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CONTENTS.

MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN HOLY WARS	405
THE FINALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION	434
CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND MUSLIMS	436
HOW CHRISTIANS ARE MADE ATTRACTIVE	438
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MORAL CONCEPTIONS IN THE EAST AND THE WEST	440

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ

Muslim and Christian Holy Wars.



The teachings of Islam and Christianity as to the wielding of the sword have already been pointed out, and it remains to show which of the two peoples, Muslims and Christians, have shed blood without any justification for doing so. The Muslims, it will be admitted on all hands, began to fight when they were weak and persecuted by a very strong enemy, while the Christians began to fight when they had acquired strong temporal power by becoming possessors of the Roman Empire. Again, the Muslims fought against those who persecuted them, while the Christians first took up the sword against their own peaceful subjects only because they did not accept Christ as God. In fact, while the Muslims fought to put an end to religious persecution, the Christians established the principle of persecution for the sake of religion by their fighting. This is the most important and significant difference between the Muslim and the Christian holy wars.

It is a fact that during the first three hundred years after Jesus, Christianity, notwithstanding the facilities introduced by Paul, made no very great progress. During this whole time, the Roman Empire remained its centre of action, yet till the conversion of Constantine, hardly one in twenty persons had accepted the Christian faith. Thus Gibbon writes :—

“ According to the irreproachable testimony of Origen, the proportion of the faithful was very inconsiderable when compared with the multitude of an unbelieving world. The most favorable

calculation, however, that can be deduced from the examples of Antioch and of Rome will not permit us to imagine that more than a twentieth part of the subjects of the empire had enlisted themselves under the banner of the cross before the important conversion of Constantine," (Vol. ii, Chap. xv.)

With the conversion of Constantine, the course of Christianity changed. At first by persuasion and then by persecution the ranks of Christianity began to swell. The persecuted became themselves the cruellest of persecutors. With temporal power in their hands, the Christians deemed it their duty to destroy idolatry. "The ruin of Paganism," says Gibbon, "in the age of Theodosius, is perhaps the only example of the total extirpation of any ancient and popular superstition; and may, therefore, deserve to be considered as a singular event in the history of the human mind. The Christians, more especially the Clergy, had impatiently supported the cruel delays of Constantine, and the equal toleration of the elder Valentinian; nor could they deem their conquest perfect or secure, as long as their adversaries were permitted to exist. The influence which Ambrose and his brethren had acquired over the youth of Gratian and the piety of Theodosius, was employed to infuse the maxims of persecution into the breasts of their imperial proselytes." Lecky says in his *History of European Morals*: "A large portion of theological ethics was derived from writings in which religious massacres, on the whole the most ruthless and sanguinary upon record, were said to have been directly enjoined by the Deity, in which the duty of suppressing idolatry by force was given a greater prominence than any article of the moral code, and in which the spirit of intolerance had found its most eloquent and most passionate expressions. The new religion, unlike that which was disappearing, claimed to dictate the opinions as well as the actions of men, and its teachers stigmatised as an atrocious crime the free expression of every opinion on religious matters diverging from them." According to Draper, among the ecclesiastics "the universal opinion was that it was right to compel men to believe what the majority of society had now accepted as the truth, and if they refused, it was right to punish them." Of St. Augustine, the renowned Christian Father, Lecky says:—

"For a time he shrank from, and even condemned, persecution;

but he soon perceived in it the necessary consequence of his principles. He recanted his condemnation; he flung his whole genius into the cause; he recurred to it again and again, and he became the framer and representative of the theology of intolerance.

"The arguments by which Augustine supported persecution were, for the most part, those which I have already stated. Some of them were drawn from the doctrine of exclusive salvation, and others from the precedents of the Old Testament. It was merciful, he contended, to punish heretics, even by death, if this could save them or others from the eternal suffering that awaited the unconverted. Heresy was described in Scripture as a kind of adultery; it was the worst species of murder, being the murder of souls; it was a form of blasphemy, and on all these grounds might justly be punished. If the New Testament contained no examples of the apostles employing force, this was simply because in their time no priest had embraced Christianity. But had not Elijah slaughtered with his own hand the prophets of Baal? Did not Heseekiah and Josiah, the King of Nineveh, and Nebuchadnezzar, after his conversion, destroy by force idolatry within their dominions, and were they not expressly commended for this piety. St. Augustine seems to have originated the application of the words 'compel them to come in' to religious persecution."

Thus had Christianity, as soon as it attained to temporal power, launched out into the cruellest persecution of its own subjects who had in no way offended it. The cruellest Muslim monarchs were never guilty of such atrocious deeds. They may have shed much blood, sometimes even unjustifiably, but they were never guilty of the heinous deeds of persecuting people who had once settled under them peacefully. A Christian writer tells us that "one illustration of the Mohamedan spirit is to be seen in the fact that whenever a country is conquered by Mohamedans, its churches and temples are taken by force and turned into mosques." It is absurd to make such generalizations from one or two instances, when thousands of ancient churches or temples are still standing in countries conquered by the Muslims. But the fanaticism with which Christian priests and monarchs destroyed the Pagan temples of the Roman Empire, "the most splendid and beautiful monuments of Grecian architecture" is

not paralleled in the history of the most savage people. This cruelty becomes the more heinous when it is considered that this demolition was not made in the excited moments of victory over an enemy, but it was the result of the cool deliberations of Christian monarchs and priests against peaceful subjects. The following account from Gibbon would give the reader a fair idea of the "Christian spirit" of bigotry, fanaticism and persecution:—

"A special commission was granted to Cynegius, the Prætorian prefect of the East, and afterwards to the Counts Jonius and Gaudentius, two officers of distinguished rank in the West; by which they were directed to shut the temples, to seize or destroy the instruments of idolatry, to abolish the privileges of the priests, and to confiscate the consecrated property for the benefit of the emperor, of the church, or of the army. Here the desolation might have stopped; and the naked edifices, which were no longer employed in the service of idolatry, might have been protected from the destructive rage of fanaticism. Many of these temples were the most splendid and beautiful monuments of Grecian architecture: and the emperor himself was interested not to deface the splendour of his own cities, or to diminish the value of his own possessions. These stately edifices might be suffered to remain as so many lasting trophies of the victory of Christ. In the decline of the arts, they might be usefully converted into magazines, manufactures, or places of public assembly; and perhaps when the walls of the temple had been sufficiently purified by holy rites, the worship of the true Deity might be allowed to expiate the ancient guilt of idolatry. The laws of the emperors exhibit some symptoms of a milder disposition, but their cold and languid efforts were insufficient to stem the torrent of enthusiasm and rapine, which was conducted, or rather impelled, by the spiritual rulers of the Church. In Gaul, the Holy Martin, bishop of Tours, marched, at the head of his faithful monks to destroy the idols, the temples, and the consecrated trees, of his extensive diocese."

We are told further how when Marcellus, a Syrian bishop, resolved to demolish the temple of Jupiter in Syria, and the solidity of the temple defied the force of the strongest tools, the foundations of the temple were undermined by the fanatic bishop to carry out his resolve. The great temple of Venus at Carthage which had a

circumference of two miles was converted into a church, as was also the majestic dome of Pantheon at Rome, and those who seek an evidence of the warlike spirit of Islam from the conversion of St. Sophia's church at Constantinople into a mosque need to be reminded of the numerous instances of similar conversions in Christianity. But if the Christians did not convert every Pagan temple into a church, the circumstance by no means redounds to the glory of Christianity, for, as Gibbon tells us, "in almost every province of the Roman world, an army of fanatics, without authority and without discipline, invaded the peaceful inhabitants: and the ruin of the fairest structures of antiquity still displays the ravages of those barbarians who alone had time and inclination to execute such laborious destruction."

