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CHRISTIANITY AND
MUHAMMADANISM

BY THE
Rev. W. R. W. GARDNER, M.A.

THE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY
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P R E F A C E

THE following pages do not profess to be a comparison of Christianity and Muhammadanism. Their object is simply to appeal to thoughtful Muhammadans to recognize that the historical issue between these two religious systems demands that they study the Christian writings to which the Qur'án bears witness as being the revelation of God.

150



The following paper is not intended to be a complete history of the development of the system of the German language in the Germanic languages. It is only a sketch of the development of the Germanic languages in the Germanic languages. The Germanic languages are divided into three groups: the North Germanic languages, the West Germanic languages, and the South Germanic languages. The North Germanic languages are the Old Norse, Old Icelandic, Old Norwegian, Old Swedish, and Old Danish. The West Germanic languages are the Old English, Old Dutch, Old Frisian, Old Saxon, and Old Low German. The South Germanic languages are the Old Gothic, Old Lombard, Old Venetian, and Old Dalmatian. The Germanic languages are characterized by a strong inflectional system, a strong tendency to form compounds, and a strong tendency to form new words by derivation.



CHRISTIANITY AND MUHAMMADANISM

CHRISTIANITY and Muhammadanism both claim to be revelations from God; each bases its teaching concerning faith and practice on a book which it regards as the word of God, and in this teaching there is much in common. They both maintain that there is but one God, Maker of heaven and earth; they both hold that the most important consideration for man in this life is his relation to this God; and they both profess to look forward to the attainment of that vision of God which can alone satisfy the human soul—that nearness and likeness to Him which is heaven, and which both hold will be attained only hereafter.

Yet, while they have so much in common, they have also so much in contrast—we might better say in contradiction—that there is no possibility of reconciling the two. There are at the present day those who regard religion as a matter very largely of purely human speculation, and who, seeing that there is much in Christianity and

Muhammadanism that is matter of common belief and that the professed objects of both are very similar, argue that it is a matter of small moment which of these religions a man accepts and follows, if only he be truly desirous to live an honest moral life and show forth in his conduct towards others the spirit of tolerance and loving kindness. Such a position it is impossible to understand, except on the supposition that its advocates have given up the belief that there is any such thing as a revealed religion. This is certainly not a position which can satisfy a true Muhammadan any more than it can satisfy a true Christian. For both hold as a vital principle that religion is not the outcome of human philosophy seeking to know God, but must be essentially a revelation from God to mankind. And while Christians and Muhammadans may differ as to wherein this revelation consists, and how and when it was given, they both hold that the sphere for the action of the human reason in judging and deciding between the two must be limited to answering the questions: Which of them is of God? Did God give his final and full revelation of himself through Jesus or through Muhammad? Do we find the record of this supreme revelation in the New Testament, or in the Qur'án?

We have said above that both Christianity and Muhammadanism look forward as their ultimate

goal to the true and full knowledge of God, and to that vision of the divine presence which can alone satisfy the human soul. Some on the Christian side may be inclined to demur to this statement, claiming that it represents too favourably the view of heaven which is current among Muhammadans. We do not intend to maintain that the views of Christians and Muhammadans as to the joys of heaven are one, and that there is no difference in the expectation with which the average Christian and the average Muhammadan look forward to the home above. But we do not desire here to enter into the vexed question as to what in reality is the hope of the average Muhammadan with regard to heaven; in other words, whether the descriptions of heaven, which are given in the Qur'án, are to be taken as figurative or literal. For the purpose we have before us it is permissible to take the highest and best—the noblest and most spiritual interpretation which can be put on the words; yet it should not be forgotten that we are herein making not a small concession, for there are very many of the more ignorant Muhammadans who undoubtedly take these descriptions as literal and look forward to the enjoyment of heaven as being purely corporeal. It is that these enjoyments may be available to the true believer in a corporeal manner that they regard the resurrection of the body as necessary. For the resurrection

body, according to the multitude of Muḥammadan believers, is not to be considered as in any way a glorified body from which will be eliminated carnal desire and the sensual appetites which here make man so much their slave that in the words of the apostle we 'groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon'. The resurrection body, this class of Muḥammadans regard, as being one exactly similar to that which we now possess, with all its desires and passions not merely remaining but strengthened and increased. Such a view is but a logical deduction from the words of the Qur'án if they are taken literally, and is borne out by the explanations of Ghazáli who, while he speaks of the vision of the face of God as the *summum bonum*, yet admits that all are not qualified to enjoy this, and therefore argues that for the less spiritually advanced there must be less spiritual joys. And the particulars into which he enters leaves no doubt as to the nature of these less spiritual joys.

The present writer has heard practically the same views expressed by Muḥammadans in Arabia, and the current conception of heaven in that land may certainly be said to be that of a place where all the natural passions and appetites of the body, which can here be enjoyed only to a limited extent, will be enjoyed in all their fullness and completeness, and where many of those things

which God has seen fit to withhold from the true believer will be abundantly bestowed. On one occasion the writer speaking to a Muhammadan Shaikh of the hope that in heaven we should be near God, and enjoy the vision of His presence, was met with the reply: 'Are we to serve God both here and there? God won't be there.' Evidently in his opinion heaven was to be a place where man would be rewarded for his self-restraint while on earth by opportunities for full and gross self-indulgence. This, it may be said, was only the view of an ignorant Arab. It is true that the man who expressed these views was very ignorant of the outside world; but his views were undoubtedly based on the teachings of the Qur'an taken in a literal sense, and he was a true Muhammadan, the product of Muhammadanism in its native soil, untouched by the refining influences of Christianity and modern civilization.

Another, and in a certain sense a higher, view of what heaven means, was but lately propounded to the writer by an educated Turkish gentleman, a warm admirer—according to his own confession—of the celebrated Imám Ghazálí. He explained that the joys of heaven may be illustrated thus. A man may see in a dream the face of his beloved and hear her voice and even touch her cheek, and he thus enjoys all the pleasure of her actual presence, and yet there was no actual flesh and blood within his reach; all

was mental, yet real. And so in heaven all the joys described so graphically in sensuous language will be enjoyed in truth, yet not corporeally, but so to speak intellectually, or it may be said spiritually, much as a man in a dream enjoys eating and drinking and caressing his beloved.

But, as we have said, for the purpose before us at present it is not necessary to decide what is the true teaching of the Qur'án on this point, and it is permissible to accept the highest, noblest, and purest interpretation which it is possible to put upon the words in which Muḥammad describes the joys of heaven, and which include as the chief joy the vision of the face of God.

To open any investigation as to the respective claims of Christianity and Muḥammadanism with a consideration of the theological doctrines or dogmas which characterize these two religions is to take up the subject from the wrong end. These theological dogmas, and the systems worked out by the theologians on each side, are but the attempts of the human mind to grasp and express, in terms of human consciousness and human experience, the metaphysical truths concerning the nature of God, and His manner of action in relation to mankind. They are not the essentials of religion. Religion, whether Christian or Muḥammadan, existed before these systems had been developed, and will continue to exist (if the religion be truly of God) though these should

change; for religion consists in a certain attitude of the soul to God—an attitude, according to both Christianity and Muhammadanism, to be assumed in self-surrender to Him in accordance with what is believed to be the expression of His self-revelation; and one's theological beliefs must depend for their foundation on what this self-revelation teaches and implies. The ultimate question then which arises between Christianity and Muhammadanism is not, which theological system appears to be most logical, or which appears to give the most reasonable explanation of our experiences in the domain of religion. Both Muhammadan and Christian theologians readily admit that spiritual truths concerning the deeper realities of religion, especially those which concern the nature of the Deity, the manner of His self-subsistence, and the mode of His relation to the world of nature as well as to mankind, must far transcend the human reason. And they alike claim that these do not form the basis of man's belief in God, or the necessary ground on which he takes up the attitude of self-surrender to Him. As we cannot know God unless He reveal himself to us, we must judge and decide on the truth or untruth of this or that particular doctrine or dogma by its agreement with what we have, on other grounds, come to accept as the revelation of God, and not conversely. We may be certain, it is true, that in the final investigation between the opposing

doctrines and dogmas of any two systems such as Christianity and Muḥammadanism, those which are founded on the true self-revelation of God will also be found to be the highest and noblest, the most logical and reasonable, the most satisfying to the human heart, and the truest as an expression of the actual experience of mankind. But we must beware of approaching the subject from the wrong side, and arguing that those which appear most acceptable to the mind of man unenlightened by the divine Spirit, are necessarily the true. For, let us remember, we are considering the question only as it comes up between Muḥammadanism and Christianity, and both agree that only by submitting to the will of God in hearty obedience can we come to know of the doctrine whether it be of God or not. Thus we come back to the point that Christianity is not to be judged, and rejected in favour of Muḥammadanism, on the ground that it teaches doctrines which at first sight appear to the Muḥammadan investigator as being beyond the power of the human mind to comprehend fully. The question which he must ask himself is simply this: Where do we find that final self-revelation of God on which we must base all our speculations as to these deep realities?

