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THE RELATION  
 OF  
 CHRISTIANITY TO ISLAM,  
 AND THE  
 CORAN IN ITS LAST MECCAN STAGE.

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[EXTRACTED FROM THE CALCUTTA REVIEW, NO. L.]

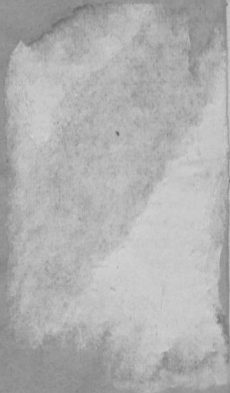


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THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO ISLAM,  
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[FROM THE CALCUTTA REVIEW, NO. L.]

1. *The Coran.*
2. *Versuch einer Darstellung der Christologie des Koran von C. F. Gerock. Hamburg und Gotha, 1839.*

HAVING in a previous paper traced the history of Mahomet to his flight from Mecca, we propose now to examine the portions of the Coran revealed during the last three years of his residence in that city.

It is in the Suras of this period that we first find any detail-mention of Christianity. The connection at that time professed by Mahomet with our holy Faith, never became closer, or materially altered. It will therefore be convenient here to review the entire relation of Christianity to Islam, without confining the enquiry to the Meccan period only of the prophet's life.

Though the Christians and their Prophet are frequently referred to in the Coran by name, yet extended notices of the narrative or doctrines of the Gospel are few, and scattered;—so few, indeed, that it will be possible (and we think it will prove interesting to the Christian reader), to enumerate them all.

The following is the fullest and the earliest account of the Gospel history; and was produced by Mahomet shortly after his journey to Tayif. From its subject the Sura is entitled MARY, (Maryam), and opens thus:—

A commemoration of the mercy of the Lord unto His servant ZACHARIAS;—

When he called upon his Lord with a secret invocation.

He said;—Oh Lord! as for me, my bones are decrepit, and my head white with hoar hair.

And I have never prayed unto Thee, Oh Lord! unheard.

Verily, I fear my kinsmen after me; and my Wife is barren. Wherefore grant unto me from thyself a successor\*.

Who shall be my heir, and an heir of the Family of Jacob, and make him, Oh Lord! well pleasing.

\* **وَيٰ** In the parallel passage in Sura III, 38, the expression used is **ذُرِّيَّة** or offspring. Gerock would construe the passage as the prayer for an heir generally, and not from his own body, of which from the opening of his prayer it seems he had no expectation. He goes so far as to say that the prayer alludes probably to the marriage of Mary, his "ward," or "foster-daughter," (Pfegetochter) whose child he assumes (but seemingly on very insufficient grounds) would be his heir. *Christologie*, p. 20. We very much doubt this explanation, and would

Oh ZACHARIAS! WE bring thee good tidings of a son, whose name shall be JOHN; WE have not made any to be called thereby before.\*  
 He said;—Oh Lord! whence shall there be a son unto me, since my Wife is barren, and I truly have reached the imbecility of old age?  
 He said;—So shall it be. Thus saith thy Lord,—It is easy unto me; for verily I created thee heretofore when thou was nothing.  
 He said;—Lord! make unto me a sign. He said;—This is thy sign; thou shalt not speak unto any for three nights,† though sound in health.  
 And he went forth unto his people from the chamber, and he motioned unto them that they should praise God in the morning and evening.  
 Oh JOHN! Take the Book‡ with power; and WE gave him Wisdom, as a child, And compassion from Us, and Purity; and he was virtuous, and dutiful unto his parents; he was not overbearing nor rebellious.  
 Peace be on him the day he was born, and the day he shall die, and the day he shall be raised to life!  
 And make mention, in the Book,§ of MARY, when she withdrew from her people into an eastern place,  
 And took a curtain to hide herself from them.  
 And WE sent unto her Our SPIRIT, and he appeared unto her a perfect man.  
 She said;—I seek refuge in the Merciful from thee if thou fearest God!  
 He said;—Nay, verily, but I am a Messenger of thy Lord, that I may give unto thee a virtuous son.||  
 She said;—How shall there be to me a son, and a man hath not touched me, and I am not unchaste.  
 He said;—So shall it be. Thus saith thy Lord,—It is easy with me; and We shall make him a sign unto mankind, and a mercy from us, for it is a thing decreed.  
 And she conceived him, and withdrew with him (*in the womb*), unto a distant place.  
 And the pains of labour came upon her by the trunk of a Palm-tree;

take the common sense of ذرية *i. e.*, "offspring to Zacharias himself." The Mussulman commentators do not stand on such difficulties. Abd al Cadir, the Urdu translator of the Coran, holds that Zacharias prayed "in secret," because at his advanced age, to have prayed *openly* for offspring, would have subjected him to ridicule!

\* Evidently based on Luke i. 61.

† Compare Sura III, 41. In the Gospel, Luke i. 20, 64, the dumbness continues until after the birth of John.

‡ That is, the Old Testament. The verse is spoken by God Himself.

§ *I. E.*, the Coran.

|| Gerock, (p. 37,) with much special pleading, endeavours to prove Mahomet's doctrine to have been that Gabriel was the father of Jesus by ordinary generation. The only expression which gives the shadow of a colour to this idea is the one in the text, where Gabriel declares himself sent, "that *I may give thee a virtuous Son.*" But from the parallel passage, (Sura III. 45) it clearly appears that no stress can be laid upon these words. The following is the account there given: "When the Angels said, *Oh MARY! Verily God giveth thee good tidings of the WORD from Him, JESUS, the Messiah, the Son of Mary, &c.* She said:—Whence shall there be a son unto me, and no man hath touched me? He said,—Thus doth God create that which He pleaseth; when He hath decreed a thing, He only saith unto it, *BE*, and it shall be, &c.

Besides, in both passages, after the annunciation by Gabriel, the question of Mary as to how this should be, seeing that "she knew not a man" (Luke i. 34); and the reply of Gabriel that it would be by the Almighty power of God, are conclusive against any such meaning as that started by Gerock; and show that Mahomet simply adopted the Gospel story as it was narrated to him, even to verbal coincidence.

It is farther clear from the phrases repeatedly applied in the Coran to Mary, as "she whose virginity we preserved, and into whom WE breathed of Our spirit," that Mahomet avowed the immaculate and supernatural conception of Jesus. Sura XXI, 91; and LXVI, 13; the former revealed at Mecca, the latter at Medina.

The expression, التي احصنت فرجها, which it is not necessary to translate literally, will satisfy the Arabic scholar, that Gerock's theory is utterly groundless.



She said,—Would that I had died from before this, and been forgotten, out of mind!\*  
 And there cried one from below her,—Grieve not thou! verily thy Lord hath provided beneath thee  
 a fountain:  
 And shake unto thee the root of the Palm-tree: it will drop upon thee ripe dates, ready plucked.  
 Wherefore eat and drink, and be comforted; and if thou seest any man,  
 Say,—Verily I have vowed unto the Merciful a fast, and I will not speak to any man this day.  
 And she came with the child unto her people, carrying him; they said,—Oh MARY! Verily thou  
 hast done a strange thing:  
 Oh Sister of Aaron! thy father was not an evil man, nor was thy mother unchaste.  
 And she pointed to the child. They said,—How shall we speak with him that is an infant in the  
 cradle?†  
 He (*the child*) said;—Verily I am the servant of God; He hath given me the Book, and made  
 me a Prophet,  
 And made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and hath commanded me (*to observe*) Prayer and  
 Alms-giving while I remain alive,  
 And made me dutiful to my mother, and not overbearing nor wretched:—  
 Peace be on me the day I was born, and the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised alive!  
 This is JESUS, the Word of truth,‡ concerning whom they are in doubt.  
 It is not for God to take unto Him a Son:—Glory be to Him!  
 When He hath decreed a matter, He only saith unto it, Be, and it shall be. *Sura XIX.*

There is but one other detailed account of the birth of Jesus  
 in the Coran,|| and that was delivered a few years before the  
 death of Mahomet, on the occasion of an embassy to Medina

\* Gerock, (*ibidem.*) as it appears to us quite gratuitously, turns these words of  
 natural anguish into a proof of his doctrine as to the paternity of Je-us.

† In *Sura III.*, 33, she is likewise called *the daughter of IMRAN*: and it is there-  
 fore concluded by some, that Mahomet confounded Mary (Maryam) with the sister  
 of Moses. The confusion of names is the more suspicious, as it is not favoured by  
 Christian authority of any description,—the traditional names of Mary's parents  
 being Joachim and Anna.

Gerock combats this idea at some length, (p. 24;) showing that Imrân is never  
 named in the Coran as the father of Moses, nor Mary (Maryam) as his sister, and  
 that Mahomet is seen elsewhere to be well aware of the interval between Jesus  
 and Moses. The latter fact cannot, of course, be doubted. Mahomet could never  
 have imagined that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was the sister of Moses and Aaron.  
 But it is still extremely probable that the confusion of this mis-nomenclature  
 originated in the notions of Jewish informants, amongst whom the only notorious  
 Mary, (Maryam) was the daughter of Imrân, and sister of Moses: and they  
 would ordinarily give the name of *Maryam* those accompaniments. Mahomet  
 adopted the phraseology (for his informants were mainly, if not solely, Jews,)  
 without perceiving the anachronism it involved.