It may be thought that though Christianity demolished Pagan temples and proscribed the religious practices of idolatry and persecuted the idolaters, it did not shed much blood in forcing the new religion upon its subject people or that the alternative of baptism or of death was never actually proposed by any Christian Emperor for his subjects. But this was due more to the slavish submission of the Pagans to their masters than to any want of severity on the part of the Christians. Gibbon says:—

"Had the Pagans been animated with the undaunted zeal which possessed the minds of the primitive believers, the triumph of the Church must have been stained with blood; and the martyrs of Jupiter and Apollo might have embraced the glorious opportunity of devoting their lives and fortunes at the foot of their altars. But such obstinate zeal was not congenial to the loose and careless temper of Polytheism. The violent and repeated strokes of the orthodox princes were broken by the soft and yielding substance against which they were directed; and the ready obedience of the Pagans protected them from the pains and penalties of the Theodosian code. Instead of asserting that the authority of the gods was superior to that of the emperor, they desisted with a plaintive murmur, from the use of those sacred rites which their sovereign had condemned. If they were sometimes tempted by a sally of passion, or by the hopes of concealment to indulge their favourite superstition, their humble repentance disarmed the severity of the Christian magistrate; and they seldom refused to atone for their rashness, by submitting, with

some secret reluctance, to the yoke of the Gospel. The Churches were filled with the increasing multitude of these unworthy proselytes, who had conformed, from temporal motives, to the reigning religion; and whilst they devoutly imitated the postures, and recited the prayers, of the faithful, they satisfied their conscience by the silent and sincere invocation of the gods of antiquity. If the Pagans wanted patience to suffer, they wanted spirit to resist; and the scattered myriads who deplored the ruin of the temples, yielded, without a contest, to the fortune of their adversaries. The disorderly opposition of the peasants of Syria, and the populace of Alexandria to the rage of private fanaticism, was silenced by the name and authority of the emperor."

For all these excesses committed by the Christians and their unjustifiable persecution of the idolaters, no sensible person would accept the apology that they were impelled to such severities by their strong hatred of the superstitions and impure practices of idolatry. Their only desire seems to have been to swell the ranks of Christianity, not to uproot any evil. In fact, they had themselves adopted many of the evils of idolatry, the doctrine of trinity itself being of a Pagan origin. They persecuted the Jews with even greater fanaticism, and if the alternative of baptism or sword was not proposed in the case of idolaters, it was proposed and in a most cruel manner carried into effect in the case of the Monotheistic Jews only because they rejected Jesus Christ. The horrible atrocities which were practised by the Christians upon the Jews are absolutely unapproached in cruelty in the history of the world. From the time when Christianity first obtained temporal power till very recent times, the Jews were persecuted in every Christian country and under every Christian government with relentless cruelty. It is impossible for me to give in a few lines an adequate idea of these horrible holy Christian atrocities, for, as Archdeacon Jortin remarks,* "the account of the Jews who have been plundered, sent naked into banishment, starved, tortured, left to perish in prisons, hanged and burnt by Christians, would fill many volumes." (vol. ii., p. 237). The conversion of Constantine to Christianity was the signal to them for a long course of persecution of the severest type. Constantine is said to have cut off the ears of the Jews who assembled to re-build Jerusalem, while Eutychius adds that "the emperor obliged them all to be baptised

*The facts and quotations relating to these atrocities are taken from "The Crimes of Christianity," a freethought publication.

and to eat pork at Easter" (Jortin vol. ii, p. 206). Constantine burnt all their cities in Palestine and slew all he could find, without sparing even the women and children. As the Christian empire gained strength, the persecution of the peaceful Jews became severer. "At Minorca," as Gibbon tells us, "the relics of St. Stephen converted in eight days, five hundred and forty Jews; with the help, indeed, of some wholesome severities, such as burning the synagogue, driving the obstinate infidels to starve among the rocks, etc." In Alexandria the Jews were "expelled from the city, their houses plundered, and their synagogues appropriated to the use of the Church." Justinian went still further, and according to Gibbon, "in the creed of Justinian the guilt of murder could not be applied to the slaughter of unbelievers, and he piously labored to establish, with fire and sword, the unity of the Christian faith." Acts of violence were resorted to by bishops to compel the Jews to become Christians. In the beginning of the seventh century "ninety thousand Jews were compelled to receive the sacrament of baptism; the fortunes of the obstinate infidels were confiscated, their bodies were tortured, and it seems doubtful whether they were permitted to abandon their native country" (Gibbon). The council of Toledo in 633 issued the decree "that all the children of Jews should be taken away from their parents and put into monasteries, or into the hands of religious persons to be instructed in Christianity" (Fleury Hist. Ec., ch. viii.) The same council also enacted that a Christian convert found speaking to a Jew should be considered a slave and the Jew so spoken to should be publicly scourged. The fourteenth council of Toledo in 694 ordered "the abduction of Jewish children." In some cases the children of Jews were ordered to be imprisoned in monasteries so that by finding salvation in Christianity they might be saved from eternal damnation.

In France a law was enacted in 615 by the Council of Paris by which no Jew could entertain a suit against a Christian until he had received from the bishop "the grace of baptism." In 630 a great number of the Jews were compelled to migrate on account of an ordinance which "enjoined all who disbelieved in Christ to leave that kingdom."

During the crusades the Jews were especially exposed to the horrible atrocities of the Christians. Gibbon says:—

“ At Verdun, Treves, Mentz, Spires, Worms, many thousands of that unhappy people were pillaged and massacred, nor had they felt a more bloody stroke since the persecution of Hadrian. A remnant was saved by the firmness of their bishops, who accepted a feigned and transient conversion ; but the more obstinate Jews opposed their fanaticism to the fanaticism of the Christians, barricaded their houses, and, precipitating themselves, their families, and their wealth into the rivers or the flames, disappointed the malice, or at least the avarice, of their implacable foes.”

According to Milman, “ the frightful massacre of this race in all the flourishing cities in Germany and along the Rhine by the soldiers of the cross, seemed no less justifiable and meritorious than the subjugation of the more remote enemies of the Gospel.” Basnage relates that at Worms the Jews sought refuge in the bishop’s palace where they were given the choice of sword or baptism, and those who did not adopt the latter alternative committed suicide. At Treves, Jewish mothers are related to have stabbed their daughters when they saw the crusaders coming ; at Bavaria twelve thousand Jews were massacred. Wherever the crusaders went, the poor Jews had only a choice between death and baptism. In England, their fate was as bad. They were plundered and massacred indiscriminately.

Hecker writes :—

“ The noble and mean bound themselves by an oath to extirpate the Jews by fire and sword, and to snatch them from their protectors, of whom the number was so small that throughout all Germany few places can be mentioned where they were not regarded as outlaws and martyred and burnt. . . . All the Jews in Basle, whose number could not have been inconsiderable, were enclosed together in a wooden building, constructed for the purpose, and burned together with it, upon the mere outcry of the people, without sentence or trial, which indeed would have availed them nothing ; soon after the same thing took place at Freyburg.” And again :—

“ At Spires, the Jews driven to despair, assembled in their own habitations, which they set on fire, and thus consumed themselves with their families. The few that remained were forced to submit to baptism ; while the dead bodies of the murdered, which lay about the streets, were put into empty wine casks and rolled into the Rhine,

lest they should infect the air. At Strasburg, two thousand Jews were burnt alive in their own burial-ground, where a large scaffold had been erected ; a few who promised to embrace Christianity were spared, and their children taken from the pile. The youth and beauty of several females also excited some commiseration ; and they were snatched from death against their will. Many, however, who forcibly made their escape from the flames were murdered in the streets."

In Spain, the Jews and the Muslims were equally subjected to horrible persecutions by the Christians on the accession of Ferdinand and Isabella. On the 30th March 1492, an edict was issued by the Christian monarchs that all unbaptized should leave the kingdom by the end of July. They were not permitted to carry with them any gold or silver. Lindo thus describes their sufferings :—

"The misery suffered by the unfortunate exiles is almost indescribable. Some of the vessels took fire, and they either perished in the flames or were drowned ; others were so overloaded that they sank. Many were wrecked on barren coasts and perished with hunger and cold ; those who survived were exposed to further troubles and misfortunes. Some captains purposely prolonged their voyage, to force them to buy water and provisions at any price they chose to extract from their unfortunate victims."

Some of these miserable exiles reached the coast of Genoa and would have perished there, but for the timely help rendered by some merciful Christians who proposed the alternative of cross and provisions or neither, and the poor wretches had at last to yield.

In Portugal, the same fate was reserved for this despised people. Don Emanuel married the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella on condition that he should expel all the Jews and Muslims from his country, and accordingly in December 1496, all unconverted Jews were ordered to leave Portugal within two months. Another edict of a later date ordered all Jewish children under fourteen to be taken from their parents and brought up as Christians.

