



discussions, from the Koran or the Prophet. When the reformers had the upper hand, which frequently happened, they knew how to follow the track of all battling theological sects, applying the same inquisitorial and barbarous penalties which they had experienced from others.¹ But these are eclipsed by the stories in which the history of Moslem free thought abounds, of heroic rebukes and resistless arguments hurled by its confessors at tyrannical priests and kings, to their utter confusion and shame; and the "Acta Martyrum" of Islam would not pale beside the noblest records of self-sacrifice for conviction in any age.

Earlier discussions, such as those of the Kadarites and Jabarites, were soon merged in the rise of the great sect of Motazelites (separatists), in the eighth century, who represented free thought for many centuries. They began, indeed, by so firmly holding to the unity of God that they denied the existence of divine attributes, because as so many distinct forces they would imply that He was not one, but many.² They did not deny predestination as a necessity of infinite Will; they rejected free-will in man in any sense inconsistent with this. Yet they stood for human rights as against the awful objective God of the Koran. They asserted that human reason was the judge and source of knowledge. They protested against much Koranic anthropomorphism, and sought to reconcile faith with a more rational conception of Deity. The Khârijites and others opposed the sinlessness of the Prophet. The Morgites rejected the idea that God had an unlimited right to save or punish to all eternity.³ They repudiated the dark views of life and death prevailing in the Koran, and afterwards expounded in a Calvinistic form by Ghazzâlî.

¹ Dozy: *Musulm. d. l'Espagne*, iii. 19. Kremer, p. 241.

² See account of their doctrines, with abundant quotations, in Salisburys article, *American Oriental Journal*, vol. viii., no. 1.

³ Especially Sura liii. See Kremer, p. 18-20, 28. Kremer, p. 256.



They rejected eschatological machinery, like Es Sirât, the Bridge of Judgment, the Final Balance, and the Resurrection of the Body.¹ The protests of these sects developed into a positive religious philosophy, which for a long while antagonized the orthodox belief in predestination, and that worship of the Koran as an *uncreated* form of Divine will to which the Prophet had certainly given the first impulse. They combined with their refusal to personify Divine attributes insistence that man could fulfil the moral law even without the intervention of prophetic revelation. They had no mercy on miraculous traditions, Hebrew or Arab, or on the immoralities they detected even in the life of the Prophet.² Ibn Koteybah carries back the beginnings of this liberty of thought to old Arab times, but the historical founders of it were the Persians Hasan and Wâsil; and so great was its influence in cultivated Iran, that princes and even caliphs were among its followers, — among them Mamûn, Rashîd, and Mansûr. Under these caliphs it produced a true revival of letters analogous to the European Renaissance, accompanied, we may believe, by similar frivolities and extravagances of license.³ Even after the school had lost its influence at court, its liberty animated the whole intellectual life of western Iran. The gist of the Motazelite protest was directed against the autocracy of Divine Will; against an arbitrary determination of the soul's destiny, which superseded the moral law. Nazzâm, a teacher of the ninth century, distinctly taught that Allah had no power to create the evil actions of men, or to determine their future rewards and punishments by any other test than their natural moral deserts. He went so far as to deny volition in any known sense to the Divine perfection, which is superior to choice.⁴ The Shâh-Nâmeh

¹ Kremer, pp. 271-273; also 20-28.

² Ibid., p. 148.

³ Dozy, pp. 199-207. Crichton: *Arabia*, chap. xii. Palmer: *Haroun Al Rashid*. Kremer, p. 149.

⁴ Steiner: *Mutavillitun*, 5, 56, 57. Kremer, p. 31. Salisbury, as above, p. 158.



says, "The world is God's work, by virtue not of volition, but of His nature."¹ Ibn Abbād even maintained that God could not be self-conscious, because that would imply a distinction in Him of the knower and the known; nor yet conscious of things apart from Himself, which would involve dependence on an outward world. Both Jubbāi and his son taught that "since God has prescribed duties to man, He is bound to perfect human reason, to come to the support of human ability and free-will, and do away with their weakness in respect to His commands."² These and many other similar Motazelite theses, drawn by Professor Salisbury from the writings of the historian Sharas-tāni, combined with the earnest affirmations of free-will, and refutations of the orthodox dogma of eternal decrees, strikingly suggest that the system of belief against which the later free-thinkers of Christendom have found themselves obliged to contend is not specially revealed in Christianity, as its supporters conceive, but is evolved by necessary logic out of the very substance of anthropomorphic worship. Later Motazelite teachers fell into predestinarian tendencies, even though maintaining opposition to other anthropomorphic beliefs. The controversy went through various attempts at reconciliation between human consciousness and sovereign foreknowledge and decree, which of course proved vain, and ended in the triumph of absolutism. The reasons for this issue were partly political; but the invincible recurrence to Fatalism claimed its own at last from every true Mussulman.

But the absolutism of which we speak is not to be conceived as unaffected by the struggle with the opposite principle of liberty. Fate, in the Mussulman mind, as the Koran itself fully shows, is as far as possible from suppressing the spontaneity of instinct or will. No Scriptures are more intensely moral, no history more replete with

¹ Salisbury, p. 164.

² Ibid., p. 179.



heroism, personal independence, enthusiastic zeal, than those of Islam. For the sense of necessity has, besides the outward, also an inward side; it attaches not to the edicts of a Divine Will alone, but to the moral impulses and convictions, the patriotic and humane instincts. In proportion as its forces are absorbed on the *human* side, they become an unconscious antidote to the logic of absolute religious monarchism. They back the calls of duty, valor, love, with an infinite pressure. They are not a master's edict, but a prestige and prophecy beyond fear. We have seen that fate is a factor in the noble pantheism which, instead of subjecting man to Nature,¹ lifts man and Nature at once into godhood, and makes him capable of the most sublime virtues. It is equally true that the most effective force in moral and intellectual culture is that kind of necessity which consists in the invariable sequence of cause and effect,—at once the guarantee of scientific truth and the knell of all dire chimeras of supernatural volition. Necessarian freedom, if not in its scientific yet in its moral forms, has certainly proved a mighty counter-action for Islam to the predestinating Will in which the personal worship of Allah has been most strongly entrenched. It is a foregleam of the religion of inviolable law.

It was after a hundred and fifty years of this Motazelite strife that orthodoxy succeeded, by its control of the phraseology of religious tradition, in condensing into systematic form that modified anthropomorphism, resting on the revelations of a creative Will and their reception with blind faith, which the Koranic logic required. At the close of the ninth century of Christianity (883–935 A. D.) Ashari of Basra gave Islam its great Confession, or catechism.² He defined the crucial point of God's relation to

¹ See the Author's *India*, chapter on "Panthéisme."

² See Kremer (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xxxi. 166–169).



His attributes in a purely homoeousian manner, and denied the Motazelite idea of his amenability to the moral law.

"God must not be held to be the absolute goodness, but rather the absolute king. The Koran, as His word, is uncreated, though the Prophet and his language are created. Creation is from nothing, by His will, without change in His consciousness. Even his predictive knowledge, out of which predestination proceeds, is without effect on his experience."

Two centuries before Asharî, however, substantially the same system was evolved from the idea of the Koranic God, and its rehabilitation after ages of controversy showed that its very early origin was entirely legitimate.¹

But Asharî's Confession pointed forward to a greater. Every positive religious system finds the representative of its logical results, from whom its permanent creeds proceed, by whom its historic values are made effective. He is one who, having passed through the contending phases of protest which it involved, rests at last in the natural consequences of its central principle, and adopts them in pure, unquestioning faith. This is Buddha's relation to Brahmanism; it is Augustine's to Christianity; it is Luther's to Protestant bibliolatry; it is Ghazzâlî's to Islam. The most famous Moslem teacher of his time, contemporary of Firdûsî, a leader in the schools of Bagdad, Damascus, and Nishapur, Ghazzâlî passed in his experience from the spirit of Descartes to the spirit of Bossuet, from intellectual scepticism to supernaturalistic faith, from the appeal to consciousness to the appeal to revelation. Yet the very name of his great work indicates that by his time orthodoxy had absorbed what it could not ignore in the liberalism of two centuries, and was attempting to reconcile the natural and supernatural, as modern Christian philosophy has tried to do, as not inconsistent parts of one great system of divine Will. His "Revival of Re-

¹ Kremer, p. 40.



ligious Science" is in many respects a resort to the mysticism which readily covers any desired interpretation of religious phraseology. He praises wisdom as far higher than mere belief, and opposes the fanatical dogmatism which rejects all rational inquiry; while he supplements the limitations and uncertainties of reason by a prophetic intuitive faculty above experience, by which the absolute trust of the Sufi is to be reached. At the same time he protests against that excessive and final form of absorption in God which most of the Sufis pursued.¹

It might seem from this that Ghazzâlî had some glimmer of those transcendental necessities of thought which condition experience instead of proceeding from it, and are the foundation of all scientific processes whatever. Yet his faith is based, after all, on the failure of the human element and the externality of the Divine. "God made reason, and said, 'Go forward,' and it went forward; 'Go backward,' and it went backward."² Metaphysics were nothing but the handmaid of revelation; the analytic philosophies of his day were the bane of truth; he scouts mental certitude and denies the principle of causality, for which he substitutes a direct action of Deity.³ God has human faculties, without human limitations or organs; and creates by pure will all good and evil, works and ways and issues of man, all in a perfect justice and wisdom, which are in fact definable by his will alone. He adores the Koran, and insists strictly on its rites; thinks the Kaaba will one day wake and bear witness with eyes and tongue.⁴ So necessary is response to the reading of the prophets, that a hearer should force himself to *seem* moved when he is not so, and cultivate the gestures that his heart does not

¹ See *Edinburgh Review* for April, 1847, p. 183.

² Ihjâ, analyzed by Hitzig (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, vii. 177).

³ Renan: *Averroës*, pp. 98, 99.

⁴ Hitzig (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, vii. 172-180). Franck: *Dict. d. Science Philos.*, — "Alcazeli," p. 608. Kremer, pp. 45, 46.



prompt, in hope that they will at last come of themselves.¹ Nevertheless, his ethics, when they do not touch theology, are pure and noble.

"Knowledge is a joy for its own sake, and will ever receive reverence from men."

"Where is the equal of a true friend? While thy relations wait to divide thy goods after thou art gone, the friend will be mourning for thee, meditating on what thou hast been to him, and praying for thee in the night, while thou sleepest in the ground."

Mahomet said, "When a man dies, people say, 'What has he left behind?' but the angels say, 'What has he sent before?'"²

"No wild horse needs a firm rein more than thy soul; the wise agree that heavenly joy can come only by the renunciation of earthly."

"For the spirit, sorrow is better than joy."³

Ghazzâlî's precepts on personal independence, on moral discipline, on self-purification, on practical kindness, and on the culture of the young, are creditable to his mind and heart. He denounced the immoral and useless lives of the Kadîs of his line. The history of his solitary struggles, his dumbness, his wanderings and gropings for ten years, ends, as with many thoughtful natures on whom a positive religion has a constitutional hold, in his finally casting himself absolutely into its arms. In him, as in most, the grip of such a religion is usually most effective by its terrors concerning death and a future, which are seen in the fearful light of a sovereign Will. Ghazzâlî developed the warnings of the Koran on this subject, long before him rejected by the Morgites and others, into a dread picture of the agonies of dying sinners, which has left its doleful echoes in all true Moslem souls.⁴

With the triumph of orthodoxy, signalized by the work of Ghazzâlî, — of which the modern orthodox say that "were all other works lost, Islam could be restored from

¹ Kremer, p. 130.

² Hitrig (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, p. 182.)

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 185, 186.

⁴ *Ihjâ*, quoted in Kremer, p. 271.



it alone,"—began the age of persecution. Creation by Will, predestination, eternity of Scripture, reason sunk in revelation, were the shibboleths by which every man should live or die.¹ Motazelites and all other heretics were put to the fiery trial. Kâdir and Motawikkil in Bagdad (1017-1018), and Mahmûd in Ghaznî, proved their God supreme, above mental freedom or morality, by bloody reactionary edicts against both,—true counterparts of their own political despotism.

In Spain, the same logical necessities were developed more rapidly than in the speculative East. The compromise between Islam and Christianity, inevitable in that country, did not render either party less intolerant within its own sphere. But in spite of the burning of books and the banishment of philosophers, a rationalistic reaction occurred even in Spain. There were sects in the eleventh century that taught religious impartiality, and even a kind of agnosticism. Others reduced all religions to efforts of man's ethical nature to reach truth, and made its laws the sole bases of knowledge.² They had large glimpses of universal religion. Great writers, like Ibn Bâdja, Ibn Tofail, Ibn Roshd, flourished in those palmy days of liberty, and felt the terrors of their departure. But the intolerant clergy of Christianity had their counterpart in the orthodox Mollahs, who ruled thought with the iron hand of their canon law, committed the free philosophical works of Eastern thinkers to the flames, and denounced even the orthodoxy of the Eastern world with holy horror. Al Ghazzâlî himself was excommunicated, and his book burned for its attacks on the theological hair-splitting of the canon law.³ A puritanic reformer, whose followers came to Spain from the Berber tribes of Africa in the twelfth century, had proclaimed himself a Mahdî in the usual manner, beginning with miracle and ending with

¹ Kremer, p. 43.

² Dozy, p. 350.

