

## ARTICLE VII.

MOHAMMEDANISM AS A MISSIONARY RELIGION.<sup>1</sup>

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IN December 1878 no small stir was created in ecclesiastical circles in England by the delivery in Westminster Abbey of a lecture on missions by the accomplished Orientalist, Professor Max Müller. Zealous churchmen were most concerned to settle the question of the right of the liberal dean to invite a layman to such a service in such a place. Others cared more to learn what the speaker would say on a theme presenting so many sides, and seldom treated by men of science from their point of view. Müller's Lectures on the Science of Religion (delivered three years earlier) had shown not only the tastes and resources of the man, but also how wide is the reach of modern philology.

For the purposes of this paper we are concerned only with a question arising in connection with the classification of the world's religions which Professor Müller laid at the foundation of his discussion. He divides religions into two classes, the *non-missionary* and the *missionary*,—and says very justly: "This is by no means, as might be supposed, a classification based on an unimportant or merely accidental characteristic; on the contrary, it rests on what is the very heart-blood in every system of human faith."<sup>2</sup> Here we may, in passing, at least ask the question, whether our principle of classification should not go beneath even such an important "characteristic" of religious faiths as this, to those views of God and man which supply or destroy all motive and impulse to extend the faith. The three religions which Professor Müller recognizes as having had a missionary character from

<sup>1</sup> A Lecture delivered at Princeton, N. J., at the opening of the Seminary year.

<sup>2</sup> On Missions (Am. ed.), p. 35.

their very beginning are Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity. Whether we accept this principle of classification as of primary or only as of secondary importance, it is evident that practical as well as scientific issues are involved. Our evangelistic methods of approaching other missionary religions (if there are other such) must be well considered. For if these other systems are essentially aggressive, as well as our own; if their aggressive impulse has power behind it, and the prestige of wide success; if they are not only disposed to, but organized for, present and future extension, our grapple with them must be intelligent and circumspect. We have an active, and not merely a passive, resistance to encounter and overcome; our impulse and momentum must prevail over theirs by its better quality and richer measure; our truth has to triumph over their error plainly in part by laying hold of whatever truth there is in them, whether it be elements of truth in doctrine or truth in sentiment and impulse that we discover in them. And it is only honesty to admit that the meagre results of our past missionary efforts among Buddhists and Mohammedans are the less surprising in view of our imperfect apprehension, and frequent positive misapprehension, of the history, the aim, and the power of our antagonists.

With reference to Mohammedanism we ask, With what reason, and in what sense, a missionary character is ascribed to it? If such an inquiry needs justification, historical, political, philosophical, evangelistic reasons suggest themselves abundantly. The past, present, and future of the Turkish empire and the Mohammedan faith are dwarfed by no other topic of the day. And it is no mere chance that complicates political with religious issues in "the Eastern question." Islamism is in its very essence a politico-religious system. And this characteristic of Mohammedanism enters into the explanation both of its persistence and of its extension.

Let us look, first, at some of the more external facts connected with the history and present condition of this faith which seem to justify Professor Müller's description of it.

Founded nearly six centuries after Christianity, Mohammedanism has come to include among its adherents, according to the lowest estimates, one hundred and twenty millions — according to others nearly two hundred millions — of our fellow-men. A recent German missionary writer, depicting the unexampled rapidity of its early progress, in connection with his discussion of its present character and prospects, says: “In the twenty-first year after the Hegira the crescent was already ruling over a realm as large as that over which Rome in its time had ruled; and it may be affirmed that the Saracen empire in eighty years subjugated more kingdoms and lands than the Roman in eight hundred years. In Syria, Palestine, Asia Minor, in Egypt, North Africa, and other neighboring lands, the Koran was at the very outset introduced at the point of the sword; and from these regions moving outward, it was in an incredibly short time carried farther eastward to India and China, westward to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, northward to the borders of the Caspian Sea, and southward to the inaccessible central regions of the African continent.”<sup>1</sup>

As a partial and superficial explanation of these unparalleled triumphs, there is usually suggested to us the fiery enthusiasm of the Moslem hosts, which, e.g. in the battle on the shores of Gennesaret was kindled to the white heat of frenzy by Omar’s battle-cry: “Before you is paradise, behind you death and hell”; and on another occasion, when the soldiers were complaining of and sinking under the intolerable heat of the day, was revived by the stern appeal, “Hell is hotter.” But the questions have often been very unsatisfactorily answered, What originated and sustained this wonderful enthusiasm? And what besides enthusiasm contributed to these crowding victories? And whether the later and present successes of Islam are at all accounted for in the same way we shall have occasion to consider.

The successes of the Mohammedan armies soon reached their limit, at least in certain directions. The victory gained

<sup>1</sup> *Allgem. Miss. Zeitschr.*, Feb. '75, p. 72.

at Tours, in A.D. 732 (one hundred and ten years after the Hegira), by Charles Martel over Abd-er-Rahman, fixed the utmost northwestern limit of Moslem progress. In south-eastern Europe the check came later. Although Charles V. in A.D. 1529 compelled the Turks to retire foiled from the siege of Vienna, this was not decisive; for, more than one hundred and fifty years later, and less than two hundred years ago (A.D. 1688), John Sobieski and Charles of Lorraine needed to repeat the rescue of the Austrian capital. These repulses, however, only proved that in Europe the favorite argument of the sword was to result unfavorably to the Moslem challengers. And by no other argument has Mohammedanism ever been able to make any impression upon Europe. Something more than the relative strength and effective management of battalions plainly needs to be taken into the account.

