Art. III.—MUHAMMAD, OR CHRIST?

THE question which stands at the head of this paper is one which has been during the last year forced upon the consideration of all minds interested in the missionary work of the Church of Christ. For the suggestion has been definitely made that Islam is, in some places and for some reasons, better than Christianity.

The reason given for this assertion sounds strange. For not only are we told that the Muhammadan religion has been more successful as a missionary religion than the religion of Christ (a statement the force of which entirely depends upon what persons mean by "successful"), but it is argued that Christianity is "too spiritual" and "too lofty" a religion for any except "the higher races." Such an argument quite contravenes the statement of the greatest missionary of the primitive Church, who said that not many wise and not many noble were called, and that the preaching of the Cross was to Jews a stumbling-block, and to Greeks foolishness. Nor does the history of the early transmission of the Christian religion permit us to doubt that it was to the poor, the weak, the suffering, the ignorant, that the Gospel was effectually proclaimed at the first. It was only gradually that the intellectual and philosophic superiority of the doctrines and ethics, which were based upon the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, came to light. To make Christianity a *peculium* of an esoteric circle of disciples, and to say that something lower or less divine may be sufficient for the uninitiated, is not consonant either with the facts, or with the spirit, of the Christian religion. Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to tell the message of divine love for all, and to invite men to see in Himself the Light of the world. The religion which He proclaimed was not proposed as a philosophy for aristocratic intellects. It was given as a solace and a source of infinite hope for the burdened heart of sinful men and women in all classes, races, and places, throughout the world.

If Christianity be true, no religion can compete with it. It is *exclusive*, because it is *inclusive* of all the moral and spiritual truths which are fragmentarily indicated in other religions, and at the same time it puts forward paramount claims for Christ as the Apostle of God and the High Priest for men in things pertaining to God. It was, indeed, this exclusive claim on the part of the Christian religion that evoked anger and irritation among various opponents, and drew upon its adherents manifold persecutions. And if this claim be not allowed, we make Christ a liar and an impostor. But when

we speak of the claims of the Christian religion we should not forget that we mean the claims of Christ Himself, not those of any local Christian Church, which may be corrupted or defective, or may have deviated from the faith as once for all delivered by Christ.

Controversy in the matter of religion is inevitable. It is only the unfair, controversial spirit of one-sided partizanship which we should endeavour to avoid, not controversy itself. For controversy clears truth. All religions must include some doctrine which is asserted to be the highest truth, and is put forward for acceptance. Discussion necessarily ensues, and conviction, or doubt, or denial is the result. Opposing views are placed side by side, and the comparison of partial conceptions of any complex truth brings out a clearer understanding of the real point in question. Thus a history of heresies becomes a history of the intellectual evolution of Christian doctrine. Moreover, since accepted truths may often gather round them accretions of error and of prejudiced or mistaken interpretations, reconsiderations of what passes as true "doctrine" become necessary; and this involves reformations of the Church or society wherein the erroneous element has become apparent. The ultimate question in all such discussions, however, is, What is *authoritative?* Which statement of so-called truth has the surest foundation in fact?

In the controversy as to the claims of the Muhammadan religion a great deal has been written and said about the features of the religion itself, and about the spread of the religion both in ancient and in modern times. There can hardly be anything new to be brought forward on the subject.[1] But it may be useful to bring to a focus, in a concise statement, the chief arguments by which the Christian advocate feels himself entitled to maintain that the religion of Muhammad is precluded from being in any case a desirable substitute, even among the lower races, for the religion of Christ.

[1] The following list of books, consulted by the writer, may be mentioned as containing information of a sufficiently varied sort for the purposes of those who wish to make a study of the Muhammadan religion, such as may enable them to have a fair knowledge both of the merits and defects of *Islam* as compared with *Christianity:* Maracci's folio edition of the Koran, with Latin translation and *Prodromus* (Patavii, 1598); Sale's "Koran, with Preliminary Discourse;" Washington Irving's "Life of Mahomet;" Macbride's "Mohammedan Religion Explained;" Sir W. Muir's "Life of Mahomet;" Rodwell's "Koran" (with notes); Syed Ahmed Khan Bahadoor's "Essays" (1870); Syed Ameer Ali's "Life of Mohammed" (1873); Deutsch's "Literary Remains" (article on Islam); T. P. Hughes's "Notes on Muhammadanism;" Bosworth Smith's "Essays;" Stobart's "Islam, and its Founder" (S.P.C.K.); Sir W. Muir's "The Corân" (S.P.C.K.); Dr. Badger in "Dictionary of Christian Biography" (s.v. Muhammad); Sir W. Muir's "Rise and Decline of Islam" (R.T.S.).