³ Ibid., 367.



persecution. These sectarians founded in the twelfth century the dynasty of the Almohades, whose bigotry quenched the splendors of the great times of the Omeyyades and Almoravides of Cordova. For thinkers like Averroës and Maimonides, orthodox Islam had no more toleration than orthodox Christianity; and both alike made of Spain a vast inquisition for extirpating freedom of thought.¹

The Motazelite controversies in Persia are easily explained by the continuities of religious history. In the collision and intermixture of Oriental beliefs in that country at the time of the Mussulman conquest, this great protest of rational thought against the orthodoxy of Koranic revelation was inevitable. It was by no means of Semitic origin. The Semitic mind of itself had little tendency to philosophy or logic; and its immense services in this direction throughout the Middle Ages were due to its focalizing and kindling effect upon the Greek, Syrian, Persian, and Latin, — in other words, the Aryan elements with which it came into contact. Rationalism could hardly find root in the personal monarchism of the Koran; but it could hardly fail to be provoked and intensified by such despotic constraints. Islam, on its part, was surrounded by a crowd of separatist sects, breaking forth everywhere out of the free speculative spirit of Iran, representing every shade of doubt, disbelief, indifference, and fanaticism, as well as of rational inquiry and mystical faith. These were the issues of that spiritual ferment which had followed the blending of heretical Christianity with heretical Pârsism, of the Gnostic and the Zendik, the Manichæan and the Mazdakite, sometimes expanding into universality and sometimes sinking into communism and immorality. Into this strife of elements Islam infused the passion of monotheistic Will and personal revelation. Yet, through all these later products the most conspicuous force was

¹ Dozy, p. 380.



reaction against that central autocratic dogma which stood armed alike with the zeal and the sword of Islam, — Semitic self-abnegation before a supreme master of body and mind. The Motazelites soon found themselves substituting definitions of revelation, Koranic inspiration, creation, as results of natural laws, for such as were required by the orthodox theory of Divine free volitions; in other words, they proceeded to put universal reason in place of personal caprice. It is curious to note that the world has never seen fuller liberty of discussion on speculative themes than has over and over again signalized Mahometan rule in the East. It seems as if the confidence of the great Mussulman emperors — like Akbar, Al Mamûn, Al Rashid — in their own doctrine of the one God led them at first to imagine that bringing together the varieties of human belief must result in a spiritual unity analogous to that which they had effected in the political sphere. It proved equally impracticable in both spheres to establish permanent unity so long as the autocratic basis stood. Both were incessantly rent by discord. However liberal the spirit of the ruler, it was inevitable, not only that every question of belief should become absorbed into that of the supreme rights of Divine Will over human reason, but that orthodox Arabic theology should back down upon the freedom it had forced into life, in its best disciples. Even Hindu reformers, inspired largely by older Aryan philosophy, — such as the Moslem prophets Nānak, Bāber, and others, — all insisted on the need of an inspired teacher, who should stand to the pupil in place of God. In fact, orthodox Islam has striven for a thousand years to escape anthropomorphism by logical subtleties and large interpretations of the monarchical absolute; yet, after all, the old unlimited and unconditioned Will that dictated the Koran stands fast, as root and master of the moral law, and God is really an Oriental despot. Yet



even here the qualifications of arbitrary power are great, as we have already seen in our previous studies of Oriental civilizations.

Nothing can show more conclusively the necessity of these results than the fact that the *Kalâm*, or Mussulman Reason (*Logos*), after being the inspiration of a widespread liberalism and free discussion in the great schools of Islam, was, even after the infusion of Greek thought into Persian, turned, in the *Moticallemîn* schools, into the chief organ of orthodoxy in defending Semitic orthodoxy against the assaults of science,—the very soul of persecuting fires.¹ In the sixteenth century Sharânî, the modern apostle of theological conciliation in Islam, still adhered to the old conceptions of God as seated on a throne, of a predestinating Will, of miraculous evidence of Divine commission, of revelation as higher than reason, with all the mythic accessories of Koranic eschatology.² Until very recently, as was true of the Christian treatment of the Bible for a thousand years and more, no translation of the Koran was made into popular tongues. To put it to press was forbidden as impious by the four great orthodox sects. Nevertheless, the cry of the mind for freedom has never been silenced, as our immediate purpose is to show.

The force of those inherent qualities which necessitated the triumph of monarchism in Islam (as they must, if not neutralized from without, in every other religion of the same class) cannot be appreciated without the careful study of an immense accession to the resources of free thought, which, though associating Islam with the great world-movement of future ages by direct consequences, yet proved wholly unable to overcome the logic of autocratic

¹ Renan : *Œuvres*, pp. 105, 106.

² Analyzed by Flügel (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xx. 1-48). Kremer, p. 253.



Will. I refer to the early introduction of the Aristotelian writings through the schools of eastern Iran, whence they spread to Spain, France, Germany, and Italy before the middle of the thirteenth century. To expel this mighty master of those who trust in Nature and law from the whole field of study, was the great aim of Mussulman orthodoxy, as it was for a long while of Christian, and for similar reasons. The free-thinking Greek was understood to teach eternal immanent law as the secret of divine and human, of soul and sense alike, in place of voluntary creation of the finite in time; to remove predestinating Will from the notion of divine perfection; to undermine the recognized grounds of that future state of rewards and punishments on which the Koran rested, by uniting matter and spirit in one conception, and as sides of one process on which individual existence was dependent; and, finally, to conceive Nature and man, as well as God, to be objects of free and independent inquiry.¹ It was seen that here was a foe more dangerous than the Motazelite, because far more systematic, scientific, and learned. The God of Aristotle, as prime mover of the universe, immaterial and unchangeable, was associated with it, not as a pre-forming Will, but by the law of his being as the realized perfection of that very process from potentiality (*dynamis*) to fulfilment (*entelecheia*) by which each being and thing became an individual; thus, and thus only, partaking of the nature of universals. While, therefore, as the sole absolute *entelecheia*, God is in one sense completely apart from all these finite and imperfect ones, He is, as that which they all pursue, the inspiration and end of all being. The idea, the universal, the abstract divine, is for Aristotle not like the Platonic Ideas,—archetypes existing before the individual; nor yet is it found by abstraction or combination of the individuals. It is only in the individual, in the concrete; it exists only

¹ See Aristotle: *Metaphysics*, xi. 7.



as positive energy, a transformation of Matter, which is its empty possibility, into Form, which is its essence. These postulates, however unfamiliar their phraseology, are as far as possible from materialistic in our sense. They are no more so than the Platonic philosophy to which they are in some respects strongly opposed. God, with Aristotle, is strictly immaterial as perfected Form,—the absolute Energy of principles. Knowledge is no accumulation of detailed sensations under the name of experience. It has its "origin and end in necessary principles, beyond demonstration; apprehended by the *nous* without reasoning," as the condition of its own energy. This perception, constantly recurred to by Aristotle, is properly translated *intuition*.¹ It is in the light of these transcendental postulates—the foundations of all genuine thinking since the world was made—that the subtle duality of the soul in Aristotle's system, on which there has always been so much dispute, must be interpreted. He conceives the soul as on the one hand a passive possibility or finite material, and on the other as partaking of the "active, universal intellect," which realizes itself in the same; and, though inseparable from its concrete form, is itself supremely real, and the true end of all knowledge of particular beings and things.²

The practical meaning of this system for Islam was in various ways a revolution. Thus, as the Divine Life can be no creative and controlling Will, but is evermore simply the pure perfection of all energies, so the human mind can be no mere creature of such a higher Will, but is itself an active energy, free to shape the matter of its inherent powers into their highest individual form. As a religious-philosophical ideal, the God of Aristotle, although not

¹ *Ethics*, vi. vi. 2; xii. 6.

² See Bohn's edition of the *Metaphysics and Logic*. Also Ueberweg: *History of Philosophy* (Eng.), i. 160. Renan: *Avicenna*.



altogether beyond the confines of a self-conscious individual Will, was yet an open door out of the monarchical logic of a revealed religion. As the one substratum of the universal and individual, He satisfied the theistic instinct of the freer Mussulman mind, at the same time thoroughly supplanting the autocratic motive by the scientific. His cosmos was an evolutionary whole, a harmony of progressive ascents from the inorganic to the organic, plant to animal, thence to rationality in man and his unity with God, each grade pursuing its own natural purpose, its highest possibility by the law of its own being. I am tempted to picture the manifold stimulus which the study of Aristotle was suited to give to the finer elements of Islam. The reality of this world, the necessity of progress in the study and use of it, neutralized those hopes and fears concerning a future world by which revealed religions have absorbed the interest of mankind in the distant and unknown. Men could not think of essence as inseparable from matter, of phenomena as containing the *noumena*; they could not conceive of the universe itself as eternal (that is, *forever* involved in the motive energy of the prime mover), without escaping the purely passive attitude of the Koranic faith towards a supernatural world. Through the subtile mazes of Aristotelian psychology, the one clear clew is the impulse to incessant mental achievement, to self-conscious study and experience, as the end of Nature and man. It was the function of Aristotle to awaken this aspiration in a scientific form, to give the keys of the universe to the free reason of man. He turned the full force of it on concrete individualities, while making their whole value consist in the universal which they enshrined. What could be nobler than to teach men to regard the form, the end, the cause of being as the ultimate of truth, and to regard the soul as the purpose of the body's existence, not as its creation; as the light from Deity, not derived from



it, but found in it; as the activity by which its phenomenal life, as passive and receptive, became real, and the individual a force of universal law?

His searching analyses of concepts and objects, so absolutely different from the operations of faith, enforced exact thinking, and summoned to a Socratic self-study, which became the light of ages, and has not yet ceased to inspire philosophic thought. His encyclopedic survey of physical science, terrestrial and cosmical, through spheres of continuous ascent, however imperfect and erroneous, pursued the ideal of systematic coherence and universal unity, with an interest in every minutest fragment of truth, never surpassed in the history of thought. It announced that the world rests on the authority and invariability of law, and that every law has inherent, commanding relation to the mind of man.

The *Organon* of Aristotle, as it was afterwards called, taught the ages to think; his physics, to observe.¹ Here is indeed the true father of science, who defines it as "the knowledge of things by their causes," and describes doubt as the only condition of knowledge, and knowledge itself as "the solution of doubts;" while they who fail to "hear all adversaries,"² and entertain all rational suspense of belief, are "like persons who know not whither they go."³ What a reveille for every human faculty to its utmost assertion and endeavor was that insistence on the *entelecheia*, or realization of its own possibilities by

¹ Lange, a thorough materialist, if I understand him, who hates all systems that start from self-consciousness (*History of Materialism*, i. 90), opposes (not fairly, as it seems to me) Aristotle's "anthropomorphic teleology" (i. 83). Yet even Lange admits that his system is "the most perfect example in history of a theory of the universe as a united and self-included whole" (i. 96). It is hardly necessary to dwell on the Aristotelian identity of matter and form, the universality of the latter being the final purpose of the former, in distinction from the Platonic separation and even opposition of the two, as an anticipation of the modern scientific conception of matter and spirit, of subject and object. With this direct attachment of thought to Nature came initiation into the physical sciences by the hand of a master. See also Dieterici (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellschaft*, xxxi. 118).

² Aristotle: *Metaphysics*, v. i. *Ethics* vi. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. 1.



every being and force! What stimulus to the fine arts was his close analysis of their mutual relations and finest functions, as expansions of finite experience into universal thought and feeling!

We cannot wonder at the instinctive rejection by traditional supernaturalism of such a foe to the authority of the Koran. No peril could be more subtle and incisive. The self-conscious God of Aristotle was still sufficiently anthropomorphic to offer an easy and attractive transition for the Mussulman thinker from the bonds of revelation, and to prompt a natural reaction to the free inquiry of which he stood in such absolute need. To these attractions must be added the fine sense of natural limitation, which led Aristotle to avoid ontological speculations, and fasten the mind on fruitful positive research. Still further, there was a vast and instant interest awakened in the Mussulman world by the science of the Greeks, through the *fatalistic element*, which might seem to forbid such interest, but which has always played so essential a part in all human progress and power. Stripped of personal caprice, it is, in some form, absolutely requisite to the ideas of order, of science, of philosophy, and must have prepared the way in Islam for a sense of necessary relation, and so of unity and law.

The Ethics of Aristotle had even greater dignity and fascination than his physical and intellectual system. They rest on free reason, on a natural power of obedience and conformity thereto, and on the constant energizing of belief in the form of conduct. In this only are happiness and power.¹ Here, too, his method is transcendental, based on the perception of necessary truths beyond demonstration, by the intuitive reason, as the beginning and end of knowledge. The origin and culture of morality are thus planted in thoroughly human and independent

¹ *Ethics*, ii. vi. 10; i. vii. 10; x. viii.



grounds.¹ No moral action in a human sense is ascribed to God, since the necessity of choice or suspense would degrade his perfection. Neither do the sanctions of virtue come from a future state of rewards and punishments. That sublime principle of the "end in itself" as the motive of endeavor swept away every obstacle to the disinterestedness of moral struggle. Man is naturally designed for moral relations. His function is to fulfil the law of his being; and this function is conceived as his being's final cause, yet not a result of conscious divine intent. To what, then, does character appeal? To a universal ideal conscience superior to the mere individual desire, being reached by the fulfilment of ethical conditions by human experience. Thus substantially the good man is the measure and rule of goodness.² At the same time this moral standard tends to coincide with the grand principle of an objectively "active intellect," or truth, in God, — the really everlasting life amidst the transiency of individualities.³ Has a freer or nobler basis of ethics ever been devised?

Reason is the sanction of morals; and balance, or the mean between extremes, determines the specific forms of virtue, — to modern thought a questionable rule, as it is apparently quantitative rather than qualitative, and so not sufficiently absolute for the antagonism of right and wrong, in the view of Kant and others.⁴ Yet nothing could be nobler than the practical ideals to which it led.