This inhuman order was carried into effect by pious Christians and the horrible scene is thus described by Lindo :—

"It was a horrid and wretched spectacle to see tender children

torn from the arms and breasts of their distressed mothers ; fathers, who fondly held them in their embrace, dragged about to force them from their arms. To hear the cries, sighs, groans, lamentations, and female shrieks that filled the air was dreadful. Some were so distracted that they destroyed their children by casting them into wells ; others, in fits of despair, made away with themselves."

But their troubles did not end here :—

"A fresh edict now went forth, that all children between fourteen and twenty should also be taken from their parents and baptised, and multitudes were dragged forcibly by their hair and by their arms into the churches, and compelled to receive the waters of baptism, together with new names, being afterwards given over to those who undertook to instruct them in the Catholic faith. Next, the parents themselves were seized, and were offered to have their children restored to them if they would consent to be converted ; in case of their refusal, they were to be placed in confinement for three days without food or drink. It is indeed wonderful that any mortals could be proof against so terrible and fiendish an ordeal ; yet, to the glory of the Hebrew race, very many still remained unmoved. Resistance was, however, not to be tolerated, and it was, therefore, decreed that the same fate was to be meted out to the adults and to the aged, as had already been the portion of the younger members of the race of Israel. Amid the resistance, men and women in the flower of their days, or the decrepitude of age, were dragged into the churches and forcibly baptised, amid the mocking and exultation of an excited populace" (Mocatta).

These are only a few instances of the blood shed by Christianity for its advancement. The bloody deeds of Charlemagne who spread Christianity with the sword, and the cold-blooded murder of the Muslims in Spain are two other notable instances showing that for a long time Christianity adhered to the principle of persecution for the sake of religion. The clergy were the chief advocates of this principle, and even where monarchs were sometimes willing to yield to the pitiable entreaties of their suffering subjects, the clergy used their influence to dissuade them from such a human course. When the Jews were ordered to leave Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella, if they did not accept baptism, an influential Jew threw himself at the feet of the monarch, and offered a very large sum of money in consideration of the

order being revoked. The king and the queen would have been prevailed upon, but the clergy so loved their enemies that they could not suffer them to live in a Christian country. Milman says:—

“The Inquisitors were alarmed. Against all feelings of humanity and justice the royal hearts were steeled, but the appeal to their interests might be more effectual. Thomas de Torquemada advanced into the royal presence bearing a crucifix. ‘Behold,’ he said, ‘him whom Judas sold for thirty pieces of silver. Sell ye him now for a higher price, and render an account of your bargain before God.’ The sovereigns trembled before the stern Dominican and the Jews had no alternative but baptism or exile.”

Such is the record of Christian holy wars and such the conduct of those who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel of Christ. And while every Christian country was blindly engaged in bringing people by force into the fold of Christianity, no voice was raised against the justifiability of these cruel and inhuman deeds. The whole of Christendom for hundreds of years considered the principle of persecution for the sake of religion as the most important doctrine of the Christian religion. If there had been only exceptional cases of such persecution or if they had been resorted to by some tyrant here and there and generally the Christians and their clergy had used their efforts to suppress these diabolic persecutions and murder of innocents, we would have been willing to exonerate Christianity of the horrible crime with which it stands charged, but the circumstances under which these cruel persecutions were carried on only deepen the blackness of that crime. Christianity persecuted those very men who sought its shelter as the ruling power. It turned against its own helpless subjects who had not the means even if they had the will to make any resistance. It is a most ghostly picture of bloodshed and there is no parallel to it in history.

I will now consider the case of the Muslim holy wars. I have already said, and history proves this assertion, that the Muslims were compelled to fight against a powerful enemy who was carrying his persecution of the converts of Islam to the last extreme. The mighty persecution which was carried on against Islam by the unbelievers is not equalled even by the terrible persecution of the Jews by the Christians so far as the nature of the persecution is

concerned. The number of converts was not very great and most of these became voluntary exiles when they saw their opponents bent upon extreme measures of persecution. Twice the Muslims sought refuge in Abyssinia whither they were unsuccessfully followed by the Quresh. The third time a place nearer home was chosen for refuge and the converts, one and all, including the Holy Prophet himself, fled to Medina. The Quresh who had pursued them so far as Abyssinia could not allow them to propagate Islam unmolested in Arabia itself, and accordingly they now resolved to exterminate Islam by dealing a decisive blow to the Muslim society. It was at this juncture in the persecution of the Muslims that they were allowed to fight against their persecutors who sought to turn them away from the new religion. Ample evidence of this is met with in the Holy Quran regarding whose reliability there can be no question. I have already referred to some of these verses in the last issue. Here I may refer to a few more. In ii: 214, we read *وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يَقَاتِلُونَكُمْ* حتى يردوكم عن دينكم ان استطاعوا which Rodwell translates as follows: "But they will not cease to war against you until they turn you from your religion, if they be able." This verse shows clearly that the unbelievers had taken up the sword to persecute the Muslims and to force them to desert Islam and to revert to idolatry. The Muslims were very few compared with the unbelievers, but they defeated the unbelievers in several battle-fields. But the Quresh only became more exasperated and they were now bent upon destroying these Muslims by the sword. It was on account of the smallness of their numbers that some Muslims feared, and it is to this that the verses preceding the one quoted above refer: "War is prescribed to you; but to this you have a repugnance: Yet haply you are averse from a thing, though it be good for you, and haply you love a thing though it be bad for you; and God knoweth, but you know not" (ii: 212). The necessity of war on the part of the Muslims is also explained in the 213th verse which says: "They will ask thee concerning war in the sacred month. Say: the act of fighting therein is a grave crime: but the act of turning men aside from the path of God, and unbelief in Him, and to prevent access to the Sacred Mosque, and to drive out its people from it, is worse in the sight of God." Thus it was the act of turning the Muslims aside from the path of God and preventing them from the performance of

their religious duties, for which the unbelievers unhesitatingly used the sword, that necessitated war on the part of the Muslims. Any sensible person would see that under these circumstances the ordinances relating to war were absolutely justifiable. The Muslims took up the sword not to force the unbelievers to accept Islam, but to resist being forced to desert Islam and accept idolatry.

Various other verses in the Holy Quran show that the one thing which the unbelievers desired to bring about by all their persecutions was to make the converts to Islam desert their faith. For instance, in iv.: 89, we read *وَدَّوَالُو تَكْفُرُونَ كَمَا كَفَرُوا فَتَكُونُونَ سَوَاءً* "They (the unbelievers) desire that you should deny the truth of Islam as they have denied, and that like them you should also be unbelievers." And in lx : 2, we have *إِنْ يَتَّقِفُوا كَمْ يَكُونُوا لَكُمْ أَعْدَاءٌ وَيَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَأَلْسِنَتُهُمْ بِأَسْوَأَ وَدَّوَالُو تَكْفُرُونَ* i. e., "If they (the unbelievers) overtake you anywhere, they will prove your foes : hand and tongue will they put forth to injure you, and desire that you become infidels again." The seventy-fifth verse of the fourth chapter testifies to the same effect "But what reason have you for not fighting in the way of God (i.e., for the defence of Islam) and for (the deliverance of) the weak among men and women and children (who are being persecuted by the unbelievers and) who say, 'O, our Lord ! bring us forth from this city whose inhabitants are oppressors ; and give us a defender from Thy presence and give us a helper from Thy presence.'" Consider also the following verses which show how many of those who were convinced of the truth of Islam were forced to remain unbelievers : "The angels when they took the souls of those who had been unjust to their own weal, demanded, 'What hath been your state ? They said, 'We were the weak ones of the earth (and, therefore, could not resist the unbelievers).' They replied : 'Was not God's earth broad enough for you to flee away in ? Except the men and women and children who were not able through their weakness to find the means of escape nor could they see their way to fly away. Whoever flieth his country for the cause of God will find in the earth many refuges and abundant resources'" (iv : 97-100).