On the other continents of the Old World, moreover, and quite as much without as with the sword, the Moslem faith has continued to make conquests. And in two memorable instances it was the conquered Mohammedans whose faith was adopted by their conquerors: first, when in the eleventh century the Seljuk Turks, and later, when in the thirteenth century the Mongol victors over the caliphs, became followers of the prophet of Mecca. In regard to the present vitality of Islam, the German missionary writer to whom I have just referred says: "To-day its forward movement is not arrested; instead of this, it is moving toward the interior of Asia and Africa at such a rate that it alone may claim to make as many proselytes as Christianity and Buddhism together—the other two religions which besides itself prosecute missionary work. Every 'believer' who enters a country of 'unbelievers' feels himself called to work to this end. The governor, the soldier, the merchant, the ship's captain are wont to be filled with the same propagandist zeal as the Ulema or the Mollah."<sup>1</sup> Dr. J. M. Arnold, who is qualified to testify by a like missionary experience in Mo-

<sup>1</sup> *u. s.*, p. 75.

hammedan lands, says: "None but those who have witnessed the missionary zeal of the modern Arab merchant would believe what efforts are still being made to proselytize the pagans in the interior of Africa."<sup>1</sup> Munzinger, a recent German traveller in Eastern Africa, writes strongly of the inroads which Mohammedanism has made upon the Coptic Christianity of Abyssinia. Dr. Gründemann (than whom there is no more cautious and reliable authority) testifies, in his *Missions-Atlas*, to the progress now effected by Islam, and without the use of the sword, in Western Africa in the regions about Gambia and Sierra Leone, especially in connection with the efforts of the Mandingoes, and also in the islands of the Indian Archipelago, where the Malays and Buginese are the untiring and successful propagandists of the faith. Scholars and travellers, like Von Kremer and Vámbéry,<sup>2</sup> express the opinion in regard to British India, that Mohammedanism has much prospect not only of regaining its lost religious (not its political) ascendancy, but even of gradually supplanting Brahmanism; inasmuch as the strictly monotheistic Islam in the struggle with an antiquated polytheism will carry off the victory.

If testimony is asked in regard to the methods to which the zeal of modern Mohammedanism resorts, two or three illustrations will suffice. In 1838 Professor Döllinger recorded it as a proof of the powerlessness of Islam that "in Cairo, the classic seat of Mohammedan science, . . . the great school of the Mosque of Flowers, which formerly supplied Africa and Syria with ulemas, had sunk from twelve hundred to five hundred scholars."<sup>3</sup> Dr. Ellinwood, of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, visited Egypt early in 1875, and wrote of this school: "There are at present about ten thousand students, representing all lands where the Mohammedan faith is known. Here are over three hundred men (three hundred and fourteen) who devote themselves to the work of instruction without salary, and with no means

<sup>1</sup> Ishmael, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Vámbéry's *Islam im xix<sup>ten</sup> Jahrh.*, p. 279.

<sup>3</sup> *Mohammed's Religion*, u. s. w., p. 144.

of support but the few gifts of their students, most of whom are even poorer than themselves. . . . . The students, some of whom have come from Morocco and Algeria, from Soudan and Darfour, Zanzibar and the vale of Yemen, Persia and Turkestan, India and Malaya, simply buy their coarse Arab bread in the larger court fronting their great hall, and for lodgings roll themselves in their blankets, and lie down upon the same matted floor upon which their work is done. Ten thousand at a time are thus preparing to proclaim the teachings of the false prophet to the nations of mankind."<sup>1</sup>

Our missionaries in India also tell us that there the Moslems are adopting (whether for defence or aggression is immaterial) street preaching and other like agencies which they find effective in the hands of Christian missionaries. And when new English societies are formed to carry the gospel into the lake regions of Central Africa, wealthy Mohammedans in Constantinople make liberal subscriptions to support the cause of the prophet of Mecca against this Christian invasion of territory which they deem theirs.

There seems, therefore, to be ample external justification for the claim that Mohammedanism is a missionary religion. It is a system that has aimed and is still aiming at wider diffusion in the earth. It has found and is still finding means, of one sort or another, to effect this extension. We are to inquire into the animating spirit of the system and its adherents. The methods that have been and are employed must be among the important exponents of the spirit.

But before we dismiss from consideration the more external and historical facts, we observe that the successes of Islam have been gained and are still won within quite definite bounds of clime and race and culture. And we must ask what these limitations mean?

Vámbéry, the well-known traveller in Western and Central Asia, of whom it is so characteristic to emphasize and exaggerate the physical, social, and political elements of every religious problem, calls attention to the fact that in Asia

<sup>1</sup> New York Evangelist, May 20, 1875.

