularity of Mohammed increased, he and all his party were obliged to take refuge with the Hâshimites in a secluded quarter of the city belonging to Abu Tâlib. The conversion of Omar about this time only increased their rage. They formed an alliance against the Hâshimites, agreeing that they would neither buy nor sell, marry, nor have any dealings with them. This oath was committed to writing, sealed, and hung up in the Kaaba. For two or three years the Hâshimites remained shut up in their fortress, and often deprived of the necessaries of life. Their friends would sometimes secretly supply them with provisions; but the cries of the hungry children would often be heard by those outside. They were blockaded in their intrenchments. But many of the chief people in Mecca began to be moved by pity, and at last it was suggested to Abu Tâlib that the bond hung up in the Kaaba had been eaten by the ants, so as to be no longer valid. This being found to be the case, it was decided that the league was at an end, and the Hâshimites returned to their homes. But other misfortunes were in store for Mohammed. The good Abu Tâlib soon died, and, not long after, Khadîjah. His protector gone, what could Mohammed do? He left the city, and went with only Zeid for a companion on a mission to Tâ'yif, sixty or seventy miles east of Mecca, in hopes of converting the inhabitants. Who can think of the prophet, in this lonely journey, without sympathy? He was going to preach the doctrine of One God to idolaters. But he made no impression on them, and, as he left the town, was followed by a mob, hooting, and pelting him with stones. At last they left him, and in the shadow of some trees he betook himself to prayer. His words have been preserved, it is believed by the Moslems, and are as follows: "O Lord! I make my complaint unto thee of the feebleness of my strength, and the weakness of my plans. I am insignificant in the sight of men. O thou most merciful! Lord of the weak! Thou art my Lord! Do not abandon me. Leave me not a prey to these strangers, nor to my foes. If thou art not offended, I am safe. I seek refuge in the light of thy countenance, by which all darkness is dispersed, and peace comes. There is no power, no help, but in thee." In that hour of prayer, the faith of Mohammed was the same as that of Luther praying for protection against the Pope. It was a part of the universal religion of human nature. Certainly this man was no impostor. A man, going alone to summon an idolatrous city to repentance, must at least have believed in his own doctrine.

But the hour of success was at hand. No amount of error, no bitterness of prejudice, no vested interest in falsehood, can resist the determined conviction of a single soul. Only believe a truth strongly enough to hold it through good report and ill report, and at last the great world of half-believers comes round to you. And usually the success comes suddenly at last, after weary years of disappointment. The great tree, which seems so solid and firm, has been secretly decaying within, and is hollow at heart; at last it falls in a moment, filling the forest with the echoes of its ruin. The dam, which seems strong enough to resist a torrent, has been slowly undermined by a thousand minute rills of water; at last it is suddenly swept away,

and opens a yawning breach for the tumbling cataract. And almost as suddenly came the triumph of Mohammed.

At Medina and in its neighborhood there had long been numerous and powerful tribes of Jewish proselytes. In their conflicts with the idolaters, they had often predicted the speedy coming of a prophet like Moses. The Jewish influence was great at Medina, and that of the idolaters was divided by bitter quarrels. Now it must be remembered that at this time Mohammed taught a kind of modified Judaism. He came to revive the religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He continually referred to the Old Testament and the Talmud for authority. He was a prophet and inspired, but not to teach anything new. He was to restore the universal religion which God had taught to man in the beginning,—the religion of all true patriarchs and prophets. Its essential doctrine was the unity of God, and his supremacy and providence. Its one duty was Islam, or submission to the Divine will. Its worship was prayer and almsgiving. At this time he did not make belief in himself the main point; it was to profess the unity of God, and to submit wholly to God. So that the semi-Judaized pilgrims from Medina to Mecca were quite prepared to accept his teachings. Mohammed, at the time of the pilgrimage, met with many of them, and they promised to become his disciples. The pledge they took was as follows: "We will not worship any but the one God; we will not steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill our children (female): we will not slander at all, nor disobey the prophet in anything that is right." This was afterward called the "Pledge of Women," because it did not require them to fight for Islam. This faith spread rapidly among the idolaters at Medina,—much more so than the Jewish system. The Jews required too much of their proselytes; they insisted on their becoming Jews. They demanded a change of all their previous customs. But Mohammed only asked for submission.

About this time Mohammed had his famous dream or vision, in which he was carried by Gabriel on a winged steed to Jerusalem, to meet all the prophets of God and be welcomed by them to their number, and then to the seventh heaven into the presence of God. It was so vivid that he deemed it a reality, and maintained that he had been to Jerusalem and to heaven. This, and the Koran itself, were the only miracles he ever claimed.

The Medina Moslems having entered into a second pledge, to receive Mohammed and his friends, and to protect them, the prophet gave orders to his followers to leave Mecca secretly in small parties, and repair to Medina. As the stout sea-captain remains the last on a sinking vessel, Mohammed stayed quietly at Mecca till all the others had gone. Only Abu Bakr's family and his own remained. The rest of the believers, to the number of about two hundred, had disappeared.

The Koreish, amazed at these events, knew not what to do. Why had the Moslems gone? and why had Mohammed remained? How dared he to stay, unprotected, in their midst? They might kill him;—but then his tribe would take a bloody vengeance on his murderers. At last they proposed to seize him, and that a number of men, one from each tribe and family, should at the same moment drive their dirks into him. Or perhaps it might be better to send an assassin to waylay him on his way to Medina. While they were discussing these alternatives, news was brought to them that Mohammed also had disappeared, and Abu Bakr with him. They immediately went to their houses. In that of Mohammed they found the young Ali, who, being asked where his father was, replied, "I do not know. I am not his keeper. Did you not order him to go from the city? I suppose he is gone." Getting no more information at the house of Abu Bakr, they sent out parties of armed men, mounted on swift horses and camels, to search the whole route to Medina, and bring the fugitives back. After a few days the pursuers returned, saying that there were no signs of any persons having gone in that direction. If they had gone that way they would certainly have overtaken them.