The verses quoted above will give the reader a clear idea of

the circumstances under which the Muslims fought. The holy wars of Islam were undertaken with an object exactly the reverse of that with which the holy wars of Christianity were undertaken. The Christians sought to force their religion upon the idolaters and the Jews by means of the sword, and the Muslims only resisted being forced to change their religion by the sword. Christianity began to fight when it had attained civil power, while Islam had to fight in the days of its weakness against mighty and powerful enemies. We further learn from the Holy Quran that the Muslims were required to fight only so long as religious persecution continued and they had to stop when there was no persecution. The Holy Quran states this plainly on several occasions. Thus ii: 193 runs as follows: *وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ أَفْتَهُوا* : "And fight against them until there be no more seduction from the truth and religion should be practised for God, but if they (*i.e.*, the opponents of the Muslims) desist (from persecuting the Muslims), then let there be no hostility save against the oppressors." As these words are often misconstrued, it is necessary to consider their significance at some length. The word *فتنة* *fitnat-un*, indicates originally a burning with fire, and hence affliction or a trial, or civil war or slaughter or seduction. As used in this passage it means seduction, meaning the seduction of the Muslims from the true religion. Rodwell translates it as "seduction from truth," and gives the alternative significance "civil discord" in a footnote, the latter phrase being explained as meaning "their driving you out of Mecca." Whichever of these significances is adopted, the meaning of the verse would be that the Muslims should continue to fight so long as they are persecuted by their opponents on account of their conversion to Islam. This is the true significance of this word as the context itself shows. But there is greater misapprehension regarding the meaning of the phrase *وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ* which is ordinarily translated as meaning "and the only worship be that of God" or "God's religion (*i.e.*, Islam) only should prevail in the earth." This interpretation is clearly wrong, for it contradicts the very next words which say that "if they desist, then there should be no hostility against them, for hostility should be carried on only against the oppressors." Now if the Muslims were required to fight against

the unbelievers until they all accepted Islam, the words "if they desist. . . ." would not have followed the injunction. The Muslims are enjoined to cease all hostilities if the unbelievers desisted from persecuting and oppressing the Muslims, and hence the words لا دين الا لله do not carry the significance that Islam should be the only religion of the people. In consonance with the context these words only mean that there should be no hinderance in adopting the religion of Islam and performing its ceremonies. The Holy Q̣uran, therefore, enjoined the continuance of war only so long as the persecution of the Muslims continued, and when perfect religious freedom was established, then there was no ground for carrying on religious wars. Resistance of persecution was, therefore, the only ground of Muslim Holy Wars.

That the words in dispute carry the significance pointed out above is also shown by the later history of Islam. If the Holy Quran had given an injunction to the effect that the unbelievers should be fought against until they all became Muslims, the Holy Prophet would have been the first man to carry it into practice. Now it is a fact that these verses were revealed in connection with the earlier Muslim wars, and the only dispute about them is whether they relate to the battle of Badr or Ohud. But after neither of these battles do we find the Holy Prophet attacking the unbelievers first. The only instances on record show that the Muslims still defended themselves against the attacks of the unbelievers, as for instance in the famous battle of *Ahzab* when a ditch was dug round Medina as the only measure of safety against a mighty attack of the idolatrous tribes of Arabia. Hence this battle is known as the battle of the confederates or the battle of the ditch. It was in the fifth year of Hejira and two years after the battle of Ohud, the latest time which can be assigned to the revelation of the verse under discussion that the Holy Prophet set out for a pilgrimage to Mecca with sixteen hundred companions. It was in the sacred months during which all hostilities had been suspended in Arabia from very ancient times, and this custom was respected in the whole of Arabia so that no one dared to break it. But in the persecution of the Muslims the Quresh paid no regard even to this usage, and accordingly when the Holy Prophet reached Hudaibiyya, the Quresh opposed his further prog-

ress, and would on no account allow him to visit Mecca. A truce was drawn up on this occasion by which both parties agreed to discontinue all hostilities for a period of ten years. Such a truce was in perfect agreement with the injunction contained in the above verse if we adopt the right interpretation, for the Muslims were required to fight with the unbelievers only in case that the latter fought against them and persecuted them, but as they promised to cease hostilities and persecution of the Muslims, the Muslims also promised to cease fighting with them for a like period. But if the injunction is considered to carry the significance that so long as the unbelievers were not converted to Islam they should be fought against, the truce concluded at Hudaibiyya directly contradicted this Divine injunction which required that fighting should not be stopped until Islam was the religion of the whole of Arabia. These and many other circumstances show that the injunction was never considered by the Holy Prophet to carry the significance which hostile critics force upon it, and that it only meant that the Muslims should continue to fight until they were safe from the persecution of the unbelievers.

The later wars of the Holy Prophet did not differ in character from the earlier ones, and the Holy Prophet did not undertake a single expedition to compel any tribe or people to accept Islam. Hostile critics make a difference between the earlier and later injunctions relating to war which occur in the Holy Quran, and while admitting that the earlier injunctions related only to defensive wars or wars undertaken to resist persecution, they assert that the later injunctions laid down the principle of fighting with the unbelievers to compel them to accept Islam. But if there had been any such difference in the injunctions occurring in the earlier and later chapters of the Holy Quran, a similar difference should have been observed in the practice of the Holy Prophet and in his earlier and later undertakings. For, it cannot be doubted that it was the first duty of the Holy Prophet to carry out all such injunctions. Nay, the Holy Quran even tells the Prophet that the obligation to fight against the unbelievers lay only on him: "Fight thou in the way of God (*i.e.*, to defend Islam); no soul shall be compelled to fight except thyself, and urge on the believers; haply God will restrain the fighting of the unbelievers." (iv: 86.) Hence the injunctions to fight were addressed in the first instance to the Holy Prophet himself, and if we are unable to point out any

and to eat pork at Easter" (Jortin vol. ii, p. 206). Constantine burnt all their cities in Palestine and slew all he could find, without sparing even the women and children. As the Christian empire gained strength, the persecution of the peaceful Jews became severer. "At Minorca," as Gibbon tells us, "the relics of St. Stephen converted in eight days, five hundred and forty Jews; with the help, indeed, of some wholesome severities, such as burning the synagogue, driving the obstinate infidels to starve among the rocks, etc." In Alexandria the Jews were "expelled from the city, their houses plundered, and their synagogues appropriated to the use of the Church." Justinian went still further, and according to Gibbon, "in the creed of Justinian the guilt of murder could not be applied to the slaughter of unbelievers, and he piously labored to establish, with fire and sword, the unity of the Christian faith." Acts of violence were resorted to by bishops to compel the Jews to become Christians. In the beginning of the seventh century "ninety thousand Jews were compelled to receive the sacrament of baptism; the fortunes of the obstinate infidels were confiscated, their bodies were tortured, and it seems doubtful whether they were permitted to abandon their native country" (Gibbon). The council of Toledo in 633 issued the decree "that all the children of Jews should be taken away from their parents and put into monasteries, or into the hands of religious persons to be instructed in Christianity" (Fleury Hist. Ec., ch. viii.) The same council also enacted that a Christian convert found speaking to a Jew should be considered a slave and the Jew so spoken to should be publicly scourged. The fourteenth council of Toledo in 694 ordered "the abduction of Jewish children." In some cases the children of Jews were ordered to be imprisoned in monasteries so that by finding salvation in Christianity they might be saved from eternal damnation.

In France a law was enacted in 615 by the Council of Paris by which no Jew could entertain a suit against a Christian until he had received from the bishop "the grace of baptism." In 630 a great number of the Jews were compelled to migrate on account of an ordinance which "enjoined all who disbelieved in Christ to leave that kingdom."

During the crusades the Jews were especially exposed to the horrible atrocities of the Christians. Gibbon says:—

2. "Go ye, therefore, at large in the land four months : and know that you cannot frustrate the power of God : on the other hand God will disgrace the unbelievers.

3. "And a proclamation on the part of God and His Apostle to the people in the day of the greater pilgrimage that God is clear of the idolaters as is His Apostle. If then you repent (of your oppression), it is better for you, and if you turn your backs, then know that you cannot frustrate the power of God : and to the unbelievers announce thou a grievous punishment.

4. "But this concerns not those idolaters with whom you made a league, and who have afterwards in no way failed you, and not yet aided any one against you. Fulfil for them then your covenant until the time agreed upon with them : verily God loves the righteous.