"the doctrine which originated under the hot sky of Arabia could, as an exotic growth, never anticipate a successful development under a northern clime."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, it has never flourished greatly above 40° north latitude. (Turkestan and Southern Siberia are exceptions to the absolute correctness of this statement.) Barthélemy St. Hilaire<sup>2</sup> recognizes distinctly the fact of local adaptation and limitation. "Islam," he says, "was so well suited to races and places that it has never been able to pass beyond a certain zone. It is the burning desert; it is the nomad life that it requires. It is, as it were, the religion of the tent and the caravan. It has remained encamped under certain latitudes which it has vainly attempted to pass." Renan, looking at another side of the same general facts, writes: "Islamism is plainly the product of an inferior and, so to speak, mediocre combination of human elements. This is the reason why it has been a conqueror only within the middle range of human nature. Savage races have not been able to rise to it, and, on the other side, it has not been able to satisfy peoples that carried in themselves the germ of a stronger civilization."<sup>3</sup>

Within these bounds the system has gained its successes partly by taking advantage in the wisest way of local characteristics; but it must also be borne in mind that it has surmounted natural disadvantages, which it would not be just or wise to overlook. In the Mohammedan system and method there are peculiarities which would have been fatal to the spread of many another faith, and which serve, in part, to explain its failure beyond certain bounds. The one and only miracle to which Mohammed claimed that he could point was the Koran itself. Throughout the book it is asserted that the book—its substance, its style, its very pauses, all unalterable—is literally a work of God. Its translation into other tongues is precluded to the faithful. It is only the original that can carry conviction with it, and do the work which God designed. And Döllinger says that

<sup>1</sup> *u. s.*, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Mahomet et le Coran, p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> *Études d'histoire religieuse*, p. 295.

“in the lands in which Moslem fanaticism is least under restraint it is regarded a transgression to teach a Christian the Arabic tongue; and if a stranger would enter a mosque to gain instruction from the prayers and religious addresses uttered there, he would have forfeited his life.”<sup>1</sup> Thus the very faith of the Moslem denies him the use of some of the most powerful and effective instrumentalities for spreading that faith,—such as direct knowledge and personal conviction. The convert is often simply made to follow the convictions of others, rather than his own; or, if you will call the judgment which controls him his own, it is a judgment necessarily based on very imperfect knowledge.

And if the sword was in early times, and has occasionally been in later times, a powerful agency in working submission, it is no less true that the reputation thus gained for a faith and its propagandists is not wholly favorable to conversion. Hearts revolt, even while the instinct of self-preservation is calling upon men to yield to the stern demand that confronts them.

As for Africa, Döllinger can hardly be wrong in maintaining that the association of the Mohammedan peoples with the slave-trade has hindered, and not altogether helped, the progress of Islam. If one would know what desolation has followed in this track, the pages of Livingston and Schweinfurth are dark with the horrible testimony.

It is also to be considered that it is among peoples of Semitic and Turanian stock that Islam in its boldest forms has triumphed and ruled most readily and effectively; while on Indo-European ground, as in Persia and India, free-thinking has most persistently displayed itself, and an intellectual and spiritual restlessness even now appear, which to some thoughtful minds give indication that there the days of Islam are not to be what they have been.

These are some of the more important facts of an external and historical kind that must be taken into consideration if we would test the reality and estimate the quality of the

<sup>1</sup> u. s., p. 17.



missionary character that has been ascribed to Mohammedanism. We must now pass to the examination of the more internal and essential characteristics of this powerful, aggressive, and persistent system.

As a construction the system is singularly composite; perhaps, as Renan describes it,<sup>1</sup> "the least original" of the religious creations of humanity. It has been characterized as a "variegated mosaic of earlier religions."<sup>2</sup> With elements which may be clearly traced to the ancient paganism of Arabia, and perhaps some to the Sabaeen faith, it combines numerous others derived from Judaism and Christianity. These last take a form and coloring determined partly by the character of Mohammed's own mind and his limited and inaccurate knowledge of the revealed systems upon which he was drawing, and partly by the necessity that was upon him of harmonizing these borrowed elements with his own claim to be himself a prophet, foretold in the revelations that had gone before, and authorized to make new communications of the will of God. These new revelations, however, he did not offer as a novelty. His system was professedly a restoration of the faith of Abraham, the common father of Isaac and of Ishmael—a faith which had been misunderstood and perverted, both by Jews and Christians.

Scholars like Deutsch and Nöldeke are probably correct in recognizing Judaism as having made the largest contribution to the material out of which the prophet of Mecca built up his system, rather than Dean Stanley, who would have us regard it as "an eccentric, heretical form of Eastern Christianity."<sup>3</sup> That church must be broad which could accept Mohammedanism even as one of its "eccentricities." The prophet's attitude toward the Jews was, however, that of sterner hostility than toward the Christians. For the Jews had at an earlier point refused obedience to the succession of great prophets whom God had sent. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, they both received; while the Jews had rejected Jesus, whom Mohammed would have men honor as the

<sup>1</sup> *u. s.*, p. 220. <sup>2</sup> Vámbéry, *u. s.*, p. 61. <sup>3</sup> *Hist. of the Eastern Church*, p. 363.

greatest of the prophets before himself, calling him "the word of truth," and representing him as being strengthened by the Spirit of God; while yet Mohammed denied Jesus's divinity, and all that in the Christian scheme hangs upon this. The Christians, however, as Mohammed saw and understood them, were chargeable not only with rendering to Jesus the adoration due a God, instead of the reverence due a great prophet, but also with polytheism, at least to the extent of tritheism, in worshipping God, his Son Jesus, and Mary, and with idolatry in introducing pictures and images into religious worship.