If then the investigation is not to be opened by a consideration of the respective doctrines of these two opposing religious systems, what are

the grounds on which we are to appeal to the Muḥammadan when we ask him to consider the possibility that Christianity is the religion of God?

One method sometimes followed is to argue that Christianity is better adapted to the needs of man and to the condition in which he actually finds himself. On this point the Muḥammadan naturally has his own opinion as to the fitness and suitability of Muḥammadanism as a religion for mankind. He claims that Muḥammadanism realizes more correctly and more profoundly than does Christianity the condition of man as ruled by passion and weak in regard to the possibility of any exalted degree of absolute holiness, and affirms that Muḥammadanism is represented by its founder as a religion in which the Almighty has been graciously pleased to make light the duties imposed on man, and has, of His mercy, moderated that degree of attainment in spiritual growth which He demands. For it represents God as being gracious and ready to forgive man as soon as he repents of any sinful action and turns again to Him with renewed purpose and fresh endeavour after holiness, and at the same time grants him a certain freedom and latitude in the indulgence of his natural passions, so that in taking this freedom he does not stand self-condemned before a standard which is too high for him.

In meeting such a position taken by our Muḥammadan brethren, we must desire to show that

the superiority of Christianity, from this point of view, lies in the fact that it recognizes more clearly and more truly than Muḥammadanism the need of man and his sinful condition, in that it sees, what Muḥammadanism does not see, that the fitness of a religion for mankind does not lie in its bringing itself down to man's present sinful condition, and thus making 'provision for the flesh'; but consists rather in its recognizing this position in which man finds himself, and providing him with a means whereby he may rise out of it to higher ideals and nobler attainments. And in doing so, it must set before him a standard far above that to which he is of himself able to attain, but to which he may attain by accepting the help and following the guidance which it offers him. It is in doing this, we hold, that Christianity is better adapted to the real needs of the human race. It understands more profoundly than does Muḥammadanism the fallen condition of mankind, and sets before him an ideal which of itself is a wonderful uplift to the man who desires to rise beyond himself towards God-likeness. And it does more than this, it offers him a means whereby he may in very truth experience the forgiveness of his Maker, and it holds out to him, as a free gift, a source of energy and spiritual power which enables him to overcome—the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Muḥammadanism, on the contrary, while making

things, to a certain extent, easy, and in this inferior sense adapting itself to the needs and condition of mankind—making thus, as we said before, 'provision for the flesh'—holds out no real and true help to the attainment of higher things. It does nothing more than hold out to man the assurance that whenever he falls he may begin again, for God is easy to be reconciled, and ever ready to forgive. It provides no divine help to assist him to rise, for God is not in any real personal relation to the strivings of his heart and soul as a God of Providence. It represents man as but the plaything of an impersonal divine decree, and if he is to rise, it must be of himself alone. For while all his actions are the creation of God, yet they are His creation through man's own thoughts and will; nothing can come from outside to help him; no divine Spirit can work upon his will and lead him, consciously yielding to its influence and guidance, to the desire of better and higher things. God is in heaven and he on earth, and there is no possibility of any divine Spirit coming and dwelling within his heart and moulding and regenerating his will from day to day. If he wills good and does it, it is because God willed and decreed it from all eternity; not because the Spirit of God is working in his heart now. If he wills evil and does it, it is equally because God willed it from all eternity. Yet in either case man stands alone; he has no

experience of any influence of God's Spirit striving with his own evil will and purifying it and moulding it into the likeness of His own holy will. Muḥammadanism thus only makes certain demands of man, and leaves him to himself to struggle as best he can, constantly reminding him the while that he is weak and that his weakness is part of his constitution as given him by his Maker, and promising him no certain salvation from sin; offering him no divine assistance in the task that has been imposed upon him, and holding out to him only a dim and uncertain hope if he succeed by his own unaided efforts in fulfilling what is demanded of him.

And yet this is but a small part of the difference between Muḥammadanism and Christianity in respect to their adaptation to the condition and needs of man. But it is not necessary to pursue the question further; for, after all, it is not by any such comparison that the two can join issue as to their rival claims.

In a comparison of any two religions which have not that relation which Christianity and Muḥammadanism have to one another, such a mode of argument might be one of the best that could be adopted; but as deciding between the claims of Christianity and those of Muḥammadanism, it must hold a very minor place, or, at least, it must be used only after the question has been settled on other grounds, Which is the true

revelation of God? to strengthen and support the conclusion otherwise reached.

Another way in which it is often attempted to approach the Muhammadan is to ask him to contrast, or rather to contrast for his enlightenment, the character of Jesus with that of Muhammad, and to argue that the nobler messenger must be the herald of the nobler and more perfect religion. This is specially undertaken because it is the custom of Muhammadans to claim for their prophet a moral perfection which they regard as a model and pattern for all succeeding ages, though he himself acknowledged that he had need of God's forgiveness, and is represented in the Qur'an itself as taught by God to seek forgiveness.

In regard to any such comparison, Christianity has not merely nothing to fear but all to gain. This is a method, however, which has so often been employed that there is no need to enter into it here in particular. One thing, nevertheless, may be noted, namely, that it is no argument for the truth of an historical fact that you prove that the chief witness for it was a man of upright conduct, or good moral character, if the facts to which he bears witness are not such as he can attest at first hand. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that we can allow that the character of Muhammad was all that it ought to have been; all that his followers claim that it actually was—does this in any way prove that he is able

to give special evidence as to what the teaching of Jesus really was? We must always remember that he lived six hundred years after Jesus and had no special means of knowing what Jesus taught and how His mission on earth ended.

But the supposition is one that we cannot make, for one of the strongest proofs that the character of Muḥammad was not all that it ought to have been, is that it did not appeal to his contemporaries as being so. Not only did those who were opposed to him doubt at times the purity of his actions, pointing out his inconsistencies, but some of his own followers were, from time to time, scandalized by some of his actions both public and private, and were with difficulty persuaded that he had acted rightly. Indeed it was only his claim to have received this, or that special revelation guaranteeing that his action was lawful and right, that with difficulty brought them round to support him in them. The markedly different position which even the opponents of Jesus were forced to take up in regard to His personal life and character and walk among them, is one of the clearest proofs of the nobility of His character. He could look around Him and say: 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' And none dared to raise his voice against Him. And when He was finally arrested and condemned, the grounds of the accusation and judgement were not connected with any charge against His personal life—this they

did not mention even to call in question—but with certain phases of His teaching which they regarded as blasphemous; and the gentile judge before whom he was brought was compelled by his regard for truth to say, 'I find no fault in Him'. These estimates of the characters of the two, Jesus and Muhammad, are based on the two books which are claimed as being the inspired records of the two religions which they respectively founded. This method, however, we also pass by as not raising the true issue.