5. "And when the sacred months are passed, then kill the idolaters wherever you find them, and seize them and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in every place of observation ; but if they repent and are steadfast in prayers, and give alms, then let them go their way, verily, God is forgiving and merciful.

6. "And if any one of the idolaters ask thee for protection, then give him protection so that he may hear the Word of God, then send him to his place of safety. This, because they are ignorant people.

7. "How can the idolaters be in league with God and His Apostle, save those with whom you made a league at the sacred mosque. So long as they are true to you, be true to them ; verily God loves those who fear.

8. "How ! if they prevail against you, they will not observe either ties of blood or covenants. With their mouths they content you, but their hearts are averse and most of them are transgressors.

9. "They sell the signs of God for a mean price, and turn others aside from His path : of a truth, evil is it that they do.

10. "They respect not with a believer either ties of blood or their covenants, and they are the aggressors.

11. "Yet, if they turn to God and observe prayer and give alms, then they are your brethren in religion : and We make clear the signs for men of knowledge.

12. "But if, after alliance made, they violate their covenant and revile your religion, then do battle with the ringleaders of infidelity, so that they may desist, verily their covenants are as naught.

13. "Will you not do battle with a people who have broken their covenant and aimed to expel the Apostle and attacked you first? Are you afraid of them? God is more deserving that you should fear Him."

To understand these verses, it is necessary to bear in mind the circumstances under which they were revealed. It was not the Meccans only who opposed the progress of Islam and persecuted the Muslims, but all the idolatrous tribes of Arabia were guilty of the same offence.

In the beginning the Holy Prophet used to preach to the pilgrims who assembled at Mecca from every part of Arabia, and thus Islam had become known to almost every tribe. But idolatry was so deep-rooted in their hearts that they all assumed an hostile attitude to Islam. In fact, no tribe could be friendly or even neutral to Islam without incurring the enmity of the Quresh who, as the guardians of the *Ka'ba*, used to warn the assembled hosts in the pilgrimage season against the new doctrines. Hence no member of any tribe could openly profess Islam though he might be inwardly convinced of its truth, and if any one dared to do it, he was sure to be persecuted in the same manner as his brethren in faith at Macca. Thus all the idolatrous tribes of Arabia, which annually assembled at Mecca, had necessarily assumed a hostile attitude towards Islam. When the power of Islam began to grow and the Quresh suffered crushing defeats in battle after battle, their allies from among the idolatrous Arabs made treaties with the Muslims which were often for fixed periods. But the unbelievers generally paid no heed to such agreements and inflicted injuries on the Muslims whenever they could. Especially was this the case when the Holy Prophet went on an expedition to Tabook with all his companions. There treaties were often made and broken by the idolaters, as the Holy Quran tells us in plain words. Thus we have in the eighth chapter of the Holy Quran the following description of these idolatrous tribes: "They with whom thou hadst leagued, but who ever afterwards break their league and have not the least fear in break-

ing it" (viii : 58). And again, "or if thou fear treachery from any people, throw back their treaty to them as thou fairly mayest ; verily God loves not the treacherous" (viii : 60). But the Prophet is clearly enjoined to make peace with them if they are inclined to refrain from making war on the Muslims : "But if they lean to peace, lean thou also to it ; and put thy trust in God : He verily is the Hearing, the Knowing. But if they seek to betray thee, then verily God will be all-sufficient for thee" (viii : 63, 64). And to the same purport we have in a previous verse the following warning : "If you desired a decision, now hath the decision come to you (referring to the conquest of Mecca). It will be better for you if you give over the struggle, and if you return to war, we also will return to it ; and your forces, though they be many, shall by no means avail you aught because God is with the faithful" (viii : 19).

It was under the circumstances narrated in the previous paragraph that the ninth chapter was revealed. The Immunity was declared as the last remedy for a people who every now and then broke their covenants and disturbed the peace of the Muslim society. When the opening verses of the ninth chapter were proclaimed to the idolatrous tribes who had assembled at the pilgrimage, the unbelievers told the Holy Prophet's messenger to inform him that they had already thrown back their treaties which they had made with him and that there was no covenant between them, but the thrusting of lances and the striking of swords. I will now take the verses one by one to show that the Holy Quran did not preach in this chapter any principle of persecution for the sake of religion. The first verse clearly speaks of an immunity to those idolaters with whom the Muslims were in league. The injunctions that follow, therefore, relate only to such idolaters and not to the whole world, not even to all the idolaters. In the second verse the idolaters are told that they "Cannot frustrate the power of God," showing that the object of the idolaters in fighting against the Muslims was not to resist any supposed persecution by the Muslims, but to frustrate the power of the Muslims and to bring them under subjection to them to stop the progress of Islam by force. The third verse establishes two points. It shows that the proclamation was not addressed to all non-Muslims or to all the idolaters anywhere in the world, but only

to the people that assembled on the "day of the greater pilgrimage," i.e., only to hostile Arabian idolatrous tribes. Another point which the third verse establishes is that in the war which was now declared against these idolatrous tribes, the charge of aggression could not be laid against the Holy Prophet, for it declares God and His Apostle to be "clear of the idolaters." The fourth verse shows that war was declared not even against all the idolatrous Arabian tribes which after carrying on hostilities with the Muslims for some time had then made a league with them, but only against such of these tribes as had failed their covenants which they had made with the Muslims or secretly aided other tribes to attack the Muslims. The fifth verse tells us that all the aggressions and oppressions of such idolatrous tribes were to be forgiven if they accepted Islam. These tribes were guilty of grave oppressions and excessive outrages against the Muslims, but the latter were commanded to show them a clemency at last if they embraced Islam. It was not a case of persecution for the sake of religion, but a case of forgiveness for the sake of religion. The principle of forgiving one's bitterest enemies was carried into practice by Islam and Islam only. The unity of the religion of Islam established a relation of brotherhood and hence all past wrongs were forgotten. "Verily, God is Forgiving and Merciful" says the verse, thus impressing upon the Muslims the necessity of showing forgiveness and mercy to their enemies. The sixth verse even more clearly refutes the idea that the Muslims were fighting with the idolaters to force them to accept Islam. Even if a member of any of the idolatrous tribes that were at war with the Muslims sought protection, such protection was to be granted to him. If, as its enemies assert, Islam had taught the principle of persecution for the sake of religion, the injunction on this occasion ought to have been that an idolater falling into the hands of the Muslims should be forthwith beheaded if he did not accept Islam. The principle of "Sword or Islam" has no existence anywhere except in the minds of the hostile critics of Islam. For, here in the latest revelation of the Holy Prophet he is enjoined to give protection to an idolater belonging to one of the tribes at war with the Muslims, if he sought it. The Word of God was only to be preached to him and he was then to be sent back to his place of safety, leaving it to his choice to accept or reject Islam after that. Thus do the Holy Quran and the practice of the Holy

Prophet show that the principle that "there is no compulsion in religion" was preached by Islam for all ages and that it was never abrogated, even the latest revelation bearing testimony to its truth and endorsing it. The seventh verse states that the idolaters could not be in league with the Muslims, and the reason of this is explained in the eighth verse in which the question asked in the previous verse is repeated. The idolaters could not be in league with the Muslims, not for any fault of the latter, but because they would not, if they prevailed against the Muslims, "observe either ties of blood or covenants" and because their hearts were averse to any alliance with the Muslims and they desired to content them only with their words. Hence they broke their covenants again and again. When the Muslims wanted to avenge the wrongs done by them they made a treaty, and when they saw their attention turned in some other direction, they again oppressed the believers without regard either to the ties of blood or to the covenants which they had made. The ninth verse shows that the idolaters were not content with practising their own religion freely, but they compelled others to forsake Islam. They were fighting not because the Muslims compelled them to accept Islam, but because they desired to compel the Muslims to forsake Islam; not because they were prevented from practising idolatry, but because they did not like others to forsake idolatry. Their object, was, as the verse says plainly, to "turn others aside from the path of God," *i.e.*, to prevent them from accepting Islam. The tenth verse repeats that when a Muslim falls into the hands of the idolaters, they maltreat him and have no regard for ties of blood or their covenants. The eleventh verse again enjoins the Muslims to cease fighting with people who become their brethren in faith and forgive them all past wrongs. The twelfth verse says that if after making an alliance any tribe violates its covenant, its ringleaders must be fought against. And the thirteenth verse enumerates the three principal offences of the people against whom the Muslims were commanded to fight. These offences were their persecuting and expelling the Holy Prophet and his followers, their attacking the Muslims first and at last their breaking the covenants which they had made and thus again reverting to the persecution of the Muslims.