"Not a man, but reason, should rule; since by ruling for self, man becomes a tyrant."⁵

"Friendship is in loving rather than in being loved. . . . It is in equality, especially between the good. . . . A friend is another self. . . . When men are friends, they do not need justice; but when they are just, they still need friendship."⁶

¹ *Ethics*, vi. i.; vi. vi.; vi. x. *Mag. Moralia*, i. 35. See also an admirable article in *Westminster Review*, January, 1867. And Grant's *Ethics of Aristotle*, i., Essay v.

² *Ethics*, iii. iv. 5; x. v. 14.

³ *Metaphysics*, xi. vii. 5.

⁴ Grant: *Ethics of Aristotle*, i., Essay v.

⁵ *Ethics*, v. vi. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, viii. viii. 4, 5; viii. i. 5.



A good man bears the accidents of fortune most nobly and always suitably, as faultless as the cube." "He is brave who bears death or wounds because it is honorable to do so."¹

"There are cases in which pardon is granted, when one does what he ought not, owing to causes too strong for human nature. But there are things which it is wrong to do even on compulsion, which a man should undergo most dreadful sufferings and even death rather than do."² "Suicide is cowardly, for it does not seek death because it is honorable, but to avoid evil."³

"The magnanimous man, in the greatness of his merits, is in the highest place; but in his proper estimation of himself he is in the true mean."

"Men are most apt to be deceived by pleasure, choosing it as the good, though it is not so."⁴

When Aristotle says that "deliberate preference," that is, real moral choice, "can only be desire of things that are within our power,"⁵ he shows that his rule of "balance" (or the mean) was simply the noble sense of liberty as the fruit of right limit. It is pure spontaneity. "What is done virtuously, is done without annoy; honorable actions are for the sake of the honorable, and the right act is the pleasant act."⁶ Finally, to sum all, is this noblest of moral affirmations: "We *exist* by energy, by living and acting. He who has produced a (real) work loves it because he loves his existence."⁷ Surely Semitic passion, at its Moslem fever heat, may well have sought the disciplines of an ethical "balance" so commanding, so wise, and so brave.⁸

But what could be a more welcome relief from that *political* absolutism in which Moslem orthodoxy centred, than Aristotle's firm demand for entire mental freedom, his recognition of reason as the rightful ruler? What so acceptable to the early Arab instincts, or to the individ-

¹ *Ethics*, i. x. 7.

² *Ibid.*, iii. i. 8, 9.

³ *Ibid.*, iii. vii. 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iv. iii. 5; iv. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, iii. iii. 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, iv. i. 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, ix. vii. 5.

⁸ For many fine illustrations of Aristotle's ethical philosophy, see Mayor's *Ancient Philosophy*.



quality of the Iranian genius, as those bold political speculations in which tyranny, oligarchy, and unbridled crude democracy are shown to be the worst forms of government, and the end of the State is pronounced to be the good of the whole!¹ With what force must it not have appealed to the thoughtful scholar of Bagdad or Basra, in Irak or in Khorassan, to read in his Greek master that "authority in Persia, especially parental, is founded on tyranny;" that "justice is the most excellent of virtues, and is more admirable than the morning or the evening star;" that nevertheless "equity is nobler even than justice,"² because it supplements the inequality of general laws; above all, that equity is the corrector of edicts, and higher than the written law! Even those doctrines which appear most contrary to modern humanity, such as the righteousness of slavery under certain conditions, the depreciation of woman, and the inferiority of mechanical labor, could have found no serious protest in the Islam of the eighth century, as they certainly did not either in Greece in Aristotle's own time or during many ages of Christianity. Their seeming harshness will be much modified by the study of his meaning. Thus he justified slavery only among "those whom Nature had fitted to be happier in that state than out of it;" only for "those who have just reason enough to know that there is such a faculty as reason, without being endued with the use of it."³ But even here "the interests of master and slave are one; and to govern ill is evil to both the governor and the governed;" so that "a mutual utility and friendship is proper between them."⁴ "A slave should be trained by his master to such virtue as he is capable of, *not as mere servile drudgery*."⁵ "And if it is necessary that both sides should have some noble qualities, why should one *always* govern and the other

¹ *Politics*, vii. xiii.; v. vii. ix.; vii. ii.

² *Ethics*, viii. x. 7; v. i. 12; v. x. 4; v. x.

³ *Politics*, i. v.

⁴ *Ibid.*, i. vi.

⁵ *Ibid.*, i. xiii.



always be governed?"¹ "Therefore they are wrong who would deprive slaves of reason, and say that they are only to follow their orders; for slaves want education more than children."²

From all which it is evident, to say the least, that the Aristotelian ethics could have added nothing to the comparatively light and loose burdens of slavery as it has always existed in the Oriental world. As healthful inspirations for that age and for all ages, may be added Aristotle's opposition to Platonic communism, and honor to the family relations; his strong tendency to suffrage for all citizens, and to making all men citizens who have a fair measure of character and wisdom; and his liberal view of right governmental forms as variable with the genius and qualities of States.

The dreaded influences of Aristotelianism were summed up in the last and greatest of his followers, the famous Ibn Roshd (Averroës) of Cordova, whose numerous writings, circulated throughout the Oriental world, represented for centuries that sceptical, anti-supernatural, scientific spirit, out of which grew the freedom of the modern Renaissance, after the bitter war against him in Islam and Christianity had proved vain. Against the "renegade" Ghazzâlî, the prime minister of Moslem orthodoxy, Averroës expends his entire strength, answering his work against the philosophers triumphantly in detail.³ To the theology of personal revelation and divine autocracy nothing could be more destructive than the calm, systematic tone of Averroës, and his clear conclusions, far more decided on these subjects than the writings of his master. He reversed the dogma that good was good because God willed it, as destroying the foundations of morality.

¹ *Politics*, i. xiii.

² *Ibid.*, i. xiii.

³ See Renan: *Averroës*, p. 167.



His philosophy of emanation, drawn from Neoplatonism, verged towards pantheism, especially as providing a continuous chain of being between God and man, which it was for man to span, not by asceticism, but by moral discipline and by science. His psychology struck at individual immortality. His exegesis overthrew Scriptural religion in the traditional sense. His free dealing left nothing inviolable by science, philosophy, and free belief; and he affirmed that Nature is moved by principles. His large and encyclopedic thought nevertheless went further towards recognizing the permanent good in traditional beliefs than that of other writers of his school. For example, he allegorized in the interest of adaptation; he claimed to respect the Koran, and to be a good Mussulman. He admitted Fatalism in a certain sense, though not in the full predestinarian sense; recognized the control of conduct by natural laws and their continuity from the whole past, which he was willing to include in the Divine omniscience. He did not even deny the possibility of revelation, yet interpreted it as a part of the education of mind on lower stages, but wholly needless to the philosophic mind,—and he might have added, in the ordinary sense impossible. His political theories were Platonic, and amidst many fantastic ideas contained protests against military despotism in all forms, and in fact against all forms of tyranny, especially that of priests. Above all, he claimed for woman equal breadth of capacity with man in all spheres, and considered the narrow sphere to which she had been confined as the real reason for her actual inferiority, even moral.¹

Arabic thought has never reached beyond the mind of Averroës. He summed up one of the largest and freest movements of speculative and moral progress in all history. Yet in the very moment of its culmination there

¹ See citations in Renan's *Averroës*, pp. 161, 162.



set in the reaction which indicated that Mussulman theology could not contain, or tolerate it, and live. And the war upon pure rationalism fully organized against it in the twelfth century, no revival has followed. Everywhere the Asharîte and Ghazzâlîte reaction took possession of the powers of Islam, and their watchword was the name of Ghazzâlî's great work, "Destruction to the Philosophers." From Bagdad to Spain raged the fires of Mussulman inquisition. The great physicians, scientists, and metaphysicians, to whom the world owes a debt that can never be cancelled, were exiled, imprisoned, silenced, executed, and their writings destroyed, by barbarians like the Almohades in Spain and the later Abbasides in Iran. They deserve a closer recognition on our part, especially as the most of them were Persians, born and taught in the various provinces of Iran.

Averroës was but the last in that line of Mussulman philosophers whose writings, inspired and directed by the genius of Aristotle and Plato, exerted a profound influence on Persian, and afterwards on Jewish and Christian, thought.¹ We do not speak of such influence on the Arab mind, because such speculations were never suited to its Semitic nature; what the Arabs supplied was the language, which, as the result of the Mussulman conquests, became the current medium of thought in that age. The Aristotelians contributed very largely to this extension of Arabic to the higher uses of language, if they may not even be said to have produced it.² They were earnest ethical preachers, men of encyclopedic science, inspired by the intense emphasis laid by *Mahometan tradition on the Will*, either as God or man, to a profound study of its conditions, and upon the basis of human freedom. It is wonderful to note the scope of their inquiries, their aspirations to the highest subjects of speculation and the broadest

¹ Ueberweg: *Hist. of Phil.*, i. 402, 403. Renan: *Averroës*, p. 184.

² *Ibid.*, p. 174.



fields of application, their conscientious exploration of the wisdom of the past, and transmission of its best fruits to future study, and their laborious lives, distributing original and free methods of thought over the whole East. They were not Greek scholars; they used translations made by Syro-Christians of the Nestorian and Monophysite sects, who contributed the raw materials of Aristotle and Plato, but wholly failed to add any original use of them. For the most part, these Nestorian-Christian translators were in small sympathy with Greek thought, being driven to it as a refuge when their sect was expelled from the Christian Church for heresy as to the Trinity, — seeking in Pagan wisdom the light refused them by the Church of Christ. They had found employment at the courts of the Abbaside caliphs as physicians or literary scribes, fitted to gratify the taste and pride of the Mussulman renaissance. The beginning of translations from Greek into Oriental tongues, however, began far back in the Sassanian times, in earlier outbreaks of Christian intolerance, when Justinian expelled the Greek philosophers of Athens to find hospitality at the Persian court.¹ The schools of Nisibis, Chalcis, and Resaina, and the Monophysite studies, prepared the way for the Greek renaissance.

The accumulation of materials had therefore gone on for several centuries, and had become adequate for the inspiration of scholars like Alfarâbî, Alkindî, Avicenna (Ibn Sînâ), and Averroës (Ibn Roshd); while every successive generation revised and multiplied the versions.² These men were not blind worshippers of Aristotle, however profound their admiration for the great master.³ They analyzed for themselves the ideas of Revelation and Philosophy in the peculiar forms in which Islam pre-

¹ Ueberweg, i. 403.

² For these Arabic philosophers, consult their lives in Franck's *Dictionnaire des Sciences Philosophiques*, — "Arabes," p. 83.

³ See, especially, in Franck, passages from Averroës in praise of him.



sented them.¹ They sought to fill the void in Aristotle's fragmentary psychology between man and God by Platonic emanations, conceived after a scientific method, and by the doctrine of the intelligence of the spheres; and so to complete the unity of the cosmos, not for the mind only, but for the religious sense, — showing in this the natural instinct of the Mussulman for simplicity and unity.² They endeavored to explain what he had left vague, and to reconcile the ethical and spiritual with the philosophical side of science. This was especially manifest in their development of the Aristotelian theory of the two intellects, — the passive Reason, conversant with material forms and subject to change and death through them; and the active Reason, superior to the individual and conversant with the Immutable, and so remaining unchanged in itself. This higher Reason man can appropriate and come into conjunction with by patient disciplines, — moral, spiritual, and intellectual.³ Thus they resisted the Islamic separation of God and the soul, and counteracted Aristotle's notion of a separate prime Mover, the inconsistent point in his principles of evolution. We shall see how naturally this passed over into the pantheism of the Sufis.

Moreover, they refused to accept immortality as a postulate; some of them denied its reality, preferring, as more consistent with their psychological data, the absorption of individual mind into the active Reason, which represented the connecting bond between God and man, and which was likened to the light, without which seeing — the passive reason — was impossible. Alfarâbî, who died A.D. 950, denied this as an old wives' tale, and asserted annihilation.⁴ Averroës accepted it, as did also Avicenna.⁵ For ethical earnestness, it would be hard to find anything more

¹ Alfarâbî.

² Especially Averroës (Frauck, p. 749), Avicenna (Frauck, p. 734).

³ Especially Ibn-Bâdjâ (Frauck, p. 744).

⁴ Frauck, p. 522.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 750-752.



impressive than the teaching of Avicenna.¹ For encyclopedic scope, nothing could exceed the works of Alfarābī, the Transoxanian scholar, of whom it has been said that "what Faust desired to know, Alfarābī believed himself to have already learned."² One thing is sure: the Arab philosophers, whatever their individual views respecting immortality, denied without exception the Christian doctrine of the resurrection,³ and the curious orthodox Mahometan conception of the renewed life beyond death, as a result, not of actual continuance in any form, but of a new creation by Divine Will, restoring to life a body already reduced to dust.⁴ Ghazzālī's chief reproach of the ethics of the philosophers was that they looked for no reward of virtue but that which comes here on earth in excellence itself.⁵

What made them most obnoxious to the orthodox worshippers of the Kalām, or Word⁶ (Motekallemin, Asharītes, and others, scholastic philosophers of Islam), was their incessant intermeddling with the prescriptive Islamic dogma of the fore-ordaining will of God. "The doctrine of the philosophers," says Makrizī, the historian, "has caused the most fatal evils to religion that can be conceived, not only increasing error, but adding an excessive growth of impiety."⁷ They went very far in their criticism of creation by Divine Will. They raised the subtle but valid and effective objection, that creation at a definite time would imply imperfect fulfilment of Divine Will previous to that time, while active manifestation is always essential to perfect being. Maimonides, the greatest of Jewish teachers, as well as of the earlier Motekallemin, followed in the track of Christian theology, in an excessive zeal to establish against these philosophies the fundamental or root doctrine of a monarchical Deity, — that of crea-

¹ Franck, p. 755. Dukes (*Philos. d. Zehn. Jark.*, p. 84) has given an account of his famous treatise on the "origin of things."