‡ The tradition that Jesus spoke in his cradle is referred to in the *Gospel of  
 the Infancy*, ch. I. "Invenimus in libro Josephi Pontificis, qui vixit tempore  
 Christi, Jesum locutum esse, et quidem cum in cunis jaceret, dixisseque matri  
 suae Mariae: Ego, quem peperisti, sum Jesus, filius Dei, verbum, quem admodum  
 annunciavit tibi angelus Gabriel, misitque me pater meus ad salutem mundi."  
 —See Gerock, p. 47.

§ Or, "a true saying, concerning which," &c.: the original, قول الحق  
 is susceptible of both constructions.

|| *Sura III.*, 33—54. This passage contains in much detail the birth of Mary,  
 and Gerock has traced some approximations in it to the Apocryphal Gospels.

1. Mary's parents devoted her while in the womb to the Divine service, *Sura  
 III.*, 35, compared with *Evang.* de nativ. Mariae:—"Voverunt tamen (ejus pa-  
 rentes) si forte Deus donaret eis sobolem, eam se Domini servitio mancipaturos."  
 2. God supplied her supernaturally with daily food, *Cnf. Protev. Jacob*, ch. 8;   
 και ἐλαμβανε τροφήν εκ χειρος ἀγγελου. So, *Hist. Nativ. Mar. et infant. Salv.*;  
 quotidie exa, quam de manu angeli accipiebat, &c. 3. The relatives of Mary  
 cast arrows (lots) for her charge, *Sura III.*, 44; compared with *Ev. Nativ. Mar.*,  
*cap.* 6—8; *Protev. Jacob*, *cap.* 8, 9.

A common traditional source is thus apparent. Gerock, p. 30.



from the Christian tribe of Najrân, the singular particulars of which will be alluded to below.

Of the *Life* of Christ, the particulars are unaccountably meagre, and mingled with fable: the passages, too, in which they occur, belong solely to the prophet's later years at Medina. The object of the Mission of Jesus to the Jews was to confirm their Scriptures, to modify and lighten some of the burdens of their Law, and to recall them to the true service of God.\*

His miracles are thus described:—

On a certain day shall God assemble the Apostles, and Say:—What reply was made unto you? They shall say;— We know not, verily Thou art the Knower of secrets.

Then shall God say;—Oh JESUS, Son of MARY! call to mind My grace unto Thee and upon Thy MOTHER, when I strengthened Thee with the HOLY SPIRIT, that Thou shouldest speak with men in the cradle, and in mature life:—and when I taught Thee the Scripture and Wisdom, and the Law, and the Gospel;—and when Thou formedst of clay like unto the figure of a bird by My permission, and thou blewest thereupon and it became a Bird by my permission:—and Thou didst heal the Blind and the Leper by My permission;—and when thou didst raise the Dead by my permission;† and when I held back the Children of Israel from Thee at the time Thou showedst unto them evident signs, and the Unbelievers among them said,— Verily this is nought but manifest sorcery.

And remember when I spake by inspiration to the Apostles,‡ saying,— Believe on Me, and on My Apostle. They said,—We believe; bear thou witness that we are Moslems §

When the Apostles said,—Oh JESUS, Son of MARY! is Thy Lord able to cause a Table to descend upon us from Heaven? He said,—Fear God; if ye be faithful. They said,—We desire that we may eat therefrom, and that our hearts be set at ease, and that we may know that Thou verily hast spoken unto us the truth, and that we may be witnesses thereof. Then spake JESUS, Son of MARY,—Oh God, our Lord! send down unto us a Table from Heaven, that it may be unto us a Feast-day,|| unto the first of us and unto the last of us, and a sign from Thee; and nourish us, for Thou art the best of Nourishers. And God said,—Verily I will send it down unto you; and whoever after that shall disbelieve amongst you, surely I will torment him with a torment wherewith I shall not torment any other creature.

And when God shall say,—Oh JESUS, Son of MARY! didst Thou speak unto mankind saying,—Take Me and My Mother for two Gods besides THE LORD? He shall say,—Glory be to Thee! it is not for Me to say that which I know to be not the truth. If I had said that, verily thou wouldest have known it. Thou knowest that which is in Me, but I know not that

\* Sura III., 49.

† These miracles are again recapitulated in Sura III., 48, with this addition;—“And I will tell unto you what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses,” *i. e.*, as a proof of his knowledge of the invisible.

‡ *الحواريين* used only of the Apostles of *Jesus*.

§ *I. E.*, those who have surrendered themselves unto God.

|| *عيدا*, An Eed, or religious festival recurring periodically.



which is in thee ; verily, Thou art the Knower of secrets. I spake not unto them aught but what Thou commandedst Me, saying,—Worship God, My Lord and your Lord; and I was a witness unto them whilst I continued amongst them ; and since Thou hast taken me away, Thou hast Thyself been their keeper, and Thou art a Witness over all things. If Thou punish them, verily, they are Thy servants, and if Thou have mercy upon them, verily, Thou art the Glorious, the Wise !

God will answer,—This is a day on which their truthfulness shall profit the truthful. They shall have Gardens with rivulets flowing through them, and remain therein for ever. God is well-pleased with them, and they well-pleased with Him. That shall be a great Felicity !\*

This passage is remarkable as affording in the supernatural table that descended from heaven, the only possible allusion, traceable in the Coran, to the Lord's Supper. The tale is probably founded on some misapprehended tradition regarding "the Table of the Lord."†

To complete the miserable outline, it remains only to be added that Jesus escaped the machinations of the Jews, and was taken up alive to heaven. In a passage aimed at his Jewish enemies of Medina, Mahomet thus upbraids their rebellious fore-fathers :—

— And for their unbelief ; and for their having spoken against Mary a grievous calumny ; and for their saying,—*Verily we have killed the MESSIAH, JESUS, son of MARY, the Apostle of God.* And they killed him not, nor did they crucify him, but he was simulated (in the person of another) unto them. And verily they that are at variance about him, are in doubt concerning him. They have no knowledge regarding him, but follow only a conjecture. And they slew him not certainly. But God raised him up unto Himself ; and God is the Glorious, the Wise ! And there is none of the People of the Book but shall believe in him before his death, and in the day of Judgment he will be a Witness against them.‡

In addressing the idolatrous Meccans, Mahomet appealed to the Ministry, Revelations, and rejection of Jesus, as he was wont to appeal to the history of other prophets, in analogy and support of his own Mission. His adversaries saw their

\* Sura V., 118 to end.

† The singular fancy of the Traditionists and Commentators has created a host of miraculous accompaniments to this table ;—fruit from the trees of Paradise, bread, meats, and fish, which, though broiled, were still alive, and for the convenience of the guests threw off their scales and bones !

The poor, lame, and wretched were invited to the feast, which lasted forty days. The commentators probably confounded the Lord's Supper with the feeding by Jesus of the multitudes.

‡ The purport of this last verse is obscure. It probably implies that the death of Christ will take place before the Judgment Day : and that the Jews will then be forced to believe in him.



opportunity, and replied that if Jesus, who appeared in human form, was worshipped by his followers, there could be nothing absurd, (as he would insist,) in their praying through images,—the representatives of heavenly powers,—to God. They exclaimed with delight that his whole argument thus fell to the ground ;—

And when JESUS, Son of MARY, was proposed as an example, lo ! thy people cried aloud,  
And they said, What ! Are our own gods the best, or he ?

They have proposed this unto thee only as a cause of dispute ;

Yea, they are a contentious people !

Verily he was no other than a servant, upon whom WE were gracious, and WE made him an example unto the Children of Israel :—

[And if WE pleased WE could make from amongst yourselves Angels to succeed you upon Earth : ]  
And verily he shall be for a sign of the last hour. Wherefore doubt not thereof, and follow me ;  
this is the right way.

And let not Satan obstruct you, for he is your manifest Enemy. *Sura XLIII, 56-60.*

This was in fact the only position which, at the present advanced period of his Mission, Mahomet could consistently fall back upon ; and it was ever after carefully maintained. Some terms of veneration, in use among Christians, are indeed applied to Jesus, as “the WORD of God,” and “His SPIRIT which he breathed into Mary.”\* But the Divine Sonship was stedfastly denied : the worship of Jesus by the Christians was placed in the same category as the supposed worship of Ezra by the Jews ;† and, in one place, the doctrine of the Trinity is expressly reprobated. It is a Medina Sura ;—

Ye People of the Book ! Commit not extravagancies in your religion ; and speak not of God aught but the truth. For verily the Messiah, JESUS, Son of MARY, is an Apostle of God, and His WORD which He placed in Mary, and a Spirit from Him. Wherefore believe in God, and in the Apostles ; and say not, there are THREE. Refrain : it will be well for you. Verily the Lord is one God. Glory be to Him ! far be it from Him, that there should be to him a Son. To Him belongeth whatsoever is in the Heavens and in the Earth ; and He is a sufficient Patron. The Messiah disdaineth not to be a Servant of God : neither the Cherubim that draw nigh unto Him. *Sura IV, 169, 170.*

It may well be doubted whether Mahomet ever understood the real doctrines of Christianity. The few passing observations regarding our Faith to be found in the Coran, commence at a period when his system was already, in great part, matured, and seem founded upon information not only deficient but deceptive. The whole of his historical know-

\* So *Sura IV*, 169. “His WORD, which He placed in Mary, and a SPIRIT from Him.” John was to bear testimony to “the WORD from God,” *Sura III*, 39. At the annunciation, the Virgin is thus addressed ;—“Oh Mary ! God giveth thee good tidings of THE WORD from Himself,—the Messiah, Jesus,” &c., *Sura III*, 40. “WE breathed into her of OUR SPIRIT,” *LXVI*, 13 : *XXI*, 91.