It will be seen from the above that the Holy Quran never enjoined or permitted the persecution of the non-Muslims on the

score of their religion. The idolatrous Arabs had taken up the sword to destroy the Muslims and they were punished with the sword. And as there is no injunction in the Holy Quran to compel the unbelievers to accept Islam or to propagate it by the sword, so there is not a single circumstance in the Holy Prophet's life which should lend any support to such an assertion. It cannot be pointed out that any expedition was undertaken by him to force Islam upon any tribe. We even find him writing letters to the different potentates in the sixth year of Hejira, but in none of these letters did he threaten any monarch with making war upon him if he did not accept Islam. One of these letters has been discovered, and it proves conclusively that it was not "Islam or Sword" that the Holy Prophet offered but Islam only. The following is the translation of this letter which has been declared to be genuine: "In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. From Muhammad, the servant of God and His Apostle, to Maqauqis, the Chief of the Copts. Peace be upon him who follows true guidance. After this, I invite thee to accept Islam: become a Muslim and thou shalt be saved; God will grant thee a double reward. But if thou turn back, then on thee will be the sin of the Copts." It appears from the most trustworthy traditions that similarly worded letters were written to many other monarchs. And the strongest of all facts is that no expedition was undertaken by the Holy Prophet after the revelation of the opening verses of the ninth chapter which is alleged by Missionary critics to proclaim the principle of persecution for the sake of religion for all ages. Had the Holy Prophet understood any verse of the ninth chapter to mean fighting with the unbelievers to convert them forcibly, he would have sent his armies in all directions. But notwithstanding that he lived for more than a year after the revelation of the ninth chapter and its announcement at the time of the pilgrimage, not a single battle was fought him. Does it not show what meaning the Holy Prophet himself attached to the injunctions of the ninth chapter.

As regards the wars of the earlier caliphs, none of these can be shown to have been undertaken to compel any people to accept Islam, nor can it be proved that any people were actually compelled to change their religion. These wars were necessitated by the aggressions of the Persian and the Roman empires. The Arabian

tribes near the borders of these empires had accepted Islam, and it was the aggression of these empires on the frontier that led to wars between them and the Muslims. Had the Muslims undertaken the conquest of these empires with the object of forcing their religion upon them, there is no reason why they should have allowed perfect religious freedom to the non-Muslims in these countries after conquering them. It is a fact that in all the countries which the Muslims conquered, they allowed full religious liberty, and Islam was in fact the pioneer of the valuable religious freedom with which the world is now blessed. The spirit in which the Muslims conquered these empires is well illustrated in the following remarks made by a Freethinker in connection with the conquest of Jerusalem by Omar in 637 C. E.: "The great caliph entered without bloodshed, and conversed amicably as he rode along with the patriarch of the city on its antiquities. He granted the Christians the use of their churches and the free practice of their religion. His laconic decree is worth preserving: 'In the name of the most merciful God. From Omar Ebn Al Khattab, to the inhabitants of Aelia. They shall be protected and secured both in their lives and fortunes, and their churches shall neither be pulled down, nor made use of by any but themselves.'" The impartial writer adds: "The dignity and humanity of Omar, and the graceful chivalry of Saladin, who captured Jerusalem from the Christians in a later age, form a vivid contrast to the rudeness and ferocity of the soldiers of Christ" (Crimes of Christianity).

Even the later Muslims were never guilty of the heinous deeds of bloodshed which are recorded in the history of Christianity. Muslim monarchs may have invaded and conquered countries sometimes from a desire to extend their empires, but when they once conquered a country, the inhabitants of which settled peacefully under them, they never persecuted them for the sake of religion. They never demolished their temples or interfered with any of their religious ceremonies. There was no country in which they did not govern people professing other religions, but far from oppressing or persecuting these people, they granted them full liberty in the performance of their religious ceremonies. If we desire to institute a comparison between the spirit of Islam and the spirit of Christianity on the basis of the conduct of the followers of these two religions in

wars, the crusades afford us the best material for doing so, and the following quotations from European authors may be safely considered as conclusive against Christianity on this point.

The crusades were Christian holy wars in the sense of being the outcome of religious fanaticism, but the world has never seen unholier wars than these. Gibbon tells us of the crusaders that "in the dire necessity of famine, they sometimes roasted and devoured the flesh of their infant or adult captives." Cannibalism had no horror for these meek soldiers of Christ. Nor did the holy wars help to keep them chaste. One passage from Michaud is sufficient to show the extent to which license and corruption were spread among them: "If contemporary accounts are to be credited," says the Christian historian, "all the vices of the infamous Babylon prevailed among the liberators of Sion. Strange and unheard of spectacle! Beneath the tents of the crusaders famine and voluptuousness formed a hideous union; impure love, an unbounded passion for play, with all the excesses of debauch, were mingled with the images of death."

The scenes of bloodshed were horrible. At the falling of Antioch, a general slaughter of the Muslim inhabitants was made. "The dignity of age, the helplessness of youth, and the beauty of the weaker sex, were disregarded by the Latin savages. Houses were no sanctuaries; and the sight of a mosque added new virulence to cruelty" (Mills). At Marra, to the barbarity of a similar general slaughter was added the horror of cannibalism. And when at last Jerusalem was taken and the goal reached, blood and carnage also reached a climax. Gibbon thus describes the scene:—

"A bloody sacrifice was offered by his mistaken votaries to the God of the Christians; resistance might provoke, but neither age nor sex could mollify, their implacable rage; they indulged themselves three days in a promiscuous massacre; and the infection of the dead bodies produced an epidemical disease. After seventy thousand Muslims had been put to the sword, and the harmless Jews had been burnt in their synagogue, they could still reserve a multitude of captives, whom interest or lassitude persuaded them to spare" (Vol. vi, p. 459).

Michaud thus describes the scene after the conquest when the excitement of war was over :—

† “All the captives whom humanity or the lassitude of carnage had at first spared, all those who had been saved in the hope of a rich ransom, were slaughtered. The Saracens were forced to throw themselves from the tops of towers and houses ; they were burnt alive ; they were dragged from their subterranean retreats ; they were haled to the public places and immolated on piles of the dead. Neither the tears of women, nor the cries of little children, nor the sight of the place where Jesus Christ forgave his executioners, could mollify the victor’s passion.”

Mills thus gives an account of the butchery :—

✱ “The subjugated people were therefore dragged into the public places, and slain as victims. Women with children at the breast, girls and boys, all were slaughtered. The squares, the streets, and even the uninhabited places of Jerusalem, again were strewed with the dead bodies of men and women, and the mangled limbs of children. No heart melted into compassion or expanded into benevolence.”

The earlier scene, immediately following the capture of Jerusalem, is thus described by the same historian :—

✱ “Such was the carnage in the mosque of Omar, that the mutilated carcasses were hurried by the torrents of blood into the court ; dissevered arms and hands floated into the current that carried them into contact with bodies to which they had not belonged. Ten thousand people were murdered in this sanctuary. It was not only the lacerated and headless trunks which shocked the sight, but the figures of the victors themselves reeking with the blood of their slaughtered enemies. No place of refuge remained to the vanquished, so indiscriminately did the insatiable fanaticism of the conquerors disregard alike supplication and resistance. Some were slain, others were thrown from the tops of the churches and of the citadel.”

✱ After some time Jerusalem was taken back by the Muslims under Saladin, and the humanity of the Muslims presents a vivid

contrast to the brutality of the Christian crusaders. The following remarks from the pen of a Freethinker are sufficient to convince any unprejudiced reader that in practice Islam was far more mild than Christianity. The author of the Crimes of Christianity says:—

“Saladin defeated the Christians at Tiberias in July, A. D. 1187, and advanced to Jerusalem. Unwilling to stain the venerated city with blood, he offered the people money and settlements in Syria if they would capitulate. They refused, but prayer was a poor defence, and after several days' fighting they threw themselves on his mercy.” The following passage from Gibbon is then quoted:—

“He consented to accept the city and to spare the inhabitants. The Greek and Oriental Christians were permitted to live under his dominion; but it was stipulated that in forty days all the Franks and Latins should evacuate Jerusalem and be safely conducted to the seaports of Syria and Egypt; that ten pieces of gold should be paid for each man, five for each woman, and one for every child; and that those who were unable to purchase their freedom, should be detained in perpetual slavery.”