Now Mohammed, who is said by his followers to have been foretold both by Moses and by Christ, professes to bring back the revelation of the divine will into harmony and continuity with that which Abraham had been commissioned to make to the world. What God had really revealed through Moses and Jesus men could no longer learn reliably from the corrupted Jewish and Christian Scriptures. "The books," could men but have them as they were given, are worthy of all honor, and their authority is a cardinal article of faith. The one article of faith which absolutely distinguishes Islam from Judaism and Christianity is, of course, that relating to the prophetic rights and acts of Mohammed. Other articles, while apparently in agreement with Jewish and Christian tenets, contain much in substance and much in coloring that the old faiths would repudiate. This is notably true of the doctrine of predestination, — a doctrine whose practical power is so conspicuous in Mohammedan lands, — which differs from Jewish and Christian conceptions of the divine decree mainly in excluding so absolutely all moral elements from the divine nature and counsels. God can, e.g. punish good and reward evil, if he please. His sheer will determines what he shall do, and not moral qualities in himself or in the persons and acts that he may be judging.

Keeping these external facts and these general characteristics in mind, we are to look for those elements in Mohammedanism, whether borrowed or original, which have con-

tributed to its progress through the world. We are to guard against ascribing permanent and universal importance to elements and conjunctions which in single instances, or for limited periods (as, e.g. in the seventh century), have smoothed the way or accelerated the march of Islam. It will be quite a common experience, and not at all distinctive, if here and there Mohammedanism has owed its successes more to that which was external and temporary than to that which was essential.

Four periods, quite distinctly marked, may be recognized in its history. When we have explained to our satisfaction what Gibbon calls "the most arduous conquests of Mohammed," in the conversion of the fourteen kindred and neighbors who had become his only proselytes within the first three years after he advanced his claims, and of the few scores who had joined them before the Hegira; when we have accounted for the subsequent spread of the new faith among the tribes of Arabia, for which alone the prophet for a time claimed to have a divine commission, and to whose condition and wants both the religious and the political elements of his system and the methods of his dealing were with amazing sagacity adapted, so that one hundred and fourteen thousand are said to have accompanied the prophet in his last pilgrimage;<sup>1</sup> when we have awarded their just share of praise alike to the simple and emphatic demands, the adroit concessions, the judicious compromises, that characterize the struggle for Arabia; when we have accounted for the swiftly crowding victories of this excited host, full of the pulsations of a new national as well as a fresh religious life, as they dashed against the corrupt and crumbling systems and organizations about them, fired with what Saint Hilaire calls "a frenzy of fanaticism and pillage" — when we have done this, we may have thrown much light on the events of the seventh century, without having approached the solution of the problem of the later and present successes of Islam. The dead prophet rules, and is to-day making conquests over

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon's *Decline and Downfall* (Am. ed.), v. 140.

numerous tribes and wide realms that the living prophet and the first caliphs never saw. What Mohammed was, what his people were, what his times were, we cannot entirely dismiss from our consideration; these have still great determining power<sup>1</sup>; but his system is not merely and wholly a product of these. And it is the system that must supply us the reason why Mohammed's followers are, after so many centuries, among the most untiring of propagandists, and in some parts of the earth the most successful. Gibbon's testimony is: "It is not the propagation, but the permanency, of this religion that deserves our wonder."<sup>2</sup> And the permanency of the system expresses more than a wonderful tenacity of life; there is about it great aggressive vitality.

It may prove a most signal and conclusive endorsement of a religious system, if, being many sided, and really world-wide in its adaptations, it presents one front convincingly to one age, one race, one type of humanity, one grade of social condition or intellectual culture, and another to another. But successes may be due largely to accidents rather than to essentials. And the system, as is true of Mohammedanism, may be rigid and sterile in the extreme, as respects its power either of satisfying or of helping man as man. Its inflexibility and its petrifying power may be a conclusive refutation of its claim to be the last revelation of the All-wise, even in the face of limited and brilliant triumphs and actual local services.

As we eliminate from this complex historical and religious problem those elements which are most plainly local and transient, two lines of inquiry open definitely before us: (1) What are the attracting aspects, and (2) What are the impelling forces in Mohammedanism? What inclines men to receive it, and what incites them to extend it? The answers will be kindred, but not quite identical.