† *Sura IX*, 31.



ledge\* (for whatever he knew, it was his practice to embody in the Coran,) is contained in the few extracts already before the reader; and whether regarded in its own meagre and apocryphal outlines, or compared with the ample details of Jewish history, both Scriptural and traditional, shows that the sources were singularly barren and defective. The Sacrament of Baptism is not even alluded to; and if there be an allusion to the Eucharist, we have seen it to be utterly disfigured, and well nigh lost in fable. The great doctrine of Redemption through the death of Christ was apparently unknown (for if it had been known and rejected, it would no doubt, have been combated in the Coran,) and His very crucifixion denied.

We do not find a single ceremony or doctrine of Islam in the smallest degree moulded, or even tinged, by the peculiar tenets of Christianity:—While Judaism has, on the contrary, given its colour to the whole system, and lent to it the shape and type, if not the actual substance of many ordinances.

But although Christianity is thus so remote from Islam as to have had practically no influence in the formation of its creed and ritual, yet, in the *theory* of Mahomet's system, it occupies a place equal, if not superior, to that of Judaism. To understand this we must take a brief review of the development of the system itself.

In his first breathings of pseudo-inspiration, the prophet professed no distinct relation with any previous religion, excepting perhaps with the purer element in the national worship said to have been derived from Abraham, though grievously overlaid with idolatry and superstition. His Mission was simply to recall the Arabs to the service of the true God, and a belief in "the day of reckoning."

In process of time, he gained, through Jewish informants, some acquaintance with the existing Scriptures of the Jews and Christians, and the systems founded thereon. The new Revelation was now announced as concurrent with the previous "Books." The Coran was described mainly as an attes-

\* Of the period subsequent to the ascension, the only trace of acquaintance with the spread of Christianity is in the story of the three Apostles (one of whom is supposed to have been Simon Peter,) who went to Antioch, and of one of their converts there who suffered martyrdom. *Sura XXXVII*, 13—28.

The story of the seven sleepers, who slumbered 309 years, and then arose to find the idolatrous world Christianized, can hardly be classed under this head, though it shows the interest Mahomet was beginning to take in Christians. It will be found, with abundance of childish romance and fiction, in *Sura XVIII*.

Both Suras belong to the late Meccan period.



tation, in the Arabic tongue, and for the people of Mecca and its neighbourhood, of the preceding Scriptures. It was purely auxiliary in its object, and local in its action. From the attacks of the idolaters Mahomet sheltered himself behind the character and authority of those Scriptures, admitted in some measure even by the Meccans. When his work was abused as a "forgery" and an "antiquated tale," the most common and the most effective retort was ;—"Nay, but it is a confirmation of the preceding Revelation, and a warning in simple Arabic to the people of this land." The number, and the solemnity of such asseverations secured the confidence, or at least neutrality, of the Jews and Christians.\*

But the system of Mahomet could not stop at this point. Was he not an Apostle, equally inspired with any of his predecessors? Was he not foretold, as the prophet that should arise, by Moses in the Pentateuch, and in the Gospel by Jesus? If he was, in truth, the last of the Apostles, would not his mouldings of the true faith remain permanent to the end of time? These conclusions were fast ripening in the mind of Mahomet; and their effect was to make the Coran rise superior in authority over both the Old and the New Testament.

Not that it was ever held to be superior *in kind* to either. All three are spoken of as "the word of God," and the belief in them inculcated on pain of hell fire.† But the Coran was the *latest* revelation; and, in so far as it pleased the Almighty to modify his preceding commands, was paramount.

But in this latter phase there are two stages. Mahomet did not at once substitute the Coran in supersession of the previous Scriptures. The Jew was still to follow the Law; he was to believe also in the New Testament and in the mission

\* See Suras XLVI, 8-12, 30; VI, 93, 156; XXXVI, 6; XII, 11. There are many other similar passages.

† The New Testament is spoken of in the Coran under the Sole title of *Ingil* (Evangelium,) Gospel; and it is described as *given by God to Jesus*. Hence Geroeck would conclude that Mahomet did *not intend* the Gospel in common use among Christians, which was revealed after the ascension of Jesus; but some other Gospel (p. 91.)

The question however is not what might be deduced from a systematic and close construction of the expressions of a man grossly ignorant on the subject, but what was his fairly inferrible meaning. And in this view it is evident from the whole tenor of the Coran, that by "the Gospel" Mahomet meant the sacred Scriptures in common and universal use amongst the Christians of his day. His ignorance may have led him to suppose that those Scriptures were revealed to Jesus; or he may perhaps have intended only that the principles and doctrines of the Gospel were revealed by God to Jesus, and by him taught to the Apostles who recorded them. However this may be, the clear fact is in no-wise affected, that Mahomet, by the term Gospel, referred to the received Canon of Scripture as then current among Christians.



of Jesus. The Christian, too, was to hold fast by His Gospel. But both Jew and Christian were to admit equally the Apostleship of Mahomet and the authority of the Coran. The necessity, indeed, of conforming to their respective Scriptures, is urged upon them in the strongest terms. The Jews of Medina are repeatedly summoned "to judge by the Book," that is by the Old Testament; and they are warned against the danger of accepting a part only of God's word, and rejecting a part. The following passages inculcate a similar duty on both Jews and Christians:

SAY, Oh ye people of the Book! ye are not grounded upon anything until ye set up both the Law\* and the Gospel, as well as that which hath been sent down unto you from your Lord.†—*Sura V.*, 68.

And how will they (the Jews of Medina,) make thee their judge, since they have already by them the Towrât, wherein is the command of God, and have not obeyed it. They will surely turn their backs after that; and they are not believers.

Verily we have sent down the Old Testament, wherein are a direction and a light. The Prophets that submitted themselves to God judged thereby the Jews: and the doctors and priests did likewise, in accordance with that portion of the Book of God, which we committed to their charge; and they were witnesses thereof. Wherefore fear not men, but fear me, and sell not the Signs of God for a small price. AND WHOSEVER DOETH NOT JUDGE BY THAT WHICH GOD HATH REVEALED, VERILY THEY ARE THE UNBELIEVERS.‡ And We have written therein for them;—Verily life for life, and eye for eye, and nose for nose, and ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and for wounding retaliation: and he that remitteth the same as alms, it is an atonement for him AND HE WHO JUDGETH NOT BY THAT WHICH GOD HATH REVEALED, THEY ARE THE TRANSGRESSORS.§

And We caused JESUS, the SON of MARY, to follow in their footsteps, attesting the Scripture, viz., the Towrât which preceded him: and We gave him the Gospel wherein is Guidance and Light, attesting the Towrât which precedeth it, a Direction and an Admonition to the pious:—and that the people of the Gospel (Christians,) may judge according to that which God hath revealed therein. AND WHOSEVER DOETH NOT JUDGE ACCORDING TO THAT WHICH GOD HATH REVEALED, they ARE THE WICKED ONES.||

And We have revealed to thee the Book¶ in truth, attesting the Scripture which precedeth it, and a custodian (*or*, witness) thereof. Wherefore judge between them in accordance with what God hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires away from that which hath been given unto thee.

To every one have We given a law and a way. And if God had pleased, He had made you all one people. But (He hath done otherwise) that He might try you in that which He hath severally given unto you. Where-

\* التوراة the Towrât. As used in the Coran, this word sometimes signifies the Pentateuch only, sometimes the entire Scriptures of the Old Testament held by the Jews. According to the context of this and the following passage, the latter meaning is intended.

† *i. e.*, The Coran.

‡ الكافرون || الظالمون ¶ *i. e.*, the Coran.

fore press forward in good works. Unto God shall ye all return, and He will tell you that in which ye disagree.

Judge therefore between them according to that which God hath revealed, and follow not their desires, and beware of them lest they tempt thee aside from a part of that which God hath revealed unto thee.—*Sura V.*, 50—57.

Thus each of the former revelations was not only to be believed in as the Word of God by all the faithful of whatever denomination, but to be directly used and implicitly observed by Jews and Christians respectively (as their guide and director) and by Mahomet himself in judging amongst them. In disputed and doubtful points, the Coran was to be admitted as a conclusive oracle.

In conformity with this expansive system, we find that, at a period long anterior to the Hegira, Mahomet propounded in the Coran the doctrine that a grand Catholic faith pervaded all ages and revelations—the pure features of which had been held in the boldest relief by the patriarch Abraham.\* This primitive religion, varied at each dispensation by accidental rites, comprised as its essential features, belief in the One true God, rejection of all idolatry or worship of Mediators as sharers in the power and glory of the Deity, and the implicit surrender of the will to God. Such surrender is termed “Islam;” and hence Abraham is called “the first of Moslems.” To this original Islam it was now the Mission of Mahomet to recall *the whole of mankind*.

Each successive Revelation had been abused by its votaries, who had quickly turned aside from the pure elements forming the ground work of the dispensation. They had magnified or misinterpreted rites intended to be only collateral. By perverting doctrines, they had turned the gift of Revelation into a Curse. They had fallen into a thousand sects, “each rejoicing in its own opinions,” and fencing itself round with intolerance and intense hatred.