A further method of comparing the two systems is that which takes the two books which are respectively regarded as the inspired word of God—the Bible and the Qur'án—and setting them side by side, judges of the truth of the system based on each from the nature and character of the records. The Muhammadan regards the Qur'án as a permanent miraculous witness for the truth of Muhammadanism. Very much has been written to show that the character of the Qur'án is not all that its supporters claim it to be. It is not perfect grammatically, though it has been made the standard of Arabic grammatical expression for all future time. It does not maintain an equally lofty standard of expression throughout, though, doubtless, there are incomparable passages in it if one confines himself to Arabic literature. Its inaccuracies in many of its historical statements are a matter of general knowledge. Its endless

repetitions are, in many places, no addition to its literary style, and are certainly a weariness to the flesh, and a constant trap to the memory. Its alleged purity as regards the state of its text is simply a dogmatic statement. That it has remained unaltered since its final editing is no guarantee that we have in it only the *ipsissima verba* that fell from the lips of Muḥammad, and though this is at present conceded by most critics, yet when literary criticism assails it more severely, as it certainly will some day, it may be demonstrated that it is far from perfect as it stands.¹

All that has been said by others to show the composite nature of its origin might here be repeated, and a few additions might perhaps be made to what has been already written, but it is not necessary to burden our argument with any lengthy criticism of the Qur'án. We would rather ask Muḥammadans to place the two books side by side and honestly compare them to see which brings the reader to see more clearly his own sinfulness, and to realize the presence of the divine Spirit speaking to his hungry heart. We must ask Muḥammadans to lay aside the prejudice with which he naturally approaches the Bible, because it is not in the literary style of the Qur'án, and to try to grasp the message which it brings to

¹ For literary criticism of the Qur'án see Nöldeke, *Sketches from Eastern History*, pp. 21-59; and Sell's *Historical Development of the Qur'án*.

his soul, and we have no fear as to which will then be finally judged as being the more wonderful book.

All these and many other methods of appealing to Muḥammadans have doubtless their uses and places in the work of the Christian missionary. Some are suitable to one occasion, some to another; some appeal to the temperament of one man, and some to that of another; but none of them takes into consideration the one real vital issue between Muḥammadanism and Christianity. And yet when one looks closely at the opposing claims of these two religions, it is seen that there arises a very distinct and clear issue between them.

This issue between the two religions is not the question of the book which each regards as the word of God. It is not to be settled finally by a comparison of the characters of the two religious teachers. And, least of all, is it to be determined by the comparative suitability of either system to the condition and needs of mankind. On this latter ground there are those who argue that one religion may be suited to the western mind and adapted to the needs of western society and civilization; while the other may be suited to the eastern mind, and better adapted to the needs of eastern society and civilization. Those who argue thus forget that Christianity is essentially the product of the east, and that the civilization and conditions which at present exist in the west

are intimately connected with the acceptance in the west of this eastern religion.

But further, to take up this position is to lose sight of the real issue between the two religions. For they are not two religions which have no connexion or relation with each other, and the issue between them arises from the historical relation which they bear to each other. Non-Christians and non-Muhammadans may neglect this relation to a certain extent, for they do not stand to either religion in that position which Christians and Muhammadans occupy towards each other, and they may—as some in these days do—come to the conclusion that both religions contain practically equal elements of truth, and that it matters little which of the two be accepted. But this position cannot be taken by either a Christian or a Muhammadan, for they hold a relation to each other which is clear and fixed, though many, on either side of the dividing line, fail to see that there is any very definite relation between them. The basis of this relation lies in the historical bond which unites them. Many a Christian may perhaps be inclined to deny that there is any such relation, and from a certain point of view he may be said to be correct; for the historical relationship lies, if we may say so, on the side of Muhammadanism rather on that of Christianity. In one sense Christianity has nothing to say to Muhammadanism. It is com-

plete without it, and nothing has been added to it or taken from it by the appearance of Muḥammadanism; and in this sense it may be claimed that Christianity can look with indifference on Muḥammadanism and its claims. Whether this be granted or not, the converse is not true. Muḥammadanism can in no way look with indifference on Christianity; we may even go farther and say, that no man can reasonably accept Muḥammadanism as the final revelation from God until he has carefully examined the claims of Christianity to be the self-revelation of God and has come to the conclusion that it is insufficient. Indeed, it is solely on the supposition that this has been done that Muḥammadans claim that Muḥammadanism is superior to Christianity.

It is, however, not our object in the following pages to compare these two religious systems. Any comparative statement of the theological, moral, and ethical teachings of these two systems, which may be made in a discussion concerning their rival claims, cannot but be of great help towards the proper understanding and valuation of the relation in which they stand to one another as philosophies of religion, and in discussing the rival claims of each we cannot, of course, avoid making comparisons on some points, but the object before us at present is one and one only, namely, to show that there exists a clear issue between the two and to appeal to honest minded

Muhammadan seekers after truth to recognize this issue and investigate it for themselves. This issue will be seen to rest on the historical relation which Muhammadanism bears to Christianity and the attitude which Muhammadans take towards Christianity. And it can be settled only by an examination of the historical facts on which that relation depends, apart from any preconceived idea as to what these facts ought to be, and how they are to be interpreted or explained metaphysically or theologically.

In investigating the truth or untruth of Christianity, one must deal with Judaism and the relation which it holds to the later religion; but that matter having once been decided, there is no further question which can be raised by Muhammadanism which came six hundred years later. Without Judaism there could not have been any such thing as historical Christianity such as we know it. Judaism never felt itself to be complete and final. It looked forward to the fulfilment of its hopes in the Messiah, and Christianity is not the denial of Judaism, but its fulfilment. It, however, knows itself to be final, and while the comprehension by the Church of what it fully means and implies, may grow and increase from century to century, any apparent development there may be, cannot be a development of the essence of Christianity, but must be only an increasingly deeper apprehension of

its intent and not any addition to its content. It is true that Christianity looks forward to the second coming of Christ; but this is not for any expected completion of it as a religious system which feels itself wanting at present in any respect, but only for the deepening of the experience of union with Christ, and the fuller outward manifestation of the Spirit which already exists in and vivifies Christianity.

The relation, however, which Muhammadanism occupies to Christianity cannot be in any degree analogous to that existing between Christianity and Judaism. Indeed, it is far otherwise. For Muhammadanism is the virtual denial of Christianity, not its fulfilment. Judaism and Christianity may both be revelations from the same God; for the latter has its roots in the former and is but its consummation. But Christianity and Muhammadanism cannot both be true. The latter is the denial and rejection of the former; and it is in this denial and rejection of Christianity by Muhammadanism, that we find the definite and clear issue between the two systems.

Some might be inclined to argue that as Christianity from its own position, and of itself, has nothing to say to Muhammadanism, so Muhammadanism has nothing to say to Christianity; but this is not so, and that it is not so is, as a matter of fact, recognized by Muhammadans. Consciously, or unconsciously, they do so; for they do

not regard Christianity with indifference but with the feeling that it is inferior to Muḥammadanism. This attitude towards Christianity on the part of Muḥammadans is one which they do not themselves fully understand, and for which they seldom seek to find the grounds; but whether they take it consciously or unconsciously it is based for the most part on two main grounds.

The first ground on which Muḥammadans base their claim that Muḥammadanism is superior to Christianity is the simple fact that Muḥammad came after Jesus, and while recognizing that He had received a revelation from God for mankind, yet rejected historical Christianity. They claim, further, that Muḥammad intentionally and definitely rejected Christianity because, as he believed, it was not in accordance with this revelation which Jesus had received, but had become corrupted by the addition of much extraneous matter, and put forward claims on His behalf which He had never made for Himself. Muḥammadanism thus appeals to them as being, as they suppose, a purification of that religion which God has revealed many times in the course of the world's history, and of which Muḥammad is the latest and last prophet. Christianity is thus not something new which deserves investigation, but something old which has already been proved to be false and not in accordance with the revelation of God.

The uneducated Muḥammadan, therefore, does

not see the need for considering even the possibility of the truth of Christianity. He regards the question as settled once for all by the very fact that Muḥammad came after Jesus. The grounds on which Muḥammad based his rejection of Christianity he cares not to ask. It is a matter of indifference. He accepts Muḥammad as the prophet of God, and the Qur'an as the word of God, and there is the beginning and end of any discussion that might arise between him and any one else on the subject of religion.

