

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

attestation our Lord's attitude will be weighty indeed. Conservative criticism has been inclined to depend too completely on our Lord's attestation, an attestation which has in consequence been explained away by a new exegesis of His own words or by an illegitimately extended theory of the *κένωσις*. It is only now that extremer critics are being met in dispassionate language on their own ground, and it is being shown that true scholarship can use the weapons of criticism in the furtherance of the conservative position. It is not intended here to depreciate the attestation of our Lord : God forbid ! It is only intended to emphasize that which we are beginning to see is a fact—viz., that the best human scholarship, in its quest for truth, will sooner or later have to sit at the feet of the infallible Teacher, and see that after all it has only discovered afresh, perhaps in a fuller realization, what He told them long ago.

For the rest let this suffice. The self-emptying of our Lord was a reality : it was based on His everlasting love, knowing but the limits of love and truth, and its depth and height we shall never know or understand until we realize the fullness of His love and truth in His presence ; and meanwhile He is our perfect Saviour, our infallible Lord, very man and very God.



The Effects of Mohammedanism.

BY THE REV. C. T. WILSON, M.A.

IN seeking to arrive at a true estimate of the effects and results of Islâm in their various aspects, two dangers have to be avoided. On the one hand one must beware of the Scylla of regarding Islâm as wholly void of any good features in doctrine or practice ; and on the other of the Charybdis of claiming for it a position but little inferior to the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Islâm has, unquestionably, a measure of truth in it ; and

when we contrast it with the more degraded forms of heathenism, such as, *e.g.*, obtain in Africa, we are inclined to say, a considerable measure. This, no doubt, explains in a large degree the success of Mohammedan propaganda in Africa. To ascribe that success to the sensual gratification which Islâm allows is a very inadequate explanation. Such permission is, no doubt, a factor in the case, but not by any means the only one nor the most important. The human soul has longings and aspirations which heathenism has nothing to satisfy. Islâm does in some measure meet them, however imperfectly as compared with our holy religion. Take, for instance, the longing for the certainty of a future life. Heathenism knows nothing of it, but Islâm teaches it as clearly as Christianity. At a meeting at the C.M.S. house, Sir Apolo Kagwa, the present Prime Minister of Uganda, gave a brief outline of the story of his life, and said that the first thing which drew him, a heathen lad, to the Christian faith was the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Doubtless there are many in Africa who, through the apathy of the Christian Church, have never yet heard the story of the Cross, but who have found in the fact of a future life of the body, so clearly taught by Islâm, something better than the hopeless despair of heathenism.

Let us glance now for a moment at the better side of the teaching of Islâm, as it is an advance on the life and doctrines of heathenism. The great distinguishing tenet of Islâm is the unity of God in its strictest sense—*i.e.*, Islâm is both henotheistic and monotheistic; as against the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity it is the former, and as against the polytheism of paganism it is the latter. It is absolutely and entirely intolerant of any and every form of idolatry, holding even the work of the painter and sculptor guilty of that sin. It teaches that every "believer" is equal in the sight of God. It holds tenaciously, as already stated, the doctrine of a general resurrection and of a never-ending life after death, and, as a necessary corollary, a final judgment of all mankind and the eternal happiness of the good and everlasting misery of the wicked.

It goes without saying that, where these doctrines are honestly accepted, there will be, especially in the case of the followers of the grosser forms of idolatry, a decided advance up to a certain point. The greater measure of truth in Islâm in these particulars is sufficient to account for this. This larger element of truth, however, makes dealing with the falsehoods of Islâm all the harder, in accordance with the trite adage that a half lie is far harder to refute than a whole one.

