

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

quable du mot *Casdim* des insinuations peu favorables au caractère du livre de Daniel, tandis qu'il fallait trouver en cela même une marque de son originalité." <sup>1</sup>

CHARLES BOUTFLOWER.

---

ART. V.—CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM.<sup>2</sup>

OF all the missions, whether to Jew or Gentile, in which the Christian Church has been engaged from her infancy until the present hour, those to Mohammedan peoples may be regarded as at the same time the most important and the most difficult. They are the most important; for whereas other missions are attempts to evangelize the adherents of older religions in countries or among races in which the Cross has never yet prevailed, Mohammedan missions seek to win converts from a younger religion, which claims to have superseded Christianity, and which has actually in large tracts of territory displaced it from the position of influence and authority which it once held. They are the most difficult; for this very claim, and the partial success which has attested it, oppose a formidable bar to the acceptance of the Christian faith by the Moslem mind; and the elements of monotheistic truth in the creed of Islam give a strength to that creed which is not to be found in polytheistic Hinduism or agnostic Buddhism, or in the superstitions and devil-worship of less educated and less civilized tribes.

We may urge upon a Jew that his form of religion was, according to the Divine purpose and according to predictions recorded in his own Scriptures, destined to be transformed into the Christianity of which it was the parent, and that its survival at the present day is an anachronism. We may instruct the votaries of heathen religions that their beliefs are the conceptions of earlier and darker ages, which the pure light of Christian truth has come into the world to dissipate. But no such line of argument can be adopted in controversy with the adherents of Islam. They, on the contrary, will tell us that Mohammed was directly inspired by God to complete that revelation of Himself which before had been only imperfectly made to Jews and Christians. They will tell us that Christianity and the teaching of Jesus Christ, while they had their place in the Divine plan for the religious development of the world, and were a stage in

---

<sup>1</sup> See the *Revue des Questions Historiques*, tom. xxi., pp. 536-551.

<sup>2</sup> An address delivered at St. Anne and St. Agnes' Church, Gresham Street, London, on Wednesday, November 25, 1903.

advance of Judaism, were nevertheless themselves intended to give place to the later Arabian faith.

There are only three possible attitudes for Christians to adopt towards this claim of Islam. The first is frankly to admit it, in which case it would be the duty of us all to become Mussulmans. The second is to give a qualified assent to it, and to concede that Mohammedanism may, in the Divine purpose, be an adequate and appropriate religion for the peoples who have embraced it, though it would not be adequate or appropriate for ourselves. This is a line which is avowedly taken by some English people, and is tacitly taken by all who view with disfavour or indifference Christian missions to Mohammedans. The third attitude is to reject the Moslem claim altogether, in which case those missions become as imperative a Christian duty as are missions to the heathen. Which of these three alternatives is the correct and true attitude for us to adopt? It is clear that only one of them can be true. They are mutually destructive, and two of them must be false. There is scarcely a single Englishman who maintains the first alternative—that Mohammedanism is true in the abstract, and Christianity, in so far as it contradicts Mohammedanism, is false. But the second alternative—the local and racial suitability of both religions—possesses far more attractions to an easy-going and indifferent age, impatient of dogma. Yet this second alternative is, in one respect at least, the most untenable of all the three; for it is, in fact, equally opposed to both Christianity and Mohammedanism. It would have been emphatically repudiated alike by Christ and Mohammed. Both of these prophets taught that the religion which he inaugurated was to have, or ought to have, world-wide prevalence. Neither recognised any territorial or geographical limits to the application of the message which he professed himself sent by God to deliver. If we accept this theory of the parallel claims of the two religions within their respective appointed areas, we are neither orthodox Christians nor orthodox Mohammedans. We proclaim our conviction that neither system is entirely true, that the founders of both were under a partial delusion.