Meantime where were the fugitives? Instead of going north to Medina, they had hidden in a cave on a mountain, about five or six miles to the south of Mecca. Here they remained concealed three days and nights, in imminent danger from their pursuers, who once, it is said, came to the mouth of the cave, but, seeing spiders' webs spun across the opening, concluded no one could have gone in recently. There was a crevice in the roof through which the morning light entered, and Abu Bakr said, "If one of them were to look down, he would see us." "Think not so, Abu Bakr," said the prophet. "We are two, but God is in the midst, a third."

The next day, satisfied that the heat of the pursuit had abated, they took the camels which had privately been brought to them from the city by the son of Abu Bakr, and set off for Medina, leaving Mecca on the right. By the calculations of M. Caussin de Perceval, it was on the 20th of June, A.D. 622.

#### § 4. CHANGE IN THE CHARACTER OF MOHAMMED AFTER THE HEGIRA.

From the Hegira the Mohammedan era begins; and from that point of the prophet's history his fortunes rise, but his character degenerates. He has borne adversity and opposition with a faith and a patience almost sublime; but prosperity he will not bear so well. Down to that time he had been a prophet, teaching God's truth to those who would receive it, and by the manifestation of that truth commending himself to every man's conscience. Now he was to become a politician, the head of a party, contriving expedients for its success. Before, his only weapon was truth; now, his chief means was force. Instead of convincing his opponents, he now compelled them to submit by the terror of his power. His revelations changed their tone; they adapted themselves to his needs, and on all occasions, even when he wanted to take an extra wife, inspiration came to his aid.

What sadder tragedy is there than to see a great soul thus conquered by success? "All these things," says Satan, "I will give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." When Jesus related his temptation to his disciples he put it in the form of a parable. How could they, how can we, understand the temptations of a nature like that of Christ! Perhaps he saw that he could have a great apparent success by the use of worldly means. He could bring the Jew and the Gentile to acknowledge and receive his truth. Some slight concession to worldly wisdom, some little compromise with existing errors, some hardly perceptible variation from perfect truthfulness, and lo! the kingdom of God would come in that very hour, instead of lingering through long centuries. What evils might not be spared to the race, what woes to the world, if the divine gospel of love to God and man were inaugurated by Christ himself! This, perhaps, was one of the temptations. But Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." He would use only good means for good ends. He would take God's way to do God's work. He would die on the cross, but not vary from the perfect truth. The same temptation came to Mohammed, and he yielded. Up to the Hegira, Mohammed might also have said, "My kingdom is not of this world." But now the sword and falsehood were to serve him, as his most faithful servants, in building up Islam. His *ends* were the same as before. His object was still to establish the service of the one living and true God. But his *means*, henceforth, are of the earth, earthy.

What a noble religion would Islam have been, if Mohammed could have gone on as he began! He accepted all the essential truths of Judaism, he recognized Moses and Christ as true teachers. He taught that there was one universal religion, the substance of which was faith in one Supreme Being, submission to his will, trust in his providence, and good-will to his creatures. Prayer and alms were the only worship which God required. A marvellous and mighty work, says Mr. Muir, had been wrought by these few precepts. From time beyond memory Mecca and the whole peninsula had been steeped in spiritual torpor. The influences of Judaism, Christianity, and philosophy had been feeble and transient. Dark superstitions prevailed, the mothers of dark vices. And now, in thirteen years of preaching, a body of men and women had risen, who rejected idolatry; worshipped the one great God; lived lives of prayer; practised chastity,

benevolence, and justice; and were ready to do and to bear everything for the truth. All this came from the depth of conviction in the soul of this one man.

To the great qualities which Mohammed had shown as a prophet and religious teacher were now added those of the captain and statesman. He had at last obtained a position at Medina whence he could act on the Arabs with other forces than those of eloquence and feeling. And now the man who for forty years had been a simple citizen and led a quiet family life—who afterward, for thirteen years, had been a patient but despised teacher of the unity of God—passed the last ten years of his strange career in building up a fanatical army of warriors, destined to conquer half the civilized world. From this period the old solution of the Mohammedan miracle is in order; from this time the sword leads, and the Koran follows. To this familiar explanation of Mohammedan success, Mr. Carlyle replies with the question: "Mohammedanism triumphed with the sword? But where did it get its sword?" We can now answer that pithy inquiry. The simple, earnest zeal of the original believers built up a power, which then took the sword, and conquered with it. The reward of patient, long-enduring faith is influence; with this influence ambition serves itself for its own purpose. Such is, more or less, the history of every religion, and, indeed, of every political party. Sects are founded, not by politicians, but by men of faith, by men to whom ideas are realities, by men who are willing to die for them. Such faith always triumphs at last; it makes a multitude of converts; it becomes a great power. The deep and strong convictions thus created are used by worldly men for their own purposes. That the Mohammedan impulse was thus taken possession of by worldly men is the judgment of M. Renan.<sup>394</sup> "From all sides," says he, "we come to this singular result: that the Mussulman movement was started almost without religious faith; that, setting aside a small number of faithful disciples, Mahomet really wrought very little conviction in Arabia." "The party of true Mussulmans had all their strength in Omar; but after his assassination, that is to say, twelve years after the death of the prophet, the opposite party triumphed by the election of Othman." "The first generation of the Hegira was completely occupied in exterminating the primitive Mussulmans, the true fathers of Islamism." Perhaps it is bold to question the opinions of a Semitic scholar of the force of M. Renan, but it seems to us that he goes too far in supposing that such a movement as that of Islam could be *started* without a tremendous depth of conviction. At all events, supported by such writers as Weil, Sprenger, and Muir, we will say that it was a powerful religious movement founded on sincerest conviction, but gradually turned aside, and used for worldly purposes and temporal triumphs. And, in thus diverting it from divine objects to purely human ones, Mohammed himself led the way. He adds another, and perhaps the greatest, illustration to the long list of noble souls whose natures have become subdued to that which they worked in; who have sought high ends by low means; who, talking of the noblest truths, descend into the meanest prevarications, and so throw a doubt on all sincerity, faith, and honor. Such was the judgment of a great thinker—Goethe—concerning Mohammed. He believes him to have been at first profoundly sincere, but he says of him that afterward "what in his character is earthly increases and develops itself; the divine retires and is obscured: his doctrine becomes a means rather than an end. All kinds of practices are employed, nor are horrors wanting." Goethe intended to write a drama upon Mohammed, to illustrate the sad fact that every man who attempts to realize a great idea comes in contact with the lower world, must place himself on its level in order to influence it, and thus often compromises his higher aims, and at last forfeits them<sup>395</sup>. Such a man, in modern times, was Lord Bacon in the political world; such a man, among conquerors, was Cromwell; and among Christian sects how often do we see the young enthusiast and saint end as the ambitious self-seeker and Jesuit! Then we call him a hypocrite, because he continues to use the familiar language of the time when his heart was true and simple, though indulging himself in luxury and sin. It is curious, when we are all so inconsistent, that we should find it so hard to understand inconsistency. We, all of us, often say what is right and do what is wrong; but are we deliberate hypocrites? No! we know that we are weak; we admit that we are inconsistent; we say amen to the "*video meliora, proboque,—deteriora sequor,*" but we also know that we are not deliberate and intentional hypocrites. Let us use the same large judgment in speaking of the faults of Cromwell, Bacon, and Mohammed.