The author then goes on to say:—

“Saladin paid the ransom of thousands of the poorest himself. Malik Adel followed his example, redeeming two thousand. Eventually only about an eighth of the inhabitants were unredeemed, and many of these embraced Muhammadanism. Unlike the brutal Crusaders, who massacred without distinction of age or sex, Saladin melted with compassion at the tears of women, and when they begged of him their fathers, husbands, and brothers, he granted their request and loaded them with presents. Michaud pays a warm tribute to this noble infidel.

“He rendered to the mothers their children, and to the wives their husbands, among the captives. Several Christians had abandoned their furniture and most precious effects, and carried on their shoulders their old and enfeebled parents or their sick and infirm friends. Saladin was touched (*attendri*) by this spectacle, and recompensed with his charities the virtue and the piety of his enemies. Taking pity on all unfortunates, he allowed the Knights of the

Hospital to remain in the city to tend the pilgrims, and those who were prevented by grave maladies from leaving Jerusalem.'

"Gibbon justly says that 'in these acts of mercy the virtue of Saladin deserves our admiration and love.' Saladin's humanity was in striking contrast with the villainy of the nearest Christian prince. 'Many Christians who left Jerusalem,' says Mills, 'went to Antioch: but Bohemond not only denied them hospitality, but even stripped them. They marched into the Saracenian country, and were well received.' "

I need not cite any more authorities. The comparison between the Muslim and the Christian religious wars not only shows the baselessness of the charges against Islam and the Muslim monarchs, but it also proves that the charges of cruel persecution for the sake of religion and of shedding human blood quite unjustifiably lie against Christianity. No Christian was ever put to death by a Muslim ruler on the score of his religion, but thousands of innocent Muslims were butchered by the Christians in Spain and elsewhere simply because they refused to accept Christianity. And while hundreds of mosques were turned by the Christians into churches, only rare instances can be pointed out in which the Muslims converted Christian churches into mosques. In fact, a single instance is sufficient to show the difference between the spirit of Islam and that of Christianity. When Omar conquered Jerusalem, he not only did not convert the church into a mosque, but even when requested by the patriarch to perform his devotions there, refused, and afterwards gave his reason for it, saying: "Had I yielded to your request, the Muslims of a future age would have infringed the treaty under the color of imitating my example." But when the same city fell into the hands of the Christians for a short time, they converted the mosque into a church, and the place was afterwards consecrated by Saladin when Jerusalem was again conquered by the Muslims. And in conclusion I may again quote the same impartial writer, I mean the author of the Crimes of Christianity:—

"Nor did Muhammad himself ever oppress the Christians who would live at peace with him. As Gibbon observes, he 'readily granted the security of their persons, the freedom of their trade, the property of their goods, and the toleration of their worship.' Christian churches were allowed in Muhammadan states, though it is safe

to affirm that no Christian state would have tolerated a Muhammadan mosque. Even in India the Muhammadan conquerors 'spared the pagodas of that devout and populous country.' The Arabian caliphs gave freedom to all the oriental sects. The patriarchs, bishops, and clergy, were protected in their domestic jurisdictions by the civil magistrate. Learned Christians were employed as secretaries and physicians; they were made collectors of the revenue, and sometimes raised to the command of cities and provinces. When Saladin recaptured Jerusalem from the crusaders, he made a distinction between the Latin and the Greek and Oriental Christians. The former were treated as captives of war, but the latter were permitted to remain as his subjects, and to worship their gods in their own fashion. Nor has this tolerant tradition been since violated, for to this day the Jews and Christians of the Turkish Empire enjoy the liberty of conscience which was granted by the caliphs, and many a fugitive from Christian bigotry has found shelter with the 'persecuting' Mohammedans."

The result of the Christian crusades is thus summed up by the same author:—

"Fighting the infidel abroad heightened the spirit of bigotry, and sharpened the sword against the heretic at home. Jortin remarks that the thirteenth century saw 'hanging and burning for God's sake become the universal practice.' Milman also observes that the Holy War strengthened the doctrine that 'The unbeliever was the natural enemy of Christ and of his church; if not to be converted, to be punished for the crime of unbelief, to be massacred, exterminated by the righteous sword.' Besides the incalculable evils they directly caused, the crusades led to the slaughter of the Northern pagans, the massacre of the Albigenses, and the other wholesale cruelties with which the Papacy afterwards desolated Europe."

I have stated only the facts and I leave it for the reader to draw his conclusion and see for himself whether it was Islam that acted upon the principle of persecution for the sake of religion and converted people by force or Christianity, and which of the two shed human blood mercilessly and unjustifiably. Christianity has learned the lesson of toleration from Islam, though it ungratefully blames its benefactor for crimes of which it was itself guilty.

The Finality of the Christian Religion.

The first number of the *University Digest*, Chicago, gives a valuable digest of Professor Foster's "The Finality of the Christian Religion." The book gives an answer to the question: "Is Christianity the ultimate religion?" It deals chiefly with the Christian belief in miracles, and the views set forth in it are opposed to the ordinary orthodox views. But still there are not a few Christian ministers who give their assent to its views. At a meeting of the Baptist Ministers' Association, the following resolution, we are told, was adopted by a vote of 48 to 22: "Resolved, that we, as a Conference, declare it to be our resolute conviction that the views set forth in this book are contrary to Scripture, and that its teaching and tendency are subversive of the vital and essential truths of the Christian faith." Elsewhere too, we are further told, "its results have been accepted by churchmen," while "at the University it passes as an unquestioned contribution to philosophy and theology."

The Christian religion is based on the alleged miracle of the resurrection of Jesus. Professor Foster says on this point:—

"This is mainly because the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Jesus has been propagated into the very centre of Christian conviction, has so fixed its stamp upon this religion that the latter seems to many to stand or fall with the historicity of that event. 'If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins,' writes Paul. Is it not well to ask ourselves whether we are in a position to participate experientially in this Pauline proposition? We are dependent upon the narratives of the Gospels and the witness of Paul, to form an idea of what occurred after the death of Jesus. But these are by no means so consistent as to render assent to the actuality of the occurrence a requirement of conscience. This importance attached to the bodily resurrection is far out of proportion to the evidence therefor. The narratives yield a fluctuating image which eludes all assured evaluation. Shall we base our highest and holiest, our whole religious life on an occurrence of which no one can make a

perfectly distinct picture? And is it, indeed, necessary that we build our salvation on this occurrence? Is there no other foundation of salvation? Are not the truths of our faith, God's love and grace, his commandments and [kingdom, reliable in and of themselves? Do we not have forgiveness of our sins if we are penitent, and believingly seek his grace? Is Jesus not our reconciler if his Spirit dwells in us and fills us with the peace of God? Is our faith in eternal life vain and baseless if Jesus be not bodily risen, and did not show himself for a certain length of time to his disciples? What of Old Testament worthies who, of course, did not believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus?"

To the miraculous birth of Jesus, Professor Foster sees no objection so long as his fatherly origin is not referred to the Holy Spirit. Professor Foster's opinion is, in this respect, in perfect agreement with the Muslim belief and the Quranic doctrine. The Professor says:—

"One more instance from the same address of this sort of apologetic must suffice. 'The virgin birth of Christ may be an extreme instance of parthenogenesis, which Professor Loeb has demonstrated to take place in other than the lowest forms of life, and which he believes to be possible in all.' Whether the phenomenon in question took place artificially or not, the sentence does not make evident. The analogy would be very defective between artificial parthenogenesis due to the combination of elements by a scientific expert after long experimentation, and the virgin birth from which all laboratory agency was excluded. It is probably natural parthenogenesis the orator has in mind, in which case he but escapes one difficulty to fall into a greater. Such parthenogenesis virtually means that the virgin is both father and mother of the child. The natural derivation of the child is manifestly as complete on this hypothesis as if there had been paternal mediation. But such explanation does violence to the narrative which refers the fatherly origin of Jesus immediately to the Holy Spirit; that is, the explanation denies the fact to be explained."