It is the evil results of Mohammedanism which we now turn to study. To understand rightly the practical tendency of this faith, we must pause a moment to consider its sources and foundation, for these are more complex than is commonly supposed. The Korân is, of course, the primary source of Islâm, but not by any means its only one. Indeed, were the Korân strictly adhered to and its teachings truly followed, Islâm would be far other than it is to-day. If one may coin a phrase, there are to-day no Korân Moslems. The teaching of the Mohammedans' sacred book has been enlarged, expanded, and, to a considerable extent, altered by three other sources. The most important of these is "Tradition." An enormous mass of sayings not found in the Korân, but attributed to Mohammed, lies scattered through Moslem literature. Four thousand of these "sayings" are held to be authentic, and have great weight with orthodox Moslems in matters of faith and doctrine. Next comes what may best be described by a term borrowed from the Romish controversy, as "The General Consent of the Fathers," consisting of a number of pronouncements by the great teachers of Islâm on a variety of points of doctrine and practice, and, finally, "The Rule of Faith," which, like the creeds with us, is a more or less authoritative embodiment of the tenets of Islâm. These three supplementary sources, often doubtless contradictory, and certainly frequently opposed to the words of the Korân, have made Islâm what it is to-day, and produced the results which we now turn to examine.

It will help to make the subject clearer if we look at these results under four heads, premising, however, that all four

are of necessity more or less closely intertwined one with another. These four heads are the political, social, personal, and religious effects of Mohammedanism.

I. Political. As we read the Korân a great development is observed in the scope and objective of the Prophet's aims. In the early Suras he distinctly disclaims any universal commission, saying that he is only a messenger, or apostle, to the Arabian peoples and in the Arabic tongue. As time went on and the acceptance of his claims became more assured, the scope of his mission widened, until, finally, it embraced the whole earth, and now the orthodox Moslem confidently anticipates the time when all the world will acknowledge Mohammed, and the Kalimat "There is no god but God, and Mohammed is the Apostle of God" will be the one universal creed.

In the Korân the attitude taken up towards non-Moslem tribes and nations was one of open hostility, and the true believer was bidden to fight against all such until either they embraced Islâm or were enslaved. The reason of this injunction was, no doubt, the hope of attracting to his standard the Bedouin tribes, to whom war and plunder were the very breath of their nostrils. In this Mohammed was not disappointed; but for this temporary advantage he introduced into Islâm an element which will certainly prove its destruction, in accordance with our blessed Lord's words, "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword." Such, then, is the attitude of Moslem nations towards all others. We are perhaps too apt to forget this, because the Mohammedan peoples of the world are not now in a position to throw down the gauntlet to the rest of the nations; but the spirit of it nevertheless remains. The Imâm, who preaches on Fridays in the mosque to the "faithful," frequently holds a sword in his hand. In the great Mohammedan University of El Azhar in Cairo the following prayer is recited daily: "I seek refuge with Allah from Satan the accursed! In the name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful! Oh, Lord of all creatures! Oh, Allah! destroy the

infidels and polytheists, Thine enemies and the enemies of the religion! Oh, Allah, make their children orphans and defile their abodes. Cause their feet to slip; give them and their families, their households and their women, their children and their relations by marriage, their brothers and their friends, their possessions and their race, their wealth and their lands as booty to the Moslems, Oh Lord of all creatures."

About ten years ago the Turks took for the first time effective possession of the town of Kerak in Moab. The population was a mixed one of Christians and Moslems who had been in the habit of using, one to the other, the usual Moslem salutation of "Es Salaam aleikum" (Peace be upon you). No sooner were the Turks in possession than an order was issued by the governor forbidding the practice on the ground that there was no peace between Moslems and Christians! Such is the effect politically of Islâm, and should anything ever unite the 240,000,000 of Mohammedans in a Jehâd or Holy War, it would be one of the most terrible combinations which this war-worn earth of ours has ever seen. Such a contingency is, of course, extremely remote and is rendered still more so by the numerous, and often mutually antagonistic, sects of Islâm; still, we must never forget that the spirit of hostility is there and in Moslem theology, "Dar ul harb," a land against which war must be waged, is the technical term for all non-Moslem lands.

This fact shows (to turn aside for a moment to another subject) the tremendous importance of the success of Christian arms during the last fifty years against Moslem armies, and in particular the crushing defeat of the power of the Mahdi by England. One can but hope and pray that these events will make thoughtful Mohammedans ask the question: "Can Islâm be, after all, the one true faith?"