No one could have foreseen the cruelty of which Mohammed, hitherto always a kind-hearted and affectionate man, was capable toward those who resisted his purpose. This first showed itself in his treatment of the Jews. He hoped to form an alliance with them, against the idolaters. He had admitted the divine authority of their religion, and appealed to their Scriptures as evidence of the truth of his own mission. He conformed to their ritual and customs, and made Jerusalem his Kibla, toward which he turned in prayer five times a day. In return for this he expected them to receive him as a prophet; but this they refused to do. So he departed by degrees from their customs, changed his Kibla to Mecca, and at last denounced the Jews as stiff-necked unbelievers. The old quarrel between Esau and Jacob could not be appeased, nor an alliance formed between them.

M. Saint-Hilaire<sup>396</sup> does not think that the character of Mohammed changed when he became the founder of a state and head of a conquering party. He thinks "that he only yielded to the political necessities of his position." Granted; but yielding to those necessities was the cause of this gradual change in his character. The man who lies and murders from the necessity of his political position can hardly remain a saint. Plunder, cold-blooded execution of prisoners, self-indulgence, became the habit of the prophet henceforth, as we shall presently see.

The first battle against the Koreish, that of Badr, took place in January, A.D. 624. When Mohammed had drawn up his army, he prayed earnestly for the victory. After a desperate struggle, the Koreish fled. Mohammed claimed, by a special revelation, the fifth part of the booty. As the bodies of his old opponents were cast into a pit, he spoke to them bitterly. When the prisoners were brought before him he looked fiercely at one of them. "There is death in that glance," said the unhappy man, and presently the prophet ordered him to be beheaded. Two days after, another was ordered for execution. "Who will take care of my little girl?" said he. "Hell-fire," replied Mohammed, and ordered him to be cut down. Shortly after the battle, a Jewess who had written verses against Mohammed, was assassinated by one of his followers; and the prophet praised him for the deed in the public mosque. Another aged Jew, for the same offence, was murdered by his express command. A quarrel between some Jews and Moslems brought on an attack by Mohammed upon the Jewish tribe. They surrendered after a siege of fifteen days, and Mohammed ordered all the prisoners to be killed; but at last, at the urgent request of a powerful chief in Medina, allowed them to go into exile, cursing them and their intercessor. Mr. Muir mentions other cases of assassination of the Jews by the command of the prophet. All these facts are derived from contemporaneous Moslem historians, who glorify their prophet for this conduct. The worst action perhaps of this kind was the deliberate execution of seven or eight hundred Jewish prisoners, who had surrendered at discretion, and the sale of their wives and children into slavery. Mohammed selected from among these women one more beautiful than the rest, for his concubine. Whether M. Saint-Hilaire considers all this as "yielding to the political necessities of his position," we do not know. But this man, who could stand by and see hundreds of captives slaughtered in cold blood, and then retire to solace himself with the widow of one of his victims, seems to us to have retained little of his early purity of soul.

About this time Mohammed began to multiply wives, and to receive revelations allowing him to do so beyond the usual limit of his law. He added one after another to his harem, until he had ten wives, besides his slaves. His views on such subjects are illustrated by his presenting three beautiful female slaves, taken in war, one to his father-in-law, and the others to his two sons-in-law.

So, in a series of battles, with the Jewish tribes, the Koreish, the Syrians, passed the stormy and triumphant years of the Pontiff King. Mecca was conquered, and the Koreish submitted in A.D. 630. The tribes throughout Arabia acquiesced, one by one, in the prophet's authority. All paid tribute, or accepted Islam. His enemies were all under his feet; his doctrines accepted; the rival prophets, Aswad and Museilama, overcome. Then, in the sixty-third year of his age, death drew near. On the last day of his life, he went into the mosque to attend morning prayer, then back to the room of his favorite wife, Ayesha, and

died in her arms. Wild with grief, Omar declared he was not dead, but in a trance. The grave Abu Bakr composed the excited multitude, and was chosen caliph, or successor to the prophet. Mohammed died on June 8, A.D. 632, and was buried the next day, amid the grief of his followers. Abu Bakr and Omar offered the prayer: "Peace be unto thee, O prophet of God; and the mercy of the Lord, and his blessing! We bear testimony that the prophet of God hath delivered the message revealed to him; hath fought in the ways of the Lord until God crowned his religion with victory; hath fulfilled his words commanding that he alone is to be worshipped in unity; hath drawn us to himself, and been kind and tender-hearted to believers; hath sought no recompense for delivering to us the faith, neither hath sold it for a price at any time." And all the people said, "Amen! Amen!"