It may not be out of place to add here that according to the Quranic doctrine Jesus was not the child of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit had only informed Mary beforehand that she would bear a

child without the intervention of a father. Otherwise the fatherless birth of Jesus has no importance, for the Holy Quran considers him to be an ordinary mortal like the other prophets of God. As regards the miracles, the Islamic belief differs from the Christian doctrine in several points. In the first place, the truth of Islam does not depend wholly upon miracles as is the case of Christianity. Its greatest miracle is the Holy Quran which defies all human attempts in any age to produce its like. It is as great and as conclusive a miracle now as it was in the time of the Holy Prophet. Secondly, Islam appeals to the nobleness and the moral and spiritual excellence of its teachings more than it does to miracles. At the same time it refers to the miracles of the Holy Prophet which are spoken of as signs in the Holy Quran. But these signs are not limited to a particular age. A conclusive proof of their truth is to be met with in the circumstance that signs of the heavenly origin of Islam are shown through particular men in every age, and in this age they are shown through the Promised Messiah. The true explanation of those extraordinary signs is that the works of God are two kinds, ordinary and extraordinary. His ordinary works are manifested ordinarily, but when a man attains to extraordinary relations with Him, it is then that He manifests His extraordinary works through him. Both kinds of works are the works of God, and are displayed in accordance with the Divine laws under particular circumstances.

Christian Missionaries and Muslims.

The Rev. C. T. Wilson writes an article in the last number of *The East and The West* on "the present conditions and prospects of Missions to Moslems in Palestine." The writer applies to the diminution of the Muslim political power a saying of his master: "They that take up the sword shall perish by the sword," for, he says, "during the latter part of the nineteenth century the arms of England and Russia have been repeatedly victorious over those of the Afghans, Persians, Turcomans, and other Mohamadan

racess of Asia." The Reverend gentleman should not have taken the trouble to trace the fulfilment of the prophecy to such a distant time. If he had reflected on the history of Christianity, he would have seen that before Islam, Christianity had taken up the sword against the idolaters and the Jews, and Christian countries were afterwards conquered by the Muslims. If, therefore, there is any circumstance which can prove the fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy at the latter end of the nineteenth century, a clearer fulfilment may be witnessed a thousand years earlier. This application of prophecy by Rev. Wilson only shows that if the Christian missionaries had possessed any political power, they would have once more made the world a witness of the earlier scenes of the butchery practised upon the Jews. Mr. Wilson tries to prove that the erecting of hospitals and the establishing of schools by the Christian missionaries are the great forces which are undermining the fortress of Islam. In other words, the writer thinks that the Muslims are being convinced on account of Christian hospitals and schools and Christian advancement in the world that the Christian religion is true. I have seen this argument reiterated by the Christian Missionaries, but I wonder they never see its absurdity. For centuries Christianity never emerged from darkness and barbarity while Muslim universities and colleges flourished in Christian countries. Was Christianity a false religion then, and has it become a true religion by making material advancement? If our missionary friends want us to infer from their establishing of some charitable institutions that "the Christian's God is a God of love" in the words of Mr. Wilson, what inference are we entitled to draw from the cruelties practised by the Christians upon the idolaters, the Jews and the Muslims, cruelties for which there is no ostensible reason other than the advancement of the Christian religion? In his zeal for his religion, the Christian missionary should not forget the great deeds of kindness done by Muslims, not for the "dogs of infidels" but the infidels themselves. The record of history cannot be obliterated by such efforts.

The writer of the article is, however, certain that the Muslim views of the Christian religion are becoming more and more favorable. For this he has the authority of a "Moslem Sheikh of liberal views" whom the writer heard saying that "the beginning of the world was

Christian and its end will be so also," and the word of another Muslim that "Saidna Isa was Divine" quoting in proof of this a certain passage and then remarking "What can that mean but that He is God?" Now taking these statements for the word of a gentleman, I may tell Mr. Wilson that his "liberal Shaikh" and the other Muslim were only two such dunces as might be found in any Christian or Muslim country. It is a perfect lie that the beginning of the world was Christian, and that its end will be Christian is as great a lie. Nor could any Muslim, having the slightest acquaintance with the Holy Quran, ever assert that the holy book called Jesus God, for it plainly and emphatically repudiates the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus and his atonement. Further on, Mr. Wilson remarks that the Muslim is from his childhood taught that "the story of our redemption" is a lie. He is right there, and I may add that the Christian has after attaining to manhood learned at last that the redemption is a lie. The Christian missionaries ought to try more honorable ways of impressing the truth of Christianity upon the Muslim masses. The arguments derived from the establishment of hospitals and schools are too silly to have the slightest effect upon any reasonable person.

How Churches are made attractive.

New methods of attracting the non-Christians to Christianity and the Christians to the church have been found to be more effective than the old method of preaching. Under the heading of "Girl Vergers," the *Civil and Military Gazette* of 2nd November, quotes the *Daily Mail's* correspondent at New York:—

"The 'hustling' pastor of the Ebenezer Episcopal Methodist Church in the Philadelphian suburb of Manayunk has found a method of increasing the attractiveness of his ministrations which results in crowds being turned away at both services.

"He has formed the young, attractive and unengaged girls of his congregation into an Usher's Association, the chief duties of membership being to conduct worshippers, and especially strangers, to

their seats and to collect the offertory. The girls take turns, twelve of them officiating each week. They wear a simple, neat and very effective uniform of white, with a becoming lace cap, and stand ready in a double row of the church door to welcome arriving worshippers.

"The first trial of the innovation was an enormous success, crowds of young men who have hitherto been stubbornly unregenerate, coming from far and near. The Pastor, the Rev. Everett D. Decker, is delighted with the success of the experiment, which he said, he was sure would prove the long sought solution of the difficult problem of how to bring the light to many young men whom the distractions of business and pleasure have hitherto monopolised.

"The church's principal supporters are prominent business men, and they are equally delighted. They say that the opposition churches in the neighbourhood must follow suit or go out of business. The treasurer said the fact was sufficient that the offertory showed 150 per cent. increase over the corresponding Sunday of last year."

We are not aware if the reverend gentleman bases his method of bringing light to young men upon the scriptures, but we presume that being a Christian minister, he justifies his innovation by the Gospels. Probably he might be thinking that he is following Jesus Christ even in adopting this new method of bringing light to those who might otherwise remain away from it.

Somewhat similar methods are followed by the missionaries of the Christian religion to gain converts. One may judge from such circumstances how much of purity of heart is aimed at in the Christian religion. One may ask those who deny that the absence of the *pardah* and the free mingling of the two sexes in any way affects the purity of man's heart and the high ideal of chastity if these young men who went to church for the sake of attractive girls were not drawn by sensual motives? Men and women no doubt feel a pleasure in the Company of each other, but such pleasure is more often sensual. It is for this reason that the holy religion of Islam which aims at perfect purity forbids the free mixing of men and women.

Difference between Moral conceptions in the East and the West.

The head of the Mormon Church, Joseph F. Smith, is said to have been arrested on a charge of polygamy. He is charged with having five living wives. Some doubts are expressed as to his conviction. It is feared that marriages may not be proved, and the plural wives may deny marital relations with their alleged husband. In other words, the admission of adulterous connections might defeat the trial. There is all the difference here between the moral conceptions of the East and those of the West, or, more properly, of the Muslims and the Christians. Admission of adultery in a Muslim law-court would make the parties subject to the severest punishment, but similar admission in a Christian law-court entitles the accused person to an acquittal. If we have anything to learn from the sages and prophets of yore, and even the most recent Christian creeds admit the necessity of doing so, we should hate fornication as the blackest of all evils. Practically Christianity sees no objection to a married man having improper relations with another woman so long as she likes to be called by another name than his wife. We in the East, of course, fail to see what nobility is there in such moral conceptions of the West, and it is equally incomprehensible to us why polygamy is a criminal offence of which a man is exonerated if he pleads the existence of adulterous connections. This is practically giving moral sanction to improper relations between the sexes.