Both religions must be estimated according to the personal position of those who introduced them into the world; for in each of them the whole weight of the teaching is inseparably connected with the person who is alleged to be the prophet or messenger of God. And if a religion bases itself upon historic facts as connected with a definite teacher, we can best gather the intrinsic claims of the religion by asking, Who is this? Why does he claim our adherence? What is his character? What are his credentials? It should be recollected that the proclamation of a religion differs from the promulgation of a philosophy. In the latter case much, indeed, depends upon the personal abilities and intellectual power of the teacher; but he appeals merely to reason, and not to faith. He does not assert himself. In the case of a new religion the prophet asserts that his message is divinely authoritative. He claims to be specially commissioned and inspired as a messenger from God; and his appeal is not merely for adherence to a doctrine, but for allegiance to a divine rule. He claims not merely assent, but obedience, and speaks to men as himself a revealer of God's will, who has a right to say, "Thus saith the Lord."

There are four points in the personal comparison between "the founders" of Christianity and Islam, wherein the inferiority of the "Prophet of Arabia" to the "Prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee" can be so plainly established as to show the utter inadequacy of Muhammadanism as a substitute for Christianity, and the impropriety of regarding it as a pioneer of Christianity in the mission field.

The historical position of Muhammad is later, his alleged claims are less, his personal character is lower, and the actual revelation of God's nature and purposes through him is *nil*, as compared with the position, the claims, the character, and the revelation of Christ.

I. *Originality.*—Muhammad never professed to be an original teacher. "I am no apostle of new doctrines," he represented himself as commanded to say, and he frequently poses, so to speak, as one who merely attests the preceding scriptures. In answer to the taunt that the Koran was "an old lying legend," it is said, "Before the Koran was the book of Moses, a rule and a mercy; and this book confirmeth it in the Arabic tongue."[1] Again, "This Koran could not have been devised by any but God; but it confirmeth what was revealed before it, and is a clearing up of the Scriptures, there is no doubt thereof, from the Lord of all creatures" (S. x. 38).

[1] Sura xlvi. 2. In quoting the Koran I use Rodwell's translation; but cite the Suras according to the old numeration.

In another place, "The book which Moses brought" is called "a light and guidance to man." And in the Sura, entitled "Counsel" (S. xlii. 11), there occurs this notable passage: "To you hath He prescribed the faith which He commanded unto Noah, and which we (*i.e.*, God) have revealed unto thee, and which we commanded unto Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus, saying, Observe this faith, and be not divided into sects therein. Intolerable to those who worship idols jointly with God."

It is, indeed, evident from a perusal of the Koran that the religious doctrines which Muhammad promulgates are entirely dependent upon what he had gathered from his intercourse with Jews and Christians, and from "the theological words and phrases" which were to some extent current in Arabia by reason of what Sir W. Muir calls "the naturalization of Judaism and Christianity" in that country.

This consideration deposes Muhammad from any solid pretension to the independent position which must belong to the founder of a new religion which is to rival, or be the substitute for, Christianity. Jesus Christ came, indeed, to fulfil "preceding Scriptures," "the law and the prophets," but He added such a further and original revelation of God's nature and purposes as had never before been made, and so established an essentially "*new* covenant," which disannulled the foregoing dispensation and brought in a better hope. The older Judaism is rightly regarded as "a pioneer of Christianity." Moses and the prophets prepared for and proclaimed the Coming One. In that older religion were the antecedent conditions from which, by a divinely providential evolution, was to be developed, although not without a special supernatural interposition, the universal religion for mankind in the person and work of the Messiah.

But Muhammadanism, by reason of its later historical position, must either supersede Christianity or concede its superior claims. Muhammad himself, in the Koran, regards Jesus as a prophet divinely sent and commissioned; yet, from ignorance of His real teaching and claims, he in effect repudiates the essential verities of Christ's Divine Sonship and atoning death, and proclaims himself as THE prophet of the one God.