Concerning the character of Mohammed, enough has been already said. He was a great man, one of the greatest ever sent upon earth. He was a man of the deepest convictions, and for many years of the purest purposes, and was only drawn down at last by using low means for a good end. Of his visions and revelations, the same explanation is to be given as of those received by Joan of Arc, and other seers of that order. How far they had an objective basis in reality, and how far they were the result of some abnormal activity of the imagination, it is difficult with our present knowledge to decide. But that these visionaries fully believed in their own inspiration, there can be little doubt.

### **§ 5. RELIGIOUS DOCTRINES AND PRACTICES AMONG THE MOHAMMEDANS.**

As to the religion of Mohammed, and its effects on the world, it is easier to come to an opinion than concerning his own character. Its essential doctrine, as before indicated, is the absolute unity and supremacy of God, as opposed to the old Arab Polytheism on the one hand and the Christian Trinity on the other. It however admits of angels and genii. Gabriel and Michael are the angels of power; Azriel, angel of death; Israfeel, angel of the resurrection. Eblis, or Satan, plays an important part in this mythology. The Koran also teaches the doctrine of Eternal Decrees, or absolute Predestination; of prophets before Mohammed, of whom he is the successor,—as Adam, Noah, Moses, and Jesus; of sacred books, of which all that remain are the Pentateuch, Psalms, Gospels, and Koran; of an intermediate state after death; of the resurrection and judgment. All non-believers in Islam go into eternal fire. There are separate hells for Christians, Jews, Sabians, Magians, idolaters, and the hypocrites of all religions. The Moslem is judged by his actions. A balance is held by Gabriel, one scale hanging over heaven and another over hell, and his good deeds are placed in one and his bad ones in the other. According as his scale inclines, he goes to heaven or hell. If he goes to heaven, he finds there seventy-two Houris, more beautiful than angels, awaiting him, with gardens, groves, marble palaces, and music. If women are true believers and righteous, they will also go to heaven, but nothing is said about husbands being provided for them. Stress is laid on prayer, ablution, fasting, almsgiving, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Wine and gaming are forbidden. There is no recognition, in the Koran, of human brotherhood. It is a prime duty to hate infidels and make war on them. Mohammed made it a duty for Moslems to betray and kill their own brothers when they were infidels; and he was obeyed in more cases than one. The Moslem sects are as numerous as those of Christians. The Dabistan mentions seventy-three. The two main divisions are into Sunnites and Shyites. The Persians are mostly Shyites, and refuse to receive the Sunnite traditions. They accept Ali, and denounce Omar. Terrible wars and cruelties have taken place between these sects. Only a few of the Sunnite doctors acknowledge the Shyites to be Moslems. They have a saying, "to destroy a Shyite is more acceptable than to kill seventy other infidels of whatever sort."

The Turks are the most zealous of the Moslems. On Friday, which is the Sabbath of Islam, all business is suspended. Prayers are read and sermons preached in the mosques. No one is allowed to be absent. The Ramadan fast is universally kept. Any one who breaks it twice is considered worthy of death. The fast lasts from sunrise to sunset. But the rich feast in the night, and sleep during the day. The Turks have no desire to make proselytes, but have an intolerant hatred for all outside of Islam. The Kalif is the Chief

Pontiff. The Oulema, or Parliament, is composed of the Imans, or religious teachers, the Muftis, or doctors of law, and Kadis, or ministers of justice. The priests in Turkey are subordinate to the civil magistrate, who is their diocesan, and can remove them at pleasure. The priests in daily life are like the laity, engage in the same business, and are no more austere than they.

Mr. Forster says, in regard to their devotion: "When I contrast the silence of a Turkish mosque, at the hour of public prayer, with the noise and tumult so frequent in Christian temples, I stand astonished at the strange inversion, in the two religions, of the order of things which might naturally be expected." "I have seen," says another, "a congregation of at least two thousand souls assembled in the mosque of St. Sophia, with silence so profound, that until I entered the body of the building I was unaware that it contained a single worshipper."

Bishop Southgate, long a missionary bishop of the Episcopal Church of the United States, says: "I have often met with Mussulmans who seem to possess deep religious feeling, and with whom I could exercise something of a religious communion. I have sometimes had my own mind quickened and benefited by the reverence with which they spoke of the Deity, and have sometimes mingled in harmonious converse with them on holy things. I have heard them insist with much earnestness on the duty of prayer, when they appeared to have some spiritual sense of its nature and importance. I have sometimes found them entertaining elevated views of moral duty, and looking with contempt on the pleasures of this world. These are indeed rare characters, but I should do injustice to my own conviction if I did not confess that I had found them. In these instances I have been uniformly struck with a strong resemblance to patriarchal piety." He continues: "When we sat down to eat, the old Turkish Bey implored a blessing with great solemnity, and rendered his thanks when we arose. Before he left us he spread his carpet, and offered his evening devotions with apparent meekness and humility; and I could not but feel how impressive are the Oriental forms of worship when I saw his aged head bowed to the earth in religious homage."

Bishop Southgate adds further: "I have never known a Mussulman, sincere in his faith and devout and punctilious in his religious duties, in whom moral rectitude did not seem an active quality and a living principle."

In seasons of plague "the Turks appear perfectly fearless. They do not avoid customary intercourse and contact with friends. They remain with and minister to the sick, with unshrinking assiduity.... In truth, there is something imposing in the unaffected calmness of the Turks at such times. It is a spirit of resignation which becomes truly noble when exercised upon calamities which have already befallen them. The fidelity with which they remain by the bedside of a friend is at least as commendable as the almost universal readiness among the Franks to forsake it."