The place which the personal prophet filled for a few years, the Koran has filled now for nearly as many centuries;<sup>3</sup> it is, therefore, mainly in the Koran that we must search for the

<sup>1</sup> Stobart, et al.<sup>2</sup> v. 167.<sup>3</sup> Cf. St. Hilaire, u. s., p. 225.

secret of Islam's permanence and power. If after studying both the man and the book we should be brought no farther than Schlegel's characterization of the system, and say that we have here "a prophet without miracles, a faith without mysteries, and a morality without love," these negative results, while separating it widely from Christianity would not greatly distinguish it from other human systems, and would fail to explain either its intense enthusiasm or its success.

I. What elements in Mohammedanism have won men to it?

(a) In its grossest, rudest approaches to men, the system has prevailed almost wholly by fear. It has subjugated, not converted men.

After Mohammed had said :<sup>1</sup> "Let there be no compulsion in religion," he was taught and proclaimed very different doctrine. Under these later revelations conversion by the sword was no temporary, accidental adjunct to the legitimate ways of extending the faith. Whatever primary regard Mohammed may have had to the temper of his people and of his time when he put this religious instrumentality into the hands of his fierce countrymen, he in his later utterances incorporated into his system, which admitted of no subsequent change, the fullest sanction of this converting agency. Unbelievers may, to the end of the world, be summoned to "the faith, tribute, or the sword." With characteristic sagacity Mohammed left it to be determined by a wise expediency when and where his followers should avail themselves of this warrant. There must be a fair prospect of success ; they are not required to startle and shock men by empty threats ; they may hide the sword when probabilities are against its effective use.

While Mohammed directed believers first to invite men to the faith, the fierce hosts led by Omar and other early caliphs were no patient heralds. Instruction and conviction were tardy processes, for whose slow and doubtful result they could not wait. The modern Moslem, except, perhaps, in some parts of Africa, has yielded to the necessity that re-

<sup>1</sup> Sura ii.

strained the armed hand, and has contented himself with more peaceful agencies. To the pagan the alternative that the Koran offers is simple — conversion or death; to the favored Jew and Christian, whom God had honored with special revelations, that Mohammed himself recognized, an intermediate alternative was presented, that of heavy tribute.

Accordingly, when Mohammedanism has been in position to work out its nature, many of "the faithful" have become such by grace of earthly fear. The drawn scimitar in the hand of him who reads the Koran from the pulpit in Saint Sophia tells more than the fact that the great mosque was won by the sword, though this is the professed import of the sign. The two instrumentalities that have been potent in Moslem history, and that are especially legitimate according to the prophet's teachings, are exhibited together.

(b) Mohammedanism gains favor by the concessions which it makes to human nature, even to corrupt human nature, especially in its Oriental type, and its savage or half-civilized stages of development. While Islam signifies "resignation," i.e. to the irresistible will and decrees of God, whether in matters pertaining to faith, conduct, or destiny, this resignation is greatly helped by the form and measure of what God is supposed to demand of, or impose upon men.

The demand which this system makes upon intelligence is slight; the items of required belief are few and simple. The essential articles of the creed are six in number as they are commonly stated. The Moslem must believe in God, the angels, the books, the prophets, the judgment, and predestination.

By every kind of positive affirmation and protective negation the unity of God is maintained against all real or supposed polytheism, and the impossibility of representing him by any material emblems or symbols is asserted against idolatry. Many of the divine attributes and prerogatives are vividly apprehended and strongly emphasized. He is, however, rather to be revered and feared than loved; and when in rare instances his worthiness to be loved is insisted

upon, it is on the ground of his compassion and bounty, rather than on account of his exalted moral excellence. That is held up as characteristic of God which the natural heart can with least repugnance and least difficulty be made to see and believe in. Far be it from the God of the Koran to accept, much more to originate, salvation by atonement. It is only anticipating by a few sentences to say just here, that this Christian doctrine is also on its human side especially odious to Moslems, because so opposed to the Koran's teaching in respect to the necessity and merit of good works. In general it is true of the creed that few things are insisted upon, while in regard to these the demand of faith is peremptory, as should be true of a system claiming to exist by revelation.

In respect to conduct the system unquestionably exercises some wholesome restraints, and makes some useful requirements. It has wrought beneficially for many tribes that have come under its power, but not above the measure, nor inconsistently with the manner of a purely human system. Even fierce and sensual passions find indulgence and a sanction to a degree quite acceptable to our human nature. On the whole, Islam requires but little change, and that external, in the life of the mass of men. A devotee may, it is true, fill up his life with the observances which the system demands of all, making their performance a condition of salvation, and their most abundant performance the condition of God's highest favor. Five things are required as proofs of piety; the recital of the creed; prayers, fasting, almsgiving, and pilgrimage. Of the amount of routine service thus enjoined upon believers, and all besides that he requires, the prophet says: "God hath not laid on ye any hardship in religion."<sup>1</sup> Yet the observances obligatory upon all are not light, while the amount possible in one day of an enthusiast's devotion is enormous. But it is mechanical, and it is meritorious. It requires a rigorous exercise of memory and will-power, with very little fresh and constant demand upon the intelligence and the finer sensibilities. And it pays well. "Each step taken by

<sup>1</sup> Sura xxii.

the devotee towards the Kaaba blots out a sin.”<sup>1</sup> Each recital of a formal prayer counts substantially to the worshipper’s credit.