Amidst the contending factions, truth might possibly be discovered by the earnest enquirer, but it would be with difficulty, and uncertain steps. The Jew denounced the Christian, and the Christian the Jew. Some worshipped not only Jesus but His mother: others held both to be mere creatures. From this labyrinth of confusion and error it pleased the Almighty once again to deliver mankind. Mahomet was the Apostle of this grand and final Mission, and his judgment was to be

\* See *Sura XVI.*, 120, 123. Connected with this Catholic faith is the doctrine that a prophet has been sent to every people. *Sura XXVIII.*, 60; *XXII.*, 36; v. 57.



heard unquestioned amid the clash of opposing authorities. This in a Meccan Sura :—

He hath ordained unto you the Faith which He commanded unto Noah, and which We have revealed unto thee, and which We commanded unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying, set up the Faith and fall not to variance.

And they fell not to variance until after the knowledge (of Divine Revelation) had come unto them,\* ~~and~~ of enmity among themselves; and if the word from thy Lord had not gone forth (respiteing them) unto a fixed time, the matter had been decided between them. And verily they that have inherited the Book after them are in a perplexing doubt regarding the same.

Wherefore call them thereto (*i. e.*, unto the Catholic Faith;) and be steadfast as thou hast been commanded, and follow not their desires; and say, I believe in all the Scriptures which God hath revealed; and I am commanded to do justice between you. God is our Lord and your Lord. To us will be reckoned our works, and to you your works.† There is no ground of difference‡ between us and you.—Sura XLII., 12—15.

In this intermediate stage, Salvation was not confined to Islam, but would be obtained by every righteous man, whatever his religion, so as he abjured idolatry.

In the last period of development, the Coran rides triumphant over both the Law and the Gospel, and casts them unheeded into the shade. This, however, arose not from any express declaration, but from the necessary progress of the system. The popular impression which would attribute to Mahomet either the formal cancelment of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, or any imputation against their perfect genuineness and authority, is entirely mistaken. No expressions regarding them ever escaped the lips of Mahomet, but those of the most implicit reverence and highest eulogy.§

\* This is a favourite idea repeated frequently in the Coran as in Sura II., 254. The commentators are inclined to explain it of Islam, viz., that Jews and Christians did not fall away till Mahomet came, and then they denied the prophet they had been expecting. But the idea seems to point rather to the perversion of former Revelations which, instead of leading men to the true faith broke them up into opposing sects.

† That is,—“your works will not be vain and rejected as those of the idolaters, but will be reckoned towards Salvation, equally with those of my own followers.”

‡ حجة “Ground of contention,” “quarrel,” “dispute.”

§ A pamphlet, we believe, is about to be published by the Agra Tract Society, entitled, *The Testimony borne by the Coran to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures*, in which every text having any reference whatever to those Scriptures, will be quoted. It is clearly proved by this collection, that the strongest and most unequivocal testimony is borne by the Coran to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures as current in the time of Mahomet; that the evidence extends equally to their genuineness and authority; and that there is not a hint anywhere to be found as to their cancelment or interpolation.

It was the opposition of the Jews, and the cold suspicion of the Christians, as well as the martial supremacy of Islam over the Hejâz, that imperceptibly, but inevitably, led to the exclusive imposition of the authority of Mahomet and the Coran. The change that dispensed with previous Revelation was made in silence. In the concluding, as in the early days of his mission, Mahomet hardly ever refers to the former Scriptures. His scheme was complete, and rested now on other pillars. The steps by which he had ascended to his final elevation were left far behind and forgotten.

Islam, indeed, had in the later years of the prophet, been rapidly diverging from all sympathy with the Bible. An appeal to it would now have proved embarrassing: and it seems probable that his silence was in some degree intentional. Whatever effect the doctrines of Christianity, if properly understood, might have had on the mind of Mahomet when yet enquiring, and moulding for itself a creed, it is evident that long before the final settlement of Islam at the last Pilgrimage to Mecca, his system had hardened into a form in which it was impossible that any new influences could produce material alteration. Argument was not now tolerated. Mahomet was the Prophet of God. His word was law. Every opposing doctrine must vanish before the Divine command.

The exclusive and growingly intolerant position of Islam is sufficiently manifested by the ban issued against the Jews and Christians, as unfit for the sacred rites and holy precincts of the Meccan temple; and by the Divine command to war against them until, in confession of the superiority of Islam, they should consent to the payment of a tribute.

It may be interesting to illustrate the practical treatment of Christianity by Mahomet, after his acquisition of political power, by describing some of the treaties entered into with Christian tribes. The following relates to the important Christian settlement of Najrân.

“ And the Prophet of the Lord wrote to the Bishop of the Bani Hârith, and the Bishops of Nâjran, and their Priests, and all that followed them, and their Monks,—saying, that they should continue in (the possession and practice of) every thing small and great, as it then stood, in their churches, their prayers, and their monasteries. The pledge of God and of His prophet is given that no Bishop shall be removed from his bishoprick, nor any Monk from his monastery, nor any





‘ Priest from his priesthood ; that their authority and rights shall not be altered ; nor any thing whatever which is customary amongst them ; so long as they shall conduct themselves peaceably and uprightly. They shall not be burdened with oppression, neither shall they oppress.’\*<sup>†</sup>

The narrative of the embassy of this people to Medina is in itself curious, and has a double interest from being referred to in the Coran. It is as follows† :—

A deputation of fourteen chief men from Najrân repaired to Mahomet. Among them was Ackil or Abd al Masîh, of the Bani Kinda, their chief, Abdal Hârith, their Bishop, and his brother Kurz, their guide. On reaching Medina, they entered the mosque, and prayed turning towards the east : and they were clothed in fine raiment lined with silk. Then the prophet called them : but when they came, he turned away and would not speak with them. And Othmân told them it was because of their dress. So they departed that day.

In the morning they came again clothed in their monastic dress, and saluted Mahomet ; and he returned their salutation, and invited them to Islam, and they refused ; and words

\* *Wâckidi*, p. 51½. At p. 56½ there is another treaty with the Christians of Najrân given in greater detail, and probably subsequent to the above. It is to the following effect :—that Mahomet had commanded them to render tribute of all their fruits, ye low, white, and black (ripe and unripe?) and captives; but that he had generously commuted this for 2,000 suits of clothes of the value of an owkeea (ounce of silver) each; 1,000 to be given every Râjab and 1,000 to every Safar. Whatever exceeded or fell short of the value of an owkeea to come into account ; as likewise all armour, horses, camels and other goods taken from them by the Moslems. They were to entertain Mahomet’s messengers (collectors) twenty days or less, but not to detain them beyond a month.

When there was war in Yemen they were to lend Mahomet thirty suits of armour, thirty horse, and thirty camels; and any that were lost were to be made good by Mahomet’s people.

On the part of Mahomet, the guarantee of the Prophet of the Lord was given for their lives, religion, lands and property,—the absent as well as the present,—and for their Churches and places of prayer. No Bishop to be removed from his bishoprick, nor any Monk from his monastery ; nor any minister (واقف) from his ministry (وقفانية). Everything, little and great, to remain as it then was. No claim of blood prior to Islam to be allowed. Claims of right to be decided justly. Whoever took interest was free from Mahomet’s guarantee.

“ Now for all that is written in this paper, there is the protection of God and his Prophet, for ever until the Lord send forth His command (*i. e.* the day of judgment) if ye deal uprightly and conduct your affairs properly, ye shall not be burdened with injury.” Abu Sofian, and five others witnesses.

† The statement is given from Wâckidi. Hishâmi (p. 200), has encompassed his version of it with numerous puerile additions in favour of Islam, such as that their Bishops had with them books inherited from their predecessors and bearing the seal of each successive bishop, in which a notice of Mahomet was found; imaginative conversations between Mahomet and the party to the discomfiture of the latter, &c.



and disputation increased between them. And Mahomet recited to them passages from the Coran, and said:—"If ye deny that which I ~~say~~ say unto you, *come let us curse each other.*" So they went away to consider the matter. And on the morrow Abd al Masih, with two of the chief men came to Mahomet and said;—"We have determined that we shall not curse with thee; wherefore command regarding us whatsoever thou wilt, we will give it; and we will enter into treaty with thee." So he made a treaty with them;\* and they returned to their cities. But in the evening Aekil with a companion went back to Mahomet and professed Islam, so they were received and entertained in the house of Abu Ayûb the Adjutor.†

The incident is thus alluded to in the Coran:—

Verily, the analogy of Jesus is with God, like unto the analogy of Adam. He created him out of the dust, then said unto him *BE*, and he was. This is the truth from thy Lord: wherefore be not thou amongst the doubters.

And whosoever shall dispute with thee therein after that the true knowledge hath come unto thee; say—*Come let us call out (the names) † of our sons and your sons, of our wives and your wives, of ourselves and yourselves; then let us curse one the other, and lay the curse of God upon those that lie!*

Verily this is a true exposition. There is no God but the Lord, and verily God is mighty and wise. And if they turn back, verily God is acquainted with the evil doers.

SAY;—Oh ye people of the Book! come unto a just sentence between us and you, *that we shall not worship aught but God, and that we shall not*

\* The particulars of the treaty are similar to those in the previous note.