Five times a day the Mezzuin proclaims the hour of prayer from the minaret in these words: "There is no God but God. Mohammed is his prophet. Come to prayer." In the morning call he adds, "Prayer is better than sleep." Immediately every Mussulman leaves his occupation, and prostrates himself on the floor or ground, wherever he may be. It is very disreputable to omit this.

An interesting account is given of the domestic life of Moslem women in Syria, by Miss Rogers, in her little book called "Domestic Life in Palestine," published in 1862.

Miss Rogers travelled in Palestine with her brother, who was British consul at Damascus. The following passage illustrates the character of the women (Miss Rogers was obliged to sleep in the same room with the wives of the governor of Arrabeh, near Naplous):—

"When I began to undress the women watched me with curiosity; and when I put on my night-gown they were exceedingly astonished, and exclaimed, 'Where are you going? Why is your dress white?' They made no change for sleeping, and there they were, in their bright-colored clothes, ready for bed in a minute. But they stood round me till I said 'Good night,' and then all kissed me, wishing me good dreams. Then I knelt down, and presently, without speaking to them again, got into bed, and turned my face to the wall, thinking over the strange day I had spent. I tried to compose myself to sleep, though I heard the women whispering together. When my head had rested about five minutes on the soft red silk pillow, I felt a hand stroking my forehead, and heard a voice saying, very gently, 'Ya Habibi,' i.e. 'O beloved.' But I would not answer directly, as I did not wish to be roused unnecessarily. I waited a little while, and my face was touched again. I felt a kiss on my forehead, and a voice said, 'Miriam, speak to us; speak, Miriam, darling.' I could not resist any longer; so I turned round and saw Helweh, Saleh Bek's prettiest wife, leaning over me. I said, 'What is it, sweetness, what can I do for you?' She answered, 'What did you do just now, when you knelt down and covered your face with your hands?' I sat up, and said very solemnly, 'I spoke to God, Helweh.' 'What did you say to him?' said Helweh. I replied, 'I wish to sleep. God never sleeps. I have asked him to watch over me, and that I may fall asleep, remembering that he never sleeps, and wake up remembering his presence. I am very weak. God is all-powerful. I have asked him to strengthen me with his strength.' By this time all the ladies were sitting round me on the bed, and the slaves came and stood near. I told them I did not know their language well enough to explain to them all I thought and said. But as I had learned the Lord's Prayer, by heart, in Arabic, I repeated it to them, sentence by sentence, slowly. When I began, 'Our Father who art in heaven,' Helweh directly said, 'You told me your father was in London.' I replied, 'I have two fathers, Helweh; one in London, who does not know that I am here, and cannot know till I write and tell him; and a Heavenly Father, who is here now, who is with me always, and sees and hears us. He is your Father also. He teaches us to know good from evil, if we listen to him and obey him.'

"For a moment there was perfect silence. They all looked startled, and as if they felt that they were in the presence of some unseen power. Then Helweh said, 'What more did you say?' I continued the Lord's Prayer, and when I came to the words, 'Give us day by day our daily bread,' they said, 'Cannot you make bread yourself?' The passage, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,' is particularly forcible in the Arabic language; and one of the elder women, who was particularly severe and relentless-looking, said, 'Are you obliged to say that every day?' as if she thought that sometimes it would be difficult to do so. They said, 'Are you a Moslem?' I said, 'I am not called a Moslem. But I am your sister, made by the same God, who is the one only God, the God of all, my Father and your Father.' They asked me if I knew the Koran, and were surprised to hear that I had read it. They handed a rosary to me, saying, 'Do you know that?' I repeated a few of the most striking and comprehensive attributes very carefully and slowly. Then they cried out, 'Mashallah, the English girl is a true believer'; and the impressionable, sensitive-looking Abyssinian slave-girls said, with one accord, 'She is indeed an angel.'

"Moslems, men and women, have the name of Allah constantly on their lips, but it seems to have become a mere form. This may explain why they were so startled when I said, 'I was speaking to God.'" She adds that if she had only said, "I was saying my prayers," or, "I was at my devotions," it would not have impressed them."

Next morning, on awaking, Miss Rogers found the women from the neighborhood had come in "to hear the English girl speak to God," and Helweh said, "Now, Miriam, darling, will you speak to God?" At the conclusion she asked them if they could say Amen, and after a moment of hesitation they cried out, "Amên, amên!" Then one said, "Speak again, my daughter, speak about *the bread*." So she repeated the Lord's Prayer with explanations. When she left, they crowded around affectionately, saying, "Return again, O Miriam, beloved!"

After this pleasant little picture, we may hear something on the other side. Two recent travellers, Mr. Palgrave and Mr. Vambéry, have described the present state of Mohammedanism in Central Arabia and Turkistan, or Central Asia. Barth has described it as existing among the negroes in North Africa. Count Gobineau has told us of Islam as it is in Persia at the present day<sup>397</sup>. Mr. MacFarlane, in his book "Kismet, or the Doom of Turkey," has pointed out the gradual decay of that power, and the utter corruption of its administration. After reading such works as these,—and among them let us not forget Mr. Lane's "Modern Egyptians,"—the conclusion we must inevitably come to is, that the worst Christian government, be it that of the Pope or the Czar, is very much better than the best Mohammedan government. Everywhere we find arbitrary will taking the place of law. In most places the people have no protection for life or property, and know the government only through its tax-gatherers. And all this is necessarily and logically derived from the fundamental principle of Mohammedan theology. God is pure will, not justice, not reason, not love. Christianity says, "God is love"; Mohammedanism says, "God is will." Christianity says, "Trust in God"; Mohammedanism says, "Submit to God." Hence the hardness, coldness, and cruelty of the system; hence its utter inability to establish any good government. According to Mr. MacFarlane, it would be a blessing to mankind to have the Turks driven out of Europe and Asia Minor, and to have Constantinople become the capital of Russia. The religion of Islam is an outward form, a hard shell of authority, hollow at heart. It constantly tends to the two antagonistic but related vices of luxury and cruelty. Under the profession of Islam, polytheism and idolatry have always prevailed in Arabia. In Turkistan, where slavery is an extremely cruel system, they make slaves of Moslems, in defiance of the Koran. One chief being appealed to by Vambéry (who travelled as a Dervish), replied, "We buy and sell the Koran itself, which is the holiest thing of all; why not buy and sell Mussulmans, who are less holy?"