If we are convinced that this was the case, we are bound honestly to admit it. But do the facts warrant our arriving at this conclusion? Islam had undoubtedly many elements of truth in it, when contrasted with the idolatrous religion of the Arabians, against which Mohammed established it as a protest. It has at the present day many elements of truth, when compared with Hinduism and Buddhism in India, or with fetish worship in the dark continent of Africa. But the

point for our consideration is, whether at the outset it was, as Mohammed alleged it to be, an advance on Christianity, and whether in the present day it is a preferable, or even tolerable, substitute for Christianity among the peoples of the East. We can examine this question in the abstract and experimentally. We can compare the tenets of the two religions, and weigh their respective merits and their comparative capacities for meeting the spiritual wants of mankind. We can then turn to their results, and see what they have actually effected for mankind in the twelve centuries and upwards during which they have existed side by side.

What, then, in the first place, have Christianity and Islam in common, and what are their salient points of difference? Both recognise that God is one, and that He is a Spirit, to be worshipped spiritually, and not through the medium of idols. It is true that Mohammedans have failed to recognise that Christians share this article of belief with themselves. Mohammed himself, either from coming into contact with a corrupt form of Christianity, or from acquiring only an imperfect acquaintance with it, or from both causes, fell into a startling error on this point. In the Koran he accuses Christians of worshipping a Trinity of deities, consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Virgin Mary. And where his followers are undeceived as to the deification by Christians of the Mother of our Lord, they yet maintain that in acknowledging Christ to be God we destroy the unity of the Deity. The best answer which I ever heard to this accusation is the retort with which a lady missionary to the Moslems in South India told me that she is in the habit of meeting it. She replies to her Mussulman objectors: "It is you, and not we, who practically nullify the unity of God by raising a man to the same level with Him. Your primary formula is, 'There is one God, and Mohammed is His prophet.' We should not venture for a moment to put Christ on that level, and to say, 'There is one God, and Christ is His prophet,' if we did not believe that Christ Himself was actually the one God manifested in the flesh." At any rate, the fact remains that, when properly understood, Christianity and Islam are alike monotheistic religions. They are also agreed in regarding God as a holy, just, and merciful Being, and as having revealed Himself to and through Abraham and Moses and the Jewish nation, and through Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary. But there the agreement practically terminates; and we find three cardinal points of divergence, which result in placing the two religions in sharp contrast with each other. First, Christianity affirms, and Islam emphatically repudiates, the idea of the Fatherhood of God. Secondly, Christianity affirms, and the Koran

denies, that Jesus Christ suffered death on the cross. Thirdly, Christianity claims to be based upon the perfect life of its holy and self-denying Founder; while Islam claims to be based upon a perfect and infallible book, irrespective of the life of its author. Let us briefly examine these three points of difference.

First, as regards the Christian idea of the Fatherhood of God. This, of course, is, in a certain sense, only a figure of speech. No one attaches to it precisely the same meaning as belongs to the notion of father among men and other material creatures. But it is used in a metaphysical sense to denote a relationship, a kinship between the Deity and mankind, and an imparting of the Divine Spirit to men, of which no other word could convey an equally adequate expression.

Again, in the second place, the Koran affirms that Christ did not suffer upon the cross, but was miraculously carried up to heaven without enduring that death of shame; a phantom being substituted for His actual person, and His enemies being thus deceived by God into a belief that they had taken his life. Here, of course, orthodox Christianity and Islam are directly at issue upon a matter of fact; and no Western mind can have any reasonable doubt on which side the truth lies. But the Moslem belief is not merely an historical error; it carries with it the gravest ethical and practical consequences. Superficially, and from a casual point of view, it might appear to give greater honour to Jesus than the Christian belief does; but in fact it cuts at the whole root of Christ's teaching, as recorded in the Gospels and accepted by the Church. It is identical with the carnal view of the Board school teacher who, in commenting on the taunt recorded in the Gospels as levelled at the Saviour during His hours of mortal agony—"If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross"—said to his class: "Yes, and if He had been the Son of God He would have done so." It is also identical with the view expressed by St. Peter when he first heard of His Master's destined crucifixion, and who on uttering this view was met with the stern rebuke: "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." It is identical in principle with the lines of conduct suggested to our Lord by the tempter, that He should obtain personal ease, glory, and power, by unnatural or questionable means. But it is radically and irreconcilably opposed to the whole system of Christian ethics as established by Christ. He based His teaching on the principle of self-denial and self-sacrifice, of surrender of life itself for the

good of others, and He emphasized this principle by His own death on the cross. If He did not so die; if, as the Koran teaches, He was spared the shame and the agony of this death—aye, and of any death at all—by a miraculous intervention of the Divine power, the whole force of His teaching of self-surrender and self-sacrifice is cut away. He then appears as the author of a teaching which He did not carry out in practice Himself; and Christians, in giving up their lives for the sake of what they believed to be truth and in the service of God and their fellow-men, have not been humble followers of their Master, but have far surpassed Him in zeal and devotion.

