

## ARTICLE VII.

## THE OUTLOOK FOR ISLAM.

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IF asked to name the three organized religious forces which constitute the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the prince of evil upon earth, the mightiest antagonists of Christianity, with which the fight for mastery bids fair to be fiercest and longest, one need not hesitate to answer, Mohammedanism, Brahmanism, and Confucianism. And the system founded by the Arabian "prophet" is full as likely as either of the other two to endure for centuries, and maintain to the end a sturdy and desperate resistance to the gospel. Compared with the struggle certain to be required to conquer this triad of errors and iniquities, how insignificant the task of evangelizing all the world besides, including Japan, the Islands of the Sea, and even Africa with its measureless mass of degradation and savagery.

The relations existing between the Cross and the Crescent are peculiar and most intimate. These two forms of faith and practice had their origin in Southwestern Asia in regions adjacent and as closely connected as Palestine and Arabia, while their founders and early propagators were close kindred of the great Semitic race. At many points they have not a little in common, holding certain great names in highest honor and reverence, cherishing the same religious traditions, and even agreeing upon a few fundamental doctrines. Nor does it approach to slander to affirm that, in a general way, Islam is largely but a gross heretical perversion of the gospel. Still further, these two antagonistic systems have

dwelt side by side from the first, engaged in strife unceasing and irrepressible, with victory inclining sometimes to one and sometimes to the other. More than once, and for generations together, it has looked as though the Moslem would prove himself more than a match for the Christian, and would master the whole civilized world. It was six centuries after the ministry of Jesus ended before Mohammed began to teach, and three centuries after the Roman Empire by imperial proclamation had been made Christian. But immediately, through the cogent persuasion of the sword, his ideas and the acknowledgment of his claims began to spread like wild-fire in every direction, until his dominion extended from the Caspian on the east to the Atlantic on the west.

Egypt was invaded by the fiery zealots of Islam as early as 641, nor was any force available able to withstand their impetuous onset. Before the end of the century the Arabs were in supreme power upon the entire southern coast of the Mediterranean. In 711 they crossed to Spain, and soon were masters in that peninsula. In 731 they pierced the Pyrenees, though only to meet with most humiliating and overwhelming defeat at Tours the next year under the crushing blows of Charles the Hammer. On that joyful day for Christendom the threatening tide of Moslem conquest reached its flood in Western Europe, though eight dreary centuries were destined to roll away before complete deliverance was vouchsafed to Spain. Meantime in the East the soul of the Prophet was "marching on." Jerusalem and Damascus accepted the Koran under compulsion as early as 637. Within that generation the Abassides had laid the solid foundations of glory and power upon the Tigris, with Bagdad as the seat of empire, with the distant Oxus as the eastern border, and with Haroun al Rashid among famous caliphs. About 1000 A. D. the Afghan conqueror, Mahmoud of Ghanzi, pierced the Khyber Pass with his legions, made no less than twelve campaigns in the valleys of the Indus and the Gan-

ges, and thus established Mohammedan dominion in that vast peninsula, which reached its culmination under the Great Mogul, Aurangzeb (1658-1707). When the Holy City fell into Moslem hands a terrible life-and-death struggle commenced with the Eastern Empire, which with occasional truces lasted eight hundred years, and ended with the capture of Constantinople in 1453, and the annihilation of the Christian party in the momentous and protracted duel between religions. The advent of the semi-savage Turks upon the scene added to the fierceness of the conflict and, through the Crusades resulting, involved all the foremost nations of Europe. The Bosphorus was crossed by these redoubtable foes of the Cross as early as 1360. With incredible ardor and enterprise they continued to press westward and northward, adding one province after another to their domain, their fleets meantime sweeping the Mediterranean, and filled all Christendom with terror; nor was an effectual check administered to their ambition, until their fleet was well-nigh annihilated by Don John of Austria in 1571 at Lepanto, and much more in 1683, when the hosts of Mohammed IV. were utterly routed by John Sobieski under the walls of Vienna. This irreparable disaster to Moslem schemes was to Eastern Europe what the similar one at Tours had been to Western Europe nearly a thousand years before. For two centuries, as a military power, and as against Christian nations, Mohammedanism has kept itself wholly in the attitude of defence. But abundance of vitality and aggressive force still survive. In various extensive regions its propaganda is in vigorous and successful operation, and in the main is content to resort to weapons less material than the sword.