#### § 6. THE CRITICISM OF MR. PALGRAVE ON MOHAMMEDAN THEOLOGY.

Mr. Palgrave, who has given the latest and best account of the condition of Central and Southern Arabia,<sup>398</sup> under the great Wahabee revival, sums up all Mohammedan theology as teaching a Divine unity of pure will. God is the only force in the universe. Man is wholly passive and impotent. He calls the system, "A pantheism of force." God has no rule but arbitrary will. He is a tremendous unsympathizing autocrat, but is yet jealous of his creatures, lest they should attribute to themselves something which belongs to him. He delights in making all creatures feel that they are his slaves. This, Mr. Palgrave asserts, is the main idea of Mohammedanism, and of the Koran, and this was what lay in the mind of Mohammed. "Of this," says he, "we have many authentic samples: the Saheeh, the Commentaries of Beydāwee, the Mishkat-el-Mesabeeh, and fifty similar works, afford ample testimony on this point. But for the benefit of my readers in general, all of whom may not have drunk equally deep at the fountain-heads of Islamitic dogma, I will subjoin a specimen, known perhaps to many Orientalists, yet too characteristic to be here omitted, a repetition of which I have endured times out of number from admiring and approving Wahabees in Nejed.

"Accordingly, when God—so runs the tradition,—I had better said the blasphemy—resolved to create the human race, he took into his hands a mass of earth, the same whence all mankind were to be formed, and in which they after a manner pre-existed; and, having then divided the clod into two equal portions, he threw the one half into hell, saying, 'These to eternal fire, and I care not'; and projected the other half into heaven, adding, 'And these to paradise, and I care not.'

"Commentary would here be superfluous. But in this we have before us the adequate idea of predestination, or, to give it a truer name, pre-damnation, held and taught in the school of the Koran. Paradise and hell are at once totally independent of love and hatred on the part of the Deity, and of merits and demerits, of good or evil conduct, on the part of the creature; and, in the corresponding theory, rightly so, since the very actions which we call good or ill deserving, right or wrong, wicked or virtuous, are in

their essence all one and of one, and accordingly merit neither praise nor blame, punishment nor recompense, except and simply after the arbitrary value which the all-regulating will of the great despot may choose to assign or impute to them. In a word, he burns one individual through all eternity, amid red-hot chains and seas of molten fire, and seats another in the plenary enjoyment of an everlasting brothel, between forty celestial concubines, just and equally for his own good pleasure, and because he wills it.

"Men are thus all on one common level, here and hereafter, in their physical, social, and moral light,—the level of slaves to one sole master, of tools to one universal agent. But the equalizing process does not stop here: beasts, birds, fishes, insects, all participate of the same honor or debasement; all are, like man, the slaves of God, the tools and automata of his will; and hence Mahomet is simply logical and self-consistent when in the Koran he informs his followers that birds, beasts, and the rest are 'nations' like themselves, nor does any intrinsic distinction exist between them and the human species, except what accidental diversity the 'King,' the 'Proud One,' the 'Mighty,' the 'Giant,' etc., as he styles his God, may have been pleased to make, just as he willed it, and so long as he may will it."

"The Wahhabee reformer," continues Mr. Palgrave, "formed the design of putting back the hour-hand of Islam to its starting-point; and so far he did well, for that hand was from the first meant to be fixed. Islam is in its essence stationary, and was framed thus to remain. Sterile like its God, lifeless like its First Principle and Supreme Original, in all that constitutes true life,—for life is love, participation, and progress, and of these the Koranic Deity has none,—it justly repudiates all change, all advance, all development. To borrow the forcible words of Lord Houghton, the 'written book' is the 'dead man's hand,' stiff and motionless; whatever savors of vitality is by that alone convicted of heresy and defection.

"But Christianity, with its living and loving God, begetter and begotten, spirit and movement; nay more,—a Creator made creature, the Maker and the made existing in one; a Divinity communicating itself by uninterrupted gradation and degree, from the most intimate union far off to the faintest irradiation, through all that it has made for love and governs in love; one who calls his creatures not slaves, not servants, but friends,—nay sons,—nay gods: to sum up, a religion in whose seal and secret 'God in man is one with man in God,' must also be necessarily a religion of vitality, of progress, of advancement. The contrast between it and Islam is that of movement with fixedness, of participation with sterility, of development with barrenness, of life with petrification. The first vital principle and the animating spirit of its birth must, indeed, abide ever the same, but the outer form must change with the changing days, and new offshoots of fresh sap and greenness be continually thrown out as witnesses to the vitality within; else were the vine withered and the branches dead. I have no intention here—it would be extremely out of place—of entering on the maze of controversy, or discussing whether any dogmatic attempt to reproduce the religious phase of a former age is likely to succeed. I only say that life supposes movement and growth, and both imply change; that to censure a living thing for growing and changing is absurd; and that to attempt to hinder it from so doing by pinning it down on a written label, or nailing it to a Procrustean framework, is tantamount to killing it altogether. Now Christianity is living, and, because living, must grow, must advance, must change, and was meant to do so: onwards and forwards is a condition of its very existence; and I cannot but think that those who do not recognize this show themselves so far ignorant of its true nature and essence. On the other hand, Islam is lifeless, and, because lifeless, cannot grow, cannot advance, cannot change, and was never intended so to do; stand-still is its motto and its most essential condition; and therefore the son of Abd-el-Wahhāb, in doing his best to bring it back to its primal simplicity, and making its goal of its starting-point, was so far in the right, and showed himself well acquainted with the nature and first principles of his religion."

