



the Will they have made known. Identity of subject and object is here completed and instructive. As he stands there on his desert rock, unmindful of physical surroundings, bent only on his message from One before whom the earth and the sky are but a grain of sand, we can hear the desert voices behind every accent of his warning and appeal. Between the lines of the Koran we read the inexplicable mystic lights and shadows; the terrible contrasts of life and death; the shifting sand-column, the unswerving simoom, directed by invisible Will upon pure destruction; the hopeless wastes, the bitter waters, the dry bones of long-perished caravans,—all this has made the desert symbolic of absolute evil, of theological wrath and eternal death. And, on the other hand, the life-giving springs; the palm with its feet in burning sands and its head in the light of heaven; the herbs whose saltiness is medicinal; the sweet returns of men for ages to the same fountains and shades; the joyous rush of living creatures, when the great river bursts from its mountains and fills the bed long dry with rolling, resistless waves; the grand uprise of the king of day out of the dissolving gloom, and the cloudless autocracy of his march,—all this has made the same desert a rebuke to those old dreams of absolute evil and Divine hate. In that anxious verge of hope and fear on which the message runs, that sharp stress on the moment's call and on the fate that goes with the instant moral act, we can recognize what the Prophet has learned from the deception of the mirage,—the desert's penalties for delusive hopes, the hallucinations of ear and eye in pathless wastes; from the mutterings of demons far off or close by, their spectres surrounding the fever-stricken pilgrim; from the voices of ruined cities of an unknown past, half-buried in sand, and whispering of penal whirlwinds and earthquakes that have swept them away forever; and withal, from the concentration of every sight and sound on the little caravan or



lonely rider, till the world has become one mighty reflex of a more or less complete egoism of religious function and fanatical faith in its dictates as the voice of God.

In this introversion of the symbol there is nothing of contemplative thought. The roving life, the undisciplined feeling and will, the physical susceptibilities, forbid it; and these undoubtedly help explain the sceptical character of the Arab mind, where, instead of rising into enthusiasm, it reacts from the pressure of Nature into a realism all the more cautious and analytic. But if the Arab is not contemplative, he is all the more certainly an impassioned prophet whenever the constant presence of the Inexplicable, the Inevitable, the Overruling, the Changeless among fleeting forms, seizes his imagination and inspires his feelings. The natural outcome is that absolute monotheism in which we discern not only the type and reflex of intense individualism in the conscious will, but the ceaseless suggestion of the desert horizon, of sky-marches, and of unchangeable facts and laws.

The germ of the Prophet of this monotheism is that total self-reliance and self-sufficiency which civilization destroys. To this very hour the desert is its natural soil. The Arab is and has always been the Epictetus of Nature; to him the Stoic creed is practicable,—that the happy man is he who can dispense with every possession. His dependence is reduced to the minimum,—to camel, water-skin, mat, tent, and sword. All beyond this is accidental, a badge of servitude to things. "Riches confer no influence here; the sheikh lives and dresses like his meanest follower. Even the Emir dares not command or scold." The Turcomans say, "We are all equal; every one is king."¹ Here is the pride that makes sharp critics of poetry, without schools or even books; that walks in the open night as master of the heavens, without astronomy;

¹ Burckhardt: *Notes on the Bedouins*, i. 65, 72, 74, 112, 117, 374.



that makes its centaur-life strong and beautiful, without mechanic arts; that girds even woman with rights and dignities unknown to high civilization.¹ What need of wealth or rank to him who owns the desert world! What a but is civilization to this mount of vision, camping-ground, council-field, sea of adventure, table of hospitality, trysting-place for song and tale and interchange of mysterious love! Here is manhood in full and free accord with its outward conditions. "Voyaging is victory," says the desert proverb. Here the bravest may not loiter, nor waste his strength, nor fall back in ease; he must battle till his presence, like Antar's, is a spell and a host. The modern traveller scents the whole Saracenic history in the desert atmosphere. "Here," exclaims one, "your *morale* improves; you become frank and cordial. Your senses are quickened by the air and exercise alone, and spirituous liquors only disgust. The hypocrisy and slavery of civilization are left behind. All hearts dilate as they look down from their dromedaries on the glorious desert. What traveller did it ever disappoint?"

Was Mahomet's dream of world-liberation strange? The recesses of the desert have ever been the Rock-Rimmons of the oppressed. In Africa and Arabia every tribe has its proud traditions of liberty. The fatalism of such a world does not quench self-assertion or suppress achievement, but is thrown with omnipotent force to their side. Even Ali's sentence finds its meaning, — "Despair is a freeman, hope is a slave." Christianity abjures fate, but its disciples might profitably study this creed of the desert in its startling combination with energy and faith; for Christianity has not taught man to escape the necessity that rules his life and death.

¹ Burckhardt found among the most numerous tribes only here and there a blacksmith and leather-mender. A wife can be divorced at will, but can flee to her father's house from the husband's tyranny, and be safe. The honor and defence of woman is the glory of Bedouin poetry and romance. The Arabs were the parents of chivalry.



Whence, then, but from the desert could come the fire that should burn up thrones and empires, and call the poor to the shelter of a King of kings? What contempt is bred here for the decrepitude of nations! Is not the Arab of Islam, with his whelming tide of conquest, and his swift ruin of the spoils of ages, and his instant reconstruction of the civilized world, explicable enough? Islam was the nomad claiming his original birthright in the religion of personal Will. Its conquests were but the triumph of an all-commanding instinct to master personal barriers, to move with unlimited freedom on the willing earth.

Is the religious passion that exalted these tendencies into conquering forces less natural? The desert is the prophet's cell and throne. Forth from its wastes march the self-chosen preparers of highways for their God. Moses brings its rocky sternness, Zoroaster its battle of good and evil, and John the Baptist its passionate thirst for waters; Jesus its absolutism, its self-concentration and self-assertion, its intolerance of the practical conditions of social work, its prophecy of their swift destruction, its haunting thought of the Eternal; and finally Mahomet, with not a few of these, its revelations, had, besides, the flash of its sworded sunbeams, and its compulsion to trust in the all-sufficiency of such means and forces as await the master's will. It is not here that idolatry shall sink the person in the thing, the Maker in his work, where every symbol burns with concentrated purpose. So long as these symbols abide, Theism shall not fail of apostles. Of the sun in the desert one has said: "He seemed to command me, and to say, 'Thou shalt have no other gods but me.' I was all alone before Him."¹ Another has called Jahveh "the genius of the desert, its eternal inhabitant."² Not more so, we may add, than Ormuzd,

¹ Kinglake.

² Quinet.



than Allah, than the Creator and Father under every name, — than all forms of supreme providential care. It is a Hymn of the Ages that the English traveller Pringle has sung in his matchless description of a desert ride and rest: —

“Afar in the desert I love to ride,
With the silent Bush-boy alone by my side. . . .
And here while the night-winds around me sigh,
And the stars burn bright in the midnight sky,
As I sit apart by the desert stone,
Like Elijah at Horeb’s cave alone
‘A still small voice’ comes through the wild
(Like a father consoling his fretful child),
Which banishes bitterness, wrath, and fear,
Saying, Man is distant, but God is near.”

Such were the geographical conditions which nurtured a special form of the religious ideal, dominant thus far in the foremost lines of civilized humanity, — that of monotheistic revelation. The sublime unconscious egoism of its masters, the fruit of solitary prayers and struggles, is essentially of the mountain, the waste, the cave, where the inward message could not be shared nor brought by institutions or rival seers. When they trod the crowded streets of Jerusalem, of Memphis, of Mecca, or Bokhara, it was not as fellow-students of laws which all could see for themselves, but as chosen teachers of what had been commanded in themselves alone. Regions like Palestine, Edom, Arabia, — deserts, or tracts encircled and set with desert spaces, marked out among the nations by a pure tribal individualism, — shaped these living types of self-assertion and revelation. Their God could not be social, nor his word a progressive reason in man. He must be a solitary indivisible Force, an authority not to be scrutinized, rivalled, or shared. The infinite play of harmonious laws in Nature and life, in which the divine substance of the world is now coming to be manifested to the free



student of world-uses and united powers, had no place there; that nobler meaning of Unity, for which this monarchical phase has been the preparation, is yet to appear. Only the absolutely unmodified and final personal Will — now a tender parent, now a terrible judge — can answer to the highest forms of religious need, summed up in an ultimate simplicity which forbids science, forecloses progress, and suppresses freedom. Its word is: "*I am* hath sent me unto you." "There is no God but One, and Mahomet is his prophet." "My kingdom is not of this world." The judgment day shall reveal it. On a lower plane, but with no greater finality, a Cenghis announces, "One God, one Khan."¹

Such influences account in no slight measure for Mahomet, because they shaped the race of which he was born. The genius of a race or of a civilization always determines that of its highest mind; and no examples of this law are more decisive than those which are supposed to be due to an inspiration superior to human conditions. In the thought and method of the highest masters there is a naïve element, an unconscious temperament, which penetrates all that is conditional and all that is universal. And for that wonderful force of natural selection which made Arabia in the sixth and seventh centuries, through its typical man, the autocrat of the faith and life of nations, we must find the momentum in its population of free tribes, swayed by the impulse of individualism, inured to physical endeavors, exalted by an imaginative self-conscious temperament and an intense force of personal concentration. That Arab ideal of personal dignity and self-respect which formed the warrior and the God of Islam is conspicuous in the passion of these tribes for

¹ The reference here is not, of course, to the special legislation of these masters of revealed religion, which, as we have seen in Mahomet, has often established freer institutions than it found, but to the *idea of God* as unchangeable and past question or judgment of men.



biography and genealogy. The whole poetic literature of pre-Islamic Arabia for half a century before Mahomet is of the lyrical, or distinctively individual, kind. Even its narrative, legendary, and didactic portions are inspired by the same qualities of direct intuition and free emotion. The prolific energy of this national poetry cannot be conceived without study of the immense labors of Hammer-Purgstall in collecting, classifying, and translating its products; and the strongest impression made by this survey is of the multitudinous variations that may be played on a few personal instincts and relations. The *Hamāsa* of Abū Temmām contains nearly a thousand poems, which pour out, with startling spontaneity and frankness, the jealousies, rivalries, hospitalities, ambitions, the loves and hates, the magnanimities and revenges, the hopeless griefs of bereavement, the stoical pride in endurance, and the passionate yearnings for the lost, whereof the old Bedouin life was made up.¹ Their changes are rung on themes of war and rapine, of tribal and ancestral pride, of haughty self-assertion and self-praise, on tender tributes to worth, on extremes of personal eulogy and satire, on the immortality of heroic deeds, on the deep sense of the irremediable, on the necessity of trust in life and death, or the pessimism of brooding grief. More touching loyalty to natural affection and domestic ties, more freedom from all pretence to solve their insoluble problems, more frank acceptance of the realities of destiny, can nowhere be found. An intensely sensuous susceptibility, a keen instinct for actuality,

¹ Immense labor has been expended by the Mahometans in collecting and criticising these poems of the "Age of Ignorance." The first studies were immediately after Mahomet, and were purely philological; but in less than a century poetic merit was the object of research; the traditions of the tribes, the memories of bards and reciters, were explored in every quarter. (Muir: *Royal Asiatic Society*, xi. pt. 1, 447-449). Forgeries and corrupt readings are of course frequent in the innumerable verses that have thus accumulated. The lowest calculation of these pre-Islamic poets puts their number at one hundred and fifty; but there is no historical ground for these inquiries beyond the century before Mahomet. Wuttke (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, ix. 144, 157). Hammer, l. 384.



easily runs into scepticism about a future life; and old age is, next to death, the saddest of prospects,—"the dregs of life's full goblet."¹ No formula of immortality checks the full flow of the bereaved sympathies. "Very near are the dead to the living, yet how remote and dubious their companionship!"² Koss lingers by the graves of his brothers, and will not leave them by day or night. "How long, dear ones, have you slept? Know you not I am alone here, with no friends but you. Death watches you so closely; it draws my body to you in the grave. If a man could offer his life for another's, how gladly would I be your ransom! Lo, I have seen the entrance to death, but not its exit."³

In the midst of strife, blessed are the peace-makers even here; the noble men who broke up a tribe-feud of forty years receive all the honor a Christian poet could accord for their self-sacrifice and courage; and their reward is contrasted with the sure ignominy and misery of the self-convicted foe of God and man.⁴ The old Arab ideal required every man to be "brave, generous, and a poet;" a self-dependent, self-asserting personality is the soul of this prolific muse, even of her didactic proverbs.⁵

"'Tis for thee, what thou dost honor within thyself to find."

"Life's goods are but a loan; fools only fancy them their own."

"The past is fled, and what we strive for gone; only the moment's ours."⁶

"One man is better than a thousand oft." "And he whose worth is known goes not to ground." "Delay and weakness are destruction." "He who can make the most of a part, is sure of success." "Strife is the mother of despair." "Honor thy horse, and overload not thy camel." "Fear God, and love thy kin." "He is generous who succors them that need." "Of such as awaken neither fear nor

¹ Hamāsa of Abū Temmām, 447^a (49).

² Hamāsa, 289. See also Kremer: *Gesch. d. Herrsch. Ideen d. Islams*, pp. 166-168.

³ Sprenger, i. 104.

⁴ *Soheir Ben Ebi Solma's Mo'allakat*.

⁵ Mohl: *Vingt-sept ans des Études Orient.*, ii. 54.