II. We now turn to look at the second aspect of the results of Islâm—viz., the Social. Soon after the death of Mohammed the Khalifa Omar made a decree that when a Christian country was conquered by Moslems half the churches were to be handed

over to the victors to be used as mosques. In this way many of the finest buildings of Byzantine Christendom, such as Chrysostom's Church of the Holy Wisdom at Constantinople, the great church of Damascus, and Justinian's noble basilica at Jerusalem became, and are at this day, Mohammedan places of worship. Omar considered, no doubt, that he was acting in a generous spirit towards the Christians, but subsequent generations of Moslems added more and more to the heavy yoke which the earlier conquerors laid on the unhappy followers of Jesus Christ. Christians were denied all civil rights; their evidence was inadmissible in a court of law; in the towns they had to confine themselves to degrading occupations, to wear a distinctive dress; in any public place should a Christian inadvertently sit down on the right hand of a Moslem he was instantly greeted with cries of "Ishmal ya Nusrâni!" (Go to the left, you Nazarene!) In Damascus, till within quite recent times, no Christian was allowed to walk on the side paths, but had to go in the centre of the road with the cattle and beasts of burden. When a Christian died permission had to be obtained from the local authority for his burial, a permission which was couched in the following terms: "I, So-and-so, give permission for the burial of So-and-so, son of So-and-so, the damned, lest the smell of his corpse should injure a Moslem." This was in force till a few years ago. In Damascus, till within the memory of many still living, the Moslems claimed from the Christians, and in many cases exacted, the horrible right known in Europe in the Middle Ages as "*Jus primæ noctis*."

To the Moslem all non-Mohammedans, and especially all Christians, were dogs and unclean. Thus the Khalifa Omar, already mentioned, writing just before the battle of the Yarmuk to the Byzantine General Nicephoros, thus addressed him: "Omar, to the Roman dog Nicephoros."

The intolerance and exclusiveness, thus engendered, have no doubt been among the greatest hindrances to the acceptance, by the Moslems, of the faith of Jesus Christ. How few would care even to inquire into the tenets of a religion the profession of

which carried with it such tremendous civil disabilities and involved such complete social ostracism !

III. The evil effects of Islâm on the individual are the most disastrous of all. Whatever Mohammed may have been in his earlier days—and few, I think, will deny that at the beginning of his career, while his first wife Khadijeh was living, he was sincere—he was during his later life a thoroughly vicious man. This feature of his character is strongly reflected in the Korân. That book sanctions the utmost facility for divorce. It is true that it limits a man to four legal wives at any one time. A limit, by the way, which Mohammed himself did not observe. But a man may at his mere caprice divorce any of his wives or all of them, and marry others, while in the matters of concubines and female slaves Islâm imposes no limits and no restrictions whatever. Another law prescribes that should a man, after divorcing one of his legal wives, wish to cancel the divorce and live with her again, he may not do so until the woman has been meanwhile married to another man and divorced by him. It often happens, especially among the richer classes, that a man in a fit of ill-temper will divorce one of his wives and in a day or two repent it and wish her back again. So he goes to a man who, for a consideration, marries the woman for one day and divorces her the next, when she is free to return to her former husband. In Constantinople there are men who get their living by this horrible trade.

It goes without saying that such ideas and practices degrade marriage into a mere means for gratifying men's lusts and passions and make women but toys, playthings, or worse. When the women are thus regarded—they who are the mothers of the succeeding generation—can one wonder if there be little or no idea of holiness connected with their conception of God ?

The Moslems, indeed, glory in the adulteries and vile amours of their Prophet, for which he claimed to have the direct sanction of the Almighty. It is, however, only fair to say that there are, in practice, many circumstances which, happily, tend to restrain

the vices of the people in this matter. Poverty prevents many a man from marrying altogether, or till well on towards middle life, and when married, makes it impossible for him to afford a second partner. The fear of making an enemy of an influential father or brother will frequently keep a man from divorcing a wife, whom otherwise he would certainly dispense with in favour of a younger or prettier woman. In the case of the two great aristocratic families of Jerusalem, the Khâlidî and the Hassêni, it is a kind of code of honour with the men never to have more than one wife and never to divorce her, and I know this to be faithfully observed even when the wife is childless. It must be remembered, however, that this does not apply to concubines. The Moslem idea of woman is that she is never chaste except she be kept under lock and key. This belief runs through all their literature.