In trying to reach such a man argument is of no avail. He is not in a position to comprehend the force of an argument, and whatever may be said, he replies, as the present writer has personally heard: 'Even though all you say may be true, what difference does it make? Muḥammad is the prophet of God, and the Qur'an is His word.'

It would appear that the best way, if not, indeed, the only way, which the Christian missionary can take with such a man, is to set forth before him the simple message of Christianity without any discussion of its relation to Muḥammadanism, and without any attack on Muḥammadanism as a theological or as a practical religious system, appealing not to his intellect but to his heart. This he can do by simply setting before him the message of God's love for sinful man, and telling once more the old story of how he may

receive pardon and forgiveness through Jesus, and experience in his own heart the sense of forgiveness, and in his life the new-born power of a renewed will.

We do not intend to assert that this is not also the best method of approaching the educated Muḥammadan; but in the case of the latter we cannot expect that there will be a passive hearing without a questioning of the message or at least an inquiry on many points concerning it. He will wish to know the grounds on which the teaching rests and the grounds on which Muḥammadanism is rejected by Christians; and being capable of following an argument he has the right to expect an answer to any questions he may put. In the case of the uneducated man, however, no profit can be expected to come of any discussion, and it should be avoided, and the message of Christianity should be given not apologetically, but with the same dogmatic assurance with which he believes that Muḥammadanism is the truth of God. And yet it must be presented in such a way that it does not come before him as something thrust upon him, but simply as the expression of the absolute and unalterable conviction of the speaker, and of the actual experience of his own spiritual life.

But opportunities for such a presentation of Christianity to Muḥammadans are not too frequent, and in some lands are not to be found; and in

most cases the appeal to the Muhammadan must be more or less an argument dealing with the respective claims of the two religions. This presupposes that the person or persons addressed have a certain amount of education, and can understand the force of an argument.

In making our appeal, then, we turn to the educated Muhammadan, and we ask him to notice that Muhammad nowhere rejects the teachings of Jesus; he nowhere suggests that these teachings require any further development. He recognized Him as a prophet; he professed to accept what He taught; he claimed that what he himself taught was in full accordance with the teaching of Jesus. These are facts which are so well known that there is no need to quote chapter and verse from the Qur'án in support of them. It would be disingenuous, then, on the part of the Muhammadan investigator to argue that what Muhammad taught was a development of what Jesus had taught before him. We are speaking here, let it be noted, of the teaching of Muhammad on its religious or spiritual side, and are not concerning ourselves with the various civil and ceremonial laws which Muhammad promulgated during the course of his life. With regard to the spiritual side of the teaching of Muhammad, the most that the Muhammadan investigator can claim is that what the Christian Church teaches is not in agreement with the

teaching of Jesus, which Muḥammad himself witnessed was the truth. Muḥammad professed to believe that this true original teaching of Jesus had been so corrupted that it had lost all practical resemblance to its original form, and because of this supposed corruption he believed that Christians had wandered out of the true path. True Christianity—the teaching of Jesus—he never rejected.

Now, we have the right to ask Muḥammadans on what ground the prophet based his claim to distinguish between Christianity as taught by Jesus, and Christianity as taught by the Church. What reason had he to maintain that what Jesus taught was true, but that what the Church taught was false? Are the arguments which he brought forward, if indeed he brought forward any, reasonable? Are they cogent? We have the right to ask these questions; for it is the same claim which Muḥammadanism makes to-day, some 1,300 years after the death of the prophet. Muḥammadans profess to regard Jesus as a prophet of God, and the truths which he taught as a divine Revelation; and yet they deny that the message which the Christian Church proclaims as the message of Jesus, is in accordance with what Jesus taught. Where, we ask our Muḥammadan brethren, is the proof of this? We desire to remind them, further, that in asking this question we are not acting on the

aggressive. We are not making any attack on Muhammadanism. It is they who, though perhaps, they do not realize it, are attacking Christianity, while all the time professing to hold those truths which Jesus taught. To state that Christianity as taught by Jesus is true, but that Christianity as taught by the Christian Church is false, is to take up a position of pure arbitrariness unless proof of the charge can be shown. To fall back on the statement that Muhammad said so, is simply to beg the question. For before we can accept his dictum we must have proof that he understood what it was that he rejected, and that he had good ground for rejecting it. A man cannot really reject what he does not understand, and we desire historical proof that Muhammad was in a position to understand Christianity and was qualified to judge it. A man may for himself reject in practice what he does not comprehend, but his rejection can have no weight and no authority with others, unless it can be shown that he was right in rejecting it. Again, therefore, we ask what special knowledge had Muhammad of Christianity that he could definitely state that there was a difference between Christianity as taught by Jesus, and Christianity as taught by the Christian Church? The sources from which he could draw his information with regard to the teachings of Jesus are before us to-day. What

do these sources prove? To argue that he was a prophet divinely inspired and thus was in a position to make this distinction, is beside the mark. For the question is one of historical fact, and no amount of inspiration can change an historical fact. And we must again remind our Muḥammadan friends that the scriptures, to which Muḥammad appealed as true, exist to-day in the same form in which they existed in his day. This is an historical fact which cannot be gain-said; and the statement of a man on a question of fact such as this before us, whether that statement be inspired or uninspired, must be capable of historical proof or disproof, when we have historical documents on which to base our investigation. And in this case these historical documents exist.

It is not difficult to see how Muḥammad came to say what he did, and to take up the position towards Christianity which characterizes him and his religion; but that is not the same thing as to say that he had good reasons for taking this attitude towards Christianity, or for making the statements which he did with regard to it. He presented himself to the people of Arabia as a prophet of God, about 600 years after the time of Jesus, and though the Arabs were for the most part very ignorant, yet many of them must have been fairly familiar with the fact of the existence of Christianity, seeing that throughout



Arabia Christians, and in some parts of it, considerable bodies of Christians, were to be found. To a greater extent they had come in contact with Judaism, and it is probable that they had a better idea of what Judaism stood for than they had of what was meant by Christianity. All through his career Muḥammad proclaimed the fact, and insisted on it most strongly, that he was simply calling men to the true faith which had been presented to Jews, Christians, and Arabs alike. It was on the foundations of these previous revelations that he sought to build up his system, and it was from the history of the Jews that he derived most of his illustrations of the way in which God dealt in past ages with mankind. He acknowledged that the sacred books of the Jews and the Christians were divinely inspired, and he appeals to these books as affording proof that what he was mainly preaching—the Unity of God—was no new idea evolved out of his own consciousness, or the result of his own philosophical theorizings, but was something which God had Himself revealed to mankind. He did not ask his contemporaries to accept him and the Qur'án, wherein he professed to bring them a revelation from God, on his simple statement of fact that he was a prophet, and that the Qur'án was the word of God. He based his appeal on the ground that what he taught was in accordance with the teaching

of those who before him had been accepted as God's messengers, and the message itself as confirming, and confirmed by, the previous revelations. There are passages in the Qur'án which lead one to conclude that he regarded Christianity as the reformation, if not the fulfilment of Judaism, for he speaks of Jesus as witnessing in the day of judgement against His own people because they did not accept Him.

But, however that may be, it is plain that he had no right conception of the true relation between Judaism and Christianity. Of Judaism he evidently knew more, and understood better what he did know. Of Christianity his knowledge was very elementary and crude, and he did not clearly understand what he had heard of the teachings of the younger faith. He appears to have come to the conclusion that Jesus tried to reform Judaism as he himself was now trying to reform Judaism and Christianity. He thus was ignorant of the real difference between the two, or else he simply shut his eyes to any great difference which he did not comprehend, and thus he easily passed over the differences between them, and seized what appeared to him to be the fundamental teachings of both; namely, that God the Maker of heaven and earth, is one; that mankind owes Him worship and obedience; and that the day will come when every one will have to give an account to Him of the deeds done in the body, whether they

be good or whether they be evil. He was so convinced of the necessity for affirming the great truth of the Unity of God, in opposition to the polytheism of the Arab tribes, that he practically omitted or passed by all else in these two religions, especially their common idea of the absolute necessity of an atonement.