It is, therefore, the punctilious performance of observances, rather than a radically reformed morality that expresses the chief influence of Mohammedanism on conduct. If the evil things that have been prohibited are still done, the transgressor needs but to multiply the formalities of religion, and atonement is ample. “One soul cannot make satisfaction for another; no intercessor will be accepted for any man, nor shall any compensation be received.”<sup>2</sup> While sins are recognized, the system makes light of sin; God’s holiness being so feebly apprehended human sin is more a legal trespass than a moral abomination,—and where evil deeds only count on the one side, acts of obedience are easily counted, weighed, measured, on the other.

There is accordingly in Mohammedanism little that is inwardly humbling to human nature, and much to foster pride, self-sufficiency, and self-righteousness. With these feelings toward one’s self, scorn and bitter hatred toward others are easily and inevitably allied. “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are,” is an utterance more natural to the modern Moslem than even to the Pharisee of old. To be a model Mohammedan is no impossibility to human nature; and the man feels, moreover, that he is not vainly attempting to pass off a morality for a religion. For are not all his works wrought in obedience to God,—and is he not besides a scrupulous and resolute believer?

But beyond all this we must recognize the presence and power (c) of important elements of religious truth in Mohammedanism.

The system does exalt and magnify the existence and supremacy of one God,—the God, as Moslems believe, of Jews and Christians also. The system does recognize, and with great emphasis, many of his attributes. In his worship the Moslem delights to recite the hundred epithets by which

<sup>1</sup> Stobart, *Islam and its Founder*, 189.

<sup>2</sup> Sura ii.



his sense of the divine glory is best expressed. Von Kremer, speaking of the past and present of Mohammedanism in India, says : " In India Islam has accomplished more for the cause of monotheism against heathenism than all similar efforts on the side of Christianity."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, with many fantastic, and many heathenish conceptions of its own, it may be, and yet with much power, this system asserts the existence of a great spiritual world, intermediate between God and our human race. It utters loud protest against materialism as well as pantheism. It maintains as fundamental truth the possibility, the legitimacy, the necessity, the reality of divine revelations made to our race through chosen messengers, angelic or human. It does not believe in a self-secluding, an unknowable, an indifferent God, but in one who has made many special disclosures of his will, authenticated sometimes by outward miracles, sometimes, as in the case of the Koran, by their internal, incomparable, conclusive excellence. It proclaims a future life and its retributions, a heaven and a hell. Degraded or revolting in our view as much of Mohammed's teaching on this point may be, he has not wholly disowned, as so many in Christendom are ready to do, the demands of our own moral nature and God's moral government.

With many errors of mischievous tendency, and yet in other respects most worthily, it exalts the will of God to supremacy over the affairs of the world. Though Mohammed seems to ascribe this rightful dominion to the mere will of God, divorced from all else that characterizes him, he at least avoids the error of emptying his conception of God of capacity and right to purpose and decree, and to maintain what he ordains. Here, again, the system meets a vehement demand of our human nature.

Unconditional faith is made man's first duty to God, with unquestioning submission as its normal result and proof. And to this submission constant practical expression should be given. That one is a believer should not be left to be

<sup>1</sup> u. s., p. 254.

very doubtfully inferred from a very colorless conduct. Noon-day, and the hours of night, public and private scenes and relations, should bear a clear-voiced testimony. Few successive hours could one be in the company of a Moslem without meeting many tokens to his faith. In an imperfect way Islam recognizes the natural equality of men, and much more distinctly the brotherhood of believers; and in this again, it commends itself to our better nature beyond many of the systems that it has supplanted. In India this has been unquestionably a chief source of its success, especially among the lower orders, who rejoice in emancipation from bondage to caste.

To deny that these truths, and others like them, half apprehended as they may be, mutilated and corrupted though they may be, are in part the explanation of the wide and strong dominion of Islam would only complicate our problem. And Mussulmans are men who in accepting and maintaining their faith do not wholly disown their humanity and its real relations to God.

We shall take a further step toward the interpretation of the aggressive impulse and power of Mohammedanism if we ask:

II. What gives the system when adopted its stubborn tenacity of life, its active and passive persistence, and its zeal?

A faith received is not always sturdily maintained. By universal experience the Moslem must be pronounced one of the most persistent and unyielding of believers. Perhaps no other faith can be named that has lost so few adherents by apostasy. To some extent, no doubt, this results from dread of the reputation and the fate of apostates. In its theory Mohamedanism is a political religion; the apostate is, therefore, in the normal condition of things, also a traitor, and merits the heaviest penalty of the civil law, as well as the judgments of the future life. His past acts, his domestic relations are all tainted as illicit and sinful, and his very life is forfeited.

• But in other ways the political character of the faith, and its other secular relations, tend towards steadfastness.