⁶ Hamāsa, 447^a (13).



hope, make not your friends." "Be brief, for many words are wont to be folly." "Let not a stranger be misused; for many a man is worth a thousand other men." "The misfortune in plans is desire."¹

Here is none of the paraphrase and far-sought metaphor that bedeck the artificial emotion of Persian poetry. What this spontaneous singer utters is his bold confession, his fiery impulse, his faith or his despair. The ethics of the desert rest on solemn resistless laws. The sentences of Lokmân, the father of Arab gnomic wisdom, to whom Mahomet devotes a Sura of his Koran, are charged with this instinctive worship of the moral order.

"Of old we bestowed wisdom upon Lokmân, and taught him to say: 'Be thankful to God, join not other gods to God, this is the great impiety. O my son, God will bring everything to light, though it were but the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, and hid in a rock, for God knoweth all. O my son, observe prayer and enjoin right, and forbid wrong; be patient under whatsoever shall betide thee. Walk not loftily on the earth, for God loveth not the arrogant.'"²

Mahomet's quotations are doubtful; but it is certain that the great semi-mythic form of Lokmân rises on us in the gray Arab antiquity as the natural precursor of the Prophet, who found in this recognized type of the race to which he belonged the substance of his own message to the world. Contemporary of David, a second Noah, saved from the doom of a wicked race, teacher of the wisdom of animals, a patriarch twenty generations old, king of the primeval Sabeian tribes, builder of the gigantic dike of Ma'rib, Job's nephew, judge of the Jews; moreover by birth, like Antar the hero of Arab romance, a black slave,—Lokmân has been a centre of pre-Islamic mythology for all later romance.³ Whether

¹ Hammer-Purgstall: *Literatur gesch. d. Araber*, i. 332 (Amrû); and i. 39, 40 (Ektem Ben Saâif).

² Sura xxxi. 10-18.

³ Sprenger: *Das Leben und Lehre des Mohammad*: i. 95. Busch: *Urgeschichte d. Orients*, iii. 28, 242. Wüttke (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, ix. 142).



the fables ascribed to him are of native or Greek origin is still debated among scholars; but their extreme simplicity, compact sense and humor, as well as the absence of all associations of an advanced state of society, point naturally to the traditional lore of the nomadic tribes of ancient Arabia.¹ They represent the practical side of life rather than the ideal, but hold fast the same centre in individual responsibility; their precepts are of piety, modesty, prudence, benevolence, and honor. Saadî says that Lokmân learned wisdom from the blind, who go nowhere till they know the place. Mahomet might have learned of him the instincts of equality and personal force. "Whoever has not borne the injustice of the rich, knows not how to sympathize with the poor." Nor do the legends fail to find the natural man of the senses in him, gladly holding him to the conditions of human weaknesses and passions.

The poets of that Age of Ignorance at least lived in that direct contact with the objects of thought which makes of perception pure intuition and inspiration. Their songs are bursts of self-abandonment. Whatever the exciting touch, the imagination is ready to kindle into flames that consume the world. The old Arabic has no future tense; memories, traditions, hopes, are melted into the moment's mood. This tactile feeling is too sensuous for dogma, too keenly susceptible for theories or analyses of things. A battle with circumstances opens life: a tragic storm of feeling, even an outburst of sensual excess, is likely to end it. Of this intensity of instinct, especially of self-will, the natural outcome is apparent in vices of temper and social conduct; but there is no orgiastic worship of sensuality, as in the Phrygian rites that had infested the Greek and Christian worlds.²

¹ *Fables de Lokmân*, translated by Léon et Henri Helot, 1857. Also Sprenger, i. 95-101. Busch, iii. 23.

² See Tharafa's *Mô'allabâi* poem. Hammer-Purgstall: i. 305.



The greatest of these libertines of picture and song was Imriol-Kaïs. In his youth he sings his love to a maiden, at hazard of his life; and is saved from his own father's rage by the devotion of a slave, who, when ordered to put out his eyes, carries the infuriated sheikh a pair of roe's eyes instead of his son's. The old man relents from his barbarous purpose, but never from his hatred of the muse. Yet when he is murdered, the son, with instant change of heart, forsaking wine and women, swears to avenge him on a whole tribe; and, being defeated, escapes to the court of Justinian, whence he is compelled by a new love-adventure to flee, and dies at last, Hercules-like, of a poisoned tunic sent by imperial hands.¹ His genius is far more imaginative and fine than that of any of his fellows. Yet though he has seen the great centres of Chaldean and Persian life, and knows the sea as well as the desert and the town, he none the less remains the true Arab, who lives in the joy of the moment, for the fair maidens like gazelles, and knows not how to reflect, so urged is he by stress of life and desire. He can pause to describe the freshet's rush or the pangs of love; but his pride is the free lance and victory, and his scorn is for mere subsistence.²

What stirs these knightly lays is the tragic situation, the embroilment beyond relief, the command to heroic sacrifice for friendship and love.³ Twelve songs of praise immortalize as many women, all famous in their day.⁴ Not less ideal is the wild raid, fit school for these spoilers of nations. The desert Ishmael glories in rhyming his swoop on his neighbor's camel-herd and the feud that came of it, and even the summer hunt for ostrich-eggs in the sands on his swift flight through the naked land to

¹ Hammer-Purgstall: i. 292. Wülfke (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, ix. 149).

² Kremer: *Culturgesch. d. Araber*, i. 297.

³ Hammer-Purgstall: i. 29, 67, 68, 70.

⁴ *Ibid.*, i.



his beloved. He is a lord so free of his desert home that it is but nature to go singing on his way.¹

“There howls the wolf: well know we one another;
The voice of man sounds like the bird’s wild lay.
And night rolls o’er my head to point my work and way;
At sunset I my vows renew.”²

He stops his steed when at full speed, at the summons of a thought, to write his *Kassidet* of love, his “stirrup song;” his eye and ear quicker than the fine senses of the Greek, — the heavens and earth and all that live and move therein their larger nerves. This eye, ear, hand of the desert must be his own instant and sufficient providence, king of the moment by wit and will. No oath but his word; no house but his tent; no fortress but his sword; no law but the traditions of masters like himself.³ These old songs of desert raids, in the so-called Age of Ignorance, could not be dispensed with in the later days of the great Mus-sulman conquests, and the glories of the Caliphate; they were sung before combat in the Omeyyad camps.⁴

“I am he who swerves not from his plan; unmoved, whate’er befall;
Who plunges ’neath the flood of death and grasps the prize he claims;

Who takes no counsel but his own mind’s law, and asks no help but his good sword.”⁵

“He who drives not the foe from his cisterns will see them destroyed.
He who avoids injury to others shall not escape harm even so.”⁶

“To the words of other men ’t is common to say *nay*, when one will;
But no man says *nay* to us when we give sentence.”

“Not in all our line is there one of blunted heart, nor one who is a niggard.”⁷

¹ Hammer-Purgstall: i. 278.

² Hammer-Purgstall: i. 258. See also Baur: *Der arab. Held u. Dichter, Ta’abbata Sarraan* (Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch., x. 74-103).

³ Hammer-Purgstall: i. 266, 293, 321, 335, 378, etc.

⁴ Kremer: *Culturgesch. unter d. Chalifen*, ii. 356.

⁵ Hammer-Purgstall: i. 263. Saad Ben Naschiß.

⁶ Wright: *Christianity in Arabia*, p. 66.

⁷ Poole’s Preface to *Extracts from the Koran*, p. xv.



"The world is ours," sings Amrû, "and all that is on the face of it; and none can resist our attack. When a tyrant oppresses a people, we scorn to submit to his will. We fill the earth with our tents, till it becomes too narrow to hold them, and cover the sea with our ships." This gaze over the rim of the desert after a mission to right the world, hints of social aspirations beyond the impermanence and isolation of the nomadic life, everywhere writ on its vestiges of ruined towns and tribes. Ancestral and tribal ties were the Arab's nearest approach to civil or political relations; his patriotism, his immortality, meant these. "Love thy tribe; it is more close to thee than the tie of man and wife."¹ There were shrines where the tribes repaired every year to hold a pious truce; where every precaution was taken to avoid collisions, even to the extent of wearing masks and veils; where, also, it is probable, the imagination was kindled by fresh superstitions to confirm or heighten the old terrors of solitude. Only so could they counteract that all-pervading sense of transiency which, as in the beautiful Mo'allakât verses of Lebîd, everywhere breaks forth in minor key, through all their fortitude, freedom, and zest for sensual and warlike enjoyments.² A peculiar melancholy showed itself in their temperament as soon as it was brought in contact with the luxury and frivolity of Oriental manners. The desert fates were stern; and even the humanities awakened by these tribal gatherings do not seem to have restrained certain cruel customs arising from poverty and isolation, against which the Prophet was obliged to raise his voice. All the more intensely must have burned the longing and need for social sympathies; or whence that thirst for heroic dealing before which our ethical refinements pale? Hence the knighthood, —

¹ Dozy: *Histoire d'Islamisme*, p. 101.

² Hammer-Purgstall: i. 319.



"Whose word is enough to shield the unsheltered when peril comes,
in strife and storm.

Yea, noble are they; not from them shall the vengeful gain the blood
of his foe;

Nor shall even he who has wronged them be left without help."

"For the night wanderer one light is never quenched;

Nor has ever a guest reproached us where men meet together."¹

To these proud, free instincts political disciplines were intolerable. From their own necessities they carved their civilization. Retaliation became a restraining law; the protection of chiefs a court of justice, a refuge for the wronged; chivalrous treatment of women a domestic and social jurisprudence. Honor to the best and most capable had drawn these fiery units as by magnetism to lines of aristocratic tradition. Yet they had no genius for subordination, no instinct of permanent unity beyond the tribe itself. Mahomet united them but for a moment, and through wonderful conjuncture of times and persons. On his death they were all in arms, and only restrained from disintegration by the genius of Abû Bekr and Omar, and the prospect of foreign raids. Nevertheless, the depression of the desert and their unsatisfied social yearnings pushed them to larger spheres of sympathy and power. Mahomet's call to religious unity of purpose was followed up by the more peremptory summons to boundless citizenship and mastery, — to a national organization suited to grasp an imperial world. The southern tribes, as well as those in the extreme north, had reached something more nearly approaching nationality than those of the intermediate deserts; their literature centres in the kings of Himyar, Saba, and Hira, and on wars and trophies almost Assyrian in type if not in scale.² To them the crusade

¹ Translated from Arabic by C. T. Lyall, quoted in Poole's *Extracts from the Koran*. Preface on "The Arabs before Mohammed," pp. xv, xix.

² For a minute account of the Arabian tribes and their relations in Mahomet's time, see Blau (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xxiii. 569).



now opening must have offered immeasurable hopes. In this Arab exodus, spontaneity, force of circumstances, and natural reaction are so united that the resultant might well have been a tidal-wave in history. The sublime swearing of the Koran seems but the concentrated thunder of the old Bedouin vows of individual passion, love and revenge, pride and grief, and of absolute faith in personal destiny and heroic *morale*. The summons it authenticated was indeed new; but it was the more inspiring in that its objects were close at hand, — the overthrow of time-worn and despised idolatries, and the rally of equal children of the one God, Father of the fathers and Sheikh of sheikhs, to instant judgment of a disobedient world.

This preparation of the Arabs for war on idolatry may be distinctly discerned in the popular, non-religious poetry of the Hamâsa. The old rites, however tenaciously adhered to by their aristocratic guardians, had not only lost, as we have seen, their hold on the imagination of this naturally rationalistic race, but had even become objects of highly secular ridicule.¹ It cannot be entirely explained by the liberties taken with these national songs by later collectors, that they contain scarce an allusion to the old planetary Sabeian gods worshipped in animal or vegetable forms; to the cult of Venus and of the sun, long prevalent in Arabia; to the idols of the Kaaba; to the male and female tribal deities, or to the demonology introduced by neighboring religions. There seems to have been a pre-science even of higher reliance. When religious fear or trust takes possession of the poet, its object is some universal power, such as Fate or Providence, or the unity of God.²

Mahomet declared war against the poets as misleaders of the people, partly because they criticised his claims to

¹ Dozy: *Histoire d'Islamisme*, p. 12.

² For the nature of these cults, see Osiander (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, vii. 464-503).



a higher inspiration than their own, and partly upon personal grounds. He did not enjoy the taunts of practical people, who asked, "Shall we leave our gods for a crazy poet?" It was not pleasant to be classed in a category so large that camels and lizards were popularly described as members of it. Yet he said of Lebid's line, "Is not all besides God nought?" that it was the greatest of verses; and glorified Sâid Ben Newfil for singing, —

"I serve not Osa and her goddess child,
I turn me not to Thasm's idol shrine,
I serve not thousand lords, but One alone;"¹

and found Waraka inspired, when, hearing Belâl, under torture for denying the gods of his tribe, cry out, "One, One, One!" he exclaimed, "By Allah, you tribe of Belâl, though you slay him, you shall not have your will;" and then sang an ode in praise of God.²

In fact Mahomet, though repudiating the name of poet and rejecting regular metre in his Suras, was himself incomparably the greatest of Arab poets, and has the same title to the name as Amos or Isaiah.³ Perhaps, like some great masters of the art, — like Goethe, partly from intense earnestness or realism, — he regarded poetry as less natural than prose. He knew well what the singers had done for him in anticipating his grandest revelations. Tradition credits him even with composing odes, and storing his memory with those of other men. The Sunna says "he bade that children should be taught poetry, which opened the mind, made courage hereditary, and bore the fruit of wisdom." Illiterate as he called himself, he had no contempt for letters. He set the captives at Badr to ransom themselves by teaching writing to his ignorant converts.⁴ If he set his face against the great literary

¹ Hammer-Purgstall: i. 56.