When the Crescent had triumphed everywhere in North Africa from the Nile to the Straits of Gibraltar, the faithful presently turned their faces toward the Sahara, unappalled by the spectacle of its dread wastes. From that day to this, as traders and slave-stealers, in caravans they have

been continually crossing the desert back and forth, as well as entering the interior from the Red Sea, and wherever they have gone acting always as fervid emissaries of their faith. And at length it has come to this, that the creed and practice of the Koran largely prevail on the West Coast, in the Niger basin and the region around Lake Chad, and throughout the entire Soudan; that is, over a broad area which stretches across the continent, nearly 5000 miles, from Cape Verde to Cape Guardafui, and where the bulk of the population of Africa is massed. The Congo Free State contains thousands who pray facing towards Mecca, though the equator may be taken as approximately the southern limit of Islam, and it must be remembered that as we leave the Sahara behind and approach this line, faith and obedience are more and more only a veneer, or a mere varnish, and more and more the original fetishism of the savage tribes asserts itself. On the eastern side mountainous Abyssinia stands an impregnable fortress, but beyond it in the valley of the Upper Nile, and in the region of the great lakes, Mohammedanism is present in power, as the activity of the Arab slave-stealers and the recent troubles in Uganda abundantly testify. Long before the Portuguese made their advent upon the East Coast, Moslem settlements existed at Zanzibar and Mozambique, and are to be found to-day within the limits of Cape Colony.

It was in the early centuries that venturesome Arab merchants found their way through the Straits of Malacca and to the seaports of the Celestial Empire for the purpose of trade and settlement, while others of the faithful, bent on the same errand, pushed their journey over mountains and deserts, fixing themselves in the western and northern portions. Not less than 200,000 are said to dwell in Peking, they form a large fraction of the population in several of the principal cities, and in two or three provinces are so numerous as to aim at political control. In Kan-suh, in 1855-72, they were strong enough to maintain a rebellion which was

only put down at immense cost of life and treasure. Several excellent authorities estimate the Moslems in China at 30,000,000, though others would diminish this number by at least one-half. In early days also the followers of the false prophet made their appearance in the Malay Peninsula, and since have spread throughout the East Indies and the Spanish islands in the same waters, and constitute a large element which steadily increases by conversion. One-half of the 22,000,000 of Java are set down as Mohammedans, 2,000,000 in Sumatra and 4,000,000 in the Philippines, and from this remote region every year thousands make devout pilgrimage to Mecca.

It requires a vivid imagination to grasp the amazing territorial spread of Islam. Excepting Christianity, no other religion can compare with it for area covered. Consider these figures as helping to a mastery of the stupendous fact. "There is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet," is a confession of faith often on the lips of thousands at every point from Senegambia across the entire enormous breadth of the Eastern Hemisphere, through 140 degrees of longitude, 9000 miles, to the Yellow Sea, and from the Great Wall and the Black Sea almost to Australia and the Cape of Good Hope; that is, from forty degrees north latitude to thirty south, a distance of 5000 miles! The teachings of the Koran are a factor in the religious life of the southern half of Asia scarcely second to any other for potency, while over at least three-fifths of Africa their influence is unapproached by that of any other man or book. In endeavoring to gain a knowledge of the number of Moslems we are compelled to depend mainly upon estimates, since, outside of India, census tables are not to be had. And it is in reference to the Dark Continent, whose populous interior is so little known, that the guesses of the statisticians differ most widely. Thus, Dr. C. N. Cust is of the opinion that more than half the population of Africa is Mohammedan, while others conclude that one-third is more

likely to be the correct statement of the existing proportion. The following table is offered as furnishing at least an approach to the probable facts in the case:—

India .....	57,000,000.
Turkey in Asia .....	22,000,000.
Malaysia .....	20,000,000.
China .....	15,000,000.
Persia .....	8,000,000.
Russia in Asia .....	7,000,000.
Afghanistan .....	4,000,000.
Total, Asia .....	133,000,000.
Central Africa .....	50,000,000.
Northern Africa .....	15,000,000.
Scattering .....	5,000,000.
Total, Africa .....	70,000,000.
Russia .....	2,600,000.
Turkey in Europe .....	2,200,000.
Bulgaria .....	670,000.
Other States .....	600,000.
Total, Europe .....	6,000,000.
Total Mohammedans .....	209,000,000.
Total Hindus .....	208,000,000.
Total Confucianists .....	350,000,000.
Total Christians .....	400,000,000.