† *Wâchidi*, p. 69. The subsequent history of the Najrân Christians is there traced. They continued in possession of their lands and rights under the treaty during the rest of Mahomet's life, and the whole of Abu Bakr's Caliphate. Then they were accused of taking usury, and Omar expelled them from the land, and wrote as follows:—

"The despatch of Omar, the Commander of the Faithful, to the people of Najrân. Whoever of them emigrates is under the guarantee of God. No Moslem shall injure them,—to fulfil that which Mahomet and Abu Bakr wrote unto them.

"Now to whomsoever of the chiefs of Syria and Irâc they may repair, let such chiefs allot them lands, and whatever they cultivate therefrom shall be theirs; it is an exchange for their own lands. None shall injure or maltreat them; Moslems will assist them against oppressors. Their tribute is remitted for two years. They will not be troubled except for evil deeds."

Now some of them alighted in Irâc, and settled in Najrân, near to Cufa. (p. 69.)

That the offence of usury is alleged in justification of this measure, appears to us to disprove the common tradition of the command said to have been given by Mahomet on his death-bed, that the Peninsula was to be swept clear of all other religions but Islam.

‡ Sale has it—*Let us call together* But if the text is rightly referred to the occasion of the Najrân embassy, it can only mean to "call over and curse the names;" because the wives and sons of the embassy were not at hand to summon.



*associate any with Him, nor shall we take any of us the other for Lords besides God.* And if they turn back, then bear witness, saying—Verily—we are the true believers.—*Sura III., 57—63.*

It was surely a strange manner of settling the question which the Arabian Prophet proposed, and we have no reason to be ashamed of the Christian embassy for declining it. Still we cannot but see in the passage the earnestness of Mahomet's belief, and his conviction that a spiritual illumination had been vouchsafed to him, bringing with it knowledge and certainty where to the Christian all was speculation and conjecture.

Another Christian embassy was received from the Bani Taghlib. "It was formed of sixteen men, some Moslems and some Christians. The latter wore crosses of gold. And the prophet made terms with the Christians, stipulating that they should themselves continue in the profession of their religion, but should not baptize their children in the Christian faith."<sup>\*</sup>

These narratives clearly show the terms of sufferance upon which at the last Mahomet permitted Christianity to exist. It was indeed less obnoxious to him than Judaism, because he did not experience from it such persevering and active hostility. Hence the Clergy and Monks are spoken of in terms of comparative praise.† But after all his grand object was entirely to *supersede* Christianity as well as Judaism, and the professors of both were equally subjected to a humiliating tribute.

The stealthy progress by which this end was reached has now

\* *Wâchidi, p. 61½.* The account of the embassy of the Bani Hanîfa is more decidedly unfavourable to Christianity, but its details appear of doubtful authority. Moseilama, the false prophet, was among the number, and there are some anticipations of his sacrilegious claims.

As the embassy were departing, "Mahomet gave them a vessel in which were the leavings of the water with which he had performed his lustrations; and he said—*When you reach your country, break down your church and sprinkle its site with this water, and make in its place a mosque.* And they did so and the vessel remained with Al Ackâs. And the Muedzzin called to prayers. And the monk of the church heard him, and he exclaimed—*it is the word of truth and the call of truth!* and he fled. And that was the last of the time (of Christianity.) *Wâchidi, p. 62.*

The story appears unlikely, because nowhere else is Mahomet represented as exhibiting such antagonism to Christians and their Churches, when they submitted themselves to him.

† See *Sura LVII., 27.* "And we caused Jesus, Son of Mary, to succeed them, and we put into the hearts of those that followed him compassion and mercy; and the monastic state—they framed it for themselves (we did not command it unto them) simply out of a desire to please God," &c.

So *Sura V., 77* "And thou wilt find the most inclined amongst them to be believers, to be those who profess Christianity—This because there are amongst them Clergy and Monks, and they are not proud; and when they hear that which hath been revealed unto the prophet, thou shalt see their eyes flow with tears, because of what they recognize therein of the truth," &c.

been made clear. He first confirmed the Scriptures without qualification or reserve. He next asserted for his own revelation a parallel authority, and by degrees a superseding or dispensing power. And, finally, though he never imputed error to the Scripture itself; or (though ceasing to appeal with former frequency to its evidence,) failed to speak of it with veneration, he rejected all the Christian dogmas, and demanded their rejection by his Christian followers, on the simple evidence of his own inspiration. Assuming perhaps that the former Scriptures could not be at variance with the mind of God as now revealed to himself, he cared not to verify his conclusions by a reference to "the Book." A latent consciousness of the weakness of his position probably rendered him unwilling honestly to face the difficulty. His course was guided here, as it was guided at so many other points, by an inexplicable combination of earnest conviction and uneasy questioning, if not of actual though unperceived self-deception. He was sure as to the object; and the means could not be wrong.

It may be useful to enquire briefly from what probable sources Mahomet obtained his meagre and deceptive information of Christianity.

One of the most remarkable traits in the teaching of the Coran is, that Jesus was not crucified, but one resembling him, and mistaken by the Jews, for Jesus. This fact is alleged, as we have seen,\* not in contradiction of the Christians; but, *in opposition to the Jews*, who gloried in the assertion that Jesus had been put to death by their nation. Hence it would almost seem that Mahomet believed his teaching on this head to be accordant with that of the Christian Church; and that he really was ignorant of the grand doctrine of the Christian faith,—Redemption through the death of Christ.

The singular correspondence between the allusions to the crucifixion in the Coran, and the wild speculations of the early heretics, has led to the conjecture that Mahomet acquired his notions of Christianity from a Gnostic teacher. But Gnosticism had disappeared from Egypt before the sixth century, and there is no reason for supposing that it had at any time gained a footing in Arabia. Besides, there is not the slightest affinity between the supernaturalism of the Gnostics and Docetæ, and the sober rationalism of the Coran. According to the former, the Deity must be removed far from the

\* See the quotation above from Sura IV, 155—158

gross contact of evil matter. The Æon Christ, which alighted upon Jesus at His baptism, must ascend to its native regions before the crucifixion. With Mahomet, on the contrary, Jesus was a mere man,—wonderfully born indeed,—but still an ordinary man, a simple servant of the Almighty as others had been before him\* Yet, although there is no ground for believing that Gnostic doctrines were inculcated on Mahomet, it is possible that some of the strange fancies of those heretics, preserved in Syrian tradition, may have come to the ears of his informants (the chief of whom, even on Christian topics, seem to have been Jews) and been by them adopted as a likely and convenient explanation of the facts which formed the great barrier between Jews and Christians. The Israelite would have less antipathy to the Catholic faith of Islam and the recognition of the mission of Jesus, if allowed to believe, that Christians as well as Jews, had been in error, and that His people had not, in fact, put Jesus, the promised Messiah, to a shameful death: but that, like Enoch and Elijah, he had been received up into heaven. “Christ crucified” was still, as in the days of Paul, “the stumbling block of the Jews.” But here the stumbling block was at once removed: and without any offence to his national pride, the Jew might confess his belief in this emasculated Christianity. It was a compromise that would readily and strongly approve itself to a Jewish mind already unsettled by the prophetic claims of Mahomet.

By others it has been attempted to trace the Christian stories of the Coran to certain apocryphal Gospels supposed to have been within the reach of Mahomet. But though some few of the details coincide with these spurious writings, the great body of the facts in no wise does so.† Whereas, had there been a ready access to such books, we cannot doubt that Mahomet would, as in the case of Jewish history and legend, have borrowed largely from them.

Gerock, after weighing every consideration, concludes that Mahomet acquired his knowledge from no written source, but from Christian tradition *current among the people of Arabia*:—

Am gerathensten möchte es daher wohl seyn, die Berichte

\* This subject has been well discussed by Gerock, who shows the utter incongruity of Islam with Gnosticism, (p. 11.) Der positive besonnene character des Islam ist den Gnostischen speculationen gänzlich zuwider.” (p. 12.)

† See Gerock, p. 8. The “Gospel of Barnabas” is of course excepted, because it is the modern work of a Christian Apostate to Islam. “Aber es ist gewiss, dass dies Evangelium des Werk eines Betrügers ist, der erst lange nach Mohammed, vielleicht in Italien selbst, lebte, und sich bemühte, den Erzählungen des Koran und der Mohammedanischen Schriftsteller durch eine angeblich Christliche Unterlage mehr Ansehen und Glaubwürdigkeit zu verschaffen.” (p. 9.)



des Koran über den stifter der Christlichen Religion aus der Tradition zu erklären. Es scheint nämlich, das Mohammed seine Berichte über Christus und einige andere, unbedeutende Erzählungen aus der Christengeschichte weder aus schriftlichen quellen, als kanonischen oder apokryphischen evangelien, noch aus bestimmten mündlichen mittheilungen, sondern vornämlich aus einer in seinem Vaterlande umhergetragenen Volkstradition schöpfte —Page 13.

As the sole source of information this appears to us insufficient. There is no ground for believing that either at Mecca or Medina there existed elements of Christian tradition from which could have been framed a narrative agreeing, as that of the Coran does, in many points, and even in several of its expressions, with the Gospels genuine and apocryphal, while in others it follows or outstrips the popular legend.