Those who will be at the pains to collect the various passages in the Koran where mention is made of Jesus will perceive what a very limited knowledge Muhammad possessed of Christ's teaching; whilst they will also perceive that a distinct impression of reverence for Jesus had been made upon Muhammad's mind, even by the distorted narratives and fragmentary traditions, through which the Arabian reformer had

acquired his information concerning one whom he calls "El Messih, Isa ben Mariam," "illustrious in this world and the next," to whom the *Injil* (Evangel) had been given, and who was to be an apostle to the children of Israel. It is quite an exaggeration to say, as Washington Irving does, that Muhammad "had drunk deep of the living waters of Christianity"; but the reverence with which he regards the position of Jesus is certainly remarkable.

In one passage of the Koran (Sura lxi. 6) Muhammad seeks support for his own mission in an alleged prediction by Jesus, which is thus stated: "Remember when Jesus, the Son of Mary, said, O children of Israel, of a truth I am God's apostle to confirm the law which was given before me, and to announce an apostle that shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad." This assertion, which exhibits at once the ignorance of the prophet concerning the words of Christ, and his desire to be connected with the regard paid to the Messiah of the Jews, seems to have originated in a misunderstanding of the term *Parakletos* applied to the Holy Spirit, which was taken as if it were *Periklytus*, and meant "praised" or "illustrious," which is the meaning of Muhammad.

Muhammad claims to be the successor of former prophets and of Jesus. If he had stood in the same relation to Jesus as Jesus did to Moses, then the later date of the Arabian prophet would be no bar to his claim to be a special apostle of God; but it is historically and palpably evident that the special truths which Jesus proclaimed about God are a vast advance upon what Moses taught; are unique in the history of all religious thought and teaching; and were unknown to Muhammad, whilst the truths which Muhammad proclaims about God are old truths known already to Jews and Christians, which could not in any respect be regarded as superseding what had been already taught, and were not supplemented by any new revelations or development of revelation, through Muhammad, such as were adapted to bring God nearer to men, or men nearer to God. Muhammad's claims to consideration as "the prophet of God" must therefore fall to the ground when once men recognise the fact that, coming after Christ and professing to be His successor, he advances no new doctrine, and is ignorant of the essentials of the Christian faith, although (and it is a noteworthy fact) he commends as divine revelations the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.[1] Muhammad was neither a *forerunner* like Moses

[1] Sir W. Muir has done excellent service to the cause of Christianity, and to missionaries who desire to convert Moslems to the purer faith, by his careful collection of testimonies from the Koran to the reverence and respect which Muhammad both felt and enjoined for the Scriptures.

or Elijah or John the Baptist, nor was he a *fulfiller* like Christ, in the sense of bringing out the deeper meaning of former revelations, nor was he a *revealer* of new truths communicated through him by God to mankind. His historical position as a spiritual teacher is an entirely dependent one, and his gross ignorance of the law and gospel, which he commended as divinely authoritative, manifests his incompetency to be regarded as a trustworthy guide.

II. *Authority.*—The contrast between the credentials and claims of Christ and those of Muhammad is a very striking one. "There is no position more satisfactorily established by the Corân," says Sir W. Muir, "than that Mahomet did not in any part of his career perform miracles, or pretend to perform them." After Muhammad's death his followers attributed many miraculous acts to him, but the prophet himself never ventured to assert the power of working miracles; and passages in the Koran occur which are obviously inserted to explain the absence of these credentials to a divine mission. The Koran is pointed out as a sufficient miracle to convince gainsayers who were not hardened by unbelief. The following passage (S. xvii. 90-95) is worth quoting:

> Say: verily, were men and Djinn assembled to produce the like of this Koran, they would not produce its like, though the one should help the other. And of a truth, we have set out to men every kind of similitude in this Koran, but most men have refused everything except unbelief. And they say, "By no means will we believe on thee till thou cause a fountain to gush forth for us from the earth; or, till thou have a garden of palm-trees and grapes, and thou cause forth-gushing rivers to gush forth in its midst; or thou make the heavens to fall on us, as thou hast given out, in pieces; or thou bring God and the angels to vouch for thee; or thou mount up into heaven; nor will we believe in thy mounting up, till thou send down to us a book which we may read." Say: Praise be to my Lord! Am I more than a man, an apostle?

