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THE  
CHURCHMAN

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JANUARY, 1888.

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ART I.—THE PRESENT PHASES OF THE MOHAMMEDAN QUESTION.

THAT Humanitarianism which culminates in Positivism has fascination for many minds. In more or less conscious forms it infects much of our literature. To such thinkers the idealized Prophet of Mecca presents attractions, whether for hero-worship or as the mighty founder of a great religion. The presence of this sentiment will go some way to explain that eagerness with which flattering portraits of Mohammed and eulogistic descriptions of Islam are received by a section of the Press and of the public, and this reflection will make Christian thinkers wary on such occasions. I think the caution necessary now, although I should be the last to attribute such views to Mr. Bosworth Smith, who is the literary originator of the recent excitement upon the Mohammedan question. For one can detect Bosworth Smith's influence upon Dr. Blyden, Joseph Thomson, and Canon Taylor. Hence that which might at first seem a wonderful consensus of independent testimony proves to belong to one stream of tendency.<sup>1</sup>

With one professed purpose of Bosworth Smith's lectures—namely, to remind Mohammedans of the tribute paid by the Koran to the Bible, and to win a favourable audience at their hands for Scriptural truth—we can have no quarrel. We may,

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<sup>1</sup> See Bosworth Smith's "Mohammed and Mohammedanism," and compare his expression at page 30, "The Athanasian Creed, an elaborate and unthinkable mode of thinking of the Trinity," with Thomson's "unthinkable dogmas about the Trinity," at page 882 of his article in the *Contemporary Review*, December, 1886. Canon Taylor plagiarises whole paragraphs from this book.

indeed, doubt the wisdom, and perhaps the accuracy, of the line of approach which he adopts, but our difference is much more with his disciples than with himself. Nor need we question the statement made in many quarters that Islam has spread during the last half-century more rapidly than for a long period before that. What then? We ought not to lose our balance of judgment about it, and rush off into startling and illogical inferences. In the first place, as I hope to show, the progress is not as swift and immense as has been suggested. In the next, there can be no possible comparison between the spread of Islam and the spread of Christianity if regarded as wholes, and if the total number of Christians be compared with the total number of Mohammedans during any commensurate periods within this century. It is by adopting limited and specially selected areas, and upon these violating the due logic of comparison, that such hasty and unjustifiable conclusions have been arrived at as Canon Taylor and others have put forward. Where the number of Mohammedans is, at the commencement of a decade, many times that of the Christians, it is altogether unfair and misleading to place side by side the mere absolute increase in each during that decade. If, for example, in a selected district of India the Mohammedans were, say, twenty times or thirty times as many as the Christians at the beginning of the ten years, their total increase during the ten years ought to have been *proportionate*—that is to say, something like twenty times—more, or else the *rate of increase* is certainly less. The neglect of this just measurement is the fallacy which underlies all Canon Taylor's use of statistics. But when men raise arguments, and advance the criticism that missions are a failure as compared with the progress of Islam, they should point out where the methods are mistaken, or else their charge constitutes an attack upon Christianity generally. It is certainly in this light that a large body of sceptics will regard it. They (the sceptics) are already saying that Christianity is not now, and never was, adapted to all men—that, in short, our blessed Saviour was not the Saviour of all mankind.

If, however, we are advised to condone polygamy, and allow for a while heathen customs, I would ask, Has there been no experience of this principle of accommodation in the past history of the Christian Church? Whence came the superstitions which first invaded the Church of Rome, but from the pagan nations with whom they were brought in contact during the progressive dissolution of the Roman Empire? We must beware lest, as St. Paul would say, we preach "another gospel." I do not apprehend that these shallow criticisms of to-day will much affect the warm friends of missions. These earnest souls

will have confidence that the accumulated wisdom gained through the trials and patience, the failures and the successes, of the last eighty years in every quarter of the globe will have made missionary committees abler to direct operations than sudden theorists are likely to be; whilst if, for a brief space, the "weaker brother" be disturbed, he will by-and-by return to sounder opinions. I do not, therefore, propose to dwell further upon the controversial aspect of the question; but it is of interest to all to examine as strictly as possible into the present position of Islam in the world, and to ascertain our duty in regard to it.