² Hammer, i. 56.

³ See his beautiful parables, x. 25; ii. 266; poem of the conversion of Abraham, vi. 74. Sura of the Desert Horses. c.

⁴ Hammer, i. 396.



reunions of Okadh, where "a magical language was built ready to his skillful hand," and where the friendly rivalry of tribal bards must have nourished the noblest aspirations, it was doubtless because the old institution refused to become merged in his own universal aims and beliefs. It has been said that "in destroying it, he put an end to the Arab nation and created his own new nation of Muslims, who cannot sit in the places of the old Arabs."¹ The change transformed a race of semi-nomads into masters of a world faith and law,—an unparalleled change, reaching on with widening power for a thousand years. Mahomet knew his instruments. He recognized his countrymen's claims as superior to those of Jew or Christian. He put every waiting capacity to ideal use. He gave his nation's genius moral energy and self-mastering obedience to a purpose. Carlyle has put the substance of this mystery into words that will never be supplanted:—

"Belief is great, life-giving. The history of a nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, as soon as it believes. These Arabs, the man Mahomet, and that one century,—is it not as if a spark had fallen, *one* spark, on a world that seemed black unnoticeable sand! But lo, the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Granada. I said the Great Man was always like lightning out of heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would flame."²

So rooted in his age and country, so natural as the culmination of ages of will-worship, what remains for Mahomet as an original personal force? As the focus of tendencies, the great man becomes their new and all-commanding organ. He is new and creative; not indeed as outside of the line of Nature, but as fulfilling the process of existing causes, which demand concentration in personal insight and will. Genius is not historical merely; it is as profound a mystery in the world of mind as the new and

¹ Poole: *Preface to Selections from the Koran*, p. xxvi.



higher element that springs into visibility from the collision of flint and steel. The advent of unexpected energy in the transformation of lower conditions is the law of progress: it is the constant sign of cosmical forces in every step of evolution, — in other words, of the immanence of the Infinite in the finite. When we have summed up all the conditions for the result which our science can reach, there remains always this untraceable element of conditions past our knowing. The names we give it do not alter its nature; inspiration, revelation, miracle, latent forces, mystery of growth, are terms, more or less blind, to cover these cosmical conditions, equally real in the growth of an acorn into an oak, and in that of an age or a civilization into a religion. Genius and personal mastership are powers that differ from the rest only as focal expressions of more subtile, vast, and even universal conditions. This is the ground of their special sanity, their redeeming, all-glorifying power. Of a Shakspeare, a Goethe, a Plato, there is no explanation but the universe of mind. So it is with the masters of religion, of philosophy, of character. They move the world, because they are the accord, the rhythm, the unity of the world. Each in his way is unprecedented, not to be divined nor predicted, for Nature never repeats herself. His conscious conditions are determinable only in proportion to the degree in which his spirit is shared: the unconscious conditions lie veiled in the infinite complexities of being and growth. But not one of these untraceable personal forces can fail of having natural relations to such simpler ones as are discernible by the student of historical laws. So far we may go, and no farther; and this is adequate for all needful purposes. To seek an ultimate analysis of causes and conditions is here as futile as to drain Thor's goblet filled from the sea. There is no formula for making genius. The scientific understanding may construct a manikin, but never a hero or a seer.



Time slowly reveals where each man's personal force lay, and separates what he did from what he was supposed to do. But the names and lives to which the great historic religions are traced back have been so enormously idealized, and are involved in such obscurity, both of facts and of records, that the difficulties are in most instances insuperable.

These difficulties need not disturb us in the case of Mahomet. However idealized after his death, his life is a matter of verifiable record. His book and his sword were his own. He is a palpable power, from the moment of his Hegira, in Arabia and among the nations. Numbers of the great men of Islam were his personal companions, and the first four caliphs may be said to have passed from his death-bed to reconstruct empires from the issues of his heart and brain. Of all religious founders, this man alone shaped his own work to imperial success, and substantially, even within his own lifetime, through the wonderful personal instruments which he won to his side from out the little Arab world.¹ There stand his merits and faults in the full blaze of the Arabian sun, without attempt on his part at concealment. He is an Arab of the Arabs, and naively proud of his dependence. "I am the truest of Arabs: my descent is from the Koreish, my tongue is of the Benî Saad."² He was a nomad in genius and in taste. Bokhârî tells us that he said "a prophet must first be a long while a shepherd," and that agriculture made men vain and impudent. Seeing a ploughshare, he said, "When these things enter a people's house they become low-minded."³ There he stands before an unlettered race, whose native genius for poetry despised all written records, to cry: "Bountiful is God, who has taught man the use of

¹ Ibn Iscâb gives biographies of eight thousand persons who knew him. Sprenger: *Introduction*, xi.

² *Kitab al Wâkidi's Hishâm*.

³ Mussulman tradition, quoted by Goldziher: *Mythology among the Hebrews*, p. 81.



the pen; " and therewith to give forth, written on blade-bones, bits of parchment, palm-leaves, and on the tablets of the heart of hearers, in impure Arabic and without constructive method, out of the emergencies of inward and outward struggles, the Book (*Kur'ân*, somewhat to be read) which should be the fountain of faith, letters, and institutions to hundreds of millions of men for fifty generations. Here was no refinement of linguistic or logical art, no elaborate rhyme, no far-fetched metaphor, but a divine motion, conscious of supreme command, riding forth on his confused, stammering tongue; sweeping an agonized, semi-delirious brain into contradictions, retractions, blind devices, confused dilemmas, strange dealings with moral soundness and religious fear, — all of which have been too critically judged by outside observation. It seems to have been in sheer sense of failure to bear the burden of his word that he called the right use of language the perfection of success; and he admitted his inability to understand his revelations in their coming, so that he must needs work them over after the angelic utterance, before they could come to shape for mankind. Why should we cavil at the marks of such self-criticism in the Koran, — the conscious revisals of a message which his best rendering could only stain and mar? Vain attempt, at best, to translate the open talk of a man with the God of his ideal conviction, imagined as an objective real presence, and hide no word, nor tone, nor hint of its meaning whether to his own honor or rebuke! Might it not well end in a book, "written," as Carlyle says, perhaps not too strongly, "as badly as almost any book ever was, so that nothing but a sense of duty could carry a European through it, — an incoherent bundle of experiences, no more capable of certain arrangement than the ripple-marks on a beach after heavy storms"? Yet in all this the marvellous Arabic tongue went through a transformation that consigned



all Mo'allakâts, Kassidets, or other literary treasures to comparative oblivion,—no continuation of their styles even, but a new creation. What triumphant mastery so to transform a nation's jealously guarded ideal, mingling native with foreign words! For language was the Arab's religion more than all the gods of the Kaaba; yet the Koran, the Koran only, is henceforth the norm of books to this book-adoring Arab, the veritable Arabic speech of Allah, the tracing of the infinite pen!

"See you not that I, an ignorant prophet, could never have done this thing,—lifted your organ for the love-songs of Imriol-Kais, or the Hanîfite Rolls of Abraham, into a holy tongue for all mankind? Ask you greater miracle than this, O unbelieving people, than to have your profane Arabic turned into a message of universal mercy, a thunderbolt against tyranny, a trumpet to call the world to singleness of heart and faith? Do they bid thee change it? Say, it is not for me to change it by my own will. Verily, I fear if I rebel, the punishment of the great day."

Yet this supernaturalist, cowering under the terrors of his own awful trust, has been detected by the modern critic in altering, transposing, reconstructing, to suit new conjunctures, till the whole is past the critic's analytic and collocating skill. Hence the ready charge of hypocrisy, the cool dealing of an impostor with his own fraud. Why not find rather an over-anxious care to get the momentous message rightly put by the half-seeing human faculties, whose light on its meaning can only be made clear by the process of events?

Successful he was at all events, blind and confused as the message lay before his companions at his unlooked-for death, when he who alone could say what was in it, was no longer with them. Only a year elapsed before his scribe Zeyd must gather up its fragments, so that it could be committed *verbatim* by heart. Then, eighteen years afterwards, when his first companions were all dying in battle, and an authentic version must be hastened up, the same



hand is set to compiling an even more careful text. Caliph Othmân, the third of the line, fixes this as the final appeal of Islam, now centred, as a positive faith is bound to be, in a Book of books, and all other versions are burned throughout the empire (650 A.D.). No arrangement seemed then feasible but to put the longest Suras first, where the sharp historical criticism of to-day says they do not belong. Even now it lies in its well-nigh structureless plasma of emotion, beat up from abysses of woe, lifted on gusts of passionate will, paling with confession, glowing with fierce rebuke, — strange, unconscious chaos of objective truth with subjective error. If it is not poetry, — and it is hard to say whether it be or not, — it is more than poetry. It is not history, nor biography. It is not anthology, like the Sermon on the Mount; nor metaphysical dialectics, like the Buddhist Sûtras; nor sublime homiletics, like Plato's conferences of the wise and foolish teachers. It is a prophet's cry, Semitic to the core; yet of a meaning so universal and so timely that all the voices of the age take it up, willing or unwilling, and it echoes over palaces and deserts, over cities and empires, first kindling its chosen hearts to world-conquest, then gathering itself up into a reconstructive force that all the creative light of Greece and Asia might penetrate the heavy gloom of Christian Europe, when Christianity was but the Queen of Night.¹ In the eleventh century, when the Christian Church was the mortal foe of science and of Nature, five thousand two hundred and eighteen teachers of the schools of the Koran were commending these studies to the civilized world. Sâduk, when asked why the Koran appeared the newer the more it was read, answered, "It was not sent for one age or time, but for all mankind to the end of the world."² Its monotheism was the climax of exclusive

¹ See St. Hilaire's testimony. Jonguère: *Hist. de l'Empire Ottoman*, p. 86.

² Wütke (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, ix. 137).



religion; yet so all-embracing was its objective ideal that it created the largest unities in the sphere of religious belief. "The leaves of God's book," said its Sufis, "are the religious persuasions."

Much of a similar nature might be said of the powers of other Scriptures. The difference is, that of this book Mahomet was himself the indubitable maker. There is no pretence that any apostle conceived, or gathered, or fathered it upon his master. No lapse of a period like that which separates most of the New Testament writings from the days of Jesus, parted it from the living subject; no deposit was ever made in it of Jewish or Arabic stores by later schools. Even the many elaborations which the merciless scalpel of the critic now brings to view, are unquestionably of Mahomet's own devising. Crowded with national traditions, and steeped in foreign lore and garbled legend out of every faith, the Prophet's ideal purpose flames through the whole, fusing everything over and over again to satisfy the needs of the hour. I hold it to be as absolutely sincere as any human book composed under the pressure of imagined Divine special direction has ever been or can be; its faults reveal best the inherent falsity of the conception itself, but it is none the less the irrepressible cry of a possessed enthusiast and apostle of his times. The miracle of the book, of the rhymed prose that silenced the pride of ancestral metres, the mark on ages and tribes that never grows dim, is the son of Abdallah himself.

Probably we may say that there is nothing like this record in the whole history of authenticated personal achievement. Results even more amazing are ascribed by Christian faith to an historic personage, but under circumstances that forbid our knowing what he really was and did. In the one case, everything not purely ideal has been smoothed away from the adored image of an incar-



nate God, age after age; in the other, there stand out, honestly admitted, all the errors, irrationalities, and delusive dreams that belong to the pretension of supernatural claims and private revelation.

It seems incomprehensible that far down into the present century, through all ages of Christian development, this name has been synonymous with Satan, and its swarming confessors abhorred as infernal hosts. So much can the rivalries of creeds and churches effect in foreclosing even the desire of justice. With Christendom, the relentless charge of infidelity and imposture has rested on the assumption that every claim to personal inspiration, save that of Jesus, must have been a conscious lie. He and none other could by any possibility be honest and sane in claiming to be the Son of God and "Judge of quick and dead." The inconsistency proves that reason repudiates the claim itself. Still more glaring is the theological malice of the highest minds, persevered in down to the moment when Arab historians like Al Hishâm, Abûlfeda, and others forced open the eyes of scholars in the present age; and the dense ignorance of Christendom concerning Mahomet and his work for civilization was scattered by resultant studies of the Book and the Faith.

It was natural, since the fine arts were the pupils of the Church, that, while Michael Angelo painted the Christ as awarding eternal life and death at the last judgment, another great painter—Orcagna—should represent Mahomet as torn in pieces by devils, and that Dante should find him cloven in twain and displaying his rent bosom in hell for having torn the Church by schism.¹ Yet we cannot conceal the fact, that not a century before this terrible anathema the great Arabic work of Sharastânî had shown how much broader a feeling of the sympathy of religions than existed in Christendom, had sprung up in the soil of the

¹ *Inferno*, xxviii.



Koran.¹ Protestantism, worshipping its own Bible, had all the less tolerance for a rival Bible, and from the outset pronounced its author the chief of liars. It would serve little purpose to enumerate the phases of this wild and worthless abuse. So fully identified were the titles "impostor" and "infidel" with this one name, that they became catch-words for historians of all grades, from Prideaux to Hallam.² Even Goethe, in his tragedy of "Mahomet," makes him a ruthless, unprincipled assassin, without a sign of faith in his own creed. To this very day that mediæval exegesis frequently reappears, and the little horn of Daniel's vision still reminds Christendom of the Antichrist of Mecca, and aggravates political hatred towards his infidel lair upon the Bosphorus. The first word of justice to the accursed Paynim was spoken by that earliest and kindest of English travellers, Sir John Mandeville, — a clear bugle-note in the night of superstition and hate. Four centuries passed before another noble tribute was paid to the worth of Islam, when Lessing struck the key of modern religious liberty in his "Nathan the Wise." How it startled English decorum when Carlyle dared to lift Mahomet among the heroes of history, in letters of fiery indignation! Then came scholars like Sprenger and Kremer,³ Nöldeke, Dozy, Geiger and Rodwell, Sale and Lane, with clearest proof that here was a force too vast and too concentrated to be treated with contempt, and that the Prophet and his message were in the natural order of historic movement. The sum of all evidences, now abundantly available, will convince us that this exalted person was in fact substantially real and sincere,

¹ *The History of Religious Sects.*

² See Renan: *Études d'Histoire Religieuse*, p. 223.