But tradition quite sufficient for this end survived in the southern confines of Syria, and no doubt reached Mahomet through both a Jewish and a Christian medium. The general outline of the Christian story in the Coran, having a few salient points in accordance with the Gospel, and the rest filled up with wild marvels, is just such as we might expect an enquiring Jew to learn from the traditions of the lower classes in Judea. The Christian slaves of Mecca, too, had generally been ravished from their homes in boyhood, and would remember little more than a few Scripture stories, with perhaps some fragments of the creed. Either the Jew or the Christian may also have heard the opening of the Gospel of Luke, and communicated to Mahomet the outline of the births of John and Jesus, which he transferred to the Coran. It is also *possible* that some one may have repeated to Mahomet from memory, or read from a manuscript, those verses of the Gospel;—but this is a mere conjecture, and in itself improbable.\*

Mahomet's confused notions of the Trinity and of the Holy Ghost, seem most naturally to have been received through a Jewish informant, himself imperfectly acquainted with the subject.

It is not very apparent from the few indistinct notices in the Coran what Mahomet believed the Christian doctrine of the Trinity to be. In a passage above quoted, Christians are reprobated for "taking Jesus and his Mother for two Gods

\* It is unlikely that any Arabic translation of the Scriptures, or any part of them, was ever within Mahomet's reach, notwithstanding the traditions regarding Waraca. See *Life of Mahomet from his Youth to his Fortieth Year*, p. 26. If there was such a translation it must have been most imperfect and fragmentary.





besides the Lord."\* It is hence concluded that the Trinity of the Coran was composed of the Father, Mary, and Jesus. Such may be the case, but it is not certain. Zealous Protestants sometimes use language resembling the verse just quoted, without imputing to their adversaries any error in their views of the Trinity. The reverence and service for Mary had long been carried to the pitch nearly of Divine worship, and the "orthodox" party had hotly persecuted those who would not accord to her the title of "the Mother of God."† Mahomet might therefore censure the Christians for "taking Jesus and his mother for two Gods," without adverting to the Trinity.

On the other hand, the only passage in which the Trinity is specifically mentioned,‡ makes no allusion to the divinity of the Spirit: nor are the expressions "the Spirit," and "the Holy Spirit," though occurring in numerous texts throughout the Coran, ever used as if in the errors of Christianity they signified a Person in the Trinity. The phrase, as we have seen in a former paper,§ commonly meant Gabriel, the messenger of God's revelations to Mahomet. And it is possible that a confusion, in the prophet's mind, of the Holy Ghost with Gabriel, may have arisen from the annunciation of the Saviour by the latter, while he is also stated to have been conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost.|| The term is also repeatedly used in a more general sense as signifying *the Spirit of inspiration*.¶ It was the divine "Spirit" breathed into the clay, which gave life to Adam,\*\* and Jesus, who like Adam, had no earthly father, is also "a Spirit from God" breathed into Mary.†† When it is said that God "*strengthened Jesus with the Holy Spirit*,"‡‡ we may perhaps trace the use of current Christian speech, not inconsistent with Jewish ideas.§§

The assurance with which Mahomet appeals to Jews and Christians as both professing in their Scriptures, the promise

\* Sura IV., 169.

† Worship had been paid even to images of the Virgin and of Jesus from the 4th century. In the 6th century Gregory vainly endeavoured to prohibit the worship, while he encouraged the use of such images. — See Waddington's *History of the Church*, Vol. I., p. 295.

‡ Sura V., 109.

§ *Extension of Islam*, p. 23.

|| Luke i. 35.

¶ Sura XVI., 2; XL, 16; XLII., 52.

\*\* Sura XV., 29

†† Sura XXI., 91; LXVI., 13; IV., 169.

‡‡ Sura II., 87, 254; V., 119. So LVIII., 22. See also other passages quoted in the note at page 23 of the *Extension of Islam*.

§§ Compare Psalm LI., 12; "Uphold me with thy free Spirit." Gerock, though not alluding to the same expression, comes to a similar conclusion: "Das der heilige Geist der Christen dem Mohammed hier dunkel vorsich webte, ist einleuchtend besonders wenn wir bedenken, wir derselbe in dem Besuche bei Maria mit Gabriel in eine Person verschmilzt." (p. 79.)

of a prophet to come; whom, if they only put aside their prejudices, they would recognize in Mahomet, "as they recognized their own sons," is very singular, and must have been supported by ignorant or designing men of both religions. It would seem that Mahomet seized upon two kinds of expectation of the most different and indeed incompatible character, and adroitly combined them into a cumulative proof of his own Mission. The Jewish anticipation of a Messiah was fused by Mahomet, together with the utterly discordant anticipation by the Christians of the second Advent of Christ, into one irrefragable argument of a coming prophet, expected both by Jews and Christians, and foretold in all the Scriptures.

That the promise of the Paraclete was capable of perversion, we see in the heresy of Montanus, which made much progress at the close of the second century. It would seem that a garbled version of the same promise was communicated to Mahomet, and thus employed by him:—

And call to mind when JESUS, Son of MARY said;—Oh Children of Israel! Verily, I am an Apostle of God unto you, attesting the Towrát revealed before me, and giving good tidings of a prophet that shall come after me, whose name is AHMAD.\*

The prophecy of Moses to the Israelites:—"God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me,"† may plausibly enough have been adduced by a perverted Jew in favour of the Arabian Prophet.

That he was the Prophet promised to both people, lay at the root of the Catholic system so strongly inculcated by Mahomet in his middle stage; and there is no reason to doubt that the assumption was implicitly believed by himself.

From this review it appears to be highly probable, that Mahomet gained his chief knowledge of Christianity by the same Jewish medium, through which, at an earlier period, his more copious information of Jewish history reached him. His Meccan adversaries did not conceal their strong suspicion that the prompting from which the Scriptural or legendary tales proceeded, was not solely that of a supernatural inspiration. They openly imputed the aid of strangers:—

From whence shall there be an admonition for them; for, verily, there hath come unto them an evident Apostle:  
Then they turn from him and say,—*One taught by others, a madman!*‡

\* Sura I XI. 6. This is another form of the root *Muhammed*, signifying like it, "the Praised." See John xvi., 7, where *παρακλητος* may have been rendered *περικλυτος*.

† *Deut.* xviii., 15.

‡ *Sura XLIV.*, 14.



And the unbelievers say ; *Verily, this is a Fraud which he hath fabricated ; and other people have assisted him therein.* But they say that which is unjust and false.

They say ; *They are Fables of the Ancients which he hath had written down ; which are dictated unto him Morning and Evening.\**

Say :—*He hath revealed it who knoweth that which is hidden in Heaven and in Earth. He is forgiving and merciful.†*

\* \* \* \* \*

And verily WE know that they say,—*surely a certain man teacheth him.* The tongue of him whom they hint at is foreign, but this is in the tongue of simple Arabic ‡

Whatever the rough material, its passage through the alembic of "simple Arabic" converted it at once into a gem of unearthly water. The recitations of a credulous and ill-informed Jew, re-appeared as the inspirations of the Almighty, dictated by the noblest of his heavenly messengers. The wild legend and the garbled Scripture story of yesterday, come forth to-morrow as a portion of the divine and eternal Coran !

And, however strange it may appear, the heavenly origin of his revelations, obtained though they were from such a fallible and imperfect source, was sincerely believed by Mahomet himself. It would be against the analogy of his whole life, to suppose that there was here a *conscious* fraud. Occasional doubts and misgivings, especially when he first submitted to Jewish prompting, there may have been, but a process similar to that by which he first assured himself of his own inspiration, would quickly banish them.

But the ignorance which covered so strange a deception in his early prophetic life, cannot be pleaded for his later years. The means of reaching a truer knowledge lay plentifully now within his reach. But they were not heeded, or rather were absolutely rejected, because a position had been taken up from which he could not with credit or consistency recede. Was not his own inspiration as sure as the recorded revelations of preceding prophets ; was it not far more authoritative than the uncertain doctrines deduced from them by their erring adherents ? Ignorance thus became wilful. Light was at hand ; but Mahomet preferred darkness. He chose to walk "in the glimmerings of his own fire, and in the sparks which he had kindled."

The connexion of Christianity with Islam has led us to

\* Abdool Cädir translates, "*which are written out beside him morning and evening*;" and thinks it necessary to add the following explanatory note :— "At first the times of prayer were appointed for the morning and evening. The Moslems used at those time to gather about the prophet. Whatever new passages of the Coran had descended they used to write down with the object of remembering them. The unbelievers thus misrepresented them."

† *Sura XXV*, 5, 6.

‡ *Sura XVI*, 103.



follow the system of Mahomet to its full development at Medina. But our review of his life has reached only to his flight from Mecca ; and before dismissing that portion of his career, it is proper to enquire at this point what his general teaching was, and what had been its effects.

The Coran still continues\* to be made up, as before, of arguments in refutation of idolatry and the idle objections of the Meccan people ; of the proofs of God's Omnipotence, Omniscience and Unity ; of the vivid picturings of the Judgment, Heaven, and Hell ; and of legendary and Scriptural stories. The great verities of a minute and Over-ruling Providence, and of a final Retribution, are sometimes illustrated by passages of exquisite imagery and living poetry. The bold impersonation of THUNDER, in the following quotation (which may be taken as a sample of the better portions of this period,) has given its name to the Sura from which it is taken ;—

Verily God changeth not His dealing with a People, until they change that which is in their Souls. And when God willetth Evil unto a People, there is none that can turn it away, nor have they any Protector beside them.