² Dukes, p. 83.

³ Renan: *Averroës*, p. 157.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 104, 105; Franck: *Arabes*.

⁷ De Saëy, quoted by Franck, p. 84.



tion out of nothing; and to make this easier, this school adopted the expedient of *atoms*, as substances susceptible of being increased by a direct Divine act, at need, and as convenient units for measuring the quality of all objects. Not only did the Aristotelian ferment in Islam bring out in this way philosophical devices and theological refuges in immense variety, but it is hardly possible to find a phase of philosophical opinion which did not come up in some one of those peripatetic schools of the East in the course of their development.

When the orthodoxy of Asharî and Ghazzâlî triumphed, the freer philosophical writings passed over to the Jewish schools, where their thought was preserved,¹ and formed the basis of scholastic philosophy in mediæval Europe, the formative force of Christian dialectics, and the initiation of the great struggle of reason with blind belief. The Jews were the rationalists of the Middle Ages,² especially of the latter half of them. Bearers-on of the torch kindled by Arabic and Persian Aristotelians, they bore the brunt of a very natural Christian hostility to the anti-supernatural tendencies of that scientific school. Averroës, their chief philosophical master, was the chief of infidels, and so his name was especially connected with the imaginary book of the "Three Impostors," the bugbear of Christian orthodoxy, held infamous as assaulting the three great positive religions, but which really represented the opening movement of free thought in the thirteenth century in Germany, in which the modern idea of comparative religious science took its origin.³ It is not, however, our purpose to trace their influence on modern freedom, and, through them, of the Mussulman schools of the eleventh and twelfth centuries,

¹ See their influence on Saadja, and Isak al Israëli, earliest Jewish scientists (Dukes, p. 84). See, for Jewish translation from the Arabic writers, Jost, *Gesch. d. Jud.*, 26; also for the influence of the Arab language as the medium of trade on the Jews who visited Bagdad, Jost, ii. 273; and for the stimulus imported by the Arabs, p. 273.

² Renan: *Averroës*, p. 183.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 280, 292, and pt. ii. chap. i., xiii.-xv.



which were in fact the representatives of the boldest rationalism down to the seventeenth.¹ It is enough to say, that from the thirteenth to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries their impulse within the life of Judaism alone was profoundly felt, and sufficiently to transmit the scientific spirit into the very core and fibre of civilization. But in the fifteenth century set in the natural reaction inevitable for Hebrew monotheism; and the war of rabbinical orthodoxy upon natural law and rationalistic science merely repeated that of the Motekallemin of Islam on scientific thought. This result, however, was foreshadowed even in the best periods and freest persons of Jewish speculative history.

The first effect of the Arabic revival on Jewish thought was simply stimulative; the Motazelites of Bagdad in the eighth century awakened the Karaite sect to split away from the Talmudic Rabbins; but it was mainly on the question of the supposed necessity of tradition to supplement the written law.² In the tenth century we find Saadja busy in reconciling human freedom with Divine predestination, against Karaites and Aristotelians.³ And even in the persons of its greatest Aristotelian representatives, Judaism did not and could not break from its starting-point in Divine Will, and so not, in the main, from the expression of that Will in a complete and written law. Their conclusions were always in the interest of Scripture and Jahveh. They endeavored to resume the whole past of human thought, and bring its scientific results to illustrate, explain, and justify the doctrines of Creation, Providence, Revelation. Their offence to orthodoxy was that they made Nature and science the ground of these doctrines, instead of a direct and arbitrary supernatural Power. Thus the constructive philosophy of Avicbron⁴ sought

¹ See Renan's thorough account of this (*Averroës*).

² Jost, ii: 294-301.

³ Ibid.

⁴ A Spanish Jew of the eleventh century; author of the *Fons Vita*, a most influential work in forming the minds of the great Christian scholastics. Until the recent researches of



to combine Aristotelian psychology with the doctrines of Platonic emanation and Alexandrian mysticism into one conception of the universe as the unity of a supreme Substance and a supreme Form, of which all special substances and forms were but transient expressions. But even he saved himself from pantheism by introducing, somewhat mechanically, into his system the Jewish conception of a supreme Will, who, as Creator and Mover, mediates between the unity and the diversity, God and the world;¹ a conception which cannot be reconciled with emanation, yet was indispensable to his Jahvistic instinct. Yet with all his endeavors to reconcile the necessary movement of universal laws with a personal Will, this pupil of the Arabic and Greek schools was recognized under every disguise as an enemy of the Bible and its revealed God.²

Another great disciple of Averroës, Maimonides,³—the encyclopedic master of Jewish learning and thought, and to the present day its most honored secular head,—represented the like conciliatory tendencies, and his freedom received similar treatment, if not in his day, yet as soon as it was understood. In his immortal work, the “Guide of the Lost,” it was his purpose to save those whom rationalistic negations and mystic abstractions had left floating without anchorage, by reconciling apparent contradictions in a higher synthesis,—reason with faith, science with religion, the God of the philosopher with the God of the Hebrew believer. This he attempted to do by allegorical and ideal interpretations of the Bible; by naturalistic views of its miracles, and spiritualization of its Jahvistic Will;⁴ by combining an Alexandrian dialectic of the Infinite, reaching up into pure impersonality, with full

Munk, identifying him with Ibn Gebirol, a well-known writer of that time in various departments, nothing was known of him, save his great authority and his reputation as a pagan rationalist. Franck: *Dictionary*, pp. 127-131.

¹ Franck: *Études Orient.*, pp. 375, 376.

² *Ibid.*, p. 380.

³ Cordova, twelfth century.

⁴ Franck: *Études Orientales*, p. 329.

acceptance of a personal Providence and a self-conscious creative God.¹ He takes up into his broad current the manifold streams that descended through his Arabian and Persian masters; and all the wealth of learning and practical wisdom inherited by his century is laid by him at the feet of Jewish monotheism. Of course the prodigious task was in many respects a failure; in others, it asserted a philosophical science far beyond anything of which Jewish monarchism was capable. But there is something sublime in the loyalty of the ill-sustained scholar to his idea, through every discouragement and distraction, through exile and disappointment and the wild caprices of despotic power, which makes him a noble type of the heroic endurance and faith of his race. The freedom and sense with which he develops the elements of Aristotelian and Hebrew ethics into far clearer and more humane principles of practical conduct than either of his earlier masters,² is equally remarkable. He teaches that sacrifices, especially of animals, are idolatry, and only permitted as a transition to higher methods of worship. He defines prophecy itself by natural laws, and as a genius for self-sacrifice and truth.³ He dissipates the theological superstitions that grew from a physical theory of the future life, and does not dogmatize upon the resurrection of the body, or those details that made the immortality of the soul a reality to his people.⁴

Maimonides is, in fact, the extreme point in pure science to which the purely Hebrew conception of Jahveh and his revealed Will has ever been stretched. He turns the searching probe of natural light upon the literature and faith of his people, to bring order and form and reconciliation into its vast and formless mass of mingled wisdom

¹ Franck: *Études Orientales*, p. 349. Renan: *Averroës*, p. 179.

² Franck: *Études Orientales*, pp. 335-337.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁴ See Geiger: *Gesch. d. Jud.*, iii. 3.



and superstition, of Scripture tradition and reason. In many respects, though not in consistency or in pure concentration upon ideas, he is a true predecessor of Spinoza, following in large degree the same ideal guidance of unity and deity which personal monotheism alone, as a crude preliminary, rendered possible, but to which it also sought in both cases to set limits, thus revealing its own logical imperfections. Monotheism was more or less successful in imposing upon Maimonides these bounds; and its autocratic element waged as bitter a war upon the naturalism which it detected as penetrating his whole system, as was that which afterwards drove Spinoza from the synagogue with the ravings of barbarian hate. His authority, at first carrying all before it,¹ by reason of his conciliatory attitude towards the Jewish scriptures and the substance of their theology, soon struck against their supernaturalism and the pride of Hebrew religious monopoly;² and the strife divided the Jewish world. The works of the great free-thinker were burned by the joint intolerance of Christian monks and Jewish rabbins in France, though with the effect of rousing a reaction by the more liberal schools, which went nearly to similar excesses; and when the combatants rested, though Maimonides had not been suppressed, the great dogmas of Creation, Bible revelation, and miracle, — all that was logically deducible from the rights of Jahvistic Will, that indispensable centre of Judaism, — remained in substantial possession of the field. Only by the progress of secular thought has the greatness of Maimonides been fully recognized; and Judaism has found its chief glory in this its noblest mediator with scientific freedom and natural religion.³

Even the mystical Cabala, originating in the twelfth century in the longing of the more emotional class of

¹ Jost, iii. 23-25.

² See, especially, the language of Juda Alfachar, Geiger, iii. 47.

³ Geiger, iii. 48.

minds to escape the cold processes of the philosophers, and to follow the imagination through ascending spheres into the vast abyss of pure impersonal being, without will, desire, or action,—using for that purpose all Biblical, Talmudic, and rationalistic writings,—never threw off the main doctrines that flow from the personality of the Hebrew God, but invested it with the mystery of numbers and names, permutations of letters, and divisions of being; so that indirectly and in successive impulses it produces every effect possibly falling within the sphere of perfect Will, through not one intelligence, but ten *Sephiroth*, until in its later form we find it in the hands of Pico della Mirandola in the sixteenth century, claimed as a great organon of Christian faith, and proving the Trinity, the Incarnation, the divinity of Christ, the Atonement, and the whole creed of the orthodox fathers.¹

From the later forms of Græco-Semitic philosophy, we turn back to an earlier phenomenon of equal interest in illustrating the warfare of theological monarchism against scientific freedom. After the sharp Motazelite controversies on predestination, the eternity of the Koran, and the Divine attributes, came a more constructive protest, eclectic, interpretative, devotional, humane. In the tenth century the "Brothers of Purity," a mystico-scientific and eclectic school, arose at that old intellectual centre, Basra on the Euphrates, the gymnasium of Greek and Buddhist and Hindu, where the Motazelites had originated, in the school of Hasan, at the close of the first century of the Hegira, two hundred years before. It was the fruit of an intermixture of Aristotelian with free Mussulman and perhaps Christian speculation, on the Perso-Aryan basis of independent science. It was two centuries earlier than Averroës, and probably owed less to the disciples of Aristotle than it lent them. The Moslem regards it as wholly

¹ See Ginsburg: *The Kabbalah*, p. 124.]



extra-Islam. As Sprenger well suggests, it is hardly proper to call it Arabian,¹—the leading writers to whom it appeals being almost all of them of Persian extraction, though of Mussulman training; and its nature being so purely scientific as to lift it out of the sphere of the Arabian mind. The names of its members, with very few exceptions, have perished; as if history was in sympathy with their absolutely disinterested spirit, the true spirit of science. It was one of the noblest efforts in Universal Religion or Free Science ever made in human history. Its practical earnestness and devotion issued in the production of an encyclopædia in fifty-one chapters, "Ikhwân al-Çafâ," an earlier Baconian "De Augmentis Scientiarum," covering all the science known to the time and indicating its needs, under direction of Neoplatonic theology and Aristotelian cosmology. The whole past struggle of orthodoxy with free inquiry was its preparatory school. Its method is the most thoroughly scientific known to the time, wholly independent of the Koran, and often contradictory of it; reaching indeed into regions where only mystical abstractions and theosophic subtleties were attainable. Conciliatory and catholic to the last degree, these writers never shrank from maintaining the rights of reason in every possible branch of human inquiry. In none did they fall back upon a point of departure in the dogmas of Islam. In their own language they were "opposed to no form of science, avoided no book, cherished no partisan prejudice towards any doctrinal system; but embraced in one scheme all without exception, visible and invisible, uniting the whole body of sciences."² There is preserved, in the Talmud, one of their sentences: "Whoever with-

¹ *Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellschaft.*, xxx. 333, 334.

² See Flügel (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellschaft.*, xiii. 29), who has fully analyzed this little known but most significant encyclopædia; while a full exposition of its philosophy has been given by Dieterici (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellschaft.*, xv. 577).



holds science from those who are worthy of it, robs them." ¹

They combined the Platonic and Aristotelian methods of tracing all things up to Deity, and evolving all things from Deity, — the deductive and inductive, mystical and scientific.² Minutely analyzing every law, process, and form, under four main divisions, — mathematico-philosophical, physical, spiritual, divine, — they led back the cosmos to primal unity ($\tau\acute{o} \epsilon\nu$), whence emanations descend, according to curious numerical laws, in graded harmony, after the Pythagorean example, but on an original plan. In this evolution the classes of substances increase in numerical complexity of elements up to the number *nine*. In a psychological point of view, from the absolute Being, the primal ground of things, flows Reason; from Reason, the all-penetrating and all-moving Soul of things; from this, the abstract material of forms, not, as with the Gnostics or Platonists, matter as negation and evil, but as the lowest emanation, — so far a pretty consistent Pantheism, fertile in subsequent special schools of this nature. Their ingenious and fantastic system of cosmology was at least so far reasonable as to rest on the perfection of the orbed or rounded form. Their idea of an inner substance for mind and matter saved their science from becoming, as modern science is becoming, a mere watching and scoring of flowing phenomenal details.³ The emotional Arab found this speculative penetration and exaltation apart from the purpose of life, and, however stimulating, thoroughly tiresome and unproductive. "They weave a thin robe," he said; "hover over but do not grasp things, reach out after the impossible."⁴ Such were

¹ Dukes: *Philos. d. Zehnt. Jahrh.*, p. 12.