Whatever the believer is, politically, socially, or in any other way, he is as a Mussulman. His religious life is not so fenced off by itself that his faith can rule it alone; he is a Moslem through and through. A system so comprehensive and so penetrating in its claims, while at the same time so little spiritual, — making itself to be remembered and proclaimed in a thousand ways in all that a man is and does, binds him by these thousand visible, tangible bonds to continued and outspoken fidelity. Its constant ministrations to pride, both as before men and as before God, not only favor its acceptance, but tend to root it more deeply, and to make either the renunciation or the hiding of the faith difficult. Pride in being a believer, pride in the merit so easily won with God, not only bind the heart to the faith, but rear barriers strong and high against all other systems. Especially are the natural aversions of the human heart to the gospel intensified and embittered by the whole reflex influence of Islam upon its adherents. Its exclusiveness and seclusiveness, the hatred which it inspires toward unbelievers, the intense fanaticism which it develops, bring the faithful under constantly renewed bonds to each other, as well as each to himself and to God, and separate them from other men. If a Moslem abjure the faith, it is not merely into the company of aliens that he must go, but among those a thousand times accursed by God's greatest prophet.

Systems, however, that may have been vigorously adopted and may be firmly held, are not for that reason aggressive in their impulse, or constituted for successful assault upon other faiths. There are systems whose attitude toward others seems to be that of mere indifference; there are faiths whose limitation is one of their chief distinctions. Thus all national religions are weakened in their significance and in their power by expansion. Professor Müller's classification, as we have seen, includes but three of the great religions of the world in the missionary class.

A religious system that seeks diffusion needs a motive power, as well as a body of truth to be believed, and of pre-

scribed observances to be maintained, and a life to stand as its true representative. This motive power may lie in a deep conviction which is wrought, a great faith that is developed, a great zeal and enthusiasm that are kindled, a great love that is implanted; and with one or more of these there needs to be a great power of self-command, in connection with adequate inducement to cultivate, regulate, and put into use all possible energies and resources that can advance the one cause.

The most obvious sources from which such an aggressive impulse can spring, in the case of a religious system, are three: *a.* Desire for the glory and triumph of the system, its founder, or its God. *b.* Desire for the distinctions and rewards which may be won by the zealous worker for the faith. *c.* Desire for the good of men, to be secured by their receiving the truth and experiencing its power.

These may exist singly (or at least the first two of them), or they may be found in combination; they may be qualified by other elements which considerably modify their character. The world looks sadly, yet it has been too often forced to look, on gross religious partisanship, and unhallowed religious ambitions. Where the religious is closely interwoven with the political, as in Islam, it has sometimes been hard to decide whether religious or secular triumphs were the dominant aim. Or, with the personal distinctions and rewards that are sought by zealous service, there may be associated the desire to be an instrument of God's triumph by the conversion or conquest of his foes. But it is needless to suggest other possible forms and combinations of these forces. The three principles co-exist and work together in just proportion and development only in the missionary spirit of Christianity. This alone makes account, and adequately, alike of the triumphs of the truth, the good of men, and the gracious rewards of the faithful worker. Whether the Christian looks toward God and his truth, toward a needy world, or toward the honors that are at God's right hand, nothing less than a great faith, a great love, a great zeal, a great devotion

is a fit result. And our gospel contains not only a warrant for all this, but vital germs, and continued nutriment for it all.

Of what sort, then, is the missionary spirit of Mohammedanism? What is its view, and what its feeling? The fundamental article of faith in regard to the world is, that all men by nature belong to Islam. By erroneous teachings and evil examples the great multitude have been drawn aside into false faiths. The world has, however, been given to believers; by conversion or subjugation they are to gain dominion in it. This view of the relation of believers to the world, and the world to the faith will of course be modified by the effect of the Mohammedan doctrine of predestination. The first influence of this is in the direction of passiveness, as it tends to stifle all desire and effort to change a condition of things which God has decreed. It also tends to tolerance toward those whose state of ignorance and error results from God's decree. But another aspect of the doctrine, when the believer learns what God has decreed for the faith, incites to energetic endeavors to realize the victories that are foretold.

In the earlier period of the prophet's career he had written: "If thy Lord had pleased, verily all who are in the earth would have believed together. Wilt thou then compel men to become believers? No soul can believe but by the permission of God." And again: "Let there be no compulsion in religion. Now is the right way made distinct from error," etc. Mohammedanism could, therefore, at this stage be tolerant, or at least non-aggressive toward foreign error, refusing controversy, and aiming more to maintain itself within the bounds of the Arab race than to extend itself more widely. Larger conceptions of the legitimate reach of this monotheistic creed, and of the claim and destiny of the faith that had been proclaimed from heaven, and ambition made more grasping by success, changed the prophet's attitude and utterances. The defensive and tolerant gave place to the most fiercely aggressive policy toward all infidel peoples. Every believer is now told that he holds a commission from

on high to put down error and evil. This is recognized not in theory, but practically as a common right and duty of believers, not as a privilege of a professional class among the faithful, to be agents in accomplishing the triumphs of God's cause, as in the execution of his vengeance.

The natural fondness of the Arab hordes for strife and their greed for gain were thus turned to account, and a lawful and holy sphere of action found for the characteristic passions of these restless spirits. Natural impulses tell in the same direction with the summons of an instructed and aroused conscience, pointing out field work for the faith as the highest sphere of action, the paramount earthly duty. The passion for conversion and conquest became fanatical. "It was a surrender of the Moslem's birthright," says Bosworth Smith,<sup>1</sup> "if he did not extend his faith."