The story of "The Arabian Nights" in the original (even in the expurgated editions) turns entirely on this idea, and the same is true of many of the tales which make up the rest of the book. This is the idea which led to the custom of guarding the women of the harîms of Pashas and Sultans, and to the veiling of women in public. Here, again, especially among the fellahin or peasantry, we find circumstances mitigating the evil results of this degraded idea of woman. Their very poverty is a blessing. A peasant cannot afford to keep his wife shut up; she has to help him in his work, cook his food, make his clothes, take the produce of field and vineyard, garden and oliveyard, to the town for sale. She is much more his equal than her unfortunate town sister, and in some cases real affection springs up between husband and wife. But it must be remembered that all these ameliorating conditions and circumstances are in spite of Islâm, and not its outcome. What I have said above about the jealousy of the Moslem in regard to his women will explain why there is so little prostitution in Mohammedan cities. Practically every woman is married as soon as she is of an age to do so, and, while the utmost license is accorded to men in these matters, an erring woman would be immediately killed by her relations, and

the law holds that they are perfectly justified in so doing, even on the mere suspicion of guilt. I knew of a case where a wife was thought by her elder brother to have been unfaithful to her absent husband. The brother shot her dead, and then found that his suspicions were groundless. Nothing was ever done to him.

Another effect of Islâm on the individual is to render him intensely proud and self-righteous. While on the one hand the Moslem is a strict predestinarian, and is taught in the Korân that men are ordained before their birth, some to Paradise, others to Gehenna, yet he believes that eventually all true Moslems will be saved, partly through Mohammed's intercession, partly through God's mercy.

IV. This brings me to my fourth division. The religious effect of Islâm is to give a wholly inadequate idea of God. His justice is altogether obscured by His mercy. "Allah karîm!" (God is merciful!) is a frequent exclamation in connexion with their sins. I may quote here, in illustration of this, a characteristic anecdote in Palgrave's "Central Arabia." The traveller had been talking with one of the leaders of the Wahâbi sect—the Puritans of Islâm, who reject all but the Korân, and who hold the use of tobacco to be an unpardonable sin—and had asked him what sins, in their view, shut a man out of Paradise. "Infidelity and drinking (*i.e.*, smoking) the abominable," was the reply. "But what about murder, adultery, and the like?" said Palgrave. "God is merciful," was the grave rejoinder. This idea leads them to reject altogether the need of an atonement. I have often been asked by Moslems why our blessed Lord should have died when, without any such act on His part, God could forgive men their sins. This it is which makes Islâm the one great creed of the world, whose theological system has no place for sacrifice. Though here, again, popular opinion seeks to supply what is lacking in the system, and regards the Dthahiyeh, or offering at the time of the pilgrimage to Mecca, as an atonement for the sins of the year past.

The God of Islâm is a strange contradiction. On the one

hand, His power, might, majesty, unapproachable, infinite, incomprehensible, standing absolutely apart from that of all His creatures, is strongly insisted on ; but, on the other, He is regarded as a weakly, indulgent Being, who is, by the intercession of Moslem saints, to be cajoled on the Day of Judgment into letting into Paradise men otherwise unworthy. "Oh, I know about Saidna Isa" (the Mohammedan name for our blessed Lord), said a Moslem peasant woman once to one of our lady missionaries. "He will tell lies for us on the Day of Judgment!"

The fatal flaw in Islâm is its attitude towards our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; for it is of its essence to deny His Divinity and to reject His Atonement, and thus, in a sense and to a degree, not true of heathenism, its spirit is that of Antichrist. It is this fact which makes Islâm such a petrifying creed. The late Professor Lecky has shown that the world owes no advancement to it in either arts or sciences. The knowledge of geometry and the gorgeous architecture which we associate with the Moorish occupation of Spain were inherited, not originated, by the Moslems. They received both from the conquered Christians of Persia, Mesopotamia, and other Christian Eastern lands, and *their* wealth it was which made so famous the golden prime of Haroun er Raschîd, of which Tennyson sings. Ever since then Mohammedan countries have been going down and down and down—a petrifying creed, crushing the life out of the nations and individuals which come under its malign power, and all because that creed rejects Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