² Ueberweg, i. 412. Dieterici (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xxxii. 120).

³ Dieterici gives a passage from *The Theology of Aristotle* to the same effect (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xxxi. 12).

⁴ Flügel (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xiii. 26).



the conceptions of that desert people who, in spite of themselves, were made to prepare the highways of science, and to impart to spheres of thought which they could not understand that ardor and courage which they had brought to bear on conquest and on faith. They did here great injustice to the Brothers, who differed from the other systematizers of their time in making scientific knowledge, with a view to practical helpfulness, the foundation of their work, not mere theosophy or contemplation; and they began with what is nearest, not with the remote and unknown.

The anthropology of the Brothers was based on the Socratic principle of self-study;¹ and then the human world was seen as an inseparable part of the infinite system of Nature. "It would be a shame to pretend knowledge of the true being of things, but to know nothing of our own." Man was a *microcosm*; a fact which they symbolized by a tree, with its boughs, trunk, and roots; by a race, with its tribes, families, and houses; by a law, with its articles, clauses, forms of obedience and faith; by the workshop, with its tools and processes; by a castle, with its chambers, halls, and furniture; by a city, with its manifold life; by a king, with his complicated state.² Of evil they perhaps wisely forbore to attempt a philosophic solution; deriving it neither from matter nor from mind, but recognizing its actual partition of animals, souls, and spirits with good; while the body is discerned to be for some a prison, for others a pathway of light. Yet in this world of finiteness, of birth and death, every soul is under severe limits; which, however, do not forbid it to find its way to bliss, especially as aided by prophetic men and by messages from higher spheres. The future has its heaven and hell, and its judgment-day, after seven millennial periods, when the All-Soul shall weigh all conduct in real

¹ Thirty-second Treatise.

² Dieterici (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, x^v. 637).

and impartial scales.¹ In all this partially traditional belief the main and distinctive point is, that it is conceived as under strict laws of order and development, the theory of which is of the most inclusive character. In their personal and literary sources of knowledge they include, philosophers,—especially Greek,—prophets, and religious teachers,² writers on natural science, and sacred books. Ibn Rafia, their chief writer, when asked to what school he belonged, replied, "To none."³ The breadth and geniality of their interest in the relation of the brute to the human world is shown in the beautiful romance of "The Strife of Men and Beasts" as to superior uses, before a judge. This constituted the fifty-first treatise.

But no source is equal to that of the soul itself, when in harmony with that which it seeks. "If one knows not what is godlike, he cannot know God."⁴ "The soul withdrawn from sense, and calm, rises into the highest sphere and finds its rich reward."⁵ Sentences like these show mystic, perhaps Buddhistic, relations. Others seem taken from the golden verses of Pythagoras. Some of a mystic tendency are ascribed to Aristotle and quoted as his "Theology,"—probably a spurious work, yet familiar to Jewish and Persian students;⁶ said to have been translated for Al-kindi out of Greek by a Christian, one hundred years before the "Brothers of Purity;" the Brothers themselves cherished a profound veneration for Aristotle as penetrating in bodiless form the whole invisible world. In Maimonides in the twelfth century we find the same principles; so that, as Dieterici says, we stand, as it were, at the first morning glow on a great comb of oceanic waves.⁷ A pro-

¹ Dieterici (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xv. 614.)

² According to Sprenger, with especial cordiality towards Jesus. *Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xxx. 332.

³ Flügel (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xiii. 26).

⁴ Dukes, p. 14. This is taken from Aristotle.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁷ *Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xxxi. 122.



found conception of the unity and harmony of the universe thus runs through the thought of the ages in a definite series. Out of this came the impulse to Scholasticism; in it is the battle of Nominalism and Realism fought out before it came up in the Christian world;¹ in it is the opening of modern science, — all mediated by the Arabian schools.

That which gives the Brothers the most interest for us, however, is the supreme place which they accorded to the ethical element. Men have diverse powers and limitations, both in their faculties for reaching truth and in their outward means of cultivating what they have; but there was no difference as to the claim of brotherhood among them: one heart and one aim was the motto of the whole movement, while envy and ill-will were absolutely renounced. Moral gifts were esteemed higher than intellectual; and religious insight and trust, strength of soul through the disciplines of sacrifice and mastery of the senses, were highest of all. Faith without works, knowing without doing, were vain. In short, their earnest recognition, amidst the war of sects and creeds, of the demands of thoughtful, intelligent, and right-minded persons for personal sympathy, and their desire to put foundations for clear, free thinking, for trustful, helpful living, under the feet of mankind, is a crown of universal religion, which only waits to be seen by our age, to receive its highest homage.

Of course in such a semi-barbarous epoch, political and social, and in an Oriental monarchy, their movement was more or less esoteric and secret, though by no means wholly so. Probably more for the purpose of strengthening the bonds of friendship and securing practical furtherance than from anything exclusive in their spirit, they pursued the method of propagating the society by branches

¹ Dieterici (*Zeitscher. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xxxi. p. 126).



in every city of the empire which could supply a nucleus of thoughtful persons, wherein scientific and social problems were discussed, and literary work done.¹ At Bagdad especially they were much talked of. Their pledge, as given by Al Mukadassî, was to complete and perfect friendship in the cause of truth; to make the end of their inquiries consist in the purification of their thoughts and lives through philosophy and mutual help.

But with all its tendencies to mystical and even pantheistic science, this great school of Græco-Aryan philosophy remains within the charmed circle of Semitic monotheistic Will. At the root of all the emanations is a personal Creator, whose volition is the ground of the mystic numbers and of the immanent soul.² In this they are distinguished from the later Sufis. The all-conscious Will creates all, though unlike all,³ out of his positive purpose. To meet this demand of absolutist Will, they modified the pantheistic tendencies which we have described. But their pursuit of pure science, with ardent faith in universal law in place of arbitrary will, was sufficient. Their encyclopædia was burned at Bagdad in the twelfth century by order of the caliph Mostanjid.⁴ The reaction prepared by Ghazzâlî and Asharî led to the persecution of philosophy in all parts of Islam.

Yet this orthodox revival itself could not escape the powerful influence of the Aryan science, whose full light it could not bear. It shows a stamp of mystical and even pantheistic freedom, which does not belong to Koranic theism, and was necessitated by the goads of science. The "Akhlâk-i-Jalâly," a "compend of the practical philosophy of the Mahometan people,"⁵ representing the tra-

¹ Flügel, p. 28.

² Dieterici (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgent. Gesellsch.*, xv. 585, 597).

³ *Ibid.*, xv. 605.

⁴ See Möhl: *Vingt-sept Ans d'Études Orient.*, ii. 338.

⁵ Published originally at time of taking Constantinople. Translated by W. F. Thompson, Esq., Oriental Fund Series.



ditional opinions of the orthodox schools of Islam, shows everywhere the deepest traces of the influence in question; and not the least by claiming that the very philosophy which had caused the free-thinking Græco-Persian schools to be cast out as heretics was derived from Semitic sources.

"The gard'ner's beauty is not of himself;
His hue the rose's, and his form the palm's."

On this account, it pretends that the later Moslem philosophers had withdrawn all respect from the dogmas and books of the pagans.¹ It rises to an exalted praise of contemplation in a truly Platonic spirit, — the worship of perfect truth, beauty, and eternal mystery.² This spirit is not only put into the mouth of Aristotle himself, without the slightest reason, but made the ground of a parallel between the Greek free-thinkers and the teachings of the Koran, and even the Sunna.³ "The greatest fathers of mysticism and investigation" are alike adduced to prove that the supreme intelligence, "called the Mahometan spirit," comprehends in itself all that is, "as the seed contains the branches, leaves, and fruit."⁴ Even Ghazzâlî's stringent orthodoxy was far from the bald will-worship of the Koran, and, bitter as he was towards the free-thinkers, was itself so heretical to the Spanish schools that his great work against philosophy was burned with those of his opponents. Both of the great representatives of triumphant orthodoxy are found to have given up the old idea of the eternity of the letters and sounds of Scripture, replacing that idea by a symbolizing and idealizing process, in order to reach the inmost idea of the Koran, as its eternal part, thus practically giving up the historical field.⁵ By means of such partial accommodations to the free thought of the Per-

¹ *Akhlaq-i-falâhi*, p. 139.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

² *Ibid.* p. 355.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

⁵ See Kramer: *Herrschafts-Ideen*, p. 249.



sian mind, the orthodox schools won sufficient hold on the popular instincts of Islam to second the acquisition of political and military force in support of their war on free scientific thought. Their theology was the precise spiritual analogue of the political absolutism of the Abbasside caliphate, from which it proved at last inseparable. It is true that for the most part the earlier Abbasides were indifferent in religion, and, being the product of the Persian Shi'ite against the old Arab party, disposed to favor the philosophic schools. Al Mamûn (A.D. 813 to 833) was a decided free-thinker, most friendly to Greek philosophy, and opposed to orthodox views of the Koran. Under the eye of Al Rashîd, sects of free-thinkers spread through Islam. Nevertheless, none of these princes was an intelligent promoter of broad and scientific thought. They were without exception prone to persecution in some form; yet Al Mamûn said, "If it were known how I delight in pardoning, all who have offended me would come and confess their crimes."¹ The glory that shone around the brows of the legendary caliph, Harûn Al Rashîd, has sadly faded; and he stands the convicted type of a cruel, unprincipled tyrant. History has nothing to show more atrocious than his massacre of the great official family of the Barmecides, to whose virtues his reign is really indebted for all that has made it immortal.² Ibn Khaldûn, in his "Prolegomena," defended Al Rashîd, saying that the Barmecides were taking all his power from him. During the reigns of these monarchs the four great orthodox sects were founded and flourishing. Patronage of free thought was really due to their viziers, men for the most part of Persian birth and of remarkable ability.³ In truth, so

¹ Dozy: *L'Histoire de l'Islamisme*, chap. viii. See also Al Monsater's plea for mercy to the fallen.

² See Palmer's *Life of Haroun Al Raschid* (1880); and Wiel: *Gesch. d. Chalifen*, ii. 139; Braun, p. 218.

³ Dozy: *L'Histoire*, etc.



prodigious was the impulse given to intellectual activity by the commingling of Persian freedom with Islamic zeal and passion, that from the eighth to the tenth century the spectacle it presented in the East was perhaps unexampled in history. Orthodoxy was stung into prodigious efforts for collecting the Mussulman traditions and disseminating the true faith among the multitudes, with the aid of colleges, Ulemas, and public sessions. Ibn Abdallah Mohammed, surnamed from his birthplace Bokhârî, — who spent as much labor in collecting the traditions of the Mahometan faith as Firdûsî spent in gathering the legends of the old Iranian, till they amounted to 600,000, restoring from his memory the text of all compilers, and carefully separating the chaff from the wheat till he had reduced them to 7,275, which he set forth as the genuine body of the oldest truth, the fruit of thirty-two years of toil and of travel over the whole domain of Islam, — found a host of eager hearers wherever he appeared. He had lectured at Bagdad and Basra when a beardless youth to 20,000 scholars, and at a period "when in Christian Europe most people could not write their own names."¹ Everywhere schools and colleges for instruction in the faith were established; poor students were supported, libraries endowed and filled with books. His work on Mahométanism was encyclopedic; covered every possible division of faith, conduct, civil and ecclesiastical law, religious rites, and secular occupations, — the origins, the exegetics, the dogmatics of Islam. Devoutly orthodox as he was, in that age of polemics he did not escape the charge of heresy, and was driven at last out of Bokhara, his native city, to die at Samarkand in the year 256 of the Hegira.² It must have been fearfully fascinating for the people to hear from his stores of tradition how the

¹ Kremer: *Herrsch. Ideen*, p. 433.

² Hammer-Purgstall has an abstract of his works.



believers, passing into the prison of final judgment to learn their need of an intercessor, try all the prophets in vain till they come to Mahomet, who alone has power with the Almighty to save his elect, while the rest must burn forever.

Again, there was comfort in being told, on the same authority, that God would save all who had faith equal to a dinar's weight, or even to a grain of dust; and of his drawing out of hell those whose skins had been scorched, to cool them in the streams of Paradise, so that they bloom like sweet wild plants, and without merit of their own are called the ransomed of the All-Merciful.¹ So similar in all ages and faiths is the capricious theology of a divine monarchical Will. Bokhârî was as much of an enthusiast for orthodox culture and for a faith whose idea was mighty within him from the whole impulse of his age to religious study, as Firdûsî's faith in himself was mighty from the pure Iranian genius of a much more human and heroic Will. These two contemporaries of eastern Iran represent admirably the contending elements of that grand ferment of the free human and the monarchic divine which covered Iran with wonderful intellectual productivity in all classes of the people in that age. A class of lawyers and exegetists then arose whose subtile hair-splitting and casuistry resemble the doings of Hebrew Talmudists and Christian Scholastics, and run down into the writing of volumes on the Prophet's slipper.² True, too, is it that the Mongol Turkish literature of Transoxania, of Samarkand, Bokhara, and Merv, was almost exclusively of a theological and scholastic character, while the free south-Persian mind expanded in more secular and scientific fields. The command of the traditional theology over the ignorant multitude, and its natural affinity with the political system

¹ Krehl (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, iv. 1-32).