#### **§ 7. MOHAMMEDANISM A RELAPSE; THE WORST FORM OF MONOTHEISM, AND A RETARDING ELEMENT IN CIVILIZATION.**

According to this view, which is no doubt correct, the monotheism of Mohammed is that which makes of God pure will; that is, which exaggerates personality (since personality is in will), making the Divine One an Infinite Free Will, or an Infinite I. But will divorced from reason and love is wilfulness, or a purely arbitrary will.

Now the monotheism of the Jews differed from this, in that it combined with the idea of will the idea of justice. God not only does what he chooses, but he chooses to do only what is right. Righteousness is an attribute of God, with which the Jewish books are saturated.

Still, both of these systems leave God outside of the world; *above* all as its Creator and Ruler, *above* all as its Judge; but not *through* all and *in* all. The idea of an Infinite Love must be added and made supreme, in order to give us a Being who is not only above all, but also through all and in all. This is the Christian monotheism.

Mohammed teaches not only the unity but also the spirituality of God, but his idea of the divine Unity is of a numeric unity, not a moral unity; and so his idea of divine spirituality is that of an abstract spirituality,—God abstracted from matter, and so not to be represented by pictures and images; God withdrawn out of the world, and above all,—in a total separation.

Judaism also opposed idolatry and idol-worship, and taught that God was above all, and the maker of the world; but it conceived of God as *with* man, by his repeated miraculous coming down in prophets, judges, kings; also *with* his people, the Jews, mysteriously present in their tabernacle and temple. Their spirituality was not quite as abstract then as that of the Mohammedans.

But Christianity, as soon as it became the religion of a non-Semitic race, as soon as it had converted the Greeks and Romans, not only imparted to them its monotheism, but received from them their strong tendencies to pantheism. They added to the God "above all," and the God "with all," the God "in us all." True, this is also to be found in original Christianity as proceeding from the life of Jesus. The New Testament is full of this kind of pantheism,—God *in* man, as well as God *with* man. Jesus made the step forward from God with man to God in man,—"I in them, thou in me." The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is this idea, of God who is not only will and power, not only wisdom and law, but also love; of a God who desires communion and intercourse with his children, so coming and dwelling in them. Mohammed teaches a God above us; Moses teaches a God above us, and yet with us; Jesus teaches God above us, God with us, and God in us.

According to this view, Mohammedanism is a relapse. It is going back to a lower level. It is returning from the complex idea to the simple idea. But the complex is higher than the simple. The seed-germ, and the germ-cell, out of which organic life comes, is lower than the organizations which are developed out of it. The Mollusks are more complex and so are higher than the Radiata, the Vertebrata are more complex than the Mollusks. Man is the most complex of all, in soul as well as body. The complex idea of God, including will, thought, and love, in the perfect unity, is higher than the simplistic unity of will which Mohammed teaches. But the higher ought to come out of and conquer the lower. How, then, did Mohammedanism come out of Christianity and Judaism?

The explanation is to be found in the law of reaction and relapse. Reaction is going back to a lower ground, to pick up something which has been dropped, forgotten, left behind, in the progress of man. The condition of progress is that nothing shall be lost. The lower truth must be preserved in the higher truth; the lower life taken up into the higher life. Now Christianity, in going forward, had accepted from the Indo-Germanic races that sense of God in nature, as well as God above nature, which has always been native with those races. It took up natural religion into monotheism. But in taking it up, it went so far as to

lose something of the true unity of God. Its doctrine of the Trinity, at least in its Oriental forms, lost the pure personal monotheism of Judaism. No doubt the doctrine of the Trinity embodies a great truth, but it has been carried too far. So Mohammedanism came, as a protest against this tendency to plurality in the godhead, as a demand for a purely personal God. It is the Unitarianism of the East. It was a new assertion of the simple unity of God, against polytheism and against idolatry.

The merits and demerits, the good and evil, of Mohammedanism are to be found in this, its central idea concerning God. It has taught submission, obedience, patience; but it has fostered a wilful individualism. It has made social life lower. Its governments are not governments. Its virtues are stoical. It makes life barren and empty. It encourages a savage pride and cruelty. It makes men tyrants or slaves, women puppets, religion the submission to an infinite despotism. Time is that it came to an end. Its work is done. It is a hard, cold, cruel, empty faith, which should give way to the purer forms of a higher civilization.

No doubt, Mohammedanism was needed when it came, and has done good service in its time. But its time is almost passed. In Europe it is an anachronism and an anomaly, depending for its daily existence on the support received from Christian powers, jealous of Russian advance on Constantinople. It will be a blessing to mankind to have the capital of Russia on the Bosphorus. A recent writer on Turkey thus speaks:—

"The military strength of Mohammedanism was in its steady and remorseless bigotry. Socially, it won by the lofty ideality of its precepts, without pain or satiety. It accorded well, too, with the isolate and primitive character of the municipalities scattered over Asia. Resignation to God—a motto well according with Eastern indolence—was borne upon its banners, while in the profusion of delight hereafter was promised an element of endurance and courage. It had, too, one strikingly Arabic characteristic,—simplicity.

"One God the Arabian prophet preached to man;  
One God the Orient still  
Adores, through many a realm of mighty span,—  
God of power and will.  
"A God that, shrouded in his lonely light,  
Rests utterly apart  
From all the vast creations of his might,  
From nature, man, and art.  
"A Power that at his pleasure doth create  
To save or to destroy;  
And to eternal pain predestinate,  
As to eternal joy.

"It is the merit and the glory of Mohammed that, beside founding twenty spiritual empires and providing laws for the guidance through centuries of millions of men, he shook the foundations of the faith of heathendom. Mohammed was the impersonation of two principles that reign in the government of God,—destruction and salvation. He would receive nations to his favor if they accepted the faith, and utterly destroy them if they rejected it. Yet, in the end, the sapless tree must fall."