³ Kremer, especially (*Herrsch. Ideen d. Islam und Culturgesch. unter d. Chalifen*), has done full justice both to Mahomet and his religion. The same cannot be said of Sprenger's learned and minute biography, which refuses him every quality of greatness and even of common morality, finds no element of genuineness in him save his fanaticism, — a pathological condition merely, — and no sign of original genius or noble motive. Sprenger is not a generous critic, nor is he capable of spiritual insight; but he shows even to excess the dependence of Mahomet on his times. (See, especially, *Das Leben*, etc., i. 39-49.)



wonderfully self-sustained and self-directed towards ideal ends, and rooted, not in his age and its demands only, but in the truth of things and the soul of truth.

Mahomet had at once the temperament of genius and the tendency to melancholia, noticeable even at the present day in the Arab race. Naturally modest, timid, irresolute even, extremely sensitive to pleasure and pain, he was easily carried beyond self-control by impressions from the moral and spiritual imagination, to which he ascribed objective reality. How far these phenomena were caused by the morbid excitability of his physical system, subject to febrile and cephalic spasms from what has been defined as "muscular hysteria," and how far the disease itself was a result of mental convulsions, it is not easy to determine. His birth fell at a period of intense affliction in the life of his mother; but it is little less than atrocious to ascribe his whole history to that circumstance.¹ Partly from disease, and partly from moral and religious passion, that projection of inward into outward sense, which has had more or less to do with the experience of men of genius like Luther, Swedenborg, Goethe, and others, rose into a permanent state of exaltation by supposed possession, demonic or divine, and at last into absolute self-surrender to the inspirations of the Supreme Will through the visits of its angelic messenger. Yet we must not ascribe too much of this conviction to special disease, since it was the natural product of belief in anthropomorphic deity, and as true of Moses and Jesus as of Mahomet. Down to modern

¹ Robertson Smith. Sir W. Muir goes to the opposite extreme, in denying this dependence, but charges him with deliberately abandoning his inspiration to expediency; evidently dissatisfied that he "did not become, as he might have done, a St. Mahomet, or founder of Christian churches in Arabia by martyrdom."

E. A. Freeman's *History and Conquests of the Saracens* passes a judgment for the most part liberal and just, though not without some superficial criticism (pp. 52, 53, 57). Oscar Reschel (*Races of Men*, 302) coolly calls him "a crafty impostor." As fair an account of the whole subject as can be found is the work of R. Bosworth Smith, in entire contrast with which is the one-sided little treatise on Islam published by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, in their *non-Christian Systems*.



times every one believed in the possibility of inspiration, and in the direct movement of the Divine Will upon man by vision or by voice. How easily it adapted itself to the ordinary mental processes of its subject is seen by the remarkable degree to which this medium of the Infinite remained Mahomet, son of Abdallah, still, — no mere dreamer, but prudent, skilful, and self-controlled in the details of his appointed work. He was of noble form, of genial, tender manners, humane and sympathetic, and of an integrity that had won him the title of El Amin, — the Upright.¹ The tales of his recognizing with tears of gratitude, in a captive brought to him after battle, the old nurse who had tended him in his childhood among the Beni-Saad; of the courage with which he faced the rage of Omar; and the firmness of his religious loyalty, which would not yield to the prayers or rebukes of his only protector among the leaders of his tribe, — are sustained by the general tenor of his conduct. He had belonged to a society of chivalrous men, formed for the protection of foreign traders against ill treatment in Mecca. According to tradition, the descendant through five generations from the founder of the glories of the Koreish, the real father of Mecca itself, he was overarched by the immemorial majesty of Abraham and his temple, with its holy stone coeval with creation. His divine commission is foreshadowed by events in the lives of his immediate ancestors. His father, thrice chosen by lot as a sacrifice, is thrice saved by substitution of animal victims on a great scale. His grandfather is born with white hair (innate wisdom), digs out the well Zemzem, and finds old buried treasures of sacred things. This messianic prestige is held of no account by Sprenger, who places him in a decayed branch of the Koreish, confined to the right of supplying pilgrims with water.²

¹ Dozy : *L'Histoire d'Islamisme*, p. 21. Also *Selections*, etc., Preface, pp. 28, 29.

² Sprenger : *Das Leben*, etc., i. 141.

The serious introversion that determines his destiny is made conceivable by his having been left an orphan in infancy, bereaved of his grandfather's care in boyhood, and set to the lonely and despised work of tending goats. However it may be, he walks modestly and industriously among men till his hour comes, a trusted and honored merchant, whose chief employer is proud to become his wife. Slowly the heavens and earth fill with predestined vision and command. Everything in him — powers and defects, will and temperament, honor and fear — works together to intensify his destiny. Even the cataleptic trances serve to convince his nearest companions of a divine afflatus. In his youth a devout believer in the popular polytheism,¹ slow to fix his faith on the absolute unity of God, and overwhelmed by the burden of inspiration which he could not resist, the solitary dreamer is convulsed by spiritual throes, in which familiar superstition and terrible self-disparagement by turns torment him, till he is driven to the brink of self-destruction, and saved only by the gracious whispers of his divine guest. He hurries back from the desert, trembling like a child, to the bosom of his Khadija, praying only to be covered, whether from the overwhelming presence or from the night-chills of his agony — who can tell?

For two years imprisoned or shut out from social sympathy, his inward struggles become the more impassioned and desperate. But the angel has bidden him be patient, and in due time comes the self-surrender and the consolation, and at last the irresistible outflaming of his ideal into that image of omnipotent absolutism to which the worship of personal Will has in all ages steadily led its believers. Yet he shows neither the rage of the Christian Montanist nor the conceit of a Neoplatonic theurgist. Year after year he follows the command to convert and

¹ *Koran*, xciii. 7 ; lxiv. 5.



save mankind, with but one loyal woman to encourage him. He counts but thirty followers as the reward of three years of life-and-death struggle, not with the proud traditions of his native city alone, and the Koreish, their representatives, but with the common-sense of a sceptical people, who had known him from childhood, and who now verily believed him to be a crazy poet, and mocked him with questions about the latest news from heaven. It was a sharp test of his sincerity to be rejected by the wisest and best people, and ridiculed by the popular good sense. Yet he persevered, unmoved. Even the kind remonstrances of Abû Tâlib, his only relative and protector among the great men, were put aside, though with tears. "If Allah should put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, to abandon his great work before I have accomplished it or to perish in the attempt, I would *not* abandon it." The brave old Arab was moved: "Say what you will, I will not forsake you."¹ Tabarî tells us that the very stones cried out to hail him as the prophet of God. Called on to prove his mission by miracles, he dares to rest everything on the power of his conviction and the efficacy of his word. Once² his great central truth pales a moment before the temptation to a compromise for the benefit of his cause, so that he permits himself to recognize some good in the popular worship, though by no means to admit the divinity of the false gods; and the readiness of the people, on so slight a concession, to fall on their knees before Allah, proves how easily he could have had their applause for the seeking. But the sin of policy will not let him rest till he has renounced it, with all its rewards, even before they have been enjoyed. No tampering with truth!³ Even when a friend who had dared defend him, though unconverted, asks the crucial question what has become of

¹ Dozy: *L'Histoire d'Islamisme*, p. 45.

² Sprenger, of course, makes the most of it.

³ Dozy: *L'Histoire d'Islamisme*, p. 50.



his son, dying outside of the true faith, the answer is unflinching, — "He is in hell!" and the father's face is turned away in natural wrath.¹ Though some of his earliest followers who took refuge in Abyssinia were of good families and not without means, most of those who heard gladly the preacher of equality and a simple faith were poor, ignorant, and despised persons, many of them slaves.² Naturally enough, — the data of that problem being then as inscrutable and inconclusive as they are now, — he could give but an incoherent account of the methods by which the Divine will was made known to him. Sometimes the revelation was gentle, sometimes like the ringing of bells, "which rent him in pieces;" and the interjectional out-breaks and transitions of the Suras confirm his story.

Mobbed, stoned, assailed by plots and passions, his followers driven from Mecca, outlawed, imprisoned, or starving, for ten years Mahomet struggles on, never doubting the sovereignty or the purpose of his Guide. The first gleam of success comes through the old hostility of the desert to the city, — in the conversion of two Bedouin tribes, more from hate to Meccan aristocracy than from love to him or to each other; and from their jealousy of the Jews of Medina, against whose claims of a Messiah they were glad to set a prophet from their own race. Then out of the enmities of Mecca and Medina came the seventy Helpers (*Ansâr*) of the latter city, who offer him the one possible refuge. At last he must flee for his life, with but one companion to share his perils, save that the God of his old desert struggles makes the third; for whom, as the legend runs, nothing stronger than a spider's web across the cave's mouth was needed to save the servant of His will.

It is a commonplace, even for liberal Christianity, that the life of Mahomet of itself proves on how much lower

¹ Dozy: *L'Histoire d'Ismaélisme*, p. 57.

² Sprenger: *Das Leben*, etc., i. 392.



and narrower a plane his religion stands than does that of the gospel of Christ. There is great need of careful discrimination in the study of religious ideals; but how can a more universal conception possibly be framed, *so long as we stand within the limited idea of Personal Revelation*, than that of one sole God of heaven and earth, making known His will by sovereign choice of instruments, "in mercy to all mankind"? Nor can anything broader and more humane be easily imagined, under these limits, than Mahomet's obedience to a moral and religious instinct in the shape of such a conception. "For this," he says, "I ask of you no wage but the love of my kin."¹ The demands of humanity were always closest, in his mind, to the heart of God. The fear of becoming poor through giving to others was a diabolic suggestion. Giving for righteousness' sake "is like a grain of corn that produceth seven ears, and each ear a hundred grains."² All he had and gained was spent on his work, and he left neither debt nor substance behind him. "Shall they have a share in the kingdom, who would not bestow on their fellow-men the speck in a date-stone?"³ "He who shall mediate between men for a good purpose," says this reputed "Prophet of the Sword," "shall be the gainer thereby; but the mediator for evil shall reap the fruit of his doing."⁴ When he said, "Let there be no compulsion in religion,"⁵ his conduct showed that he meant it.

His first success was uniting hostile tribes in a common faith and purpose, substituting referees for the old tribal blood-penalties, inducing each of his Meccan followers to choose a brother among the jealous Helpers of Medina, and planting such germs of cordial relations among all believers.⁶ It shall be an "expiation with God" when one shall drop his right of retaliation according to the

¹ Sura xlii. 22.² Sura ii. 263.³ Sura iv. 56.⁴ Sura iv. 87.⁵ Sura ii. 257.⁶ *Ibn Hishām*, i. 250.



old Jewish law.¹ Wrangling over creeds is his abhorrence. "What, wilt thou force men to believe, when belief can come only by the will of God?"² "Jew, Sabeian, or Christian, — whoever shall believe in God and the judgment, and do what is right, on him shall come no fear."³ The constitution, drawn up to fix the relations of his Meccan fugitives with the Jews and Christians of Medina, is to similar effect.⁴ To all conquered nations he offered liberty of worship on payment of tribute; and in this he was followed by his first generals, so that the Mussulman arms were welcomed by the oppressed of every land.⁵ The humiliations to which the vanquished were subjected were political only. It is evident that proselytism by the sword was wholly contrary to his instincts. His Islam itself being substantially akin to Judaism and Christianity, he was strongly inclined to adopt forms and traditions from both these faiths. It was Omar who lifted the standard of an independent religion, and nationalized Islam by centralizing its worship in Mecca as the Kebla,⁶ — to Mahomet merely a matter of convenience, preferred to Jerusalem after his break with the Jews. "To God belong East and West alike, and whichever way ye turn, His face is there."⁷ Appeal to the sword was involved in the practical necessities of his monarchical creed, but it was not deliberately chosen.

After the flight to Medina his followers were in great indigence, and would have been put to death but for the arms in their hands.⁸ The Koreish had sworn Mahomet's death, and their army was in the field before he heard God's command to battle. Enraged that they could not use him to convert Arabia to Judaism, and that his belief was so much simpler than their Talmudic legends, the Jews

¹ Sura v. 49.

² Sura x. 100.

³ Sura ii. 59; v. 73.

⁴ Sprenger: *Das Leben*, etc., iii. 21.

⁵ Dozy: *L'Histoire d'Islamisme*, p. 184. See Al ß Bekr's noble counsels to his army of invasion on the march to Syria. Ockley: *History of the Saracens*, p. 94 (Bohn).

⁶ Sura ii. 139.

⁷ Sura ii. 109.