² Kremer, p. 179.



of Islam, gave immense advantage to the orthodox scholars and their supporters, the Ulemas. The consequent sway and swing of blind faith and prescriptive creed produced their usual effect,—a mixture of hypocrisy and devotion. The writings of the best teachers abound in denunciations of the Pharisaical pretences of humility, and of the ostentatious patronage of religion, which corrupted the church of the Prophet,—the falling away of the rulers from that democracy and that self-surrender which rendered the earlier caliphs indistinguishable from the meanest of their subjects.¹ Still, it remains true that the history of the great controversies of which Iran was the theatre down to the twelfth century, prove a productivity and an ardor in the Mussulman mind as wonderful as those in the mind of any other race which has been swayed by a positive religion in the history of mankind. Islam has made good its faith in its own Prophet's maxim, "The ink of the wise is more precious than the blood of the martyrs." It has echoed through centuries his cry for the Koran, "Blessed be God, who hath taught mankind the use of the pen!" It has followed his example in placing men of science second only to prophets. Narrow as its religious creed was, especially during the Mongol period, it could not shut out the Greek scientist or the Persian free-thinker from southern Iran. No religion has ever shown such a multitude of sects; it even serves to make up for the baldness of its own monotheism by an instinctive yearning to include within its unity the thoughts of all thinkers and the faiths of all believers. It has the same drift in later times. Akbar Shâh, Ismâil, and Nâdir Shâh, all sought to found a universal religion by mingling Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism. Driven up into the speculative height of theological discussion, three quarters of its immense literature of from twenty to thirty thousand

¹ Kremer, p. 434-437, especially Ghazzâlî.

works¹ were of scholastic import; and its contributions to natural philosophy have, in comparison with what has followed since the revival of science and letters in modern times, a meagre interest. Yet for the positive sciences these Mussulman debaters were far more effective fore-runners than their Christian contemporaries;² far readier also, and earlier to accept the stimulus of Greek studies of Nature. How it happened that after the twelfth century this ardor for mixed speculation ceased, and Islam's intellectual work seemed to be done, is a question that is not more naturally asked than it is easily answered.

¹ Sprenger (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xxxii. 2).

² The greatest Arabian philosophers wrote encyclopedic works, — Masûdî, Bokhârî, Ghazzâlî; Masûdî, a great and philosophic writer on jurisprudence in the ninth century; Yâcût, prince of geographers, twelfth century (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xviii. 397); Sharastânî, historian of the sects, thirteenth century; Ibn Khaldûn, fourteenth century, most liberal and truly scientific of all the writers of his race, a true historical thinker, who has been called by Mohl the Montesquieu of Islam (Mohl, ii. 620); Ibn Batûta, fourteenth century, traveller, envoy in Europe, Asia, Africa, for twenty-five years; Al Makkârî, author of an excellent history of the Moorish dynasties of Spain, seventeenth century. These are but a few of the most important names. The first academy of science in the Middle Ages was that of the Saracens at Toledo, in Spain (see Hammer-Purgstall: *Literaturgeschichte*, i. lxii). The free university at Cairo, the House of Wisdom, in the eleventh century, anticipated Bacon's ideal with a fact. The "Brothers of Purity" established the most remarkable institution for the cultivation of science previous to modern times. See, for full account of Mussulman literature and progress in outline, Hammer-Purgstall, i. lxi. Never were there more diligent collectors of books than the Mahometan scholars and sultans. (See summary in Hammer-Purgstall, i. lxi, and lxii.) The library of Al Walîdî, ninth century, required one hundred and twenty camels, with six hundred chests, to carry it from Bagdad to beyond the Tigris (Purgstall, i. lxvi). Purgstall's immense plan for the history of Mahometan science is little known to scholars. It was to be preceded by twelve quarto volumes of the literature of the Arabs, biographical and selective, with translations into German blank verse. Unfortunately it was not begun till his seventy-sixth year. This great series was printed for seven years at the rate of one volume a year, ending only with his death (Mohl: *Vingt-sept Ans*, etc.). He enumerates five thousand two hundred and eighteen writers down to the eleventh century (Ibid., 139), before western Europe had accomplished anything approximately equivalent to their work. The Saracens taught the pendulum as a measure of time, and a crude form of the telegraph also; introduced the manufacture of silk and of cotton into Spain, camels and carrier-pigeons into Sicily, the art of enamelling steel, national police, taxation and public libraries, paper and gunpowder; and everywhere laid the foundation of popular education in schools, academies, and colleges (Crichton: *Arabia*, xiii). They taught agriculture as a Koranic duty.

Two of the marvels of literature inspired by universality of sympathy were the *Ayn Akbery*, or *Intihutes of Akbar*, and the *Dabistân*, written half a century afterwards by Mubîn-Fâni to follow up its noble conception, and whose wide demonstration of the religions of the world stands under the immortal maxims, "The leaves of God's book are the religious persuasions," and "The time of a prophet is a universal time, and hath neither before nor after, as the Lord had neither morn nor eve" (chap. xii.).



The first reason was the triumph of orthodoxy over free thought, in the twelfth century, which we have already seen to have been involved in the cardinal principle of Mussulman theology,—the ultimate sovereignty of pure Will. To that sovereignty morality, reason, law, inquiry, were all subordinate; and it finally subjugated them all, and there has been no revival. Islam has had no priestly hierarchy to silence thought, so that there has always been a comparative license in teaching, which the natural scepticism of the Arab, the subtle intellect of the Persian, and the practical secularism of the Greek have kept alive, till they leavened with doubt or indifference, or stimulated to incessant self-assertion, the numerous commingled races of Iran. Doubtless this disintegrating work would have gone on towards a successful demand for unity on the large ground of positive studies, but for the constant repressive force of a supernaturalistic theology of Will,—especially with the Mongol races when they swept over Iran,—which diverted the thinker into the line of dogmatic subtleties, just as the same thing had been done by Christianity, centuries before, from similar causes, and by Judaism in Rabbinical days.

The second reason was the despotic politics of Islam, which were moulded on the theology of Islam, and insensibly became its practical servant or instrument. Kerâmat Ali, in a letter to Sprenger, wrote: "The scholars of Islam have followed the rod of despots, and spent all their time in developing new subtleties."¹ Thinkers who must exhaust themselves on abstractions, and cannot put their thought into institutions on the solid earth, cannot accomplish progress. The confusion of the theological with the political law was the great obstacle to reform, and continues

¹ See the formularies of caliphs prescribing the absolute submission of them to their officials, and giving the authority of a Christian Nestorian bishop. Kremer (*Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.*, xxxii. 18).



to be so; the power of the Ulemas to resist it has always supported itself on the authority of the State, and wrought by influencing and governing it. In Iran, despotic Mahometan opposition to this embodiment of thought in action, this nerve-energy that flashes from brain to hand, was so contrary to the whole stress of intellectual organization, that it demoralized the whole national mind, and for a time, at least, reduced its fires to smouldering ashes.

To understand the relations of Mussulman royalty to religious and intellectual freedom, we must note the influence of the conquest of Persia on the Arab mind. When the invaders took the capital city of Khosrû, they did not know the value of the booty. Some offered to exchange gold for silver, and others mistook camphor for sulphur. They came like swarms of half-starved locusts to devour the land. They were banditti of the desert, with no culture but the inspiration of the clan, and the thirst for individual glory and reward. Their conquests were of the nature of an emigration of clans. The only idea of government in these tribes was the leadership of age and valor, as represented in the sheikh, with a natural mixture of hereditary respect. On the death of Mahomet they broke into rebellion.¹ Islam really came on the world like a fierce descent of desert clans on their foes. Khâled was a thunderbolt of destruction upon it; yet he it was that made Islam conqueror, and saved it from disintegrating. Mahomet's ideal of government was just to send his governors through Arabia to establish Islam, and then to collect tributes from the poor, in camels and sheep, also as plunder to meet the expenses of his campaign.² Wrought to fanatical passion by the feeling that the eye of Allah was on every one of his chosen warriors, and that "Paradise was under the shadow of swords," they were ill suited to reconstruct and administer the affairs of

¹ Ockley: *History of the Saracens*, p. 215.

² Kremer, p. 313.



a grand and ancient empire, for hundreds of years the centre of Eastern religions and the field of innumerable sects, where two forces were at least greater than the traditional absolutism of rulers, — namely, the pride of local freedom and the license of individual thought.¹ Neither intellectually nor politically was Islam capable of gaining the respect of an empire which domestic disunity alone² had forced to submit to Bedouin hordes permanently settling on lands mastered by nomadic raids. Yet such was the need of unity, — so hopeless were the divisions of Zendik free-thinkers and Avestan scripturalists, of Manichæans and Mazdakites, of Christians, Magi, and Jews; so bottomless the gulf of sceptical, abstract, and unchartered speculations which had opened under the feet of thinkers; so balked had been the longings of really free spirits to found schools of universal religion on an ethical and spiritual basis, — that all Iran was disposed to welcome the new dispensation, whose first decrees invited free thought and promised a form of impartial unity, in a spirit that, so far at least as the believers themselves were concerned, had many elements of democratic equality.³ The earliest caliphs were men of great power, and on the whole of extraordinary integrity, as well as determined will. The firm hand of Abû Bekr repressed revolt; the supreme wisdom and valor of Omar, the constructive spirit of Othmân, ennobled mere barbarian conquest into empire; the terrible sword of Khâled at the siege of Damascus had its antidote on the spot, in the merciful heart of Abû Obeydah. Like the Prophet, the first caliphs went in humblest attire like religious devotees, and lived like the poorest of their subjects. Abû Bekr took his part of the public revenue with the rest; had no civil list; had one slave; chose Omar for his

¹ For political influence of heretical sects, see Kremer, pp. 362-371.

² It had no system of administration of its own. Kremer.

³ See Dozy, pp. 191-195.



virtues, took pains to question the best men respecting him, and then proposed him for confirmation to the people; and died praying for his subjects.¹ These men were of the serious, sad type of Arabic sheikh, earnest fanatics, single-hearted, passionate for personal rule and religious sway. Qutub was, as we have said, the Paul of Islam; but for him, it would have perished. He was greater than Mahomet. He founded the unity of the Moslem Church, made Arabic the official language of the empire, while Othmân gave unity to the Scriptural canon by destroying all copies of the Koran but that traced to the Prophet's wife.² Alî, — who, partly from political causes, had first the goodwill and then the adoration of the Persians, — though accused of crimes unproven, possessed many noble traits. He made the caliphate itself, from which he had been wrongfully excluded, an object of homage by his magnanimity, forbearance, and humanity, in the emergencies that grew out of his misfortunes,³ and finally, by his martyrdom, raised its despotic claims to a divine right. Even in the beginning the Arab leaders were possessed with a full sense of their claim to be a nation chosen to rule by right of Divine appointment. While their system was almost communistic, at least socialistic, dividing revenue per head among the soldiers, and opening paths to position to the worthiest without distinction of wealth, of course political life reflected this supernatural authority that they claimed. They formed military camps in Irak, lived on the conquered people, and were kept separate from the conquered by Othmân's prohibition of a Moslem from owning land in the country which they came to rule.⁴ The aristocratic and democratic Arab was in fact transported into the conquered States as a high privileged caste, under what pur-

¹ Sprenger, i. 407-411.

² Hammer-Purgstall: Preface, p. xxxix.

³ See Crichton, Ockley, etc.

⁴ For Othmân's regulations, see Kremer: *Herrschaft d. Islam*, pp. 326-333.



ported to be a theocratic government, with a successor to the Prophet as the representative of Divine Will. In such a despotism the doctrine of supernatural revelation by a personal Will must inevitably end. This submission, however thoroughly consistent with the Koran, as well as with the character of these Semitic tribes, — who were as exclusive and aristocratic as they were contemptuous towards all human laws, — was nevertheless in full logical accord with the worship of absolute Will and the religious ideal of personal unity. These caliphs were the natural successors of the old Assyrian kings. Of course nothing could be more obnoxious to the Persian tribes and their Turanic intermixture than to be so governed in eastern Iran by successive gods set over them. It was more oppressive than Rome, since there was no protection against extortion by a horde of invading fanatics. From one end of Iran to the other, and especially in the eastern States, the spirit of revolt was constantly alive. At no moment had the caliphate a recognized sway over the whole country. The opposition of Persian and Arab gives its coloring to the whole history of the two great dynasties, and determines their destinies. By keeping down with a strong hand the numerous elements of discord in Arabia, by clearing that country of all manner of unbelievers, who took refuge in the larger liberty of Iran, and by the large overflow of enthusiastic soldiers from the vast depths of the original hive, the earliest caliphs, especially Omar, sought, with partial success, to maintain the strength and purity of the ruling caste in Asia. The demoralized condition of the Sassanian and Byzantine empires did much to advance this purpose. But the civil wars descending from old Arabian feuds of Hashemites and Omeyyads, of Mo'awiyah and the Al'ites, were irrepressible. The old rage of the desert clans lived on, the old hate revived, and the wild Arab was Arab still, when all Asia lay at his feet. The caliphs themselves



for the most part shared the passionate, unbridled frenzy which belongs to irresponsible power, and were ill fitted to hold the empire together. Nevertheless, the sceptre of Islam held sway for seven centuries; and the incessant revolutions of sects and provinces and petty principalities, and even States, in East and West, down to this present moment, have failed to destroy its prestige or its power. The reason is that the worship of a supreme personal Will not only amalgamated with the traditions of the various races of Iran, but by its very simplicity and barrenness of dogmatic contents gave room for such play of subordinate systems and creeds as the more positive and formalized theism of Christianity never allowed. It is therefore the typical religion of personal Will, so far as concerns capabilities of comprehensiveness, and inclusive power. This advantage in their central principle the earlier caliphs knew how to make more effective by accepting and appropriating an amount of foreign influence which alone could account for the establishment of an enduring empire by a horde of rude predaceous tribes. Not only were Persians the creators and developers of Moslem theology, the founders of its sects, the teachers of its schools, the collectors and preservers of its traditions,¹ but the whole Arab race underwent a transforming education by Iranian experience and culture, — which is one of the most marvellous instances in history of the continuity and persistence of national forces.