In doing this we must be content with approximations rather than with fixed estimates. Yet these approximations will be found valuable. That nothing closer can be obtained must be plain, if we consider the variety of calculations which are before us at the very outset as to the total number of the followers of Mecca's prophet. These calculations range from 150,000,000 up to 200,000,000, and with such wide variations of estimate amongst them as 160,000,000, 170,000,000, and 175,000,000. Of this total, it is judged that some 60,000,000 understand Arabic, and that some 60,000,000 are in Africa.

Leaving, therefore, these vague figures, let us as we proceed carefully distinguish between Mohammedanism in its political and in its religious extension. Its political force in the world has been and is sensibly diminishing, and ultimately this diminution of power may have a remarkable effect upon a faith that is essentially political. Hitherto, however, there has been practically no loss of ground for the religion, even where its professors have been conquered or repulsed. The Moors were expelled from Spain, and during last century bodies of Tartars were absorbed into the armies of the Muscovite Czars, their descendants now being Christians. These are almost the only cases where Mohammedans have lost bulk by political changes; whilst whatever small losses they have sustained have been much more than counterbalanced by gains. The reason of this, I believe, is that Islam has as yet never been fairly confronted by Protestant Christianity, and that no other form of Christianity has the slightest chance of prevailing against it. Islam has been, and is still, God's scourge to punish all false doctrine, God's abiding test to detect and expose corrupt Christianities.

Is it not therefore a reproach to Protestant missions that they have never carried their assault directly against the citadel of this their most redoubtable foe? And are there not now many and loud voices of God calling them to the encounter? These bitter criticisms which we have noticed; the rebuke which we have had hurled at us about the liquor traffic amongst

native races; the agitation of a certain school of religious thought about the Jerusalem bishopric; the fanatical persecuting spirit rising in Mohammedan lands, and with it also the spirit of inquiry noticeable amongst many Mohammedans—are not all these so many demands made upon us to go boldly forward and preach the Gospel to the votaries of Islam?

I fear that—as an Anglo-Indian general once said to me—“We have, and not unnaturally, moved hitherto along the line of least resistance, and where most blessing seemed to be vouchsafed.”

Let me then group together some of the evidences of recent Mohammedan progress, its progress, I mean, as a religion. In doing this I naturally start off with Turkey. About this country I would quote the words of one who knows it well. Dr. Jessop, of Beyrout, wrote last year:<sup>1</sup>

From my window as I write I can see five new mosques built in Beirut during the past twenty years, the minaret of the last one just now receiving its top stone. There is no doubt a Mohammedan revival in the Empire. Boys' Schools, Girls' Schools, Military Schools, Civil Service Schools, are being built in all the provinces. There may be more of this here in Syria, where Foreign Missionary Schools, Protestant and Catholic, have awakened the popular mind, and driven both Government and people to education in self-defence, but there is good reason to suppose that the movement is general throughout the Empire. The Sultan, as an individual, holds enormous estates in every part of Asiatic Turkey. He has now issued orders to his agents, generally the Wajys of the great provinces, to build a maabad or mosque and a madrasah or school, in every town or village where the Sultan has property. Last year, in Beirut, each adult Mohammedan was obliged by the Government to subscribe a dollar towards building the new mosque of the Musaletch about forty rods from my house. Meanwhile the building of the Christian churches and schools is stopped.

Changing from Turkey to Russia in Asia, we find there a district of Russian territory which has had a singular experience.<sup>2</sup> The Kirghiz Tartars were Shamanists.<sup>3</sup> In 1734 they made a nominal submission to Russia, and were afterwards completely incorporated into that empire. “At the epoch of their nominal union with Russia,” we are told, “only a very few of the khans and sultans had a confused idea of the dogmas of Islam and performed some few of its rites. Not a single mosque then existed in the Kirghiz Steppes, not a single mullah performed there the rites of the Mohammedan religion; and if since that time the Kirghiz have become Mohammedan to a considerable degree, it is only owing to our treating them as such. An incontrovertible proof that the

<sup>1</sup> The *Foreign Missionary* for October, 1887, an American magazine.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix IV. to vol. ii. of Schuyler's “Turkistan,” 1876. This appendix is written by Professor V. Grigoriev; read especially pp. 398 to 406.

<sup>3</sup> A form of Buddhism.