The supreme place which he gave to the thought of God's Unity and his sole agency in the world drove him finally to the conclusion that this was the one article of faith in all previous revelations, and the only way in which he could attempt to maintain this in the face of the great divergences which all saw and recognized between Judaism and Christianity, was to assert that both had been corrupted from their original purity—that, in principle, they were one, and that this principle was, 'there is no god but God.' It was therefore necessary for him to deny the various tenets of Christianity which distinguished it from Judaism. To this end he denied that Jesus claimed to be more than a prophet; and asserted that He distinctly stated that He was but a man as other men. He denied that Jesus was in any sense the centre of Christianity, or that through Him man has access to God, and receives the forgiveness of sins. This of course forced him to deny the crucifixion and the resurrection.

It is thus easy to see how he came to distinguish Christianity as taught by Jesus, and Christianity

as taught by the Christian Church, and to accept the former while rejecting the latter. But to state this is not the same as to say that we can see the grounds—the historical grounds—on which he made this distinction, and came to this decision. And again we have to repeat that in doing this Muḥammad acted arbitrarily, and yet all the while appealed to the scriptures of the Christians as authentic. And so the question as far as the honest investigator is concerned, is not one which has been settled, but is one which each individual has to consider and decide for himself.

Muḥammadanism claims to be built on the foundation of previous revelations, and it is the duty of any one who wishes to investigate its claims to dig down to that foundation, and see whether it is really built thereon, or is simply reared in close proximity thereto. Muḥammadanism presents itself to the individual for his personal acceptance, and claims that the relation of man to God must be a personal relation. The matter then is a personal one for each individual, and we cannot insist too strongly on the responsibility of the individual to decide the question for himself. The tendency of mankind is no doubt the other way. He seeks to avoid the responsibility of making a personal decision on a matter of such grave importance, such vital interest to his soul, as his relation to the Maker of heaven and earth. He inclines to distrust his

own judgement on such a solemn matter and prefers rather to accept, even without the slightest personal investigation, that form of religious belief which he has received from his fathers, seeking thus to throw the responsibility on the shoulders of others. But we must stoutly insist on the fact that as the belief of one's forefathers that Christianity is the truth, while it may incline one towards Christianity, can yet be no real proof to the individual that Christianity is true; so the acceptance by one's ancestors of Muhammadanism, though it may dispose one to look favourably on the claims of that religion, and be a strong moral incentive to its acceptance, can yet never be a real proof to the individual conscience that this religion is indeed of God.

Seeing then that the fact that Muhammad came after Christ does not of itself do away with the necessity for personal investigation, we turn to the second ground on which the Muhammadan takes his stand in considering that Muhammadanism is superior to Christianity.

The second main ground on which the Muhammadan regards Muhammadanism as superior to Christianity is that the record of the revelation on which it rests is in his opinion superior to that on which Christianity relies. He asserts this by claiming that the Qur'án is the eternal word of God, spoken from all eternity. The

position he ascribes to the Qur'án he regards as far above that which the Christians ascribe to the Bible. And Muḥammadanism which rests on this he therefore believes to occupy a higher plane than Christianity. 'According to Abú Ḥanífa, the great Sunni Imám, the Qur'án is eternal in its original essence. He says, "The Qur'án is the Word of God, and His inspired Word and Revelation. It is a necessary attribute of God. It is not God, but still it is inseparable from God. It is written in a volume, it is read in a language, it is remembered in the heart, and its letters, and its vowel points, and its writings are all created, for these are the works of men, but God's Word is uncreated (ghairu'l makhluq). Its words, its writings, its letters, and its verses, are for the necessities of man, for its meaning is arrived at by their use, but the Word of God is fixed in the essence (dhat) of God and he who says that the Word of God is created is an infidel".'¹

Ghazálí in his 'Iḥyá'ulúm-ud-Din', takes up the same position. It is not necessary to quote the passage in which his views are given, for there is no controversy as to the point. Indeed this is the orthodox belief concerning the nature of the Qur'án.

Let us try to understand what it really implies,

¹ Hughes' *Dictionary of Islám*, p. 484.

for though the ignorant Muhammadan undoubtedly thinks that in some miraculous way the very book which he holds in his hands is the eternal word of God, this is not what is really meant by the theologians. Many of them it is true appear to have no clear conception as to what is meant by the dogma of the eternity of the Qur'án, and are satisfied with the simple statement without attempting to grasp or explain to themselves what they truly mean by it. Yet such an attitude towards the dogmas of one's faith is not found among Muhammadans alone, and should not prejudice us against the doctrine however hard and apparently incomprehensible it may at first sight appear.

According to the Muhammadan position God has spoken many times during the past ages of the world's history. He has caused his word to be heard by prophet after prophet, and has thus revealed His will throughout successive generations and to various nations of mankind, and by this means has preserved alive his religion in the hearts of men, however grossly it may have been corrupted from time to time, and however widely that corruption may have spread. Further, the religion of God has ever been and always will be one; though He has revealed it to mankind according to the degree in which they have been able to receive it and comprehend it. The various laws and regulations

which He has been pleased in His beneficent wisdom to promulgate through the medium of His prophets, may vary, and as a matter of fact, have varied from time to time with the passing of the ages, and the steady gradual upward movement of mankind in spiritual attainment. Muhammadanism, thus, like Christianity acknowledges that the self-revelation of God to mankind, has been a process which has been going on through the whole history of the human race. The records of this revelation—the word of God in a lower sense—are to be found in the sacred books which have been given to the successive prophets through the mediumship of Gabriel. These as is well known number one hundred and four in all; but of them all none but the Qur'an can claim the pre-eminence of the being the eternal word of God. It is not simply the record of God's self-revelation to Muhammad. It is the record in human language of God's eternal purpose of self-revelation. The word which from all eternity He purposed and determined to manifest to mankind in the fulness of time, and which as an historical fact He manifested to Muhammad. From all eternity God, foreknowing and pre-determining all that we know as human history, 'spoke' beforehand this self-revelation of Himself which He purposed to give to mankind. This, apparently is what is meant by saying that

it was written from all eternity in the preserved tablet. The Qur'án which we now have before us is the historical record of this self-revelation, a record which necessarily exists in the medium of a human created language, and written for the benefit of mankind in characters and symbols which are the creation or invention of mankind; and yet it is simply the human record, so to speak, of God's eternal purpose and word. We are not to suppose, necessarily, that it was spoken from all eternity in any human language. It was spoken so to say in the divine mind, and if we may use the expression it was stored up there till the time had come when God purposed to reveal it to mankind. It thus far excels all the other sacred books which are but the records of incomplete revelations that came as man was able to bear them. The Qur'án is the full record of all that God purposed from all eternity as His complete self-revelation, and a perfect and complete guide for mankind in matters of religion.

Against this marvellous claim on behalf of the Qur'án, much has been written and might be here repeated, with perhaps some additions, or, at least, some variations in the statement of the argument; but for our purpose it is not necessary to do more than to examine one or two points.

To begin with, this doctrine or dogma is not one which existed in the time of Muḥammad

and the view which he himself took of the Qur'án does not wholly agree with it. He regarded the Qur'án as occupying a position analogous to that of the previous Scriptures. His view of it, as gathered from the Qur'án itself, is that as the previous Scriptures were given to Moses, David, Jesus, and the other prophets, so the Qur'án was given to him. Muḥammadan theologians may distinguish between the nature of the revelation and the mode of the inspiration of the Qur'án, and the nature of the revelation and the mode of the inspiration of the other Sacred Books. He himself does not make any such distinction. He simply claims that as God spoke to others, so He spoke to him; and while Muḥammad claims that the purpose of God was from all eternity, he does not claim that the revelation given through him was, in its nature, different from that given through others. The only difference was that it was complete and final. It is true that he speaks of a 'glorious Qur'án in a preserved tablet' and a too literal interpretation of this expression is probably at the base of the whole fabric of the theological dogma of the eternity of the Qur'án. But whatever the commentators may say to the contrary, it is more than possible that the expression is simply a figure of speech wherein is signified the absolute certainty of the divine judgement which is based on the eternal purpose of God.