It was an absolute necessity for the founders of the Musulman empire in the East to adopt, in the main, the financial and administrative experience of their more cultured subjects. These native races were at first remanded to a political and social condition of clientship imitated from desert relations; they became freedmen bound to their patrons by certain feudal ties and very limited rights.²

¹ Dozy, pp. 194, 195.

² Kremer: *Herrschaftsidee d. Islam*, p. 348.



The conquered were called red-haired, the masters black-haired. But this attempt to engraft on the splendid empire of the Sassanians an institution based on the tribal laws and customs of the desert was successful only so long as it aided the armies of Omar in obtaining a strong foothold in Iran through a systematic subordination and use of the human material at hand.¹ The necessities of the situation overpowered all appliances of this kind. Arabic names, customs, language, rites, penetrated the empire; but under their external forms appeared the native ideas and methods. Omar adopted the old taxation system of Nûshirvân. The native Dikhâns, who had always held the civil and political management of Iran, retained it till the Turkish invasions.²

✓ Omar's prohibition of an Arab's owning land outside of Arabia disappeared very speedily, and with it the possibility of making the Arabs a separate ruling clan, a mere camp of military masters in the land. They became rich, and thence came the hiring of mercenary troops and military colonies, and the fall of the empire. Persians, Jews, and Christians intermarried with their masters, and the pure blood of the desert became a myth. A strong party, which set character above descent, was formed against it, and even filled the ranks of a puritan rebellion. The only permanent effect of clientage was to develop a class of scholars and statesmen of the various races, who by sheer necessity acquired possession of the offices of State and education; and they were to a very great extent Persians. Persians were the leaders and shapers of Islamic culture. The simple Arabs learned of these larger brains and more sensuous imaginations music, architecture, sculpture, politics, philosophy, wine, and fine apparel. ✓ Persians were the real founders and teachers of the great academic clubs and schools. The Persians, not the Arabs, gave

¹ Dozy, pp. 348, 349.

² Kremer: *Culturgeschichte*, i. 158.

firmness and force to Islam, and from them have issued the most remarkable sects. They were the grand viziers who gave immortality to frivolous and barbarian kings. They were the great free-thinkers, the great physicians, the great travellers, the great historians and jurists, who have given a finer immortality to the faith of the Prophet. These masters in Islam, if you trace them back to their cradles, are natives of Bokhara and Khorassan and Bactria, and from the old native schools of Basra and Nishapur, and Samarkand and Herat, — some of Turkish, but mainly of Persian origin. The great impulse from the Greek schools came largely through the Christian heretics of Nisibis and Edessa. That these statements are not too strong, is plain from the fact that most of the great writers were *freedmen*, as well as from such confessions as that wrung from the caliph Abd al Mālik, "Alas! freedmen are masters of the free Arab."

Under the force of assimilation the Arab families were transformed into large land-owners, merged in the general population, and ceased to be available by the caliphs for purposes of government or war. Resort was therefore had to military colonies and mercenary troops raised from the numerous petty States of the empire. Endless revolutions, weakness at the centre, general demoralization of the caliphate, introduction of Turkish mercenaries from Mongolia, and finally disintegration and the formation of new dynasties in all parts of the empire, were the natural result. This rapid downfall was aided by the bitter strife between the two court parties, Arab and Persian, in which the former naturally had to yield its prestige to superior power of intrigue, and especially by the larger controversy on the question of legitimacy in the succession, — the Arabs insisting on the old tribal rights of the people to take part in the choice of a representative of the Prophet, the Persians, more successfully, on their traditional principle of heredi-



tary government. The effect of this was not to strengthen the central authority, but to weaken and ultimately destroy it; there being no check left upon incompetency and no right of revolutions against a pernicious line of rulers in the caliphate itself; while in the several provinces, on the other hand, there was no check on the power of a rebellious governor to seize a subordinate throne, and compel or bribe the weak spiritual head at Bagdad to grant him the investiture required. By the time that Europe poured herself out on Asia, in the Crusades, Turkish and Mongol and Berber dynasties had risen to the side of the gorgeous and feeble Abbasides on the Euphrates, each with its rival court, its retinue of statesmen, scholars, poets, its broad schemes of ambition, reaching sometimes, as in Mahmūd of Ghaznī and the western Almoravides, at the subjugation of all neighboring States.

Iran, meanwhile, had become the theatre of anarchical wars and dynastic revolutions, of devastation and predatory raids. Heavy taxes for the support of petty courts, heavy duties on travel and trade, drove multitudes into exile or open plunder. To these influences were added dreadful pestilences, of which forty were enumerated as falling within four hundred years, due largely to wars. Never probably did a race possess so little capacity for orderly, constructive government as the Semitic Arab. At the touch of the great Mongol invasions his splendid structure, that had arisen by the genius and wealth of Persia upon the great homestead of autocratic empires, — Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, — vanished like a mirage of the desert whence it was born.

But these political incapacities did not weaken the prestige of Islam as a faith or a name. That all-conquering name covered the multitude of races, of sects, of strifes, of sovereignties, all alike, and took no heed of their rise and fall. Nothing so simple, nothing so inclusive, nothing so

susceptible of ever-fresh interpretation was ever known, so long as the mind of man was content to stay within the limits of the worship of personal Will. And this is equivalent to saying, as long as Iran was Iran; and so the Semitic Arab, planted in that cradle of the Will, must expand his petty national prejudices to accept the life and thought of a mighty Aryan empire.

This principle of a central Will amidst all the antagonisms of Persian and Arab, and in the miserable subjection of the spiritual to the temporal arm, essential to that unity of the two which Islam established, was the common ground, the universal appeal, and, so far as its limits allowed, the reconciling power. Here is another witness, in addition to Buddhism, that other religions besides Christianity can adapt themselves, by force of their central principles, to immense varieties of human experience, treating them as waves that rise and sink in mid-ocean; or as days in the march of centuries.

That again and again in his sublime evolution man has laid hold upon supposed transcendent relations with what is above him; that he has surrendered one system only to find and adhere to another, till, its day ended, still another has serenely and irresistibly risen on him like a new dawn, after whatsoever night-shadows lighted by unchanging stars, — is the inexhaustible word of history, of which a new syllable is preparing to-day.

Intolerance towards rival positive religions obviously lay in the very nature and necessity of Islam. Its God, and its God only, had for it an objective reality; and for it alone the subjective limits and conditions of all theological conceptions were supposed to be miraculously set aside. The temporal arm was master of thought in the name of religion; and the Church, leaning on the power of that arm which has increased down to the present day, is fully in the hands of the State. The form of pure personal Will,



under which this unconditioned Being was conceived, made Him precisely analogous to a political and military autocrat.

It was the positive prohibition of idolatry by this Divine Will which created the persecutions of Christians in the first century of the caliphate. For example, Walid the great unifier of Islam cut down Christian images in Jerusalem, and shut out Christians from worshipping with the Mahometans in the city, but at the same time gave them three churches for themselves. The later Abbaside caliphs destroyed Christian basilicas, or turned them into mosques; and Motawakkil cut in two the consecrated cypress of Zoroaster. Many of the monsters of cruelty, however, who have overrun Persia in later times,—like Tamerlane, Nâdir Shâh, Mahmûd the Afghan, and Agha Mohammed,¹—were mere barbarian conquerors, who were seeking, not the glory of Islam, but their own. For the cruelties attending the wars of Islam with Christianity in the Middle Ages, neither side can claim superiority in respect to its fanatical madness. Certainly the Crusaders were a set of savages driven on by crazy priests; while some of the Mahometan princes of that period were noble and tolerant, until goaded into rage by the Christian invaders.²

The sanguinary outbreaks of cruelty and fanaticism which have made the name of Islam a terror in all ages, are doubtless due in part to the impulse given to brutal passions by a religion of autocratic Will. But we must not mistake the effects of individual and tribal passions, in which religion had little concern, for the fanatical hatred of rival gods; against these gods the confessors of Islam were bound to war. Still, this fanaticism has not prevented an astonishing freedom of mind under its name.³

¹ Braun: *Gemälde d. Moham. Welt.*, pp. 246-253.

² See Braun, p. 214.

³ For Mahmûd of Ghazni's destruction of books, — forty thousand ass-loads of heresy, — Hammer-Purgstall, i. lxvii. Omar probably did not burn the Alexandrian library. For Nizid's horrible sack of Medina, see Ockley, p. 426.



Of course the sense of such direct personal relations, held firm by a written revelation, while for centuries it was educating races, grew more and more into one form of religious fanaticism whose cruel outbursts are as frequent as they are frightful. This proverbial barbarity of the Moslem is the natural result, not of a specially savage temperament, nor of unbridled passions, but of the direct reference of conduct to an exclusive personal Will. It was true of all Semitic races whose religion was intensely personal, except where, as in later forms of Christianity, the secular forces of commercial, scientific, and œcumenical life have controlled its operation.

Moslem orthodoxy was simply the legitimate evolution of that central principle which we have defined, applied to cosmical, psychological, and all morally and spiritually vital questions; and in all religions, orthodoxy much more justly claims this logical legitimacy than is commonly admitted by those who wish to retain the prestige of the religious name while they follow tracks that properly belong outside of it. For orthodoxy really represents the long experience of ages seeking faithfully to adjust and evolve the primal principles of its founder; and what it calls heresy is wont to show a greater divergence from these primal principles than from its own, whether admitted to do so or not; and herein consists its progress. But as in human character personal will takes by its very freedom a vast variety of shapes equally justified by the conscience, so in Islam, where such will is the highest religious principle, even the Koran and its Ulemas, with the schools of Koranic jurisprudence and government, have never been able to suppress the tendency to admit a vast range of discussion, inquiry, and opinion, more or less inconsistent with its own exclusiveness as a revelation.

No religion, not even Christianity, has equalled Islam in the extent to which it has been stretched and strained by



the push of free-thought from within its name and professed communion. Great princes in every line and land have continually sought to crown their conquests and glory by uniting sects and faiths upon liberal thought. And even where the impulse has pressed through all bounds to a point so far distant as the higher pantheism of the Sufis is from the definite externality of the Koranic Allah,—the name of Islam has seldom been either dropped or refused. Internal persecution has, as we have seen, been not so much in the name of Islam or its Prophet as from personal political, dialectic, or interpretative considerations. The finest thing about this religion is the expansiveness of its name. It is not labelled for any individual, it is not called from Mahomet, as Christianity from Christ; it is *Islâm*, or *Obedience*. Its unity of God is not marred by duality or trinity of persons, each with his own absolute claim; and for this very reason the multiplicity of incarnations, which we have already noted as resulting from the worship of personal Will, can stand side by side under its common name, with equal recognition as portions of Islam, however unorthodox or mutually repugnant. The immeasurable conception of Divine Unity and Universality absorbs these separated will-forms, as stars are lost in the infinity of the common heavens. And as the mystical capabilities of this conception came into play, even the limits natural to the religion of personal sovereignty themselves melted away, and the path opened to a still freer spiritual aspiration. Such is the meaning of Mussulman Sufism; it is traceable to the ideal significance of Unity, naturally evolved to a point beyond that identification of it with definite monotheistic personality which constituted Islam, as it did Christianity and Judaism, a positive religion.

Two elements in the ethnic constitution of Islam made the play of free thought inevitable. The first was the intellectual scepticism and spiritual indifference of the Arab,

noticeable alike in his desert epoch and in his openness to those Persian and Greek influences which undermined the Semitic semi-barbarism of his days of fire and sword. The other was that nervous, subtle individuality and that perceptive keenness which underlie the extreme apparent respect for political legitimacy in the Persian mind. It is easy to see that this combination of qualities, when brought under the motive force of an all-pervading religious law, would produce a great number of independent and tentative minds. It is not strange that every postulate of the faith was probed to its foundations, or reconciled with reason by a scholastic process. Equally natural were the theological subtleties and verbal artifices by which these lawless investigations were made to appear consistent with an authoritative faith. The spirit of compromise in the reconciliation of opposites was never more freely used. The art of manipulating Og's bedstead belongs to every positive religion, though the instrumentalities are not always so convenient as is this singular union of the Arab and Persian.