It has already appeared that, as to territorial extent and political power, Islam has long since passed its palmy days. Serious losses have been suffered, and for generations steady decline has been in progress, until the Sultan especially is the "sick man" indeed. Early in this century Greece gained her independence, and since then various other important provinces lying upon the northern and western border have been lost. The "unspeakable Turk" exists in Europe only upon sufferance, and is liable almost any day to be utterly expelled. Arabia was never thoroughly conquered, the bulk of the population in the interior care little for the mandates of the ruler on the Bosphorus, and only the parts adjacent to the Red Sea can be considered subject to his rule. Egypt practically threw off the Turkish yoke under the lead of Me-

hemet Ali some fifty years since, and now British influence is supreme upon the Nile. Algeria is a French dependency, and all the signs of the times unite to make it evident that ere long European "protectorates" and "spheres of influence" will include every region and tribe from Cape Blanco to Cape Town. Still further, England is firmly enthroned as successor to the Great Mogul in the magnificent peninsula which holds much the largest united mass of Moslems in the world, while in the charming region of the Spice Islands the Netherlands sway the sceptre. Only four considerable countries—Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, and Morocco—can be named, which in the strict sense are to be classed as Mohammedan, and these together cover but a paltry 2,000,000 square miles, which also are largely desert.

But if we turn to statistics of population, or to the religious aspects of the case, there is far less to inspire courage and hope. No past generation ever contained so many followers of the false prophet as are alive to-day. Not only are they constantly increasing under the operation of natural causes, but in India under the *pax Britannica* they multiply more rapidly, and, especially in the East Indies and Central Africa, conversions are continually occurring. Furthermore, abundance of vitality, and vigor, and aggressive energy still survive in this pernicious system. Islam remains the same proud, haughty, and uncompromising foe as aforesaid. The "infidel" is still regarded with a mixture of hatred and contempt. As yet Christianity has accomplished little towards recovering the precious possessions which, twelve long centuries since, by bloody violence were wrested from her grasp. No serious inroads have been made, no distinguished victories have been won. All the sacred places of our faith continue in alien and hostile hands. The Mohammedan heart is flinty and obdurate almost beyond any other. In spite of divers solemn pledges and edicts, under which perfect impunity is secured to all who would change their religious faith,

it yet remains that to all intents and purposes to dare to become a "Christian dog" is to sign one's death-warrant. Within a few months in Persia, with a liberal-minded Shah as ruler, a solemn warning has been given to the missionaries that expulsion from the realm will be the penalty for endeavoring to evangelize a "true believer." Fanaticism which is easily stirred to frenzy, and mob violence, and murder, is present in almost any thoroughly Moslem community. Cairo is the seat of a great university with a numerous company of "teachers," and some 10,000 "students" who are gathered from all quarters near and remote, are drilled mercilessly in all the precepts and performances of their faith, and then, overflowing with ardor and reckless zeal, are sent north, south, east, or west, to make proselytes and gain Paradise. Either Buddhism, or Brahmanism, or Confucianism, or even fetishism when coupled with grossest savagery, is easier to meet and master than this marvellous compound of truth and most subtle and mischievous error.

But even the religious aspect of things is not altogether discouraging. To this great threatening storm-cloud there is a silver lining. Several considerations are worthy of mention. It has already been suggested that divers hostile and irresistible political influences are making havoc of numerous ideas and methods which are fundamental to Islam. According to the Koranic conception, church and state, or religion and civil government, are one and inseparable, distinctions with scarcely a difference, only dissimilar forms of the same substance. Once it was so that the faithful everywhere were under the stern and pitiless rule of the sword. But in these degenerate days it has come to pass that a majority of Mohammedans are subject to Christian rulers, while not even in Turkey can the dread potentate do at all as he would with his own. Of Russia he stands in mortal fear, while upon England and other European powers he depends for support, without which his dominion would speedily sink to irretrievable



ruin. It is worth while to take particular note how generally this religion has passed altogether out from under the civil jurisdiction of its adherents. Some 70,000,000 Moslems are amenable to British law, 20,000,000 more yield to the mastery of the Netherlands, 9,500,000 to that of Russia, 4,000,000 to France, as many to Spain, and enough in addition to Portugal, etc., to make an aggregate of upwards of 100,000,000. After these there are about 50,000,000 whose rulers are either pagan, like China, or else are only semi-Mohammedan. Not more than 50,000,000 remain for the dominion of the orthodox Sultan, Shah, Ameer, and the like, and all these magnates are now sadly "cabin'd,cribb'd,and confin'd." In particular, it will be seen that to the Anglo-Saxon has fallen the lion's share of the vast possessions bequeathed by the famous Arabian reformer and seer. The Rev. H. H. Jessup<sup>1</sup> reminds us that, "widely extended as is the Mohammedan religion, it is completely encircled by Anglo-Saxon, Christian, political and civil influence."