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But, however this expression is to be understood, the whole attitude of Muḥammad as shown by many passages is that the revelation which he has received is on the same level as those of previous prophets, the only difference being, as stated above, that this is final.

Again, this doctrine of the eternity of the Qur'án, though now the established doctrine of orthodox Muḥammadanism, has not always been held by Muḥammadans, and there is to-day a tendency in India to depart from it, and recognize the human element in the Qur'án. There is so much in the dogma that runs contrary to all the rational principles of the human mind, that it is not surprising to see the modern spirit which is appearing in Muḥammadanism, rising in revolt against it. For, as we have said above, it is not taught in the Qur'án itself, and is something which has been developed by the schools of Muḥammadan theologians.

It is easy to see how, when once a man has accepted Muḥammadanism as the true and final revelation of God to mankind, this dogma concerning the Qur'án becomes the starting point of all his reasonings, and all his deductions, and the foundation of his whole system of theological science. But we desire to remind our Muḥammadan brethren that the object which we invite them to investigate is the truth or untruth of Christianity—the truth or untruth of

Muhammadanism, and it is absolutely necessary to approach the subject without any preconceived ideas as to what the nature of the Qur'án is. It must be taken simply as it stands, the record of a supposed revelation, and must be used in the investigation without any appeal to the authority given it by the theological dogma that it is the eternal Word of God. In other words, it must be regarded simply as a historical document in which Muhammad claims to present to mankind the revelation which he professed to have received, just as we, on our side, are willing for the sake of the argument, to appeal to the Christian record as a historical document, without basing any part of our argument on the belief, which we hold just as firmly as our opponents hold theirs that the Bible is the Word of God.

We have already seen that the question which comes up for investigation between the two systems, finally narrows down to this, Is Christianity as it now exists, the same as Christianity as it existed in the time of Christ? and this question must be decided on historical and critical grounds, without any appeal on the one side, or on the other, to the documents as 'the Word of God'. We must be free to see, for instance, what the Qur'án teaches as to Christianity, but we must be equally free to use our historical information and our critical judgement, to decide

whether what it teaches, is in agreement with historical fact. We find, for example, that the Qur'án teaches that Christianity as taught by Christ is truly a revelation from God, and we are willing to accept this historical witness. Our opponents must also be ready to accept this, or they would at once be denying that the Qur'án is correct in its teachings. On this point, then, both sides are agreed, and we do not need to ask for any proof that Christianity as taught by Jesus is the truth.

When we come to other statements, however, we ask for proof, and we have the right to make the demand. We find, for example, the Qur'án stating that Jesus did not claim to be more than a prophet, that, in fact, he denied that he was other than a man like other men. We ask, where is the proof of this beyond the mere assertion? The simple statement of the Qur'án cannot be accepted as evidence. We find, further, that the Qur'án states that the Christians claimed to hold certain doctrines; for example, that God, Jesus and Mary were the three Persons of the Trinity. Again we have the right to ask, where is the proof of this? We cannot admit it simply because the Qur'án says so. If it be said that this was a view held by certain sects, we still ask, where is the proof of this? And even if we were to admit that a certain body of Christians may possibly—a very

unlikely possibility—have held this view, we still ask proof that this was the doctrine of the universal Christian Church. There have been some strange views held by bodies who still claimed to be Muḥammadans, which, however, have been regarded as heresies by the main body of Muḥammadan believers; and it would be equally just for us to say that these heresies were part of the orthodox Muḥammadan faith, as it would be for Muḥammadans to claim that such a view of the Trinity as that mentioned above, was, or ever had been, a part of the orthodox Christian Faith, supposing, for the sake of argument, that it could be proved that some small body of Christians ever held this position. Let us, however, repeat that this is only a supposition for the sake of the argument; for it has never been shown that this conception of the Trinity has ever at any time been held by any body calling themselves Christians.

We see, then, that in the investigation which we ask the Muḥammadan to make, the Qur'án cannot be used of itself as evidence to show whether Christianity as taught by Jesus, and Christianity as taught by the Christian Church is one or not. Any statement which the Qur'án may make on the subject must be corroborated or proved by historical evidence from outside. In other words, as settling this point, the Qur'án is not 'evidence'.

Thus, the two main grounds on which the average Muḥammadan claims that Muḥammadanism is superior to Christianity, must be set aside. The fact that Muḥammad came after Christianity and professed to bring another revelation superseding the former, does not of itself prove anything one way or the other, as to the truth or untruth of Christianity, as to the truth or untruth of Muḥammadanism. It leaves the issue between them undecided, and each honest seeker after truth must investigate the question personally for himself. He must seek to find out for his own satisfaction whether Muḥammad had any real ground for saying that Jesus was a prophet of God, and taught the true Religion of God, and yet maintaining that what the Christian Church taught in his name was false. No open-minded seeker after truth among the body of Muḥammadan believers can shut his eyes to this issue. If any one puts it aside and takes his stand on the bare statement of Muḥammad that this difference truly exists, he may remain an orthodox Muḥammadan, but he ceases to be an honest seeker after truth. Let it be noted that we do not say that every one who comes to the conclusion that these two differ, and so holds to his Muḥammadan Faith as being the true Religion as taught by Jesus, is dishonest in his search after truth. There may be men honestly seeking the truth who believe this; but they must be capable of giving a reason

for the conclusion to which they come, and that reason must not be the simple statement 'Muhammad said so'.

And similarly with the second main ground on which the average Muhammadan claims that Muhammadanism is superior to Christianity. The fact that Muhammadan theologians claim that the Qur'án is the eternal word of God, cannot be validly used as an argument in favour of Muhammadanism in the settlement of the historical issue which we have seen arises between it and Christianity. Independently of any belief as to the nature of the Qur'án, the question must be settled. To say so is not to say at the outset that the Qur'án is not of God. That may be the conclusion to which we are led finally; but we are not begging the question by taking this for granted at the outset. We simply demand that this special claim on behalf of the Qur'án is one which cannot be allowed to influence the course of the investigation which concerns a simple matter of history, and which must be settled on historical and critical grounds.

Without doubt, it is no light thing to ask a man to reconsider his religious position, and see where in the light of historical fact and human reason he stands; and it is just this demand that we make on our Muhammadan brethren. We do not come to them to try to prove that their theological dogmas are wrong, and that ours are

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better; that their religious practices are tainted with the formalism against which Jesus threatened his most grievous woes. We come not to destroy, but simply to ask the educated Muhammadan to tell us what ground he has for passing by a religious faith which Muhammad himself declared to be the truth. For we maintain that what we hold, and try in spite of all the failings inherent in poor human nature to practise, is simply Christianity as Jesus taught it—in fact the true Islám, which Muhammad and the Qur'án both witnessed to as being the Religion of God.

In making this demand, we desire to emphasize even to weariness the fact that we are bringing forward no new teaching, that we are not asking the Muhammadan to give up his belief in God, that we are not attempting to persuade him to act contrary to the revealed will of God. We are simply asking him to reconsider whether what he has received, perhaps unquestioningly, as the revelation of God, can truthfully claim to be from Him, in the light which criticism and historical research have shed on the reliability of the Gospel record. We claim to be presenting to him for his consideration that body of teaching which Muhammad himself acknowledged as the truth of God. We point out to him that Muhammad had no special means of knowing what the teaching of Jesus was, though from what he knew of it he had no hesitation in acknowledging that

it was true. We desire to impress on him that it is a certain fact that any honest inquiring Muḥammadan to-day can form from the perusal of the Christian records of the New Testament, a more accurate idea of what Jesus taught than it was possible for Muḥammad to do, seeing that he had not that record before his eyes.