Other influences of a nature favorable to religious and philosophical freedom proceeded from the ease with which Islam was propagated among a great variety of races, all of whom brought their special gifts and demands to the common sovereignty. Did our space admit, it would be interesting to trace the multifarious achievements of the great Turkish dynasties which arose in eastern Iran, the marvellous life that seemed to spring up in those barbarian hordes of the North at the touch of the old soil of Avestan heroes, of Achæmenide and Sassanian kings, and the seats of an immemorial culture which had never known interruption or decay, — dynasties that associate the discredited name of Turk with such world-famous lines as the Ghaznevîde, the Seljûrk, the Kâdjâr; dynasties some of which have proved more capable than the Arabs of maintaining



splendid empires, cultivating art and letters, and advancing scientific discovery;¹ dynasties to which, in fact, the Arabs owe much of their historic fame. The range of differing qualities which we are now enumerating must cover the destructive instincts of the Afghan and Mongol conquerors, which at least show what inclusive powers have resided in the name of Islam. In Africa, the Berbers, a native race, supplied unexpected access of free energy, and down to the eleventh century were the source of Mussulman culture on that continent.²

Besides the hosts of native Persian scholars, statesmen, moralists, devotees, who were absorbed into the communion of Islam, we must take into our view the external impulse given to it by Zoroastrian traditions, whether of the orthodox or heretical (Zendik) sort, prevailing among the Pârsî fire-worshippers, whom the Arabs superseded, but for a long while did not wholly eradicate. To these we must add the subtle yet unextinguished influence of old eclectic schools of pure heretics, seeking to build a universal faith out of the fragments of floating creeds, such as those of Mani and of Mazdak in the west of Iran, especially in Babylon, and the Vedantic and Buddhist mystics spread widely over the east. From India to Greece, the choicest literature of the Oriental world poured into the courts of the Moslem kings from Ghazni to Bagdad, from Euphrates to the Himalaya, and were wrought up by poets and scholars,—too many of them paid hirelings and adulators of power, but great numbers, on the other hand, bold unflinching servants of genius, and martyrs in its cause. It was a passionate rivalry in poetic, philosophic, and literary culture, such as can only be explained by the prodigious confluence of tribes and traditions under a com-

¹ Gibbon: *Roman Empire*, li., lvii. Braun: *Gemälde*, etc. Gobineau: *Histoire des Perses*, li. 482. Malcolm: *History of Persia*.

² Hellwald: *Culturgeschichte*, p. 308. Vambéry: *Bokhara*.



mon ideal, — an ideal whose properly illimitable central principle of the unity of God was forever struggling to expand beyond the limits of personal sovereignty which constituted it a positive religion.

We must not conceal the inevitable tendency of all these circumstances — the natural qualities of the conquering and the conquered races, the rapidity and superficiality of the conversion of the Persians, their sense of oppression and wrong, their consciousness of a broader culture subjected to authoritative faith, the intermixture of revolutionary and political aims with all speculative or religious discussion, the temptations and terrors of arbitrary power — to produce a very great amount of intellectual as well as practical dishonesty, and to prepare the way for that unhappy gift of insincerity which is generally ascribed to the modern inhabitants of Iran. Such effects were often aggravated by the very elasticity with which, as we have seen, the name of Islam could be stretched to cover a freedom of thought inconsistent with its principles, requiring continual half-sincerities of adjustment and interpretation. This, in every religion, is the beginning — or it is rather the open track — of degeneracy and decay. It is the negative sign that a new day is dawning for the mind and soul, which should not be restrained from seeking to escape the clouds of yesterday; that the new wine is fermenting, and that those who guard the old bottles succeed in holding it only so far as they can suppress its nobler qualities. In Islam this was done more by political and military power than by the superior consistency of orthodoxy. Yet here also we must not go too far. There was a sense in which what has just been said of the excellence of Islam by reason of the expansive quality of its name is grandly true. Not all the noble thought which its wide reach of possible meaning permitted it to cover beyond the stiffness of definite creeds was unworthily held or compromised. And it is as



creditable to a positive religion to possess a reach of inclusive capacity as it is discreditable to it to maintain its failing prestige by the two-faced worship of a name on the part of confessors who have long outgrown its possible meaning.

The Mongol hordes which swept down upon the emasculated caliphate in the thirteenth century were descended, according to their own myths, from four male and female survivors of a mutual slaughter of tribes, or from a child rescued thence, and suckled by a she-wolf.¹ To the end of their career they tore one another in pieces by domestic feuds. The Mussulman historian says of them that they had all the qualities of beasts,—“heart of lion, patience of dog, caution of crane, cunning of fox, prudence of crow, rapacity of wolf, vigilance of cock, domestic carefulness of fowls, slyness of cat, fury of boar.”² Their instinct was to devastate the fruits of civilization, the results of history; their only constructive impulse, to rally round a human God and to conquer the world. They were lazy, filthy, intemperate, treacherous, lustful.³ They cut off heads, piled them in heaps, standing a corpse head downwards for every ten thousand victims.⁴ They massacred thousands of men and women at the graves of their Khans.⁵ They slew the wife and buried her with her husband, and drank human blood with relish.⁶ Of these semi-human monsters the fit insignia were the “Lion and the Cat.” Their name was symbolic of the terror they caused. In Persian, Mongol is said to mean “gloomy;” in Mongolian, “haughty” and “terrible.” The hoofs of these Centaurs trod the cities of the East—old Bokhara and Balkh, Merv and Bagdad, Damascus and Aleppo—into bloody dust; and Europe trembled at the noise of their coming as at

¹ Kleppeth, quoted in Wüttke, i. 225.

² Hammer: *Gesch. d. Ichane*, i. 44 (Wassaf).

³ Wüttke, i. 248.

⁴ Hammer, i. 48.

⁵ Wüttke, i. 232. Marco Polo, bk. i. chap. xlv.

⁶ Hammer, i. 44.

the judgment trump. No prayer, nor prestige, nor bribe availed when the terrified caliph of Bagdad offered his treasures to the grandson of Genghis Khan for the safety of his city. Hûlâgû replied, "My help is in my God, not in gold." To Nassir, king of Aleppo, he said: "Woe, woe to all who fight not on our side; for we bring destruction on the earth! God has torn pity and mercy from our hearts."¹ Their theory was that a vanquished enemy could never become the victor's friend, and should be exterminated. Genghis destroyed all his captives before leaving Iran. It is estimated that eighteen millions of lives were destroyed by these hordes in China and Tangut alone.²

Yet these bestial human hordes were not by any means destitute of religion. They had got so far as to recognize some Supreme Life at the root, or at the head, of the world; and later science gathers proof of such representatives of a highest from all parts of that immeasurable hive from which they swarmed, — some Sublime One,³ to whom the worshipped plants, beasts, stars, elements pointed on. Buddhism must already have done something to stir the seeds of reflection. Judaism and Christianity had long been penetrating these wilds in one form or another. The great Khans were not ignorant of what the races and nations believed. They knew enough to count it all equally insignificant beside the instinct of personal sway. The immediate effect of Islam upon the converted descendants of Genghis was not unlike that of the Buddhist and Nestorian missions upon the original fetichistic theism of the steppes; it was simply to expand their natural unimpressibility to spiritual influence into a half-sceptical, half-believing impartiality.⁴ This is a constant phenomenon amidst their most barbarous political and military

¹ Hammer, i. 175.

² Marco Polo, bk. i. chap. xlviii.

³ Howorth: *History of the Mongols*, i. 113.

⁴ Abulfeda: *History of the Tatars*, *passim*.



atrocities. Occasionally, as in Kublai Khan, it rises into a higher sense of rational liberty, preventing the Khan from joining even the Christian communion, while he showed deep respect to all the great positive faiths; and Rubruquis and Sir John Mandeville testify to his clear insight into the narrowness and insincerity of Christian professions and the moral force of his rebuke.¹ But these children of instinct exhibited other hopeful inconsistencies with their nomadic barbarism. The same impartiality in many respects characterized their treatment of the sexes; women having an influence in political and domestic affairs, and also in trade, rare in the East.² The wives of the Mongol princes gave away thrones, determined successions, reconciled armies, ruled States, sat on all public occasions beside the throne;³ and Hammer-Purgstall even ascribes the short duration of the Mongol empire to the constant interference of female relatives in every act of government. These princes were chosen without regard to race or religion; and their Christian wives and mothers have perhaps received even too much credit for the good works of their lords and masters. Of the same nature were the marks of democratic freedom in the election of the Khan. He was to be the absolute lord; yet the chiefs had to be brought together and formally consulted, and signified assent by casting their caps into the air in sign of freedom, and their girdles over their shoulders in sign of submission.⁴ So if the Khan had violated the unchangeable laws of the tribes, he was deposed in presence of the governors, and of the wives and nobles and officers generally.⁵ The last ceremony was the oath of absolute submission to the one God on earth, and to the one purpose of universal sway he came to fulfil.

¹ Rubruquis, pp. 156-164.

² *Gesch. d. Il-kane*, i. 12, 54; ii. 25, 271 (Wassaf).

³ Hammer, i. 49, 57.

⁴ Marco Polo, bk. ii. chap. xlvi.

⁵ Ibn Batûta, xlii.



In these customs and institutions we may, I think, easily recognize the causes of that negative form of impartiality in religion which they so curiously resemble. It is a low form of universality, into which the natural aspiration for unity is beaten or flattened out, like gold leaf, in a common level of subjection to one personal Will, beside which all distinctive claims are trivial. Other negative preparations for Persian influence must also be admitted. There were wide-open neutralities involved in the great conflux of races and beliefs which the early Khans had brought to their capitals, — possibilities at least of foothold for the imperishable wisdom of Iran and Cathay. For the very nature of such treasures is to live over changing civilizations, as the sun lives through varying days and months and years. But these preparations were unconscious. There was no constructive or preserving purpose in the overwhelming raids; no idea but to supplant the institutions of ancient States by the edicts of despotic Will. We recall even Mahmûd of Ghazni's enormous holocaust of books in eastern Iran, and Hûlâgû's annihilation of the libraries of Bagdad, Alamut, and Medina in the West. Ibn Batûta says a line of witnesses proved that in the Tartar wars in Irak twenty-four thousand literary men perished, and only two escaped.¹ After the sack of Bokhara, the same author tells us it nearly disappeared, and he himself could find no one who knew anything of science in this ancient city whose name meant "seat of learning."² The horrible massacres perpetrated by Timûr in Aleppo and Damascus, while he was himself discussing theology with doctors of the law, would be perhaps the most barbarous in history,³ but for the more dreadful ones by Genghis Khan in Merv and Nishapur and Bamian, which were depopulated and turned to deserts.⁴ Of fourteen viziers

¹ Ibn Batûta, chap. xiii.

² Howorth, i. 86-90.

³ Hutton: *Central Asia*, p. 115.

⁴ Hammer: *Gesch. d. Ilchane*, ii. 343-347.



during the first century of the Mongol invasion, only one died a natural death. Timûr slaughtered one hundred thousand prisoners in the neighborhood of Delhi, in order to get them out of his way.

Such were the "locust swarms" that lighted on Persia from the Altai steppes; but the touch of the soil transformed them into men, and that intellectual and æsthetic culture which had been its immemorial harvest was uninterrupted. It will in part account for this mystery if we recall in the light of recent researches one element in the Mongol and Turkish experience which has been generally overlooked. During the pre-Islamic period and in Central Asia there had gone on a mighty intermingling of tribes throughout that great region beyond the Oxus whence the Mongol invaders came. The Zoroastrian temples had spread from Bactria over Sogdiana and Khahrezm, and the famous temple in Nubehar was the centre of the fire-worship borne by the Barmecides into the courts of the Abbaside caliphs.¹ The Arabic authors point to astronomical and other scientific attainments in these regions, in very remote times, and to inscriptions which excited the profound interest of the Islamic conquerors. Turkish names are as prevalent as Aryan in the oldest records of the Bactrian and neighboring cities. Even the names of Balkh and Bokhara are Turkish. When to these facts we add Buddhist and Christian influences known to have been at work, the former from the third century before, the latter from the fourth century after, the Christian era, we cannot regard the ground as wholly unprepared for the seeds of Iranian and Western civilization. In fact, we know that the Mahometans had to maintain long and serious struggles against the followers of Buddha and Zoroaster in Bokhara; and it seemed necessary to allow the Koran to be read in Persian instead of Arabic, contrary to the most sacred usage.

¹ Vâmbéry (*Bokhara*, p. 6), according to Masûdi.



Nothing, for instance, could have been more favorable to the extension of civilization among the Mongols than the century and a half of Samanide rule in Central Asia, especially that portion of the period in which Bokhara, Balkh, Samarkand, and all the great seats of antique culture were under the government of Ismaïl, the chief of the dynasty, whose reign is perhaps the one most deserving of honor in the whole Islamic history of Central Asia. He was a prince of pure Iranian blood, descendant of Sāmān, a fire-worshipper, who became Islamic out of gratitude to a neighboring prince. His dynasty was the last great Iranian rule in ancient Iran, and fertile in the highest civilization. Bokhara became the queen of cities, seat of purest Persian culture, as famous for silk manufactures as for works and men of genius. Ismaïl died at the end of the third century of the Hegira (A.D. 907). His reign saw the establishment of the great theological schools of the Sunna, to which flocked all the religious scholarship of Islam, while all neighboring tribes and kingdoms, north and south, paid eminent respect to this real metropolis of Asiatic culture,¹ whose traditions went back to the fire-temple of Zoroaster. The days of the Turkish and Mongol dynasties were the great days of Iranian poetry and thought. This was not the result of conversion to Islam. Most of these princes were unbelievers; they had neither the culture nor the narrowness of the Moslem; or they were like the great Genghis, — at one moment listening with respect to Mussulman teachers, at another flinging the Koran under his horse's feet. The Seljûrk dynasty had scarcely brought the feeble caliphate under its control, when it began a splendid career. Togrul Beg was a legislator whose work endured. The literary laurels of the Ghaznevîdes of the East were rivalled in its courts, and their conquests in its campaigns. Who has not heard of

¹ Vámbéry: *Bokhara*, pp. 29, 30, 65-87.