Muhammad was, then, confessedly without these proofs of an extraordinary mission from God, which he alleges as evidential of the mission of Moses and of Jesus. He performed no miracles. Nor did he directly assert any divine prerogative. He confessed himself to be a sinner, needing God's pardoning mercy for "earlier and later" faults. He made no promises in his own name, nor did he direct men to believe in himself as one able to forgive sins, to refresh souls, to send from heaven the Spirit of God, or as one who was Himself, personally, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The self-assertion of Christ was a mysterious, constant, and astonishing feature in a life of humiliation and self-sacrifice.

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of the Jew and the Christian. (These testimonies, first published in 1853, have been brought out again in a convenient form in the S.P.C.K. series of books on "Non-Christian Religious Systems," with a useful preface containing some account of "The Corân" itself.)

The nature of Muhammad's self-assertion is totally different. It was not calm nor consistent. It was at first, perhaps, the product of a conscientious conviction that he had found the truth, and was prepared to teach it at all hazards. He asserted himself as an enthusiast, and as one who, to some extent, felt empowered to proclaim truth in an authoritative manner. But this enthusiastic self-assertion became mingled with worldly and selfish impulses, when he had gained a position in which the power of the sword, and the command of warriors, combined with his pretensions to be the Prophet of God, enabled him to act as a despotic chief: and then, it was as a ruler of adherents—not as an all-sufficient Saviour, the object of faith and worship—that he claimed and accepted the homage which men paid rather to the success of his arms than to the spiritual pretensions of his mission.

The claims of Jesus Christ were self-consistent, spiritual, sublime. They never wavered; were never tainted with earthly ambition; and were corroborated by the miracles which He performed, and by the supernatural close of His career upon earth. Jesus distinctly alleged the mighty works which He did as credentials of His mission from God (John x. 37-38, xiv. 11, xv. 24). He sent forth His disciples to proclaim Him as the central object of the revelations made in "the Scriptures" of old, and as One in whose Name repentance and remission of sins were to be preached among all nations. The resurrection from the grave, and subsequent ascension of Christ into heaven, were the crowning proofs of the claims which Christ made; and the resurrection, together with the ascension, formed the fundamental basis of the earliest Christian preaching, which recognised and proclaimed, in the risen and ascended Jesus, Him whom God did "exalt to be a Prince and Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins."

Of these claims by Jesus, Muhammad seems to have known nothing accurately, or in the way of actual history. In the Koran the Crucifixion is represented as not being the crucifixion of Christ, but of someone in "His likeness"[1] (S. iv. 156),

[1] This is apparently a "docetic" legend derived from some apocryphal document, and is again referred to in S. iii. 47; where the verse, "And the Jews plotted, and God plotted. But of those who plot, God is best," is supposed to allude to some substitution by God of another person in the place of Jesus at the time of the crucifixion. See an interesting note *ad loc.*, in Sale, which gives various details as to this "crucifixion *in effigy*." Rodwell in a note on the same verse says, "It would seem also from Sura xix. 34, that Muhammad supposed Jesus to have died a natural death, though it is nowhere said how long he continued in that state. The Muhammadans believe that Jesus, on his return to earth at the end of the world, will slay the Antichrist, die and be raised again. A vacant place is reserved for his body in the Prophet's tomb at Medina."

and nothing about the resurrection or ascension of Jesus is mentioned that can be traced to the actual accounts of these events in the Gospels.

Jesus is, according to the Koran, only a servant of God, and not the Son of God; a "favoured" servant, but nothing more. His Divine claims are ridiculed and denied, as in the two following passages from the Koran: "The Jews say, 'Ezra is a son of God;' and the Christians say, 'The Messiah is a son of God.' Such are the sayings in their mouths. They resemble the sayings of the infidels of old! God do battle with them! How are they misguided! They take their teachers, and their monks, and the Messiah, son of Mary, for Lords beside God, though bidden to worship God only. There is no God but He! Far from His glory be what they associate with Him!" (S. ix. 30, 31). Again: "It beseemeth not a man that God should give him the Scriptures, and the wisdom, and the gift of prophecy, and that then he should say to his followers, 'Be ye worshippers of me as well as of God'; but rather, 'Be ye perfect in things pertaining to God, since ye know the Scriptures, and have studied deep.' God doth not command you to take the angels or prophets as *lords*" (*i.e.*, to call them by the title which is only due to God) (S. iii. 73, 74).