Further, we must insist on the fact that Christianity is not an attack on Muḥammadanism. It is the Muḥammadan who is attacking and the Christian who is defending. It is therefore not the part of the Christian to show that Muḥammadanism is false. If Muḥammadanism cannot on historical grounds prove that Christianity as taught by the Christian Church, is contrary to the teachings of Jesus, then it is its own disproof. For it maintains that what Jesus taught was true, but that what the Christian Church holds is false. It is for the Muḥammadan to show wherein the Christian Church has claimed for Jesus what He did not claim for Himself. He must not seek to prove from the Qur'án that the claims which Jesus made for Himself and the claims which Christians to-day make on His behalf are irreconcilable. If this is to be attempted, it must be attempted on historical and critical grounds.

Before passing on, we desire to note that Muḥammadan theology has appropriated the words 'Mu'min' (believer) and 'Islám' (submission in thought, word, and deed to the revealed will

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of God), and has so specialized them, that it appears to be a matter of extreme difficulty for Muḥammadans generally to realize that there are others who can justly claim to be 'Mu'minún', and to practise 'Islám'. Indeed many Muḥammadans appear almost to think that all who reject Muḥammadanism are living an irreligious life. And because of this preconception, they look with misgiving and alarm on any proposal that they should study and discuss Christianity. They have no desire to coquet with irreligion. It is, therefore, perhaps not out of place to point out that the alternative between Muḥammadanism and Christianity is not the alternative between a religious and an irreligious life. The Qur'án freely recognizes that there were true believers (Mu'minún) before Muḥammad's day. The whole of Súratu'l-Mu'min (xl) shows that all who ever professed the belief in one God, are to be regarded as having been Mu'minún. In verse 29th of this Súra we read,

And a man of the family of Pharaoh, who was a believer (Mu'min), but hid his faith, said . . .

The whole Súra bears out the claim we make. In Súratu'l-A'ráf (vii) 73,

Said the chiefs of the people, puffed up with pride, to those who were esteemed weak, even to those of them who believed . . .

In Súratu Núh (lxxi) 29, Noah is represented as saying,

O my Lord, forgive me, and my parents, and every one who, being a believer, shall enter my house, and believers men and women.

In Súratu Bani Isrá'il (xvii) 79, again we read,
As to the youth his parents were believers.

Of Lot we have the record in Súratu'l-'Ankabút (xxix) 25,

But Lot believed in him.

And this must be compared with Súratu'dh-Dhárayát (li) 36,

But we found not in it but one family of Muslims.

It should be noted also that in Súratu'l-Burúj (lxxxv) the Christian martyrs are spoken of as true believers, and the torment of hell is threatened against their persecutors. Indeed, the whole teaching of the Qur'án is in agreement with this idea. Belief in one God, and submission to Him as opposed to polytheism constituted true Faith, and all who thus believed were Mu'minún.

The various forms of the stem *aslama* (to profess Islám) are of frequent occurrence in the Qur'án to describe the true Faith in pre-Muhammadan times. Thus in Súratu'l-Má'ida (v) 48, the prophets are said to have professed Islám. Súratu'l-Baqara (ii) 125, also uses the same word to express the faith of Abraham. Similarly in Súratu'n-Naml (xxvii) 45, the queen of Sheba is represented as

saying that she *submits* to God. The passages which represent the pre-Muhammadan believers as Muslimún are too numerous to require quotation. The followers of Jesus are shown in Súratu Áli 'Imrán (iii) 45, and again in Súratu'l-Má'ida (v) 3, as claiming to be Muslimún. The true Religion of God is said in Súratu Áli 'Imrán (v) 17, to be Islám, and in Súratu Bani Isrá'il (xvii) 17, this is called simply 'the creed of Abraham'. The whole point may be summed up in the verse 'This, your religion, is the one Religion', [Súratu'l-Anbiyá' (xxi) 92], which all commentators agree in explaining as showing that Islám is the same as the one true Religion of all previous believers.

Thus, we see that there were Mu'minún (true believers in the Unity of God) ages before the Qur'án was revealed, and that according to the Qur'án, Islám existed from the time of Adam downwards through the centuries. We are therefore driven to the conclusion that Islám, as the true attitude of the soul to God, may be independent of any revelation which may claim to be given in the Qur'án, and may exist apart from any knowledge of Muhammad as the prophet of God. This is the testimony of the Qur'án itself. We are not hereby maintaining that Muhammad did not teach the true Islám, or that the Qur'án does not contain a revelation of the true Religion of God. These are questions independent of the one before us, and come up for decision after the

investigation which we appeal to our Muḥammadan friends to make, has been brought to a close. What we maintain here is that, according to the witness of Muḥammad and the Qur'án, the true faith in the Unity of God, and all that that implies in the way of submission to His revealed will (the true Islám) existed before the day of Muḥammad, and independently of the giving of the Qur'án; and that the teaching of Jesus was nothing but this true Faith and that he demanded of his followers nothing but the assumption of this attitude towards God.

What we have said above as to the witness of the Qur'án to the existence of true believers before the time of Muḥammad is borne out by the fact that Muḥammad called men to embrace Islám, that is, to acknowledge that there is but one God, and to yield themselves to Him in accordance with His revealed will, before he had received the full and complete revelation of the Qur'án. He claimed that he was a true Mu'min and recognized those who followed him as true Mu'minún, while the whole Qur'án was not yet given. We cannot suppose that he believed himself to be still learning what the true religion of God was. He thus distinguishes between the attitude of the soul to God, which is the true Islám, and the further development and application of this to the various circumstances and relations of life; which development and application has

been carried on after him by the Muhammadan schools of theology, till it has crystallized into the Muhammadan Faith which we know and see. Further, according to Muhammad and the Qur'an, this true Faith and this correct attitude towards God, were in the possession of the Christians in the time of Jesus, and had Christians remained steadfast in the faith which Jesus taught, they would have remained true Mu'minún, and have continued to practise the true Islám.

We therefore ask our Muhammadan brethren to investigate the Christian records and find out for themselves what it was that Jesus actually taught, and what He really claimed, and to remember that no intelligent man can honestly accept Muhammadanism as the Religion of God, until he has made this investigation, and has been personally convinced that Christianity as taught by the Christian Church, is not in accordance with what Jesus taught, and is contrary to the Christian Scriptures, to which Muhammad witnessed as being a genuine revelation from God. He cannot shut his eyes to this question and say that it has been decided and settled long ago, and yet remain an honest seeker after truth. For, as we said before, the grounds on which Muhammad appealed to the men of his generation still remain the grounds on which Muhammadanism appeals to the intellect and heart of the individual to-day.

And now, before we go any further, we must plainly state what we mean by asking, is Christianity as taught by the Christian Church the same as Christianity as taught by Jesus? We do not mean thereby to ask, whether the different systems of organization and all the various methods of Church discipline which exist to-day throughout Christendom, have always existed from the beginning. These are not the central facts of Christianity. We must form no *a priori* conclusion as to what kind of system Christianity must be, and having decided that it must have been given a definite organization from the beginning, seek to find what that organization was. The investigation must be carried out with open mind, and having come to a conclusion from the facts before us, as to what Jesus actually claimed, and taught, we must seek to answer the question, are these the claims which the Christian Church has always made for Him? Does He hold in the Christian Church to-day, the position which He claimed? or have other claims been made for Him which He never put forward? Are the fundamental teachings of the Church to-day what He taught, or are they not?

Again we must bear in mind that the various theological explanations or systems of theology are not Christianity. They are the attempts, more or less successful, to explain from the point of view of human philosophy and the categories of

the human mind how such claims as Jesus made and how such teaching as He gave, may be systematized and stated in terms of human experience and human reasoning. Christianity as taught by Jesus consists in a certain attitude of the soul to God, an attitude which it takes up through Him. It is a knowledge of God, which is acquired through Him; a submission to God, which is manifested by a certain personal relationship adopted to Him. The investigator must not be led away from the point under investigation into the discussion of the gradual development of Christian doctrine, as it took place during the centuries following the commencement of the Christian era. On investigation, he will see that Jesus did not teach any definite system of Christian doctrine, any more than did Muhammad develop any definite system of Muhammadan theology. Our respective systems are not the fundamental principles of the Faith. The Christian Church has been slow to recognize this, and has often confused the two. The Muhammadan theologians have yet to learn even the beginning of what this means. They have yet to learn that Islām is not a theological system, but a certain attitude of the soul to God.