It is He that showeth you the Lightning to inspire Fear and Hope ; and raised the heavy clouds.

The THUNDER doth celebrate His praise, and the Angels also, from awe of Him. And He sendeth forth His Bolts and shivereth therewith whom He pleaseth, while they are wrangling about God : for He is terrible in might!

He only is rightly invoked. And those whom they invoke beside Him answer them not at all, otherwise than as one stretching forth both hands unto the Water that it may reach his mouth, and it reacheth it not. So is the invocation of the unbelievers founded only in error.

And to God boweth down in worship whatsoever is in the Heavens, and in the Earth voluntarily and by force, and their Shadows likewise in the morning and in the evening.†

Say ;—Who is the Lord of the Heavens and of the Earth : Say—GOD. Say : Wherefore, then, do ye take besides Him guardians who have no power to do their own selves a benefit nor an injury. Say :—What ! Are the Blind and the Seeing equal ? What ! is the Darkness equal with the

\* The Suras of this period (*i. e.*, from the 10th year of the Mission to the Hejira) may be approximately classed as follows : 63 (in chronological order) LI. ; 64, XLVI. ; 65, LXXII. ; 66, XXXV. ; 67, XXXVI. ; 68, XIX. ; 69, XVIII. ; 70, XXVII. ; 71, XLII. ; 72, XL. ; 73, XXXVIII. ; 74, XXV. ; 75, XX. ; 76, XLIII. ; 77, XII. ; 78, XI. ; 79, X. ; 80, XIV. ; 81, VI. ; 82, LXIV. ; 83, XXVIII. ; 84, XXIII. ; 85, XXII. ; 86, XXI. ; 87, XVII. ; 88, XVI. ; 89, XIII. ; 90, XXIX. ; 91, VII. The Suras at the close of this list become some of them very long, and include portions given forth at Medina, and added to them there. One striking feature of the closing Meccan Suras is the frequent allusion to the approaching emigration of himself and his followers.

† This a conceit Mahomet is fond of : the shadows perform obeisance to God, being long and prostrate in the morning, rising during the day, and again elongating in prostration in the evening.



Light? Or do they give partners unto God that have created like unto His creation so that the creation (of both) appear alike in their eyes? Say:—God is the creator of all things. He is THE ONE; the AVENGER!

He bringeth down from on high the Rain, and the Valleys flow, each according to its measures: and the Flood beareth the swelling Froth. And from that which men melt in the furnace, to make ornaments or vessels, ariseth a Scum, the like thereof. Thus doth God compare the Truth with Falsehood. As for the Scum it passeth away like Froth: but that which benefiteth mankind remaineth on the Earth.

Thus doth God put forth Similitudes.\*

The positive precepts of this period are still very limited. The five times of prayer, it is said, were imposed by God on the prophet's ascent to heaven, one or two years before the Hegira.† All kinds of flesh were permitted for food, *if killed in the name of the Lord*,‡ but the blood, and that which dieth of itself, and the flesh of swine, were strictly prohibited.§

While a few superstitions, by which the meat of animals was under certain circumstances held by the Arabs to be unlawful,|| were denounced, and the practice of compassing the holy temple naked was proscribed as the device of Satan,¶ the rites of Meccan pilgrimage were maintained: and enjoined as of divine command and propitious to true piety. It is probable that the Jews strongly objected to this new feature of the Reformed Faith, and we accordingly find a laboured defence of

\* Sura XIII., 13—19.

† As yet, however, the five periods are nowhere distinctly commanded in the Coran. The nearest approach to such command is the following:—"Wherefore patiently bear with what they say, and celebrate the praise of thy Lord before the rising of the Sun, and before its setting: and praise Him sometime in the night and in the extremities of the day, that thou mayest be pleasing unto him." Sura XX., 129. By the *extremities of the day*, is naturally understood the fall of day, and day-break. But some—to reconcile the passage with the prescribed hours,—interpret it as signifying *mid-day*, at which as it were the day is divided into two parts.

‡ The same motives led to this condition as to the Apostolical admonition to abstain from "pollutions of Idols," and "meats offered to Idols." (Acts XV., 20, 29.) The prohibition seems to point to the heathenish practice of the Meccans slaying their animals as a sacrifice to, or in the name of their Deities. Suras XVI., 115; VI., 118, 121, 145.

§ References as above. The influence of Jewish habit and precept is here manifest. As to the references in the *later* Suras, it is to be remembered, that they were composed close upon the Hegira, and the habit now began of throwing into a former Sura passages connected with its subject. It is possible therefore that some of what we quote as Meccan, may have been in reality early Medina verses given forth after the emigration.

|| See Sura V., 112, where the names of the forbidden animals are quoted. VI., 136, 144; X., 59. See also the note at page 24 of the *Fore-fathers of Mahomet*.

¶ Sura VII., 27-23. This was connected with the Homs: see *Fore-fathers of Mahomet*, page 20.

the innovation which it may be interesting to place before the reader.

And call to remembrance when WE gave to Abraham the place of the Temple (at Mecca); saying, join not in worship anything with me, and purify my house for them that compass it, and for them that stand up and bow down to pray.

And proclaim unto mankind a pilgrimage, that they may come unto thee on foot, upon every lean camel,\* flocking from every distant road:—that they may testify to the benefits they have received, and commemorate the name of God on the appointed days upon the brute beasts which WE have given them for a provision:—Wherefore eat thereof and feed the wretched and the poor. Then let them stop the neglect of their persons, and fulfil their vows, and compass the ancient house.

This do. And he that honoureth the sacred ordinances of God† it is well for him with his Lord. The flesh of cattle is lawful unto you excepting that which hath been read unto you. Wherefore abstain from the pollutions of idols, and abstain from the false speech: following the Catholic faith unto God, not associating any with Him; for he that associateth any with God is like that which falleth from the Heavens, and the birds snatch it away, and the wind bloweth it into a distant place.

Hearken to this: whosoever honoureth the Sacrifices of God,‡ verily they proceed from purity of heart. From them (the victims) ye derive benefits until the appointed time: then they are brought for sacrifice unto the ancient House.

And unto every people have WE appointed rites, that they may commemorate the name of God over the brute beasts He hath provided for them. And your God is one God; wherefore submit yourself unto Him and bear good tidings unto the Humble:—

Those whose hearts, when God is mentioned, tremble thereat:—and unto those that patiently bear what befalleth them and observe prayer, and spend in alms of that WE have provided them with.

And the victims§ have WE made unto you as ordinances|| of God. From them ye receive benefit. Commemorate therefore the name of God over them as they stand disposed in a line, and when they fall slain upon their sides, eat thereof, and give unto the Poor both him that is silent and him that beggeth. Thus have WE given thee dominion over them that ye may be thankful.

Their Flesh is not accepted of God, nor yet their Blood: but your Piety is accepted of Him.

Few and simple as the positive precepts of Mahomet up to this time were, they had wrought a marvellous and a mighty work. Never since the days when primitive Christianity startled the world from its sleep and waged moral strife with

\* Lean and famished from the long journey.

† شعائر الله *rites or offerings*; but from what follows, *victims* would seem to be here meant.

‡ The word signifies *camels* offered in sacrifice البدن

§ Or *signs, symbols*. It is the same word as before. شعائر

|| Sura XXII., 27—40.



Heathenism, had men seen the like arousing of spiritual life,—the like faith that suffered sacrifice and took joyfully the spoiling of goods for conscience sake.

From time beyond memory, Mecca, and the whole Peninsula had been steeped in spiritual torpor. The slight and transient influences of Judaism, Christianity, or Philosophy, upon the Arab mind, had been but as the ruffling here and there of the surface of a quiet lake;—all still and motionless below. The people were sunk in superstition, cruelty, and vice. It was a common practice for the eldest son to marry his father's widows inherited with the rest of the estate.\* Pride and poverty had introduced among them, as among the Hindus, the crime of female infanticide.† Their religion consisted in gross idolatry, and their faith was rather the dark superstitious dread of unseen beings, whose good will they sought to propitiate and their displeasure to avert, than the belief in a God of Providence. The life to come, and retribution of good and evil, were as motives of action, practically unknown.

Thirteen years before the Hegira, Mecca lay lifeless in this debased state. What a change had those thirteen years now produced! A band of several hundred persons had rejected idolatry, adopted the worship of the one great God, and surrendered themselves implicitly to the guidance of what they believed a revelation from Him;—praying to God with frequency and fervency, looking for pardon through His mercy, and striving after good works, alms-giving, chastity and justice. They now lived under a constant sense of the Almighty Power of God, and of His providential care over the minutest of their concerns. In all the gifts of nature, in every relation of life, at each turn of their affairs, individual or public, they saw His hand. And, above all, the new spiritual existence in which they joyed and gloried, was regarded as the mark of His especial grace: while the unbelief of their blinded fellow-citizens was the hardening stamp of His predestined reprobation. Mahomet was the minister of life to them:—the source under God of their new-born hopes; and to him they yielded a fitting and implicit submission.

In the short period, Mecca had, from this wonderful move-

\* See an instance of this practice ("such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles," I Cor. v. i.) in the 2nd note, page 27, of the *Life of Mahomet to his Fortieth Year*.