Another powerful motive was made auxiliary to the same result through the rewards promised to the loyal and valiant. God is a rich, wise, and liberal paymaster. The tenth Sura makes this appeal to the hesitating and calculating: "What hath come to you, that ye expend not for the cause of God, since the heritage of the heavens and of the earth is God's? . . . . A goodly recompense hath God promised to all; and God is acquainted with what you do. Who is he that will lend a generous loan to God? So will he double it to him, and he shall have a noble reward."

While there was a unique power in these professed divine revelations and appeals when they came in their freshness to the peculiar people to whom they were first addressed, Islam regards Mohammed as the last great prophet, to whose words nothing can be added, and from them nothing be taken. Therefore to-day through the wide Mohammedan world the Koran, whose latest utterances were its fiercest, is final authority, prescribing the duty and moulding the views and fashioning the spirit of believers. We cannot count it strange that great efforts and great sacrifices have marked this history. A place only a little less conspicuous and

<sup>1</sup> p. 108.

glorious, rewards only a little less munificent, than those of the first warriors for the faith, whose hazards justify their pre-eminence, perpetually invite the zeal, effort, and sacrifice of the faithful.

But what shall we say of the quality of this so-called missionary spirit of Islam? There is intensity in it. What of its tenderness; what of its sympathy; what of its disinterestedness; at whom, at what, is it chiefly looking in the effort, the giving, the sacrifice, the endurance to which it prompts? To what in God's nature and action is it the response, and of what the counterpart? For what in man's condition does it seek relief? What does the outstretched, helping hand express that cannot be repressed; in what tone does the voice convey its message, telling more than words can do what manner of men the prophet's faith would make of us?

In the most favorable view that can be taken of it, this great zeal and earnestness of Mohammedanism seems to be inspired by reverence for God's nature and rightful authority, by jealousy for his honor, by gratitude for his bounties and compassions. So far forth all promises well. But this fair show can deceive us only through our own fault. Moral perfections may in terms be ascribed to God, but they do not mould the type of his authority and all its exercise. It is not for their honor that he is, and that we should be, most jealous. With endless iteration the Moslem ascribes to God compassions and mercies. But what these bestow is material and sensual, and not moral and spiritual. Our likeness to God is not in God's thought, and how shall it be in ours? No redemptive act or wish or thought is possible to God. And so it is in sheer arbitrariness, if at all, that he bids the faithful seek the conversion of infidels. It is not at a great price that his love and justice have made those believers who are such; and how shall they go out humble, grateful, eager, tearful, offering others, with gladly received warrant, the benefit of the same ransom, cleansing, and renewal by the power of grace?

Pride, ambition, desire of reward, are motive principles in another group of which Mohammedanism makes the largest use. It is a glory of Christianity that it knows how to preserve, mellow, refine, and direct these, so that they are ornaments to character and healthful springs of action. Under the influence of Islam they become passions of the fiercest and most malignant type, blasting the heart that harbors them and the objects of their unholy working. No system expresses more abhorrence of hypocrisy, none tends more directly to develop it as a first fruit. The Moslem missionary, with the sword in his creed and in his heart, if not in his hand, demands profession of faith, at first caring nothing for, and taking no measures to secure true assent to, and sincere adoption of the faith. Repeat the formula and you are safe; conviction may follow when and if it will. Your converter is entitled to his outward and future, as he has gained his present inner reward. As for scorn and hate, Christianity allows them no existence as toward men, but only as toward evil. In the attitude of Moslems toward the infidel world no other sentiment is so conspicuous or so radical. It must be, and history on a thousand bloody pages tells that it has been, a matter of supreme indifference to Islam whether it convert, subjugate, or slay the unbeliever. The will of Allah is done; and the proud, stern, and merciless believer in Allah congratulates and flatters himself, and looks for Paradise.

This is the missionary religion which is pronounced by consistent Free-Religionism a way to heaven good enough for those who may happen to have been born in it, or converted or subdued by it. This is the system which numerous sceptical travellers and theorizers look upon and describe as the best system that has yet appeared for certain areas and certain strata in humanity. This is the system that some very "broad" Protestants, and Catholic writers like Möhler and Döllinger, would have us greet with sympathy as an ally, and bid it "God speed" through dark Africa and the islands of the sea. Grant that the consistent Mohammedan is lifted in



many respects far above the heathen and the savage ; all experience shows that he yields with tenfold greater reluctance to the message of the cross. We cannot unite with Möhler in saying : " In large districts of Asia and Africa Islam has only been paving the way for Christianity, and Mohammed has been only a servant of Christ." This is theory, and not experience. Catholic Christianity must necessarily encounter some difficulties that a pure Protestantism escapes. Nor can we agree with Döllinger in saying : " One may well indulge the thought in regard to Africa, that this religion, which corresponds far better with the low capacity of the Negro tribes, and therefore finds far more ready access than the more spiritual Christianity, has a mission to fulfil here, and is to serve as a preparation and a stage of transition for the final introduction of the gospel." We cannot see or say that for any portion of the human race the crescent points out the best way to the cross.