Regarding Jesus as a former prophet, to whom God had granted signs, and whom He strengthened with "the Holy Spirit" (by this term perhaps meaning the angel Gabriel), Muhammad is yet entirely ignorant of the New Testament account of Christ, and claims to be a successor of Jesus, as of other apostles, "who have passed away." "Muhammad is no more than an apostle," says one verse of the Koran. "Other apostles have already passed away before him; if he die, therefore, or be slain, will ye turn upon your heels?"

Muhammad alleged no miraculous credentials; he put forward no Divine claims; he gained no conquest over the power of death; he did not assert any pretension to be the vicegerent of Divine Providence unto the end of the world, or to be the judge of the quick and the dead: yet Christ made all these claims; and Muhammad, who says that God sent him to clear up previous revelations, is so ignorant of the authority claimed by Christ, that he can venture to put himself forward as THE Teacher to be obeyed, and to say, "Whoso believe and do things that are right, and believe in what hath been sent down to Muhammad—for it is the truth from their Lord—their sins will He cancel and dispose their hearts aright" (S. xlvii. 2). He calls upon men to "obey God and His Apostle," and to substitute for all other religious creeds the simple assertion, "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the Apostle of God."

Upon what authority, then, do Muhammad's claims rest? Upon the sole fact whether he taught the truth from God or not, and this, it is historically evident from the comparison with the New Testament, he did not do; while it is still more evident from the character and the composition of the Koran that he did not hesitate to ascribe to God what he himself wished people to believe as truth. The *ipse dixit* of Muhammad is a poor foundation on which to build up a religion for the world! This "Prophet" is to be admired for his enthusiasm, pitied for his ignorance, and blamed for his arrogance: he certainly cannot be followed as God's Apostle! "*Sans autorité*," says Pascal; "il faudrait donc que ses raisons fussent bien puissantes n'ayant que leur propre force. Que dit-il donc? *Qu'il faut le croire.*" Believe him? Where are his credentials? He is erring, fallible, inconsistent, ignorant of the very revelations which he professes to confirm and seal. We shall be assuredly right in refusing to let this man reign over us.

III. *Character.*—On the point of character much need not be said, for the contrast between Christ and Muhammad is obvious and undeniable. Christ's character, even in the judgment of non-believers, is perfect and blameless. Muhammad's character is, taken at its best, imperfect and sinful.

Without going back to any of the bitter expressions of former controversial writers against Muhammadanism, or to the misconception of the Prophet of Mecca as "a wicked impostor" from the beginning, we are yet constrained by any careful consideration of the facts of the case to assent to the view that Muhammad was "led away by the demon of spiritual pride and ambition" to mar the earlier enthusiasm of his reforming career by the haughty arrogance, and lust, and cruel treachery which occasionally show themselves in his acts and pretended revelations at Medina. It is undoubtedly true that "the course at Medina proves that Mahomet was not led by the Spirit of God." So writes Sir W. Muir; and all writers agree that, after the Hegira, a change came across the character of Muhammad. The persuasive, earnest enthusiast for a purer form of religion becomes the imperious, dogmatic, and crafty chieftain. Instead of our being led to contemplate with sympathy the conscientious reformer of his countrymen's idolatrous worship, as he exhibits deep mental struggles, and passionately promulgates what he believes to be highest truth, and steadfastly encounters persecution and opposition for conscience' sake, we have to look, with a growing sense of disappointment and repulsion, on the picture of a character which degenerates as outward prosperity increases. We see the man yielding to baser earthly influences, and coming down

from the heights of moral conviction to the lowlying lands of selfish expediency; and thus, instead of strenuous efforts to persuade and teach better truths, we have "the life of rule, and rapine, and indulgence" which characterised the Medina portion of Muhammad's career.