Lastly, as to the claim of Islam to be founded on an infallible book, as against the claim of Christianity to rest on the perfect life of its Founder. This contrast is well brought out in Lord Houghton's lines:

“Mohammed's truth lay in a holy book,  
Christ's in a sacred life.  
So while the world rolls on from change to change,  
And realms of thought expand,  
The letter stands without expanse or range,  
Stiff as a dead man's hand;  
While as the life-blood fills the glowing form,  
The Spirit Christ has shed  
Flows through the ripening ages fresh and warm,  
More felt than heard or read.”

The significance of this contrast is not affected by the place which the Bible holds in the Christian faith. Whatever be the exact views taken as to the inspiration or inerrancy of the Bible, the fact that it did not, like the Koran, owe its origin to one time and one source, but is the product of divers ages and divers writers, has effectually prevented it from having a similar effect upon Christianity to that which the Koran has had upon Islam.

And now for the practical results of these three distinctive features of Mohammedan teaching. Islam, in consequence of its denial of the Fatherhood of God, can only very imperfectly grasp the two great commandments of the Gospel, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” and the essential dignity of every member of the human race as the offspring of God. Islam grasps them to a certain extent; for it repudiates the degrading system of caste, which is an integral part of Hinduism, and it does not inflict on Moslem widows the lifelong torture of a despised and down-trodden widowhood, which is one of the worst curses of Hinduism. But in its general degradation of women, and in its toleration, and

even encouragement, of slavery and traffic in slaves, it shows that Christ's teaching of the Fatherhood of God cannot be rejected without a corresponding grievous declension from the standard of Christian ethics.

Again, the denial of Christ's death on the cross carries with it, as an inevitable consequence, the rejection of the Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice and self-surrender. You find Moslems boldly throwing away their lives in battle, in the fierce excitement of fanatical zeal, and supported by a firm belief in the prospect of a sensuous paradise beyond the grave. But you do not find in Islam that principle of patient, unostentatious, unrequited labour and suffering for the good of others, which is a distinguishing feature of Christianity, and which has inspired deeds of charity and the foundation of philanthropic institutions, undreamt of in the world before the advent of Christ, and unknown in regions and among peoples where this religion has not penetrated.

Lastly, the whole history of Mohammedanism is eloquent as to the blighting effect of the doctrine that the will and truth of God were once and for ever delivered in the pages of the infallible and immutable Koran. That book undoubtedly contained a message—partly true and partly erroneous, but still a message—for the age in which it was composed, and for the people for whose immediate use it was written. And accordingly we find that, impelled by its teaching, Islam in the succeeding two centuries became the leading power in the world, not merely in military strength and territorial dominion, but in culture and science. To this day we owe to it our Arabic numerals which are in common use, and without which all our notations and calculations would be cumbrous beyond endurance, and our system of algebra, without which advance in science would have been impossible. But what position does Islam hold in the world now? The fair promise of its youth was speedily clouded over. Stagnation and death set in, and the pre-eminence in learning, in invention, in progress of every kind, passed to the Christian nations. And though at intervals Islam has made spasmodic and partially successful efforts to recover its ascendancy by the sword, it has been impossible to arrest the inevitable decay; and every year, as it passes, renders more apparent and more decisive the triumph of the Cross over the Crescent in the material and intellectual and political spheres. A deadly blight reigns over the lands subject to Moslem dominion—a blight which, as experience has shown, is not natural to them, and is dispelled when, but only when, they come under Christian sway and influence. To what are we to attribute this extraordinary reversal of the

relative position of the two systems from that which existed a thousand years ago? Only one reason can be assigned for it—namely, that Christianity, though it has had its phases of decline and corruption, has yet within it imperishable seeds of life and progress, which do not exist in Islam.