⁸ Braun, p. 53.



of Medina attempted his life; and poison administered by a Jewess was believed to be the remote cause of his death. On the scabbard of his sword, the Persian legend says, was written: "Adhere to those who forsake you; speak truth to your own heart; do good to every one that does ill to you."¹ He justified anathema and war on unbelievers, at first, on account of their aggressions.²

"The infidels help each other: unless ye do the same, there will be great demoralization."³ "They regard not in a believer either ties of blood or faith; when they break their oaths of alliance, and revile your religion and attack you, then do battle with them."⁴

It has been well said that it is the political rather than the religious authority of Islam that has been propagated by force. Mahomet overturned governments in the name of God, like the leaders of every other positive religion save Buddhism, but never from love or desire of mere destruction. His institutions prove this, — never hostile to proprietorship, never false to the people, never nihilistic in their iconoclasm.

The change in Mahomet's spirit towards unbelievers can never be understood by those who do not perceive that monotheism, conceived as the source of a revelation, must be exclusive and destructive simply because it is one of the necessities of its commands that they shall be executed. It is not revelations, but science and humanity, that allow liberty to doubt and deny. As soon as a positive religion has reached the point of practical organization and extension, and is brought into conflict with the forces it would supersede, it appeals to force as naturally as it appealed at first to persuasion. As soon as Christianity acquired

¹ Deutsch: *Der Islam*, p. 61. *The Hyât-ul-Kulûb* (Merrick, p. 235) draws a marvellous picture of the humanities with which he invested the cruel necessity of war.

² Dozy: *L'Hist. des Musul.*, i. 152.

³ Sura viii. 74.

⁴ Why Sprenger should call this pernicious, is difficult to discover. Ibn Ishâk's traditions maintain this self-defensive character of his warfare. — Sprenger, iii. 431. Ibn Hishâm, i. 230, 373, 376. Sura ix. 10, 12.



strength enough to draw the notice of the powers of this world, it forgot its non-resistance and its unworldliness, and set the example which Islam was not slow to follow. It rose to sway by a warfare even more long-continued and barbarous against every form of unbelief; mostly waged by civil and fraternal hates. To this day, wherever science has not infused a new soul, the old necessity of all revealed religions — “compel them to come in” — holds its own, in spirit, if not in power. Mahomet resisted the temptation to return blow for blow as long as it was possible. Had he been slain after a few years of his ministry, or, like Jesus, at a much earlier period of it, he would have died with words of mercy and forgiveness on his lips, — a divine man, but not the founder of a positive religion. While the prophet's function remains individual, he may follow the loftiest ideal; the conditions upon which his faith becomes accepted and organized in society are very different. Whether it is forced to meet them in his own person or in the devotion of his followers to his cause, the price is a sacrifice of that higher morality for ignoble means. In this respect, so inevitable is the logic of ideas by which each in turn shows its imperfection and enforces a better!

Once convinced of Allah's will that the new word should be received by His creatures, the Prophet naturally found in every invincible condition of that result a new divine guidance, which glorified every instinct and demand. We can only wonder that in such an age so much freedom, humanity, and constructive aim attended his steps. We can mark the period when the necessity of conquest took possession of his mind, in those haughty letters-missive to the emperors of Rome and Persia, demanding submission to the will of God. Yet on the great day of triumph, when he entered the old shrine of Mecca and broke down the idols, it was not in wrath, but in pity, — announcing amnesty



almost universal, commanding protection to the weak and poor, and freeing fugitive slaves. No self-exaltation, but the same democratic habit towards men, the same humility before God.¹ Against a few acts of severity² — a part of which are fully proved to have been military necessities, and a part are but indirectly his work, while all are merciful in view of what might have been expected in the situation and the customs of the times — we may put the prohibition of selling children apart from their parents, the rebuke to his generals for barbarous warfare and the effort to compensate the families of their victims, incessant care for the poor and suffering, and hosts of noble precepts for making religion one with humanity.³ Even the list of graver charges which Renan and Sprenger have given in full, — such as direct deception for his own advantage, charged on the will of God, and a general policy of paltering with the moral law, — have in part been disproved, and in part are explicable as natural in one whose single aim was the fulfilment of an inspired mission; as Renan somewhat naïvely says, "Man is too weak to bear the burden of apostleship very long." It would be equally true to add that the sense of inspiration is simply the self-affirmation of one's whole nature, — rational, passionate, instinctive, as alike instruments to the appointed end.⁴ There is no instance in history of a religious founder under these conditions so ready as Mahomet to confess his faults, whether of momentary weakness towards idolatry or of personal unkindness towards others. The early death of Jesus was fortunate for his example, but it did not alter the law of deterioration; that was only reserved for those who gave

¹ Smith, p. 123. Sprenger: *Das Leben*, etc., iii. 331.

² See these charges in Sprenger, iii. chap. xix. On the other side, Smith, pp. 122, 123. Freeman: *Conquests of the Saracens*, pp. 42-49.

³ Pool: Introduction to Lane's *Selections from the Koran*, pp. lxiii-lxv. Sprenger, i. 321.

⁴ Renan: *Études d'Histoire Religieuse*, p. 252. See Bosworth Smith, pp. 122, 123. Also Freeman: *Conquests of the Saracens*, pp. 42-49.



his church its hold on society. This burden Mahomet could not shift from his own neck.

Mahomet had a great sensuous nature, and it was doubtless a source of his success. But polygamy was the ineradicable demand for male offspring in the East; nor did his permission of it, under the conditions he enforced, add to its strength. For himself, his fidelity to his wife Khadija during her whole life, and his devout gratitude to her to the end of his own, outweigh all charges of mere bald sensualism on the excesses of his later years. All his children were born before he entered on his mission, and all were Khadija's. The propensity to enlarge his harem was gradually developed, and has been ascribed by Sprenger to a phase in his nervous disease. Yet the same critic has dealt much too severely with his procuring the cession of a wife from his follower Zeyd, — an act which can only be judged after a full view of the persons and relations. The supreme rights of the Prophet in these and other respects are simply analogous to those assumed by all other claimants of special revelation and authority.

Low as was Mahomet's estimate of woman and rude as Islam has always been to her in his name, devoid as the Koran is of that chivalrous spirit of which she was the ideal in the life of the older Arabs, his regulations really improved her condition, by abolishing the cruelties to female children, by limiting the number of wives for each man, punishing infidelity and kindred crimes with extreme severity, making divorces less easy and subject to severer conditions and humane obligations, and requiring proof by four witnesses of adultery on the part of a wife.¹ Mahomet gave women the right of inheritance, — half a male's part, — and the right of disposing of property; and forbade temporary marriage arrangements, besides putting the children of concubines on a level with those of wives.²

¹ See, especially, Sura iv.; lxx. 2-6.

² Sura iv. 23.



The prevailing belief that the Koran does not admit that women have souls or enter Paradise, is absurd;¹ as also the idea, hardly reconcilable therewith, that its Paradise is sensual. With all the external joys familiar to the Arab, as in all apocalyptic promises, highly colored pictures and symbols are used to attract the tastes of the worshippers; yet Mahomet, as elsewhere, subordinates the passions to the moral law.

"How happy shall be the people of the right hand! in extended shade by flowing waters and with abundant fruits, unfailing and unforbidden." "And they shall have wives of perfect purity, and abide there forever."²

Even Hallam admits that Mahomet did not rely on sensual inducements for the spread of his system.³ Where have the sexes been placed on a more perfect religious equality than in the following passage of the Koran, —

"The men who resign themselves to God, and the women who resign themselves, and the men and women believing and devout, and the men and women patient, humble, fast-observing, almsgiving, chaste, — for them has God prepared forgiveness and a rich reward."⁴

That the common idea of the influence of the Koran on the condition of woman is exaggerated, at least, appears from the testimony of careful observers like Stanley Poole, who says that "in many important senses a Turkish woman has more liberty than an English, being in her home perfect mistress of her time and her property." Similar and even stronger testimony is given by Geary, Urquhart, Farley, and De Amicis, to the freedom and purity of woman in Turkey.⁵ The comparative infrequency of prostitution in Mahometan countries has been generally

¹ Sura i. 23; xiii. 23; xl. 44; xlviii. 5, etc.

² Sura lvi. 20-30; ii. 23.

³ *Middle Ages*, chap. vi.

⁴ Sura xxxiii. 35.

⁵ Poole: *Modern Turkey*, chaps. iv. xv. Geary: *Travels through Asiatic Turkey*, Urquhart: *The Spirit of the East*, i. 252. De Amicis: *Turks of Constantinople*, pp. 212-226. Farley: *Modern Turkey* (1872), pp. 116-130.



observed; and several recent travellers have ventured to show conclusively how great are the compensations for the evils of Mussulman polygamy in the regulation and restraint of the passions. That the institutions of the Koran are no bar to the progress of woman, appears not only from the immense influence always accorded to her in public and private affairs, but from positive decisions of Imâms like Abû Hanîfa, that women could lawfully exercise the functions of a judge, and from the special honor in which they were held in the splendid days of Saracen Spain and under the great caliphs of the East, before the theologians began to preach the sinfulness of earthly love.

It was not to be expected that Mahomet should attempt the abolition of slavery. He did what had been the extent of Christian work in that direction by many mitigating precepts and laws,¹ forbidding the separation of parents and children, putting the duty of kindness towards the slave on the same ground with the claims of "kindred and neighbors and fellow-travellers and wayfarers;"² encouraging manumission, and therewith the gift of "a portion of that wealth which God hath given you;" and above all, forbidding sensual uses of a master's power over the slave, with the promise of divine mercy to the wronged.³ To free a slave is the expiation for ignorantly slaying a believer,⁴ and for certain forms of untruth. As we have already seen, the whole tenor of Mahomet's teaching made permanent chattelhood or caste impossible; and it is simply an abuse of words to apply the word slavery, in our sense, to any status known to the legislation of Islam. From the slave-laws of the early caliphate, by which a fugitive fleeing to Islam became free, and the child of a slave-woman followed the condition of the father, while

¹ Kremer: *Culturgesch. unter d. Khalifen*, ii. 101.

² Sura iv. 40.

³ Sura xxiv. 33.

⁴ Sura iv. 94.



the mother became free at his death, and the slave could contract for his freedom, and part of the poor-tax went to his relief, down to the institutions of modern Mussulman countries, which allow the bondman of to-day to become the grand vizier of to-morrow, the status of slaves has stood for a political incident, not a state of nature, nor even for a degraded race.¹

It would be wrong to omit here the peculiar tenderness of Mahomet towards the brute creation. The horse and camel, true protectors of the desert man, inherit the mystic honors torn from broken idols and cowering superstitions. Islam admits into Paradise the dog of the Seven Sleepers, the whale of Jonah, the calf of Abraham, the ram of Ishmael, the mule of the Queen of Sheba, the ox of Moses, and the ass of Mahomet, — a broader recognition of the humbler forms of life and service than that of the hero of the Hindu epic who refused to enter heaven without the company of his faithful dog.

From the hour of mental anguish when he struggles to escape the conviction of an immeasurable divine task, to that in which, his message borne and his mission fulfilled, he dies, old before his time, amidst mourning companions, distributing his few goods to the poor, and murmuring of Paradise and the prophets before him, — when the devotion of Omar will not suffer him to believe the great life has departed, and he rushes out wildly to deny that it is so before the people, so that Abû Bekr has to silence him with the admonition, "Know ye that the Prophet was but a man, and has died like the rest; but let those who trust him understand that God can never die," — through all that is hard and semi-barbarous, self-delusive, and seemingly self-seeking in his thinking and doing, there is indubitable evidence of an absolute sincerity and an almost equally absolute power, natural enough thereto,

¹ Kremer: *Culturgesch. des Orients unter d. Chalifen*, ii. 18.

of attracting, convincing, and controlling men and things. His consecration to his great idea was not less perfect than its necessity to his age; and its compulsion utilized his virtues and his faults by a force of tendency beyond all measurement. He stands as the truest type of that great phase in the evolution of religious belief,—faith in authoritative private revelation from a divine sovereign Will,—whose good and evil alike are now rapidly becoming superseded by a higher. And of this faith Mahomet was the truest type among all Semitic prophets and religious founders, because he alone in his own lifetime vindicated its practical and political demands. Accordingly, his personal history will be found to associate itself more readily than those of other representatives of the class with our experience of the new phase of religion to which the old faith in positive revelations has given way.

His purely historical character; his simple humanity, claiming only to be a man among men and an imperfect instrument of the truth; his intense realism, avoiding all mystical remoteness; his rejection of miracle; the thoroughly democratic and universal form under which his idea of the divine monarchy led him to conceive the relations of men; the force of his ethical appeal; his reliance on the voice and pen, and his strenuous endeavor for peaceful interpretations of a religious ideal with which his own history is the most perfect evidence of his incompatibility,—all affiliate Mahomet with the modern world. These elements of positive monotheism are predictive of humanitarian science. The passion of Islam for science for five centuries, and its prodigious influence on intellectual progress, are not accidental; they came in the natural development of the Prophet's faith in the unity and order of the universe and the uses of this present world. These are foundations of science; and only the principle of personal Will throned above them became a barrier to liberty



and progress, especially in its human analogue of a despotic caliph or sultan. It is for these reasons that Islam has been the entering wedge for civilization among lower races. The doctrine of one God and one Prophet, speaking in strict moral edicts of unlimited authority, without pretence of theological mysteries, offers a comparatively easy step out of barbarian rites and superstitions. Unencumbered by speculative modifications, and moving with the tremendous fanaticism of the full sense of direct revelation, it has proved, especially among the tribes of Asia and Africa, capable of doing what no other positive religion could do in lifting the lowest members of the human family into the paths of brotherhood. But this is only a part of its achievement. Fertile in splendid epochs of civilization, in every form of free speculation, and in noble endeavors after the largest unities and sympathies of faith, and adapting itself to more varied forms of race and culture than any other religious proselytism, it well deserves the honor accorded it in the declaration of Oriental scholarship, that "there is no grander landmark in history."¹

It is not my purpose to follow the fortunes of Islam in detail. It interests us at present only as interwoven with the history of Iranian religions, and thereby, in a larger point of view, as illustrating the connection between religions of personal Will by revelation and that universal form of religion which is being shaped out of free science, philosophy, and faith,—the worship of Cosmic Order, Unity, and Law. Islam is the ultimate and consistent expression of that earlier basis of authority which we have been tracing through its phases as the Iranian ideal to its abstract logical perfection in the Koran. Whatever has succeeded Islam on that line of belief is an impure intermixture and transformation of the original idea by the contact of other

¹ Cust: *Linguistic and Oriental Essays*, p. 129.



tendencies, ethnic, secular, and wholly antagonistic in their direction to its theory of origin and authority. Yet to this more rational philosophy of religion the pure monarchical idea was the transition. It was the purest conception of unity possible till this should be reached.