The utmost that apologists can do for him is to extenuate his wrong acts, either by ingenious pleas (as those advanced by Syed Ameer Ali in his chapter on "The Marriages of the Prophet"), or by appealing to the known infirmity of human nature. Muhammad's conduct in the matter of Zeinab and of Mary the Copt has been recognised even by eulogists of the prophet as an "indelible stain" upon his memory.

There was a saying prevalent among the early Moslems that "the character" of Muhammad "was the Koran." And in its mixture of enthusiasm and petulance; its incoherence and passion; its strength of assertions concerning God; and the intellectual feebleness exhibited in some of the legendary portions of the book; its blended utterances of fierce vindictiveness and broad tolerance, of poetic fervour and oracular dogmatism, of pious aspirations and politic denunciations; it does indeed reflect a strange composite character, in which faith, fanaticism, self-will, self-deception and craftiness are wonderfully interwoven.

If the absence of proper credentials be a reason why Muhammad's claims should be repudiated, this exhibition of unsatisfactory and inconsistent character renders his requirement of allegiance, as a religious teacher, still weaker and more unreliable; and it renders him utterly unworthy of being placed by the side of Christ, as entitled to the esteem and obedience of those who are seeking for the truth of God.

Christ's conduct was throughout true and sincere, and consistent, and unworldly: Muhammad's career began, we may scarcely doubt, with honest earnestness, but it became soon characterized by "culpable self-deception;" and the employment of deceit and treachery for the accomplishment of worldly purposes, and the use of violent measures in the name of religion and with the pretext of forwarding it, show that he who began as a true prophet ended by being a false one.

Christ's standard and pattern of purity, and love, and self-sacrifice are generally recognised as the *ne plus ultra* of ethical ideal. But Muhammad's life and teaching are, in many instances, admitted to be blameworthy, or, at any rate, to require such vindicatory excuses as effectually preclude us from looking up to the professed religious teacher as the example of religious life.

This should not, indeed, prevent us from giving him all the

credit due to the enthusiasm for truth as it was known to him, and to the bravery, or kindliness, or patience which are recorded of him. We are not precluded from considering him to be, in relation to the circumstances in which he was placed, a great man, and a great reformer: but we are precluded from proffering him moral allegiance, and we are constrained to put him upon a moral level so very far below Jesus of Nazareth, as to deprive him of all the authority due to a consistently holy life, and of all the corroborative support which such a life affords to the doctrines which the man who lives it inculcates.

IV. *Revelation.*—We have somewhat anticipated discussion as to whether Muhammad can be esteemed a *revealer* of Divine truth, in what has been already said about his dependence for his religious doctrines upon the truths which he had gleaned from intercourse with Jews and Christians. But it is worth while to lay distinct emphasis not only upon the general fact that the religion of Muhammad was entirely wanting in originality, but also upon the specific fact that the Koran, though alleged to be a Divine revelation, is in truth nothing of the sort. It is, and has been clearly shown to be, *a fabrication* by Muhammad, and not *a revelation* from God.

The careful study of it is a very effectual confutation of its claims to be considered as a Divine revelation "from the Lord of the worlds," "a glorious Koran written on a preserved table" [*i.e.*, in heaven]. It professes to be the very words of God throughout, and stands, therefore, on a very different ground from that upon which the Old and New Testament Scriptures stand. The Koran is found to be a fictitious collection of pretended divine oracles. It is unhistorical. In the books of the Bible we have a progressive course of history, in the development of which we have records of divine messages and divine interpositions; but the Suras of the Koran were delivered by one man, during some twenty-three years, in portions of different lengths, "smaller or greater as the case required;" and, although God is said to be the speaker throughout, contain palpable mistakes, puerilities, confusions, and childish fables, which are mingled with the nobler poetic sections and the more prosaic, dogmatic and juridical utterances.

We have already remarked upon Muhammad's ignorance of the New Testament. The knowledge of Old Testament events and persons which he possessed was also very fragmentary and confused. He mixes up names in a curious order, as in the following passage: God is made to say, "We gave unto him [*i.e.*, Abraham] Isaac and Jacob, and guided both aright; and we had before guided Noah; and among the

descendants, David and Solomon, and Job and Joseph, and Moses and Aaron; thus do we recompense the righteous: and Zachariah, John, Jesus, and Elias: all were just persons, and Ismael and Elisha, and Jonas and Lot: all these were favoured above mankind" (S. vi. 84-86).