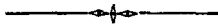
But if all this is so, is it justifiable, is it philanthropic—to put the question on no higher grounds—to adopt an attitude of acquiescence in the continued stagnation and low level of 155,000,000 of our fellow human beings, of whom some 60,000,000 in India, and perhaps 30,000,000 more in Africa, are under British rule? For it is such an attitude of acquiescence which we deliberately adopt if we deprecate any attempt to carry on Christian missions among Mohammedans. Are we not, rather, bound to offer them the opportunity, if they will embrace it, of sharing in those blessings of light and love and life which accompany a sincere adhesion to Christianity? The only possible ground for answering this question in the negative would be the certainty that they would decline to avail themselves of it. And this is, in fact, the ground which is sometimes put forward by objectors to Mohammedan missions. They say that the conversion to Christianity of the followers of Mohammed is an impossibility. If they contented themselves with asserting its extreme difficulty, they would be correct. But individual Moslems have, as the result of missionary effort, embraced the Christian faith, and have in some instances become distinguished Christian ministers and teachers. Abdul Masih, the only direct individual result of Henry Martyn's missionary labours, and the first native of India who was ordained a clergyman of the Church of England, was a convert from Mohammedanism. Dr. Imad-ud-din, the first native of India to receive the degree of Doctor of Divinity from an Archbishop of Canterbury, was a convert from Mohammedanism. Moreover, in our own lifetime Moslems have suffered death as martyrs for embracing Christianity. It is true that as yet there is no outward indication of any general movement towards Christianity among the followers of Mohammed; but the same may be said with regard to the professors of Hinduism and Buddhism. Those, however, who look below the surface believe that signs can be detected of a gradual undermining of these systems, which will lead some day to sudden and startling consequences.

Whatever we may say of Buddhism, clearly Hinduism and strict Mohammedanism are alike incompatible with the discoveries and assured results of modern science. But Moslems, unlike Hindus, have been already taught in their Koran that the Jewish law and the Gospel were actual Divine revelations,



and that Jesus Christ was a Divine teacher, filled with the Spirit of God, and worthy of being styled the Word of God. They have been taught, it is true, that the Koran has confirmed and supplemented the Gospel, and that where the Old and New Testament Scriptures are inconsistent with the Koran, the discrepancies arise from these Scriptures having been corrupted. But with the general diffusion of knowledge this mistaken notion will be dispelled. It will be admitted that the mistakes are on the side of the Koran, and with this admission the authority of Mohammed as an infallible teacher will be shattered. Islam will be recognised to be what it in fact is, an aberration from the age-long stream of Divine truth and revelation, which has flowed through Judaism and Christianity; true in so far as it is in accord with Christian teaching, but erroneous in so far as it has distinctive and conflicting features of its own. Its fate will be seen to be the natural and inevitable outcome of its character. Being an aberration, and not a legitimate development, it has run into an *impasse*, and is incapable of future progress. On us, who are ourselves advancing along the forward track, lies the obligation of doing what we can to lead our Moslem brethren into that road of Christian enlightenment which is at once the path of individual safety and of social progress.

P. V. SMITH.



ART. VI.—ON THE INTERPRETATIVE VALUE OF CERTAIN USES OF THE COPULATIVE CONJUNCTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

WHEN the copulative conjunction is used to connect two propositions, it will often be found that, from the very relation of the connected statements one to another, the conjunction has naturally conveyed something more than a merely copulative significance. I say "from the relation one to another of the propositions" because it is not pretended that the added sense can be said to be strictly contained within the conjunction. But the two statements, as viewed together, are seen immediately by their very collocation to be indicative of a certain relation of sequence—it may be of logical sequence, or it may be of sequence of time—or of comparison, or of illustration which might have been expressed by substituting for "and" some other more significant word.

Take as an example of sequence such a saying as this: "The dark clouds gathered, and the refreshing raindrops