In this connection it cannot but be counted a most remarkable providence that, far back at the very beginning, this mightiest force for the destruction of Islam began to be fashioned. How strange that when the future prophet was a lad of fifteen (595), Augustine and his forty monks crossed over into Britain, bent on the conversion of the pagan Saxons. While in the East Omar and Othman, Saladin, Solyman and the others, were engaged in smiting the infidels hip and thigh, and essaying to compel the universal acceptance of their creed, in a little island at the extreme northwest of creation a nation was slowly "mewing its mighty youth," and coming to a consciousness of its tremendous mission. Not to multiply parallels, Mahmoud of Ghanzi died about the time William of Normandy was born, and soon after the latter gained the battle of Hastings the Turks conquered Asia Minor. Elizabeth was a contemporary of Akbar, and while his successors were

<sup>1</sup> The Mohammedan Missionary Problem, p. 78.

enlarging the bounds of their empire in Bengal and the Decan, the East India Company, all unconscious of its destiny, was busy opening factories about Bombay and Madras, and on the Hoogley. William III. came to the throne of England while Aurangzebe was at the summit of his glory and power, while it was in the utter chaos which attended the dissolution of his empire that Clive, Hastings, and Dalhousie found their peerless opportunity to found a British Empire in the Orient—rather it was thus that the necessity was thrust upon them of annexing province after province until, from the Indus to the Irawadi, from the “Home of Snow” to Cape Comorin, the whole land was possessed. And it was far more from this same force of circumstances, than from settled public policy, or deep-laid plan, that England times by the score has meddled effectually with Mohammedanism, by turns restraining and impelling, rebuking, threatening and chastising. As in the Crimean war, and in Egypt within a decade. Or take, as a fine illustration, the noble and weighty doings of Stratford de Redcliffe in Constantinople, 1805–52. Macaulay affirmed that “English valor, and English intelligence, have done less to extend and to preserve our Oriental empire than English veracity. No oath which superstition can devise, no hostage however precious, inspires a hundredth of the confidence which is produced by the ‘Yea, yea,’ and ‘Nay, nay,’ of a British envoy.” And Mr. Jessup declares<sup>1</sup> that “this advantage the English enjoy to-day to a tenfold greater degree. Wherever an Englishman or an American may travel among Mohammedans (for they call both Angliz, as having the same language and religion) he will be received throughout the Turkish Empire with a friendly welcome and hospitality.” And further: “Another fact which has increased the confidence of Mohammedans in Syria in the Angliz, has been the residence among them of that noblest style and stamp of man, the British Christian merchant. More potent

<sup>1</sup> Missionary Problem, p. 81.

than the sermons or the tracts of missionaries has been the silent influence of this class, who in the temptations of trade, the crookedness, duplicity, and corruptness of native merchants and officials, have maintained their integrity untarnished, until the highest and most sacred oath a Moslem can swear, even above the oath by the beard of the Prophet, is *by the word of an Englishman!*"

But, in the inquiry concerning the outlook for Islam, how about the results of direct evangelizing work? In any considerable measure has the gospel proved itself to be the power of God in the overthrow of this arch-enemy of righteousness throughout the Orient? Two or three forms of statement will give the substance of a satisfactory reply. In the first place, it must not be forgotten that this is a most stony and barren field, the difficulties are peculiar, manifold, numerous, and exceeding great, and hence too much must not be expected. Though in recent years in almost every land barriers to the entrance of Christianity have removed in a most wondrous way, so that open doors are abundant, yet here is a vast realm which remains barred against the gospel, and at least at most points is intangible and inaccessible. For example, the Soudan with its 50,000,000 is yet *terra incognita*, and, when explored and entered, the deadly climate must be endured. As for the four countries which are strictly Mohammedan, there to reject the Koran and accept the Word of God is to become rebel, traitor, outcast, outlaw, all in one; is to endure the loss of friends and goods, if not also of life. Or, if the law does not inflict imprisonment or capital punishment, the populace is certain to make life intolerable. The Turk is cruel and implacable, and the Arab, wild son of the desert, is extremely intolerant, and in his religious prejudices most intense and passionate. In India a large fraction of the faithful dwell in native states, whose rulers are Moslems, and where British restraint is limited and only partially felt. Everywhere polygamy and slavery are allowed, as well as di-

vers fleshly lusts dear to the natural heart. Moreover, for twelve hundred years Islam has been in most intimate contact with forms of Christianity exceedingly corrupt, and utterly lacking in spiritual power. The various sects, semi-idolatrous, and with morals shamefully low, are ready on the instant to fly at each other's throats. Therefore it is not strange that the followers of the prophet hold the religion of Jesus in horror and loathing.