Mohammedan propaganda, in one form or another, went into the Kirghiz Steppes from the side of Russia is the circumstance that especially those Kirghiz who live along our lines have become Mohammedan; while the old genuine Shamansin is kept up, even at the present time, among those Kirghiz particularly who wander in the neighbourhood of Khiva, Bokhara, and what was formerly Khokand—that is, really Mohammedan countries.” So in tribulation complains Professor Grigorief,<sup>1</sup> mourning a mistake into which his countrymen fell, and its consequences. He details certain endeavours made in the reign of Catherine II. to civilize these nomads—efforts which were directed by that erroneous idea of the Russian Court that these people were Moslem. In this civilizing scheme the only educated persons sent amongst these people were Mohammedans. Yet “large sums were given for the construction of mosques, with schools and caravanserais attached . . . fathers were to be induced to send their children to school by presents, certificates of good conduct,” etc. Thus a Christian nation inadvertently became a propagator of Mohammedan opinions. But I allude especially to this piece of history because I understand that within the last few months the last Buddhist priest has died, and that no appointment of a successor has been made simply because there are no Buddhists left. Hence this is an example—and I suppose it is an unique instance—where Islam, coming into contact with the purest form of paganism, has not only conquered it, but has gained these converts in a dominion ruled by Christians.

From Russia to Persia is, in the present day, but a step across boundaries. In that kingdom there has been an internal pounding away, by which the Baabis, whose movement was the most vigorous spirit of reform within Islam, have been mercilessly cut to pieces. As another illustration of the progress of Islam, I take what has happened to Georgians. The French traveller, General Ferrier, in 1844 visited the village of Abbas-abad, near the Turcoman frontier, and he discerned there the Georgian type of countenance in families which had formerly been Christian. He adds: “Cependant il en reste encore sept ou huit qui ont persévérés dans la foi de leurs pères.” I am informed by Colonel Stewart that when he was there in 1887 there was not one Christian left, and that this is a fair specimen of what has been going on upon a large scale amongst the Georgian Christians. These Persian Georgians, finding themselves isolated, persecuted, and surrounded by Mohammedans, gradually gave way, and in many districts slowly disappeared as separate communities.

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<sup>1</sup> P. 405.

Stepping onward, we approach our own Indian Empire, and halt awhile in the highlands of Kafirstan. Here Surgeon-Major Bellew describes a process of proselytism which is still taking place.<sup>1</sup> The Gandhari, driven forth from their own country by the Mahmands, sought refuge in the fastnesses of Kafirstan, "and in the valleys opening from them upon the Kabul River as far west as Tagáo."

For some considerable period these fugitive Gandhari retained their original religion and customs, and were styled by the Mohammedans *Kafir* or "Infidel." Gradually, however, as Islam made its slow and steady progress among the neighbouring pagan peoples, they, or at least a large proportion of them who were in direct territorial contact with Musalmans, adopted the Mohammedan creed, first passing through the intermediate stage of *Nimcha* or "half and half," that is, half *Kafir* and half Musalman; for owing to their position between and dealings with the Musalmans on one side, and the Kafirs on the other, they were *Kafir* to the *Kafir*, and Musalman to the Musalman, and this was owing to the jealousy of each for his own religion. As Islam secured its foothold the *Nimcha* became strong enough to become the full Musalman, without fear of vengeance from the *Kafir*.

These converts now number about 12,000 families, and are exceedingly bigoted. "The late celebrated Akhund of Swat—saint and king combined—was a Gandharai." So is the Mullah Mushki Alam, the priest and saint of Ghuzni, who made himself conspicuous against us in the Cabul campaign.

Next, before entering India, let us make a short trip to China. Islam was introduced into this country early, and received a cordial welcome; yet to-day there are differing opinions about its condition—that is to say, as to whether it is torpid or active. The Rev. John Wherry, an American missionary, recording the results of his investigations, for no controversial purpose, and with no idea beyond missionary interest and literary curiosity, wrote in 1886: "How many millions no religious census has ever shown. There have been enough, at all events, in our times to make at the Western corners of the empire, north and south, and independently of each other, two formidable and nearly successful rebellions." They are known as the *Hui-hui*, and they wear the Chinese dress with the inevitable queue. They are to be met with in every position, profession, and grade. About twenty years ago one named Ma became viceroy at Nanking. They are very frequently innkeepers, because, as their co-religionists eat no pork, they can in that way purvey for them, and save their consciences. They "have in Peking almost a monopoly of the beef and mutton markets, and a strong hold on that of milk." "From race or from diet they possess a perceptible degree more of energy than ordinary Chinese," and with it a

<sup>1</sup> "The Races of Afghanistan," 1880, pp. 69, 70.