Intense as its germination was in Semitic Arabia, Iran was really its natural field of development. The study of the conditions to which it was subject after the conquest of the Persian empire, is of the highest historic value; and it is one which, indicating the necessities involved in revealed monotheism and its steps over into a rational faith, has, so far as I know, never been pursued. The great works of Sprenger, Weil, and Kremer, invaluable as historical researches, do not touch this point of view, save as affording worthy material for its illustration.¹ To this we shall now devote our attention.

We have found that one inevitable result of the idea of revelation by Divine Will through the prophet or mediator, whether pretending to infallibility or otherwise, has been his elevation into that supreme dignity to which his representative function legitimately points; so that he either becomes God, or is, under some superficial distinction, *practically* inseparable from God. If this was not the case in Judaism, it was because the law of Moses, as the expression of Jahveh and his will, was not made known at once by a single prophet, as Christianity and Islam were supposed to be, but was the slow product of national experience and foreign influence; and its monotheism could not be ascribed to one person, although the later priestly construction of the national literature strove hard for that end. Therefore Judaism became the wor-

¹ It should be said that the work of Kremer (*Herrschende Ideen d. Islams*) has by far the most claim to philosophical breadth of any thus far offered to the public; yet its aim is not to cover the relations of special religions to the law of their development.



ship of the Law, rather than of Moses or the prophets. Moreover, the apotheosis of a religious revelator must depend in large degree on the promulgation of his word being speedily followed by a speculative and mystical period in its development; and this period was not possible for the Hebrews until after the return from Babylon, and the conscious reconstruction of the religion in a very un-Mosaic manner. In Christianity, on the other hand, the conditions of the age favored an immediate commencement of the idealizing process; and the Will of God, as revealed in Jesus, rapidly became the divinity of Jesus himself. We shall now observe the same process in the kindred religion of Islam. Here, also, the Person *above* was soon inevitably merged and lost in the Person or Persons *below*.

Incarnation of the Personal Power, or Powers, of the universe in a human will was of course familiar to Asiatic races and religions. Buddhism carried it everywhere in its northward and westward march. The Persians had long called their chiefs gods. Brahmanism embodied it in its priesthood, every member of which was himself a Brahma. But that identity with Deity which belongs to its human organs reaches its complete form only in pure monotheism, where the unity of the original makes the process of human representation more simple and clear. It is for this reason that Islam, with all that horror of "joining gods with God," which was expressed by Mahomet, has been a hive of anthropolatry at every point of its history. This fact is of the utmost importance, as showing by the full confession of revealed religion itself the necessity of a principle more universal than its worship of a personal consciousness, which involves this localization and confinement of the ideal in powerful human personalities, or in what historical conditions have caused to appear as such.

In Islam the process began with the first establishment of the Arabs on the great rivers of Asia in the idealization of Mahomet himself. It was continued in the worship of Ali; later in that of the twelve Imâms; and still further in the immense hagiology of subsequent times.

Such is the first form under which these limitations of the class of religions now before us were apparent in Islam. There is also a second form. It is the concentration of aspiration, discussion, and momentous purpose on purely personal questions; in other words, on the rights of opposing claimants for religious honors. The relation of such facts to the law of historic development, which is merging "revealed religion" in the higher recognition and use of human reason in the discovery of truth, is at once obvious.

I. Iran, it will be remembered, is pre-eminently the land of hero-worship. Its god-kings of Assyria and Babylon, its homage to Cyrus, its cultus of Alexander, its admiration of the Sassanian Ardeshr and Nûshirvân, made it natural that Mahomet should be greeted as the Star of the West, and that in less than ten years the whole empire should have submitted to his sway. That wonderful achievement was due to an idealizing imagination rather than to mental or moral assent. It was the immense transformation wrought by Persian intellect on Arabian zeal and passion, that made of the desert-born creed an all-constructive and enduring power.

The apotheosis of Mahomet began very early, notwithstanding the strong reaction that opened against him in Arabia immediately after his death, and the succession of the Omeyyad family (his personal enemies) to the caliphate. The sound sense of Abû Bekr, the overshadowing military and organizing genius of Omar, the historical tastes of Othmân, the extraordinary manliness and free-



dom of the leaders whom the Prophet had drawn around him, — "no mere fanatics, but men of practical insight, and susceptible of lofty impressions,"¹ — could not prevent the operation of a tendency involved in the very substance of his claim. The teacher who always assured his followers, in all humility, that as prophet he had no higher function than to transcribe a book written in heaven, nevertheless did assume an exclusive commission, which absorbed his human nature in the supernal splendors of a divine election. He claimed to have been authenticated by prophetic scriptures as conveyor to mankind of saving truth direct from the mouth of God, who spake indeed in the first person familiarly from his lips. How could he fail to be regarded as the intercessor for his followers, and even for his nation as such, at the judgment and before the throne? The legend relates that Moses asked Allah to reward the good deeds of Jews tenfold, and to grant them other prerogatives over other races; but Allah replied, "These privileges are accorded only to believers in Mahomet, in whose name even Adam prayed to me."² Soon his intervention became necessary for the attainment of Paradise even by the good, and his name had magic virtue to the same end. Even at this day the pilgrim at his grave cries,³ "Thou must be our advocate! Intercede, oh! intercede for us whose sins have broken our backs!" Mahomet had said, "Whoso visits my grave shall have my good word with God;"⁴ and even Al Ghazâlî, who allows the tradition that he had in his lifetime deprecated the future use of his grave for an "idol stone," is careful to observe that he had afterwards instituted this very cult.⁵ The name of the Son of Abdallah is mentioned, like that of Christ in Christian churches, in every

¹ Sprenger: Appendix to chap. v. See his account of them in detail.

² Weil: *Biblical Legends*, 151.

³ Kremer: *Die Herrsch. Ideen d. Islam*, p. 284.

⁴ Braun: *Gemälde d. Islam*, p. 435.

⁵ Kremer: *Culturgesch.*, etc., p. 296.



prayer. In every feast it is the benediction, in every peril a charm, in every grief and loss a victory over death. He had divided the Jordan by a word; he had pierced the veil that hides the innermost heavens. It was denied that he had, even in youth, been an idolater, or had ever wavered in his faith. His own brief reference to a vision of visiting Jerusalem was magnified at once into the amazing myth of Borâk and the night journey to heaven.¹ He was dogmatically pronounced sinless and infallible, the black drop having been taken from his heart by Gabriel; and the world was held to have been created for his sake.

In Arabia, the free spirit of the desert refused this personal homage, as the Jewish Christians refrained from a like homage to Jesus. The ablutions, fasts, and organized forms of his religion could take no root in the Arab's semi-nomadic life, and never supplanted the old usages, which sprung from the nature of the country and immemorial social needs.² But in Persia the apotheosis went on without restraint. The emanative Light, before creation deposited in Adam's loins, shining on the brows of patriarchs, expanded into twenty spiritual oceans, and avoiding contact with impure persons or with even the shadow of a doubt, — down to its perfect incarnation in Mahomet, and resolved at last into the ideal Mahomet of the pantheistic Sufis, in whom, as in Jesus, multitudes of devotees were absorbed, bearing his very *stigmata* on their persons, — corresponded essentially, if not in detail, to the Logos-Christ, the Gnostic Æons, and to the God-Christ of the later saints and mystics. This mythic exaltation, with the innumerable cosmic miracles afterwards gathered about his birth, was no imitation of Christian precedents, as

¹ Ibn Hishâm, from *Ibn Ishâk*, i. 196-202.

² Yet even in Arabia there was his genealogy to work on; and nothing in this kind ever equalled that of Mahomet's "mothers," traced back for ages, to the number of five hundred, every tribe supplying an ancestress, with names and branches past number. Sprenger: Introduction, chap. xlii.



Sprenger constantly intimates, but the natural evolution of this form of religious belief.¹ In the Persian "Hyât-ul-Kulûb" his ancestry are immaculate; Satan shrieks and falls headlong at his advent, and Paradise is suffused with joy. He is the crown of humility, forgiveness, and every virtue, and his presence converts the worst to humanity. So commanding are his beauty and majesty that no one could resist them, and no unjust person could stand before him till right had been done. The elements do him homage as he walks the earth, and the angel of death must ask his permission to cross his threshold to bear him to Paradise. He is lord of life and death, and his body transcends their laws.² Such the transfiguration of the man who would hear of no miracle but his revealed word. It is true that the Shîite prayers are generally addressed to Allah, and the Prophet and his Imâms are but remembered in them; but we shall see that the spirit, as we have just described it, must interpret the form.

No doubt his real personality had much to do with this swift exaltation. The oldest traditions testify at least of the awe and love of his companions. They say of Omar, that he cut a Moslem in two who appealed from the Prophet's judgment to his own.³ One of his companions avowed that he should prize one of the master's hairs beyond all the gold and silver in the world.⁴ His wife Ayesha is made to describe him as more beautiful than a veiled virgin; as sympathetic with every mood or experience, even with the sports of little children; as making every one in a company think that he was his most favored guest; as incapable of withholding anything he had from those who had need.⁵ No Moslem ever doubted the

¹ Wâkidi, p. 36.

² Merrick: *Hyât-ul-Kulûb*, pp. 36, 37.

³ *Tales of the Kaliphate*, p. 256.

⁴ Wâkidi, p. 279. Muir: *The Life of Mahomet and History of Islam*, Introduction,

⁵ See Muir: *The Life of Mahomet*, etc., ii, 305.

authenticity of his dying words,—“By the Lord, verily no man can lay hold of me on any matter. I have made nothing lawful except what God hath made lawful, nor permitted anything which He hath in His Book forbidden.”¹

The line of personal traditions in which the divinizing of the Prophet has gone on, began at a very early period, in fact immediately after his death.² They had become enormous in quantity by the second century of the Hegira, though not more enormous or monstrous than those which have grown up around the Christ and his saints. The rapidity of their growth is illustrated by the fact that a compiler who died in the year 58 of the Hegira had collected three thousand five hundred from the immediate hearers of the Prophet, as rehearsed to their scholars. All the companions and contemporaries of Mahomet were busied in collecting them.³ Before the age of the great Abbaside caliphs the science of tracing traditions through long series of verbal witnesses had become perfected, orthodoxy being of course the chief test of authority. Of the multitude of those examined by the great scholar Bokhârî, only one in one hundred and fifty stood the test of his conscientious inquiries; and of these, “modern criticism would certainly strike out half.” Yet the patient honesty with which the millions of a later growth still have been wrought over by scholars to form the orthodox *Sunna* is at least respectable, and Sprenger does not despair of reducing the interminable series of authorities to something like historical value. The prodigious energy of these constructions is shown in the earliest biography of the Prophet now extant, that of Ibn Ishâk, transcribed and enlarged with great care by Ibn Hishâm, dating as far back as the early part of the second century of the Hegira.⁴ The endless minuteness of

¹ See Muir: *The Life of Mahomet*, etc., iii. 277.

² Sprenger: *Das Leben*, etc., iii. 61.

³ *Ibid.*, iii. lxxxiii., lxxxv.

⁴ Translated by Weil (1864). See also Sprenger (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morg. Gesellsch.*, xiv.). *Leben Moh.* iii. lxi. Mohl: *Vingt-sept ans*, etc., ii. 627.



detail, both in names and events, given us in this simple and unadorned chronicle, the treasures of contemporary poetry gathered around it, the natural appreciation of parties and situations, and the impartial hearing to their diverse reports, combine to produce upon the reader an impression of reality which is only weakened by the quiet confidence of the author in miracles as accredited facts. Not only is the supernatural power of the Prophet in full play thus early, even to the sacredness of his person from attacks, and the homage of nature to his presence, but the adoration of him has gone so far that his common replies are quoted as the words of Allah, not as his own; and his whole speech and conduct from birth to death, as well as his Koran, are evidently regarded as divine. The energy of the mythopoetic tendency in thus rapidly divinizing the founders of positive religions, especially Semitic, becomes the more astonishing when we consider how entirely the amazing capacity of the Arabs for accurately remembering oral testimony, as well as the conscientious use of it in Ibn Ishâk's researches,¹ failed even to retard the process. Nothing at all comparable to this check upon the traditional imagination existed in the Jewish mind during the infancy of the Christian records; so that the rapid formation of a deific halo about the head of Jesus became *a fortiori* a fact of easy and natural explanation.

So fruitful of personal theopoetic traditions is a revealed religion, that myriads of Mussulman teachers were consecrated to the study of this oral personal wisdom, and every corner of Islam was ransacked in the search thereof, until it came to be reckoned that the Prophet had been surrounded by one hundred and twenty thousand companions, so that not a word of God that fell from his lips could have been lost.² The parallel with Christian traditionalism

¹ Mohl, i. 490; ii. 445.