Such as these are some of the appalling obstacles which hedge up the way of entrance into Moslem countries and Moslem hearts. Hence it was only natural that the churches should be slow and hesitating in entering upon this herculean task. Besides, almost from the date of the Hegira deadly war had been waged between the two religions. The Arab and the Turk had displayed such vigor and dreadful determination, that the Christian world had long been satisfied to be simply let alone, and to be safe. To kill, rather than convert, was the ingrained impulse. Islam was a synonym for all that is abominable, and accursed. In 1818 the American Board sent its pioneers to the Levant, began work in Beirut in 1823, and in 1831 entered Constantinople. The Persian mission was founded in 1833. European Turkey was unoccupied until 1858. Four years earlier the American United Presbyterians had established themselves upon the Nile. In 1870 the Syrian and Persian missions were turned over to the Presbyterian Church. The English Church Missionary Society is represented both in Persia and Palestine. With this several other organizations are joined in evangelizing the Holy Land. The assault upon Arabia has been begun within a decade, and both from the west at Aden, and from the east at Busrah, Bahrein, and Muscat. Two or three societies are blazing the way in Northern Africa. Finally, on the border at Peshawar and Quetta eager eyes are watching, and longing hearts are waiting, to behold the signal which tells that

Afghanistan is open to the message of salvation. The bulk of these beginnings belong to the last fifty years.

So brief a period has passed that large results cannot be with reason expected. The time of harvest is not yet, and scarcely even that of sowing. It is rather the day for felling forests and gathering out the stones, for ploughing and harrowing the soil. Hitherto the task has been mainly preliminary and preparatory. By an "accident" at first the pure gospel was carried to the corrupt Oriental churches, and ever since, from the necessities of the lamentable case, has been addressed directly only to them. Not Moslems, but Armenians, Nestorians, Syrians, Greeks, and Copts, have been urgently called to repentance, faith, and a godly life. Nor is there scarcely room for a doubt that, in the long run, no wiser course of proceeding could have been devised, even in a campaign aimed at the overthrow of Islam. The ruling races must first witness the now unimagined and convincing spectacle of the Christianity of Jesus and the apostles lived out every day in the lives of those who call themselves by his name. In the sphere of activity thus limited the results are really remarkable. Let these few figures tell a fragment of the story: In the Turkish Empire including Egypt and in Persia 591 missionaries of both sexes are found and 2167 native helpers. The organized churches number 243, the communicants 24,617, and the native Christians upwards of 93,000. Of colleges there are six, two of them of especial excellence, and of other schools 1002, with 49,000 pupils. The Arabic translation of the Bible is to be named among the mightiest forces at work for the redemption of the Orient. This is to some 70,000,000 their native tongue, the sacred language of the Koran, which every intelligent Mussulman can read. And besides all this, in Western Asia a few scores of Moslems have actually been won to Christ, and several hundreds in India. Dr. Imad-ud-din, himself one of the number, has recently published the names of one hundred

and seventeen men of distinction who accept the crucified One as Saviour and Lord, of whom seventeen are clergymen. In the Dutch East Indies several thousands have recently been baptized. Perhaps most significant of all, as a secondary result of missionary toil, in a multitude of ways Occidental ideas, and convictions, and customs, and modes of living, have made their advent throughout the East, are acting everywhere like leaven, and are certain to hasten the overthrow of Islam. The printing-press is active, and His Serene Highness is urging forward a system of public schools!

On the whole the omens are excellent: they offer much to cheer, to kindle courage and hope. It is not at all unreasonable to expect marvellous things to come to pass in the not distant future. There is abundant occasion to pray with the utmost fervor of heroic faith, Thy kingdom come, with solicitude and longing fixed on the millions held in this thralldom so woeful. Oh for a nineteenth century counterpart of Peter the Hermit, to rally the Lord's hosts to enter upon a truly Christian crusade against Islam, with not an hour of truce allowed until again in Jerusalem, and Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and throughout all Bible lands, the Son of God is held in supreme honor, and the kingdom of heaven is fully restored!