Another point which must be cleared up, before the question at issue resolves itself into its true form, and proper proportions, is the question of 'practice'. Christianity and Muhammadanism

may both be divided into faith and practice. Muḥammadanism has had from early times a definite system of practice into the details of which we need not enter. Certain forms of worship, certain religious observances, certain definite duties, were laid down by Muḥammad as incumbent on the believer; and the Muḥammadan finds it difficult to imagine that there can be any religion which has no hard and fast system of practice similar to his own. To demand where one can find the definite system of practice which Jesus taught, and to argue that because there is no such system of practice common to the whole body of Christians, that therefore they must have departed from the true faith of Jesus, is again to argue from *a priori* grounds. As a matter of fact, investigation will show that the teaching of Jesus consisted in the inculcation of certain general principles, and the making of certain definite claims as to the relation in which He himself stood towards God, on the one hand, and towards man on the other. And as it is no part of the investigation to attempt to show that Jesus did or did not teach this or that definite system of theological belief, so, on the other hand, it is not its part to try to show that Jesus did or did not organize this or that form of Church government, or prescribe this or that form of ritual or ceremonial practice.

As a matter of fact, while inculcating principles of belief, which have led, and will always lead,

those who seek to do His will, into a close and true knowledge of God, he left his followers perfect intellectual freedom to develop these principles to their natural conclusion, and form should they please to do so, any system of theological doctrine which they felt was the logical result of these principles. And in the same way, He left His followers freedom to organize themselves under such system of Church government as seemed to them, under the guidance of His Spirit, best calculated to forward those ends for which they were united—the building up of the individual in a life of holy faith and practice, and the maintenance of the common body of believers in the principles of faith and love to God and man which He had taught. Thus too, He left them absolute freedom in the practice of the Faith, not laying down any definite ritual or ceremonial which they were to follow, but insisting that each and all should yield himself to the guidance of His Spirit; and in their yielding the will to Him. He claimed that the disciple would be led into a true and full knowledge of the duties which were incumbent upon him.

Thus we see that the object of the investigation which we ask the Muhammadan inquirer to make, must not be an attempt to show that such and such a system was taught by Jesus, but must be an attempt to reach a true estimate of who and what He claimed to be, and what attitude He

demanded that those who professed to follow Him should take up towards Him. Now to reach this estimate, as we have already seen, it is not to the Qur'án that we must go. The Qur'án has nothing at first hand to tell us on these points. It is to the Christian Scriptures that the investigator must find his way; those Scriptures which, as we have seen, Muḥammad declared to be a revelation from God.

We appeal, then, to all Muḥammadan seekers after truth, to take these books and having by historical and critical investigation satisfied themselves that these are the very books which were held by the whole Christian Church in the time of Muḥammad to be the word of God, and that therefore these are the very books to which Muḥammad witnessed, to study them with open mind and open heart. We ask them specially to study the Gospels, that they may see for themselves what, as a matter of historical fact, Jesus claimed, and how His claims were understood by His disciples, who had the best opportunity of judging what they meant to the mind and soul of the individual. We ask them to study these in any way they like, but with one object in view; namely, that they may come face to face with Jesus Himself; that they may learn to know him, and see how He claimed to hold a supreme position in the matter of the attitude of all men towards God; a position which none other has ever claimed;

how He claimed that a true knowledge of God is to be attained only through Him; how He asserted that only through Him can man find rest and peace for His soul, receiving in Him pardon and forgiveness; how He said that through Him alone (in vital union with Him) can man make any real progress in that path of life which leads ultimately to that vision of the face of God, which we all seek. We appeal to Muhammadans to see for themselves how all these claims of Jesus are matters of history, and we ask them to remember that Muhammad witnessed that the message of Jesus was the message of God.

When we make this appeal to the Christian Scriptures of the New Testament, we do so with confidence; for we know that there are historical proofs to show that what we hold in our hands are the very books to which Muhammad appealed to as the 'Injil' of Jesus. These books existed in his time and were universally regarded by the Christian Church as the true record of the message of Jesus, giving us an account of what He taught, and how His claims appealed to the men of His own times; and it is to these books that Muhammad witnessed, if his witness to the inspired books of the Christians means anything at all, as a revelation from God. We do not here enter into any argument to prove that these books are the 'Injil' to which he referred, that has been done by others, and no open-minded Muhammadan can refuse to

accept the proof that has been given there on this point.

One who accepts neither Christianity nor Muhammadanism, may demand an investigation that goes further back, and ask that these are the very books which the Christian Church has always held as containing the message of Jesus, and that they are reliable records of that message; and these proofs, too, are not wanting; but as far as the discussion between Christianity and Muhammadanism is concerned, it is sufficient to claim that these are the books which were held in the time of Muhammad to be the Gospel of Jesus, for the Qur'an states that what the Christians then held in their hands was the revelation of God through Jesus.

We desire, further, to point out that the question as to how the position which Jesus claimed to occupy towards God and man, is ultimately to be explained or defined from a theological or philosophical point of view, does not at first come up for settlement, and may be left for further discussion. There is no use arguing on the theological bearing of these claims, or on the way in which they may be systematically stated unless we first of all are sure that He actually made them. Once a man has been satisfied that He really made them, it will be time enough for him to consider their theological bearing, and see how they are to be formulated and defined in scientific or theological terms and language.

In such a study of the words and deeds of Jesus, the Muhammadan investigator will naturally find much that goes totally against his preconceptions. But we ask him to remember that he professes to be seeking not the proof or disproof of this or that religious system, not the proof of this or that theological conception, but the truth itself. If he finds that Jesus really made these claims, it will then, but only then, be necessary for him to ask himself how he can explain the fact that Muhammad witnessed to Jesus as a true prophet, and yet taught much that is in contradiction to the teaching of Jesus. But one thing we must insist on, and that is, that no one has an intellectual right to accept Muhammadanism as true, before he has investigated the claims of Jesus who, the Qur'an witnesses, was a prophet, and taught the true religion of God.

If any one undertakes this study of the Christian Writings, we ask him to study the question with open mind. In this connexion it is worth while quoting from Ghazálí, who, speaking of wrong methods of argument, says in his *Al-Iqtisád fi'l-Itiqád*: And I do not say that this is the nature of the common people, but it is the nature of most of those whom I have seen who are looked upon as learned men. For they do not differ from the common people in the matter of tradition. Nay they have added to the tradition of the sect, the tradition of demonstration; for in their

investigation they do not seek the truth, but seek some method of subterfuge to support what they have accepted as the truth by hearsay and tradition. So, if in their investigation they meet with anything which supports their beliefs, they say, 'we have got hold of a proof'; and if anything appears to weaken their creed, they say, 'we have come across something doubtful'. Thus they set up the belief grasped and accepted by tradition, as a principle, and call 'doubtful' whatever is contrary to it, and a 'demonstration' whatever agrees with it. But the right way of doing is the contrary of this. For one must have no belief (preconceived ideas) to start with, but must look at the demonstration and call what it demands 'the truth', and what is opposed to it 'the false'.

Let us add a word as to the spirit in which the investigation ought to be conducted. It is not to be made in the spirit of controversy or hostility. The open-minded Muhammadan will readily acknowledge that the object of his investigation must be to know *the truth*—*God's truth*, and he should not set himself simply the task of trying to show that Christianity is false, or unreasonable, or unsuitable to man's needs. We both believe that God directeth aright those who seek His guidance, and in approaching this subject we ask him to come seeking in prayer the guidance of God, that he may learn from Him the Truth.

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