² Hishâm's *Ibn Ishâk*, i. 113, 192, 290.

may be carried further; and in the later work of Wākidi, and still more in the latest and best of all, that of the great chronicler Tabari, who has been called not very accurately the "Livy of Islam," there is a certain degree of reaction towards a rationalistic point of view.

The rage for deification naturally acts in a monotheistic religion by concentration, once for all, upon one personal representative, as in the Christian worship of Jesus as God. Yet in Islam it takes a continuous form, always creating new objects. The reason lies in the character of the races with which this religion had to deal; in its being imposed on polytheistic antecedents in these races, who were accustomed to find a deity in every fresh phenomenon of human power. Thus the polytheistic instinct perseveres even through the change by which every newly deified man becomes the manifestation of one and the same God. In Christianity this tendency was contravened by an intense weariness of polytheistic systems in the Roman world, and a profound desire, everywhere, of political, social, and religious unity. The worship of saints, relics, and the papal power, indeed, represented it in an inferior degree; but, however practically intercepting and absorbing the worship of the one God and the one Christ, it did not theoretically invalidate the exclusive identity of the Only Begotten with the Father. Herein the worship of personal Will was less logical than in Islam, which knew no Only Begotten, and did not attempt to control the supreme purpose of incarnation within numerical limits. In Asia, in the seventh century, the freedom of Divine Will, instituted by polytheism, could not so easily be confined. Persia was not content with lifting the chief of prophets to the side of God. For five centuries the process was repeated, with teachers of new sects; soldiers, party leaders, veiled and unveiled prophets, rebellious sheikhs,—more open paths for Deity through human



organs than in the Buddhist Avatârs. The thoughtful student will recognize in both these tendencies — alike in the extreme limitations of the one and the extreme caprices of the other — the inherent inadequacy of the worship of personal Will. While in both the essential identity of the human and divine is dimly foreshadowed, and unconsciously pursued in these highest of revealed religions, they are but “the motion toiling in the gloom.”

Ali, the son-in-law of Mahomet, his first great convert, his dearest companion, was the legitimate heir of his inspiration, if there was one; but the intrigues of the harem set him aside from the caliphate. To three successive exclusions from his rights he submitted with the quiet dignity of a great man. Nevertheless, the disputes among the Arab leaders as to the succession not only broke out into war, but immediately, both in Egypt and Irak, resulted in exalting Ali into an incarnation of God. The object of this adoration did not hesitate to rebuke it, and to punish the leaders. The famous Fâtimite dynasty in Africa, founded in due time upon the divinity of Ali, shows how vainly men resist the logic of beliefs. Oriental familiarity with the godhood of priests and kings; religious enthusiasm for the prophetic function which Mahomet had observed in Ali, his martyrdom at Kerbelâ by the treachery of companions, combined with the persecutions of his friends by the Omeyyad caliphs, and with the possession of many noble traits, to exalt this personal devotion into positive worship, until in Persia, where all these influences had peculiar force, the name of Ali became the symbol of the national faith. The principal sects in that country are Shîite, or Aliite, in distinction from the Western Mahometans, who hold to the *Sunna*, or traditional law, in the interest of the three Omeyyad caliphs who had superseded Ali. In their hostility to Ali, the Omeyyad family¹

¹ Belonging to the old first families of Mecca.



represented a reaction against the authority of the Prophet and his line,—or rather an aristocratic resistance at the outset to his popular institutions, which showed itself at once in their free dealing with the Koranic laws.¹ Notwithstanding their discouragements from Damascus, the Alrites became powerful enough in Persia to overthrow their Syrian enemies, and by help of the disintegration of sects and parties to substitute the Abbaside dynasty. And though this change brought little immediate advantage to themselves, it was succeeded by a long period of internecine civil wars and dynastic strifes, through which the worship of this human god and his descendants became a mighty religious cult, and at last the very heart of Iranic faith. The Dabistân enumerates eighteen sects of this creed, and reports a Sura in Ali's honor, believed by them to have been struck out of the Koran by Othmân when he fixed the canon of Islamic Scripture.² Analogous emotions to those which Christians felt for the cross of Christ were, and still are, centred in the martyrdom of Ali's son Hosein, who, as suffering humanly for man, holds the full place of his father in Persian gratitude and love. This dramatic sympathy is the religion of modern Persia.³ It is easy of course to deny all analogy between this "man worship" and the Christian adoration of Jesus. But these earliest Imâms who inherit the divinity of Ali were supposed to have really dropped their human natures, and to have been as truly absorbed into the essence of Deity as it was possible for the second and human person of that Christian trinity in unity to be, which could not be recognized in the spiritual arithmetic of the Mussulman. These Imâms (Holy Ones) were regarded as perfectly immaculate before the end of the first century of the Hegira.⁴ The

¹ Renan: *Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse*, p. 264.

² *Dabistân*, ii. 366-368.

³ See Braun: *Gemälde d. Islam*, p. 20.

⁴ Kremer: *Herrsch. Ideen d. Islam*, p. 375.



line of apotheosis reaches through Persian history, culminating in the expectation of a now hidden member, who is to come in clouds and lightnings out of his seclusion, to judge, redeem, and rule the world, as immediate representative of Ali himself.¹

To follow Ali-worship would be to recount the intricate and endless tale of the Persian sects, which the purpose of this work requires us to present only in a few of their general bearings. The important fact is, that so completely did this new idealization efface the old primitive faith, that the Shiites became in general anti-Islamic, and flung aside the system of the founder, even to the Meccan pilgrimages, as completely as the Papacy set aside the early form of Christian worship. They have their own pilgrimages to the tombs of their own martyrs at Kerbelâ, where the Persian holds it his supreme bliss to be buried at their side.² For the old Arab rites they substitute stated lamentations for Hosein, and theatrical shows of his death, at which passions are aroused more vehement than ever attended the Mystery-Plays of Christendom, and not unlike the orgiastic rites of Semitic fire-gods. Some of these sects cursed the Prophet himself for the sake of Ali. A somewhat philosophical form was given to the line of Imâms by the theory of a continuous revelation from age to age, according to the educational needs of mankind. Al Hakîm (Al Mokanna, the "veiled prophet" of Khorassan, as famous in Western poetry as in Oriental politics) was a propagator of Imâm divinity in its strongest form, associated with Buddhistic dogmas, with Iranian independence, and with politic and even deceitful seclusion from the sight of his followers, and placed himself confidently in the sacred line. Ismailism, a phenomenon of immense political influence, pursued the same track, counting seven Imâms, all included in the unity of Allah.

¹ Kremer, p. 377. *Dabistân*, iii. 368.

² Kremer, p. 375.



Abdallâh ibn Maimûn, an eclectic preacher holding an esoteric system woven of Gnostic, Manichæan, Buddhist, and Pârsi elements, repudiated even the descendants of Âlî in their turn, in order to carry the doctrine of a hidden Imâm to its farthest limits. His initiations led up gradually to the rejection of all prevailing systems, retaining only their common idea of incarnation in some form; and his sworn bands of missionaries went out to hold him forth to the Oriental world as the Word of God. Out of his movement came the Karmates of Irak in the ninth century, who worked it up into a socialistic and predatory crusade against Islam from their fortress in Nabathean Irak.¹ They pillaged Mecca and terrified the caliphate of Bagdad, and, after a crusade against all thrones but that of their expected Imâm, established the Fâtimite dynasty of Syria and Egypt. From this in turn came a number of self-instituted incarnations, — such as Hakîm (A.D. 1021), a strange compound of the philanthropist and savage, whose return the Druses are still expecting; and Hasan-Çâbbah, the pessimistic and unscrupulous founder of the sect, named from their use of hashish *Hashishîn*, which in the mouth of the French crusaders became *Assassins*, with the signification of murderers, — a hierarchy of nihilists sworn to passive obedience and the martyrdom that awaits the professional murderer of all eminent foes, yet combining with this religious rage of the desert most of the personal and social virtues in which all the rationalistic Arab schools abounded. The Assassin fortress of Alamut had its line of incarnations, its protests against the formalism and superstition of the older faith, until a reaction brought the sect back into the fold, but without preserving them from the retributions of another and mightier human god,

¹ Dozy, pp. 246-278. There is a story that he cheated his followers, who insisted on seeing him, by placing a row of mirrors in the hands of his wives, so that their reflections of the sunlight overwhelmed the beholders, who fell prostrate under the dazzling glory, crying out, "O God, this light of thine suffices us." — Vanbéry: *Khorassan*, pp. 49, 50.



the Mongol Hūlāghū, who swept away Alamut and its literary stores as it had burned its own Hashishīn books.

The *Nosairis*, who are called by Gobineau the most important sect of Persia, adore Ali as the supreme God, creator of Mahomet himself! They repudiate historical Islam.¹ They take a solemn vow not to reveal the mystery of their trinity, in which Ali is the father, Mahomet the son, and Salmān the spirit. Ali's body, like the Docetic and Koranic Christ's, is phenomenal merely; but his symbol is wine, before which they fall, and know no other Kebla than his invisible face. The catechism declares that Ali created man, and is ruler of life and death; that in Mahomet he was hid as seed, and that he has appeared on earth seven times. After giving his genealogy, it gives lists of hierarchies and worlds, rites of communion and mass, similar to the Christian, and finally a store of those high moral precepts which run like a golden thread through all the phases of personal or will worship, whether of a more or less superstitious kind.² The most violently intolerant of these human deities were, like Al Hakīm, famous for kindness to the poor and for open ears to all the needs of their subjects. They were teachers of a Puritan morality, which had no respect for the persons of priests or kings.³ To the Christian believer these doctrines ought not to seem blasphemous, nor the good ethics illegitimately born, since they come, like their own, out of the premises of revealed religion.

But Ali and his Imāms do not exhaust the list of Islamic apotheoses. Every sect invariably makes its founder a form of Deity, and every religious reformer has ended by becoming in this sense a gate (*báb*) of God.⁴ From the second century of the Hegira, when Bābek in Persia cut adrift from

¹ Salisbury (*American-Oriental Journal*, viii. no. 2, pp. 235, 241, 245, 267) gives the Nosairian ritual in full, from Mahometan authors.

² *Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgent. Gesellsch.*, iii. 302-310, where the Nosairian catechism is given, translated by Dr. Wolff.

³ Kremer: *Herrsch. Ideen d. Islam*, p. 74.

⁴ Braun, p. 284.



Moslem tradition into a kind of universal religion compounded of preceding ethnic faiths, and passed for a new Buddha, the substitutive process has gone on, until Mahomet himself is probably the least worshipped of the masters of Moslem faith. Every one hastens to the empyrean, the religious norm of one sovereign Will. Al Hakîm permitted the Cairo university to proclaim his divinity at the age of fourteen; and Hamza, his Persian follower, renewed the claim in his behalf only to announce himself as the Word, and Mahomet as the spirit of Evil!¹ The Yezîds, ultra Shiîtes, who are rather unfairly called Devil-worshippers merely because they take the precaution to put themselves right with the chief of fallen angels, who is by and by to be redeemed and exalted by Allah, adore their sheikh, who said, "I who sought truth became truth, and they who possess truth shall be as I." Mirza Ali Mohammed, of Shiraz, founder of Bâbism (1842), the political pantheism of the Persian masses at the present time, declared, "He who would know the way to God can go only by me."² His preaching against the Mollahs and their traditions resulted, contrary to his desires, in armed rebellion; whence came terrible persecutions, and a record of heroic martyrdom unsurpassed in history, in which his own (1849) was the most noble and touching instance.³ His pure theology and ethics, — in many respects the crown of Sufism, — his justice to the social relations, and to a love of order and peace which rebuked the fanatical passion of his followers, were really an advance on the Koran itself; and it seems by no means without reason that the Prophet is wholly ignored by him in the interest of these higher spiritual conceptions. Characteristic of all these identifications of the prophet with his God was their *political absolutism*. Mahomet and the Hebrew prophets assumed this in virtue of their commissions, even though holding

¹ Braon: *Gemälde d. Islam*, pp. 132, 133.

² *Ibid.*, p. 178.

³ See a full account of the Bâb, in Gobineau's *Religions de l'Asie Centrale*, p. 267.



themselves to be merely human instruments of the Infinite. But the Hakîms and Ismaïls and Bâbs and Imâms could not be less than masters of this world, if not in their own view, certainly for their devout followers. How could it be otherwise, under religious conceptions wholly analogous to those of politico-monarchical Will? It was, in fact, through political evolution that such conceptions were reached. Where the only notion of law is the royal will, that type must be carried up into the ideal sphere, and God, with his incarnations, becomes simply "King of kings." As the death of an Oriental ruler threw an empire into utter confusion and peril, so the incarnated presence of God's will in all human affairs was a permanent necessity, which could take no other form than that of an earthly autocracy. The tendency to this identification has always been irresistible. The Roman Cæsars were deified as soon as they became politically omnipotent, and Augustus could not prevent it in his own case, though he certainly seems to have attempted to do so. It was the same with the Egyptian Pharaohs. Deification was but the reverse side of monarchy. It was an easy play of the imagination, too, for the court-poets of the East to transform a man for whom the world was indubitably made into the God by whom it was made. For the thinker, it was only to change the final cause into the efficient. "Mo'izz," says the Fâtimite poet of his prince, "is the cause of the world; he is healing; outflow of the essence of the spiritual sphere; intercessor; reflected light of God."¹ It was difficult for the free Arab individuality to come under such influences; and apotheosis, as we have seen, was not in its line. But the old monarchies of Egypt and Persia, and even the ruder tribes of Asia and Affica, had been for a long time under political conditions most favorable to the process. Judaism was a

¹ Kremer (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xxiv. 491, 492).



democracy like Arabia; yet its culmination, after Ezra, was in a priestly theocracy. Its God was after the image of a human autocrat, owing to its intense monolatry of personal Will. This, moreover, caused it to bring forth perhaps the most complete illustration of human divinization in all ecclesiastical history, as soon as its own purely *individual* religious fruit was watered by Aryan political experience.¹ In truth, the superiority of law to person in religious, as in political, conceptions, is a modern idea, — a result not of Christianity, but of that mighty complex of relations, inward and outward, which we call civilization. It rests on the pure love of truth as truth, not as a revelation of individual Will nor as the gift of a special teacher. It rests on the development of intuition, science, and intercourse, bringing all exclusive volitions to the level of universal human nature and inviolable law.