certain turbulence and propensity to quarrel. "There are, on the western borders, almost yearly local outbreaks which these restless people either originate or abet. Yet in Chihli, Shantung, Shansi, and elsewhere, where they are numerous and yet too few to give sentiment to the masses, they remain absolutely free from the suspicion of disloyalty by Government or people, and remain wholly unmolested." As to their own personal religious culture, they "maintain the rites received from the West, but they keep them from public view as much as practicable. Their New Year's festivities necessarily attract attention by their peculiar date and character, but even they are pitched in a lower key than the hilarious rejoicings of the Chinaman. They are never seen worshipping in public as in Turkey." "Opposed to image-worship as a cardinal tenet, they only protest to its practice in silence." Mr. Wherry is decidedly of opinion that nothing is done by them to proselytize their neighbours, but that effort is made to keep faith alive among their own people, even the humblest being taught, through easy metrical primers, fundamental doctrines.

I lay particular stress upon this account of their quiet demeanour, and of the absence of endeavour towards proselytism, because Edouard Montet, supporting himself upon the reports of another French writer, indulges in the expectation that one day Islam will be the religion of China.<sup>1</sup> He declares that the Mohammedans are very forward in their proceedings: that during a famine at Chan-Tong their "missionaries" bought 10,000 infants, in order to bring them up in the faith of Islam; and that they constantly seek marriages in Chinese families as a means of converting them. But then M. Montet has a general theory that everywhere the Mohammedan apostle has as much suppleness as the Jesuit, and adapts himself to whatever situations or persons he may find himself in presence of. Yet I should myself be disposed to think there is Moslem activity in China. That superior physique and that restless turbulence to which the Rev. John Wherry alludes would indicate energy rather than passive acquiescence.

Coming at length to India, it is disappointing to find no firm statistical support for conclusions where we should most confidently look for it. The differences between the censuses of 1871 and 1881 are such as to baffle comparison. For example, in the "Statistical Abstract relating to British India" for 1887 there is at page 6 a foot-note which points out four items that did not appear in the previous Census, and that together represent 33,237,576 persons. The

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<sup>1</sup> "Les Missions Musulmanes au dix-neuvième Siècle," an article in the May-June number of the *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* for 1885, p. 270.

*Spectator* of November 5 has accredited Islam with an average growth by conversions exceeding 100,000 a year. That is, as far as I can judge, the very highest figure at which it can be reckoned. But, although minute analysis is impossible, it is the less to be regretted, since, in whatever way the respective numbers may be balanced, the relative progress of Christianity has been with not less than fourfold the velocity of that of Mohammedanism. All the same, the Mohammedans are aggressive, and we must take account of this. Their aggression may be for political ends veiled under nominally peaceable and religious intentions. That this has been so in the past, and may well be so in the present, those who study Sir William Hunter's book will be ready to believe.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, there are good authorities who inform us that Mohammedanism "has organized a regular system of antagonistic teaching; Muslim preachers are sent forth from Bangalore, Lahore, and Delhi, to oppose missionaries in their work, and to sustain the faithful in their profession of Islam," although as to the amount and quality of this propaganda there are various estimates. The Rev. E. E. Jenkins, one of the secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, has written me a very interesting letter,<sup>2</sup> from which I extract a paragraph:

It is only recently that our brethren [*i.e.*, the Wesleyan missionaries] have encountered Mohammedan missionaries, and these as a rule are illiterate, incompetent, and sometimes a dead failure. When I was in India three years ago, I travelled over a great part of the Continent of India, and saw but few signs of Moslem activity. The population of the Hyderabad State is nine millions, and the Nizam himself is a Mohammedan Prince. I do not know that any efforts are being made to convert his Hindu subjects to the faith of the Prophet. But I do know that the Nizam himself, and some of his relatives, have contributed to the maintenance of our schools. Looking at the two systems of Christianity and Mohammedanism respectively, as they are seen contending against each other in India to-day, there can be no question that in *shaping force* (and whatever contributes to it), Islam is very far behind Christianity.