M. H. Blerzey,<sup>399</sup> in speaking of Mohammedanism in Northern Africa, says:—

"At bottom there is little difference between the human sacrifices demanded by fetichism and the contempt of life produced by the Mussulman religion. Between the social doctrines of these Mohammedan tribes and the sentiments of Christian communities there is an immense abyss."

And again:—

"The military and fanatic despotism of the Arabs has vested during many centuries in the white autochthonic races of North Africa, without any fusion taking place between the conquering element and the conquered, without destroying at all the language and manners of the subject people, and, in a word, without creating anything durable. The Arab conquest was a triumph of brute force, and nothing further."

And M. Renan, a person well qualified to judge of the character of this religion by the most extensive and impartial studies, gives this verdict:<sup>400</sup>—

"Islamism, following as it did on ground that was none of the best, has, on the whole, done as much harm as good to the human race. It has stifled everything by its dry and desolating simplicity."

Again:—

"At the present time, the essential condition of a diffused civilization is the destruction of the peculiarly Semitic element, the destruction of the theocratic power of Islamism, consequently the destruction of Islamism itself."<sup>401</sup>

Again:—

"Islamism is evidently the product of an inferior, and, so to speak, of a meagre combination of human elements. For this reason its conquests have all been on the average plane of human nature. The savage races have been incapable of rising to it, and, on the other hand, it has not satisfied people who carried in themselves the seed of a stronger civilization."<sup>402</sup>

#### NOTE TO THE CHAPTER ON MOHAMMED.

We give in this note further extracts from Mr. Palgrave's description of the doctrine of Islam.

"This keystone, this master thought, this parent idea, of which all the rest is but the necessary and inevitable deduction, is contained in the phrase far oftener repeated than understood, 'La Ilāh illa Allāh,' 'There is no God but God.' A literal translation, but much too narrow for the Arab formula, and quite inadequate to render its true force in an Arab mouth or mind.

"'There is no God but God' are words simply tantamount in English to the negation of any deity save one alone; and thus much they certainly mean in Arabic, but they imply much more also. Their full sense is, not only to deny absolutely and unreservedly all plurality, whether of nature or of person, in the Supreme Being, not only to establish the unity of the Unbegetting and Unbegot, in all its simple and uncommunicable Oneness, but besides this the words, in Arabic and among Arabs, imply that this one Supreme Being is also the only Agent, the only Force, the only Act existing throughout the universe, and leave to all beings else, matter or spirit, instinct or intelligence, physical or moral, nothing but pure, unconditional passiveness, alike in movement or in quiescence, in action or in capacity. The sole power, the sole motor, movement, energy, and deed is God; the rest is downright inertia and mere instrumentality, from the highest archangel down to the simplest atom of creation. Hence, in this one sentence, 'La Ilāh illa Allāh,' is summed up a system which, for want of a better name, I may be permitted

to call the Pantheism of Force, or of Act, thus exclusively assigned to God, who absorbs it all, exercises it all, and to whom alone it can be ascribed, whether for preserving or for destroying, for relative evil or for equally relative good. I say 'relative,' because it is clear that in such a theology no place is left for absolute good or evil, reason or extravagance; all is abridged in the autocratic will of the one great Agent: 'sic volo, sic jubeo, stet pro ratione voluntas'; or, more significantly still, in Arabic, 'Kemā yesha'o,' 'as he wills it,' to quote the constantly recurring expression of the Koran.

"Thus immeasurably and eternally exalted above, and dissimilar from, all creatures, which lie levelled before him on one common plane of instrumentality and inertness, God is one in the totality of omnipotent and omnipresent action, which acknowledges no rule, standard, or limit save his own sole and absolute will. He communicates nothing to his creatures, for their seeming power and act ever remain his alone, and in return he receives nothing from them; for whatever they may be, that they are in him, by him, and from him only. And secondly, no superiority, no distinction, no pre-eminence, can be lawfully claimed by one creature over its fellow, in the utter equalization of their unexceptional servitude and abasement; all are alike tools of the one solitary Force which employs them to crush or to benefit, to truth or to error, to honor or shame, to happiness, or misery, quite independently of their individual fitness, deserts, or advantage, and simply because he wills it, and as he wills it.

"One might at first think that this tremendous autocrat, this uncontrolled and unsympathizing power, would be far above anything like passions, desires, or inclinations. Yet such is not the case, for he has with respect to his creatures one main feeling and source of action, namely, jealousy of them lest they should perchance attribute to themselves something of what is his alone, and thus encroach on his all-engrossing kingdom. Hence he is ever more prone to punish than to reward, to inflict than to bestow pleasure, to ruin than to build. It is his singular satisfaction to let created beings continually feel that they are nothing else than his slaves, his tools, and contemptible tools also, that thus they may the better acknowledge his superiority, and know his power to be above their power, his cunning above their cunning, his will above their will, his pride above their pride; or rather, that there is no power, cunning, will, or pride save his own.

"But he himself, sterile in his inaccessible height, neither loving nor enjoying aught save his own and self-measured decree, without son, companion, or counsellor, is no less barren for himself than for his creatures, and his own barrenness and lone egoism in himself is the cause and rule of his indifferent and unregarding despotism around. The first note is the key of the whole tune, and the primal idea of God runs through and modifies the whole system and creed that centres in him.

"That the notion here given of the Deity, monstrous and blasphemous as it may appear, is exactly and literally that which the Koran conveys, or intends to convey, I at present take for granted. But that it indeed is so, no one who has attentively perused and thought over the Arabic text (for mere cursory reading, especially in a translation, will not suffice) can hesitate to allow. In fact, every phrase of the preceding sentences, every touch in this odious portrait, has been taken, to the best of my ability, word for word, or at least meaning for meaning, from the 'Book,' the truest mirror of the mind and scope of its writer.

"And that such was in reality Mahomet's mind and idea is fully confirmed by the witness-tongue of contemporary tradition."