Nor is it ignorance alone that is exhibited in this alleged revelation. Contradictory passages occur which are clumsily harmonized by the convenient doctrine of abrogation, which is thus expressed in one of the earliest Medina Suras (ii. 100), "Whatever verses we cancel, or cause thee to forget, we bring a better or its like. Knowest thou not that God hath power over all things?"[1]

To ignorance and inconsistency, another and a baser feature must be added as the result of an analytical criticism of the Koran. It is made a vehicle of personal invective against enemies, and of providing "authority" for what would have been otherwise shameful and unlawful acts on the part of the prophet in reference to women.

As a literary composition, the Koran has undoubted merits, when viewed in relation to its author and his circumstances; and "its literary merit is of course magnified by the extraordinary disadvantages under which it was composed." As reflecting the varying phases of Muhammad's enthusiastic and eager impulses, and the religious tendencies which at first shaped his own career, and were then by him moulded into an instrument of rule and warfare,—such as astonished the world, and affected its whole history—the Koran is worthy both of study and of wonder. But as "a revelation," it is *nil*. To the Arabians, indeed, it was, as has been remarked by Mr. Rodwell, "an unquestionable blessing" in some respects, and to them it was "an accession of truth." To the Jew and the Christian, the Koran stands self-condemned, both by its contents and by its pretensions, as an imposture and an impertinence, when it is put forth as the Word of God.

Admire it we may: reverence it we cannot. There is poetry and passion in it; and its denunciations against idolators, and its conceptions of the might and majesty of God, and some of its precepts and rules, may command a measure of respect. But the method of its promulgation stamps it with the stigma of deception; and the ignorance displayed in it of the very Scriptures which it pretends to confirm refutes the Arabian prophet, so so speak, out of his own mouth, and convicts him of falsehood.

[1] In this same Sura a divine command is produced, by which "the sacred Mosque" of Mecca is made the "Kebla" to which worshippers should turn when they pray, instead of to Jerusalem, which was the first "Kebla," enjoined by Muhammad for the purpose of ingratiating the Jews.

Marvellous as a compilation of Muhammad's energy and cleverness, and a testimony to a considerable amount of moral earnestness, it contains no revelation of God's line of promise and purpose, save the fragmentary and distorted reflections of what may be found, authentically and *in situ*, in the Old and New Testaments. It does not, like the Old Testament, contain any historical development of divine revelation; nor does it, like the New Testament, present an historical revelation of God.

The profound doctrine of the Trinity as emerging from the fact of the Incarnation of the Divine Word; the significance of the Incarnation itself, and that atoning death of the Christ of God which the Incarnation involved, with all the wondrous consequent issues of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and of the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the first band of Christ's disciples; and the superstructure upon these revelations of God, which is the Church of Christ—are inconsistent with Islam, and are repudiated by the followers of Muhammad. What is there in the Koran to compare with them or to compensate for their absence? or to give men a right to supersede these "former revelations?"

We have now suggested four lines of comparison whereby the relative claims of Christianity and Islam upon the reason and conscience of men may be fairly estimated.

Other arguments, which are of validity as against the religion of the Koran, are supplied by the character of Moslem conquest and rule; by the inelasticity of the legalism which is based upon the Koran; by the virtual support which the Muhammadan system gives to polygamy and slavery; by the low view of women which it encourages by the incompleteness of its moral standard; and by the absence of any satisfying truths concerning mediation and reconciliation between man as sinful and God as holy. But the four points of comparison already set forth are quite sufficient to settle the original question raised. If these be fairly considered, men will have enough both of historical and logical argument to convince them that Islam should rather be regarded as a strange "heresy," than as an independent religious doctrine. It is, therefore, not a rival claimant, with merits of its own, to be considered; but it is a distinct antagonist to Christianity, so far as it falls short of, misconceives, or traduces, the real historical doctrine of the Jesus whom Muhammad professed to reverence, and yet in reality did not understand.

All action in relation to missionary effort among non-Christians must ultimately rest upon the settlement of the question, "To WHOM shall we go for the words of eternal life?"