To corroborate Mr. Jenkins, I may add that it is indeed little likely a religion which does not hospitably entertain the modern systems of education, but which, on the contrary, contemptuously rejects them, can command the future of India. According to the Report of the Education Commission there were in 1871-2, 114,816 Mohammedan children at school throughout British India, and the number had only risen to 261,887 in 1881-2. Nor were their own Musjid schools efficient substitutes, although the Commission would gladly have smoothed over a difficulty by accepting them, and had meshed their net as wide as they could in this resolution: "That all

<sup>1</sup> "Our Indian Musalmans,"

<sup>2</sup> Dated Nov. 9, 1887.

indigenous schools, whether high or low, be encouraged if they serve any purpose of secular instruction whatever." The results, too, of Mohammedan missionary zeal in a part where they might be expected to be most powerful may be ascertained by consulting Appendix A of the Rev. Robert Clark's "Punjab and Sindh Missions of the C.M.S.," or an essay by Mr. Denzil C. J. Ibbetson.<sup>1</sup> A sample story from Ibbetson's essay will tell much: "A brother officer tells me that he once entered the rest-house of a Musalman village in Hissar, and found the head-man refreshing an idol with a new coat of oil, while a Brahmin read holy texts alongside. They seemed somewhat ashamed of being caught in the act, but, on being pressed, explained that their Mullah had lately visited them, had been extremely angry on seeing the idol, and had made them bury it in the sand. But now that the Mullah had gone, they were afraid of the possible consequences, and were endeavouring to console the god for his rough treatment."

I have thus reviewed much of the wide field of Islam, very rapidly indeed, as was inevitable, but letting those most competent speak for themselves. To complete the sketch I must relegate Africa<sup>2</sup> to another article, and for other parts of the world merely mention here that Mohammedanism is said to be "fast increasing in the Indian Archipelago,"<sup>3</sup> that the Dutch Government is said to favour it in Java, and that there is a drift, as it were, of it as far as America in the shape of coolie migration. I have also thus far confined myself to the spread of this religion, leaving other points for discussion afterwards. It seems to me that we need another Carey to rouse Christian people to an adequate sense of their responsibilities, for Islam has challenged Christendom. Nor could we doubt the issue, if in faithful obedience we addressed ourselves to the task, gigantic though it be. Canon Taylor has permitted himself a sadly unworthy sneer at the £12,000 supposed to have been spent by the Church Missionary Society in Syria, Persia, Egypt, and Arabia for the conversion of one half-witted girl. Has he forgotten what followed the conversion of a half-witted girl at Philippi? There was first a persecution of the Christians, then an earthquake, then the conversion of one, humanly speaking, the most unpromising subject for gentle influences, that harsh Roman gaoler. Already in the stratum of Mohammedan life there

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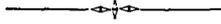
<sup>1</sup> "The Musalmans of the Punjab," in the *Indian Evangelical Review* for October, 1884. See page 165.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Bosworth Smith's singularly able and temperate article in the *Nineteenth Century* for December, will be noticed when I come to deal with Africa.

*British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, July, 1886.

are signs of social convulsion, a tremor, a thrill, a quiver. Presently we may see a great awakening, and then many, I fully believe, will be brought to Christianity of those who have proved hitherto the hardest to win.

WILLIAM JOSEPH SMITH.



## ART. II.—THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

**I**N the following paper I do not propose to discuss the authorship, canonicity, or supposed bias of the Apocalypse. I accept the opening verses as they stand. It is "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly be done: and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John; who bare record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw."

It appears to me that the thing most needed for the understanding of the Revelation is a clear idea of the plan and structure of the book. Of all human helps to the interpretation of Holy Scripture this seems to occupy the highest place. When I undertook to write this paper, I had scarcely the shadow of a hope that I should be able to suggest such a plan, or to mark out the Apocalypse in the kind of way in which Genesis, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, or Judges can be divided, so that the relation of the parts to the whole becomes at once apparent. If I venture to attempt this process now, it is with fear and trembling.

The Epistles to the seven Churches may be treated separately from the rest of the book. It is allowed that these Churches are representative of the Church in all ages, although the time of this Dispensation does not appear to be apportioned to them in any exact way. That Philadelphia and Laodicea are discernible in our present surroundings I can hardly doubt.

But the real difficulty of the Book of Revelation begins later, and concerns not "the things which are," but "the things which are to be hereafter." The time of our Saviour's public ministry at His first coming was probably about three years and a half. I venture to think that the greater part of the Book of Revelation, in its final meaning, is concerned with a similar period of about three years and a half, pertaining to His second coming. "Behold He cometh with clouds" is the real beginning of this period. When "His feet shall stand (in that day) upon the Mount of Olives," those three years and a half will have come to a close.

I would ask my readers to suspend their judgment of what I