† This custom Mahomet stringently proscribed, Sura VI., 137; 140; 151, and it disappeared with the progress of Islam.



ment, been torn into two factions, which, unmindful of the old land-marks of tribe and family, were arrayed in deadly opposition one against the other. The believers bore persecution with a patient and a tolerant spirit. And, though it was their wisdom so to do, the credit of a magnanimous forbearance may be freely accorded to them. One hundred men and women, rather than abjure their precious faith, had abandoned their homes, and sought refuge, till the storm should be overpast, in Abyssinian exile. And now, again, even a larger number, with the prophet himself, emigrated from their fondly loved city, with its sacred temple, to them the holiest spot on earth, and fled to Medina. There the same wonder-working charm had, within two or three years, prepared for them a brotherhood ready to defend the prophet and his followers with their blood. Jewish truth had long sounded in the ears of the men of Medina, but it was not till they heard the spirit-stirring strains of the Arabian prophet, that they too awoke from their slumber, and sprang suddenly into a new and earnest life.

We shall leave Mahomet to describe his people of this period in his own words :—

The servants of the Merciful are they that walk upon the earth softly, and when the ignorant speak unto them, they reply *Peace!*

They that spend the night worshipping their Lord, prostrate and standing ;—

And that say,— Oh, our Lord! Turn away from us the torment of Hell: verily, from the torment thereof there is no release. Surely it is an evil abode and resting-place!

Those that when they spend are neither profuse nor niggardly, but take a middle course ;—

Those that invoke not with God any other God; and slay not a soul that God hath forbidden, otherwise than by right; and commit not Fornication, For he who doeth that is involved in sin,—

His torment shall be doubled unto him in the day of judgment: therein ignominiously shall he remain for ever,

Excepting him that shall repent and believe and perform righteous works; as for them God shall change their evil things into good things; and God is forgiving and merciful.

And whoever repenteth and doeth good works, verily, he turneth unto God with a true repentance.—

They who bear not witness to that which is false; and when they pass by vain sport, they pass by with dignity :—

They who, when admonished by the revelations of the Lord, fall not thereupon down as if deaf and blind ;—

That say, Oh, our Lord. Grant us of our wives and children such as shall be a comfort unto us, and make us examples unto the pious!

These shall be rewarded with lofty mansions (in Paradise,) for that they persevered, and shall be accosted therein with welcome and salutation :

For ever therein :—a fair Abode and Resting-place!



When we speak, however, with praise of the virtues of the early Mussulmans, it is only in comparison with the state and habits of their heathen countrymen. Neither their tenets nor their practice will in any respect bear competition with Christian, or even with Jewish, morality. This is plentifully illustrated by the practical working of the system, when shortly after, at Medina, it had a free field for natural development.

For instance, we call the Moslems chaste because they abstained from indiscriminate profligacy, and kept carefully within the bounds prescribed as licit by their prophet. But those bounds, besides the utmost freedom of divorce and change of *wives*, admitted an illimitable license of cohabitation with "all that the right hand of the believer might possess," or in other words, with any possible number of damsels he might choose to purchase, to receive in gift, or to ravish in war.

The facility of divorce at this period, (when even the easy check of three intervening months before the re-marriage of the divorced female was not imposed,) may be illustrated by the following incident. Abd al Rahmân, son of Awf, on his first reaching Medina, was lodged by Sâd, son of Rabî, a Medina convert to whom Mahomet had united him in brotherhood.\* As they sat at meat Sâd thus addressed his guest:—"My brother! I have abundance of wealth: I will divide with thee a portion thereof. And behold my two wives! Choose which of them thou likest best, and I will divorce her that thou mayest take her to thyself to wife." And Abd al Rahmân replied;—"The Lord bless thee my brother in thy family and in thy property!" So he married one of the wives of Sâd.†

At the opening scene of the prophetic life of Mahomet, we ventured to fetch an illustration of his position from the

\* This refers to the arrangement made by Mahomet on his first reaching Medina according to which each Emigrant was specially joined in close brotherhood with one of the Medina converts.

† After this brotherly mark of affection, Abd al Rahmân said, "My brother take me on the morrow to the market place." So they went and Abd al Rahmân traded, and returned with a bag of butter and cheese which he had made by the traffic. And Mahomet met him in one of the streets of Medina with the saffron clothes of nuptial attire upon him, and he said, "How is this?" And Abd al Rahmân replied, "I have married me a wife from amongst the Adjutors." "For what dower?" "For a piece of gold of the size of a date stone." "And why" replied Mahomet, "~~not~~ with a goat?" *Wakidi*, pp. 202, 203, 282.

The above is intended by the traditionists to illustrate the poverty of Abd al



temptation of our Saviour. The parallel between the founders of Christianity and Islam might be continued to the Flight of Mahomet, but there it must stop; for it is the only point at all corresponding with the close of Christ's ministry. Beyond that term, in the life of Rule, of Rapine, and Indulgence, led by Mahomet at Medina, there is absolutely no feature whatever common with the course of Jesus.

During the periods above indicated as possible for comparison, persecution and rejection were the fate of both. But the thirteen years' ministry of Mahomet had brought about a far greater change to the external eye, than the whole of Christ. The apostles fled at the first sound of danger; and however deep the inner work may have been in the 500 by whom our Lord was seen, it had produced as yet but <sup>little</sup> outward action. There was amongst them no spontaneous quitting of their homes, nor emigration by hundreds, such as characterized the early Moslems; nor any rapturous resolution by the converts of a foreign city to defend the prophet with their blood.

This is partly owing to the different state of the two people among whom respectively Jesus and Mahomet ministered:— Jesus amongst Jews, whose law he came not to destroy but to fulfil, and in whose *outer* life therefore there was no marked change to be effected:—Mahomet amongst a nation of idolators sunk in darkness and vice, whose whole system must be overturned, and from the midst of whom converts, to exhibit any consistency whatever, must go forth with a bold and distinctive separation.

There was, too, a material difference of aim and teaching.

Rahmân when he reached Medina as contrasted with the vast wealth subsequently amassed by him. "At his death he left gold in such quantities, that it was cut with hatchets till the people's hands bled." He had 1,000 camels, 3,000 sheep and 100 horses. He had issue by *sixteen* wives, beside children of concubines. One of the former was Tamadhir, the daughter of a Christian Chieftain whom he married at Mahomet's bidding, and who bore to him Abdallah (Abu Salma) the famous traditionist. As one of his four widows, she inherited 1,000,000 dinars.

Abd al Rahmân was penurious. Mahomet said to him "Oh son of Awf! Verily thou art amongst the rich, and thou shalt not enter Paradise but with great difficulty. Lend therefore to thy Lord, so as He may loosen thy step." And he departed by Mahomet's advice to give away all his property. But the prophet sent for him again, and told him by Gabriel's desire that it would suffice if he used hospitality and gave alms.

It will be a curious and useful task to trace the multitude of wives and concubines, and the vast wealth of the chief leaders of early Islam, as illustrating its gross and earthly spirit even in its <sup>best</sup> day and at the fountain head.



The spiritual system of Jesus was essentially incompatible with worldly means and motives. His people, *as such*, though in the world, were not "of the world." The idea of his followers making him a king, or the citizens of another country being invited to receive him and support his cause by arms, would have been at direct variance with the whole spirit and principles of Jesus. And it was this spirituality of aim and agency, to the entire exclusion of earthly aids, that chiefly tended to produce the great difference in apparent progress.

The reason for Mahomet's toleration of his Meccan opponents was present weakness only. While patience *for awhile* is inculcated by God on Mahomet and his followers, the future breathes all of revenge and victory. It is true that in the Coran, the instruments are yet hidden,—known to God alone. But not the less are the enemies of the prophet to be overthrown and perish; and that with a *material* destruction, like the flood and flames of Sodom and Gomorrha. Human agency was moreover diligently sought after. The tribes as they came up to the yearly solemnities of Mecca, are one by one canvassed and exhorted to rally round "the cause of God and His prophet;" the chiefs of Tayif are tempted by the prospect of sovereignty over the rival city and temple; and at last, when all nearer aid is despaired of, the converts of Medina are bound by an oath of fealty to defend the prophet with the same courage and weapons as their wives and children.

It might easily be foreseen from the first rise of opposition, (and the prospect had its full effect upon the Arab,) that arms and warfare, with all their attractive accompaniments of revenge and predatory raids, would decide the struggle.

It was, we believe, with the full anticipation of such a struggle (for he was not long at Medina before taking the initiative,) that Mahomet, alarmed by the council of the Coreish, hid himself in the cave, and fled from Mecca. Compare with this, if indeed there be any common ground of comparison, the peaceful and sublime serenity with which Jesus calmly awaited the diabolical machinations of the Jewish council. Contrast further with the sword about to be unsheathed by Mahomet, the grand principle for the propagation of his faith pronounced by Jesus before his heathen judge:—"My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence."

Having now sketched the Life of Mahomet to the point of his quitting Mecca, it is not our intention to prosecute the subject further for the present.

The opportunity is appropriate of apologizing to the readers of this Review for the unwonted course of publishing in its pages, and in a disjointed form unfavourable to the subject itself,—the results of *original* research. For the abundant forbearance experienced, notwithstanding the unusual, and, for the general reader, often uninteresting, character of some of the articles, the writer feels bound to express his acknowledgments. He indulges a hope that these articles may perhaps tend in some degree to clear away the obscurity and misapprehension which envelope the infant days of a religion, second in importance to Christianity alone.

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