It is not enough to compare the philosophical or ethical

aspects of one and another system of religion. It is a mistake to treat of civilization as if it could be treated independently of evangelization concerning God, and to regard material prosperity as the sole gauge of true success. It is not enough to point to conquered cities, and realms subdued, and large range of empire. The only warrant of true elevation and progress is the possession of real knowledge concerning the Eternal God as in relation to human history, and to the deepest springs of human action. Whence, save from the Christian's creed, and where, more satisfactorily than in the Christian's creed, can such knowledge be obtained? WHO has revealed God, and the things of God, most and best?

Jesus Christ of Nazareth claimed to be the Teacher sent from God, before whom all others should rightly yield place. He claimed to be in intimate and mysterious union with the Father who sent Him. His life, His works, His teaching, His resurrection and ascension, corroborated the claims which He advanced to be the Revealer of God and the Redeemer of men.

Jesus Christ answered to the predictions which had gone before, among the Jewish people, of a coming Saviour. He announced the glad tidings of God's love for all, and asserted that to Himself had been given all authority in heaven and earth, and that in His Name repentance and remission of sins should be everywhere proclaimed.

Faith in the crucified and risen Jesus grew into a creed, which has, without doubt, effected a vast moral transformation both in individual souls and in society at large. And everything that is most pure, and elevating, and hopeful, and philanthropic in modern civilization can be traced to the working of the spirit of Christianity, which is the Spirit of Christ.

There are no claims, no moral influence, no personal force for good, like those of Jesus Christ; and, best of all, in Him is the living Mediator between God and man, such as the religious spirit in man always yearns for, and can never fully find, save in Him. In Him, *Deus descendit, ut nos assurgamus.*

How can those who have gone unto Him for truth, and have been brought to know and feel that HE has the words of eternal life, recommend to others any Teacher as supreme, any Saviour as sufficient, save Him?

We may, indeed, welcome the *testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ,* so far as it appears in the consciences of men. We may welcome all elements of moral and religious truth which may appear in any scheme of philosophy, or any form of worship amongst men. The mystical aspirations which characterize some forms of lyrical poetry, and the sententious maxims which embody, or indicate, the meditative results of the

ethical tendency in the human mind, may be often recognised as allied to the religious truths which we hold most sacred. And, assuredly, we should gladly recognise as common ground whatever there is in Islam of truth concerning God, and of acknowledgments that make for Christianity. But as we cannot put, complacently, in one Pantheon Socrates, and Buddha, and Confucius, and Christ, and honour all alike, so we cannot, without treason to truth, permit Muhammad to be placed before any, even "lower races," as an alternative prophet to the Lord Jesus Christ. W. SAUMAREZ SMITH.

ART. IV.—THE CLERICAL BAGMAN.

TO the curate who has rashly given his heart to undowered beauty and worth, who wants to marry, but sees no speedy prospect of a rectory, such an advertisement as the following is not without its attraction:

> WANTED immediately by the Society for the Promotion of . . . ., etc., a Clerical District Secretary. £300 per annum and travelling expenses.—Apply, with testimonials, to Secretary, 47, Temple Court Square, London.

It is true that the curate may not know much about the Society in question; but, when he makes inquiry, he finds that its objects are excellent, its work is undeniable, and that it has secured the services of many good men, and the support of quite a number of enthusiastic contributors. Fathers of the Church direct its management, Bishops are its patrons, noble and distinguished laymen have occupied its presidential chair. Why should he not master the details of this new work, make this cause his own, and give some good service in return for his wage? So he sometimes seals his fate, and, by one quick leap out of curatedom, condemns himself to wander for years in that intermediary limbo which lies outside the desired rest of the beneficed.

Not that I would assert that the life of a travelling secretary is for a man a fruitless one. Far from it. It might be sufficient to say that he is doing a necessary work which demands his best efforts. That is in itself enough to ennoble the life of any man. But apart from this, he will be brought into contact with many men, and many modes of religious life. He will have to adapt his voice and style to many buildings and many widely different audiences. He will have opportunities of platform speaking and lecturing such as are not within the reach of the ordinary curate. All this should shape him, if he is shapeable, into a ready and efficient man. The work of a travelling secretary to one of our great Church Societies, if not