It may seem that evidence enough has been given of the natural expansion of belief in personal revelation, through the very conditions of a free divine Will, over an indefinite number of human representatives thereof, who not only practically intercept the worship of a Supreme One, but — what is of more moment — foreclose the universal relation of mankind to the substance of truth and good. But we must not forget that the very extent of this expansion is a hint of the aspiration of the human faculties toward the highest spheres of thought and desire. For this reason, as well as to show how inevitably even a monotheistic faith falls into the interception above mentioned even while theoretically forbidding it, we shall try to point out the extreme development of Islamic anthropolatry.

¹ Dr. C. P. Tiele (*Histoire Comparée des Anciennes Religions*, etc., p. 492) makes the astounding assertion that "Jesus never appealed to a special inspiration of God, nor presented his word as the word of God"! It is enough to ask, how could he have failed to do so, under the circumstances of his education and ideal? The statement shows how hard it is for the highest perception of historical laws to escape the prejudices of a positive religion.



Nothing seems more incongruous with the sublime conception of Allah in the Koran than a positive adoration of saints, their tombs and their miracles. Mahomet indeed availed himself of the honors traditionally paid by the old Arab tribes to the graves of their heroes and bards. He allowed miraculous gifts to the earlier prophets, though not as a mark of superiority, since the Koran was above all miracles, the very speech of God. He firmly maintained the separation of the human from the divine by an immeasurable gulf, which it was blasphemy to deny or ignore.

"The Jews say 'Ezra is a son of God,' and the Christians say 'The Messiah is a Son of God.' They are like the infidels of old: God do battle with them! Fain would they put out His light in their mouths, taking their teachers and monks and messianic Son of Mary for Lords beside God. But there is no God save God."¹

Nothing could be more explicit. Yet not only were the Prophet's earliest companions made into divinities, as caliphs,—not only, as we have seen, did the great leaders of sects inevitably become objects of worship,—but the process is repeated, down to the narrowest local experience, in tens of thousands of thaumaturgic ascetics, whose tombs are temples, and who live after death as real representatives of God. It seems to be as natural to the strict monotheism of the orthodox Moslem as to the pantheism of the Sufi, whose very purpose is to reach absorption in the whole as the true end of existence. In both forms it is equally common for the devotee to proclaim his own arrival at this identity with God, and to receive the worship which is its due.

Nor is this anthropolatry, from which the master would have shrunk in horror, imposed by a priesthood. Islam recognizes no such right or power in any class to grant official canonization, still less to deify mortal men. The instinct is spontaneous in the worshipper, and rests entirely

¹ Sura ix. 31, 32.



on merits and miracles in the holy man. The process lies wholly outside of the recognized rights and forms of the Church. It is, then, the unconscious following out of some logical necessity in the conception of God. It is the practical result of the theism of personal Will, a strictly human quality identified with the Supreme. So intense is this thirst for union of the actual with the ideal, that a great sheikh is quoted as saying that it is "the highest joy to believe in all who describe themselves as in union with God, even when the claim is known to be false."¹ Every age has had its perfected saint, "whose foot is on the neck of all the righteous;"² perhaps living unknown, and pursuing some humble trade. Every town moreover has its centre of superstitious legend. Mussulman Egypt is covered with local myths, and names shaped on divinizations analogous to those of mediæval Catholicism, in which the same logical development took place. Morocco swarms with adored Sheikhs, — literally, "elders;" Marabouts, — literally, "bound to God;" Shêrifs, — nobles, descendants of the Prophet; and Mokaddems, — representatives.³ The *Onalls*, ascetic missionaries of Islam for three centuries among the Kabyles of the Tell, whose influence has been in every way civilizing in faith and customs, established individually a dominion over these tribes amounting to theocracy. They are credited with ubiquity and omnipotence, and with instant command over the laws of Nature and the lives of men. In the legends these saints⁴ often appear as flames of fire, which slowly resolve themselves, on approach, into human bodies in attitudes of rapt devotion; while intruders are rooted to the ground, or sent away perfumed with incense from heaven. Prayers are regularly addressed to them, and vows of absolute obe-

¹ See instances in Goldziher's article (*Rev. d. l'Hist. d. Relig.*, ii. pp. 268-281).

² Krenier, p. 173.

³ Burton's *Pilgrimage*, ii. 10.

⁴ See a full account of these saints, with their literature, in Colonel Trumelet's work, *Les Saints du Tell*, 1881, Introduction, xix.; also pp. 163, 174, 217.



science assumed.¹ Their tombs are protected by their miraculous presence against invasion, and become shrines for their constant responses. In life and death all time is transparent to them, and their will is God's.² The necessity is too strong to endure the invidious distinction of sex: the records of Islam everywhere show equal honors to sainthood, male and female. Nunneries and cloisters, often founded by women, asylums for the divorced, are under the divine protection of female Marabouts and Oualîs. Old pagan tombs and temples and feasts have been transformed, as in Christianity, into shrines and rites of an apotheosis, not so far remote, after all, from their original purpose. Late researches by De Tassy in India, and Renan in Phœnicia, show that Islam and its kindred, Christianity, have easily accepted even the old heathen names of saints; and in many Mussulman countries the passion for divinization has kept alive the oldest forms of animal service.³

All this was resisted in every age by rationalistic theists and by sceptics. But from the indignant declaration of Omar, when he kissed the black Kaaba, that he did so "only because the Prophet had set the example, but that it was nothing more than a dead stone after all," down to the heroic iconoclasm of the Wahhâbees, extinguished in blood by Mehemet Ali in the present century, every protest split on the rock of an invincible necessity.

Wahhâbism was the most significant revolution ever known in the history of Islam. It was the revival, after a thousand years, of the old Arab individuality, conservative

¹ Trumelet: Introduction, xxi.

² Ibid., pp. 19, 245.

³ Goldziher, p. 290-300. Thus the Mussulman feast of Nôrûz (New Year) is grafted on an old Iranian solar festival, and turned (precisely like the change of the old December liberties into Christmas) into a commemoration of Ali's choice as successor of the Prophet. The Mussulman pilgrims to Egypt have adopted into their processions the sacred cats of Bubastis. The old serpent-cult of Egypt still remains under Islam. The love of trees, fishes, and other creatures is transmitted in Mussulman forms. Samson has passed into Ali, and St. George into Al-Chidr. — Goldziher, pp. 308, 309, 316, 318, 322.



simplicity, and natural scepticism,—of that reluctance of the desert tribes to receive Koranic institutions, or an intermixture of foreign cults, which demanded at the outset, “Why should we practise ablutions, who have no water; or give alms, who have no money; or pray to the Kaaba, when we have the rising sun?” Wauhâb, it has been said, played the part of Luther in Islam. He did more. He went back to the freedom of natural religion. He was no full believer in the Koran, or in the Prophet,—certainly not in the orthodox sense of belief. He denounced all mediatorship by prophets and saints, and all worship at their tombs. He assailed the *Sunna* traditions, taught the primitive democracy of the desert, noted the human limitations of Mahomet, the sinfulness of all rites but those addressed to the Supreme. He waged deadly war against wine, tobacco, rosaries, and all vanities of dress and fashion. He denounced the vicious and senseless habits of the Mecca pilgrims, the silly legends about the graves of saints. He renewed the old thunders of the Prophet among his people, and with like results.¹ The traditional dignitaries set themselves to silence him, and soon drove the new puritans to take up arms. A new destruction seemed to impend over Islam, like that which Mahomet had brought on the empires of his day. Bagdad trembled, and the tomb of Hosein itself was overturned. Mecca was captured, and a general sweeping off of mosques and trading-stalls around the Kaaba succeeded; the black stone itself was broken up, and the ornaments stripped from the Prophet’s tomb. Saûd, the chief in this crusade, had great aims for the regeneration of his people. Like Mahomet, he was obliged to fight his way through to security for all; and so far as he found power, he established order and peace. Jews and Christians were unmolested, on condition of tribute. But nothing could

¹ Dozy: *Histoire de l’Islam*, p. 417.



keep those wild Semites loyal to settled government. This leader compelled obedience to law, broke up the old blood-revenge and settlement of disputes by war, enforced reconciliation, and abolished the right of rogues to find refuge by fleeing to the tent of a chief. He tried to drive the masses to mosque with sticks, and, an earlier Savonarola, made a bonfire of Arab abominations, — pipes, ornaments, and wine-vessels. It was an appeal to the best instincts, and for a while they responded bravely to the stupendous task of reforming the world. He was an expert soldier; only a tinge of avarice lessened his power; no treachery, like that of the Egyptian semi-barbarian, who finally marched to destroy the new faith, can be laid to his charge. Orthodoxy proclaimed a holy war against the iconoclast, and Wahhâbism went down before the cruelty and cunning of Mehemet Ali, who succeeded only through the untimely death of its chief. But Wahhâbism survives, because the free Arab lives. It will again rend Islam with its war on saint and relic worship, — the settled mediatorialism of a thousand years. But it will always find the orthodoxy of a revealed religion its deadly foe, because these and the like anthropolatrics are the inmost necessity of such belief.¹

II. The second point I proposed to consider in the evolution of Islamic religious monarchism is, that just as its sentiment became absorbed in personal apotheosis, so its speculative and even ethical controversy has centred in questions of personal claims. The statement is equally true of matters human and divine. Its disputes related either to the right of certain individuals to rule human thought and conduct, or else to predestination and free-will in the relations between God and man considered as distinct personalities. The great war between the cali-

¹ See Braun: *Gemälde*, etc., p. 298. Crichton: *Arabia*. Burckhardt: *Notes*, etc., vol. ii.

phate dynasties of the Omeyyades and the Abbasides was about family rights rather than any difference of principles. Shīte and Sunnite did not substantially disagree in doctrine. The question was whether Alī or Abū Bekr was entitled to the prophetic succession; and this strife for men has rent Islam into hostile halves from the beginning to the end of its history, as if to show how surely the worship of personal Will, even in the form of absolute unity, breaks up into practical Dualism and intense antagonism of wills, by its very nature. The subordinate sects have battled in the same way over the claims of the Prophet himself; and the history of free thought in Islam constantly revolves around the disposition to repudiate him as the centre of faith, and either to substitute some nearer name or names, on whom the age or region is supposed to depend, or else to come out by a strong reaction into a more perfect conception of the unity of the universe by pantheistic absorption into an impersonal substance (Sufism).¹ Christian history presents precisely similar phenomena, being founded on essentially similar notions of Deity. Its incessant strifes reveal the same enormous proportion of purely personal questions, beginning with the controversy of Jew and Gentile in the early Church over the humanity of Jesus, passing on into the battle of ages over his essence, — whether of God or like God, whether one or twofold, whether involving two wills or one only, — and then, after all this was officially and dogmatically settled, resolving themselves into the rival claims of metropolitan bishops to represent His will in church government; a dispute no sooner settled than the pontifical rule was broken up by fragmentary protestant papacies, ending only in the sublime revolt of historical and intellectual science against the assumption of a central head, historical or ideal.

¹ Kremer, p. 172.



As soon as the Prophet's death left the theology of Islam free to pass from an instinctive into a reflective stage, it divided on the question of predestination and free-will; in other words, the will of a Supreme and the will of a finite man. And this strife continued till the former was firmly established as the orthodox norm of faith. It was the natural parallel to the strife of Augustine and Pelagius in the Christian Church. The predestinarianism of the Koran was intense; and all the vehemence of Mahomet's appeals to free moral choice could not hide his belief that he was the mere instrument of Divine will, and his demand that others should regard themselves as no less so.¹ But the independence of the Arab, the intellectual energy of the Persian, the dialectical rationalism of the Græco-Syrian schools of Basra and Nisibis, were never suppressed by the absolutism of Allah and his Koran. Not for a moment during the history of Moslem supremacy has the protest against it ceased. Constantly unsuccessful, for reasons already given, it has been as constantly renewed, — the half-conscious struggles of a higher ideal by and by to be made good.

The Omeyyad caliphs, born of an anti-Mahometan stock, were indifferent, literary, luxurious. They encouraged free thought, and treated the orthodox church as the Medici treated the Church of Rome. It is true they fell into an opposite policy; but the Abbasides, who succeeded them, renewed the free movement, and led it to its culmination. While Europe lay in mental night, the Mahometan world was called on to repudiate bibliolatry and even revelation. The horror of an orthodox Spaniard at the intermixture of schools and religions which met his eyes at Bagdad in the tenth century, came to its climax when he found that no arguments were allowed to be drawn, in these

¹ See Salisbury in *American Oriental Journal*, viii. no. 1, — an excellent and suggestive article.