

The
Moslem World

By

W. G. STALLEY



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Many Christians who are very well informed concerning Missionary work in heathen lands have to confess that they know very little about Mahommedanism, the religion of one seventh of the world's inhabitants.

Mahommedanism, also spoken of as Islam, is the latest of the great religious systems of the world. It had its origin in Arabia, early in the seventh century, A.D., at a time when the testimony of the Christian Church had become weakened through Sectarianism and strife. Missionary zeal had waned, and the Church, instead of translating and proclaiming the Word of Life to the heathen, kept it to themselves.

Mahommed, the founder, was born A.D. 570. He grew up with a thirst for knowledge and when in early life he became a camel

driver, his journeyings brought him into contact with Jewish and Christian peoples. From these he learned the truth, that there was One God over all. Unfortunately, because of the decadent state of Christianity, he did not get to know of the pure Word of God, but only of the ridiculous stories and traditions which had obscured the great truths of the Faith. His interest was attracted by a sect of people who, tired of idolatry and empty superstitions, had raised among themselves the cry, "Back to Abraham, and his simple worship of the one True God." This appealed to the young and thoughtful enquirer, who frequently spent days and nights in solitary meditation.

From the Koran, the sacred book of the Mahommedans, we learn that, while meditating in solitude, a heavenly being, whom he believed to be the angel Gabriel, appeared before him, and spoke the words which form the opening sentence of the Koran, "Recite,—In the name of the Lord who created,—created man from Clots of

Blood." To the anxious, seeking soul, this became a proof that Allah, the one and only God, had chosen him to be an apostle. Other visions followed, and the words he heard and proclaimed, were recorded by his followers, and form the Koran.

In A.D. 610, Mahommed began to preach his doctrine in the city of Mecca, calling upon the people to forsake idolatry and worship the one God. His teaching was full of Judgment, and the pains of hell for unbelievers. Except for a little company of faithful followers, the prophet and his message were scorned and refused. After about 10 years, he had to flee with some of his little company to Medina, where he was welcomed. The year of his reception at Medina, A.D. 622, became the first year of the Mahomedan Calendar.

He was now regarded, not only as a prophet, but also as a judge and King over the people of Medina. The little nation was known as Islam—the word meaning "Submission," and the individuals were known as Moslem—

which means "one who has submitted." They had given their submission to the one and only God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Lord of the day of Judgment, and to Mahommed, the Apostle of God.

Urged by the power which now dominated his being, and which caused outbursts of fanatical frenzy, Mahommed became a warrior, and, with his followers, the sword was adopted as the means of enforcing his doctrines. In A.D. 629 he returned to Mecca and conquered the city. When the warlike people of Mecca, who had opposed him a few years before, saw his victorious progress, and the plunder which fell to the victors, they sprang to join his army, and proclaimed with the faithful, "There is no God but God, and Mahommed is the apostle of God."

New revelations came to him, and were added to the Koran, promising blessings in this life, and bliss in Paradise for those who lived in, and died for the faith. With such inducements for the faithful, and the terrible

vengeance visited by the fanatical conquering armies upon those who refused to become Moslems, Mahommed's ever increasing hordes swept on through Arabia, and, within a year, he was leading them against the Christian tribes in the North.

Mahommed died in A.D. 632, but after his death, his followers swept on in their conquering progress, over Palestine, Syria, Persia, Egypt and North Africa, and to India and the borders of China. It was not until 250 years ago that the tide of conquest was stayed. Even now, though by less violent means, Islam is making headway, especially in Africa, and recent estimates place the number of our fellow human beings professing Mahommedanism at nearly 250 millions.

At most of their meetings, the Fellowship of Faith for the Moslems, display a large map of the world showing in colours the widespread dispersion of Mahommedanism. Contemplation of that map has aroused many Christian workers, (the writer of this article among them) to a deep sense of humiliation and

confession that the Christian Church has done, and is doing, so little to meet the challenge of this vast anti-christian system. In Africa there are 50 million Moslems, mostly in the north, and the number is increasing as Zealots, trained in Islamic schools, are pressing forward among the pagan tribes of the interior. In India there are more than 70 millions, in China 9 millions, in the Dutch East Indies over 36 millions. In Greater Russia there are estimated to be more than 18 millions. Is there not a solemn responsibility resting upon us in the fact that there are 103 millions of Mahommedans in British possessions or protectorates?

Mahommedan worship is very simple for the ordinary man. Five times a day he is called, from the minarets of the Mosques, to give his witness that there is no God but Allah, and Mahommed is the prophet of Allah. His prayers are made with his face toward Mecca, the Sacred City. For a month in each year, during the fast of Ramadhan, the orthodox Moslem has to fast between

sunrise and sunset, and to break the fast is considered a grievous sin. Among other observances are ceremonial washings, almsgiving, and pilgrimages to the sacred city of Mecca.

Islam raises no voice against Sin as an offence against the holiness of God. The fatalistic doctrine that man does what he does, including Evil, because God made him that way, excuses his actions. The Moslem is taught that God inbreathed wickedness as well as piety into a man's soul. In the Traditions, *i.e.*, sacred literature other than the Koran, most of the evils of the world are attributed to women. Education of girls is considered useless. The degradation of womanhood begins at birth. The birth of a daughter is deplored,—a succession of girl children becomes a valid reason for divorce. Marriage is arranged for girls as early as possible, and is a matter of business into which love does not enter. Divorce is permitted for the most trifling reasons. The seclusion of women in harems, prevailing

in most Moslem lands, entails untold suffering, and heavy mortality.

The antagonism of Mahommedanism to Christianity is based on the belief that the revelation to Mahommed is superior to, and supersedes all previous revelation of God to man. Jesus is referred to in the Koran, but always in terms of inferiority to Mahommed, such as, "Jesus, the Messiah, is only an apostle of God." Jews are referred to as enemies of the faith. Christianity is regarded as an idolatrous religion,—the Christian belief in the Triune God being interpreted as a belief in three Gods.

The orthodox Moslem, believing in his religion as a final and superior revelation to mankind, and believing that its mighty progress throughout the greater part of the world is God's witness to it, regards the work of Christian Missions with mingled pity and scorn. Islam forms the greatest, most widespread, and most virile challenge to the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The

very land, and the very spot, to which our blessed Lord will come at His Advent, are dominated by the religion of the false prophet. Yet, as we stated at the beginning of this paper, many Christians, well informed and enthusiastic concerning work in heathen lands know very little about this great challenge. The number of missionaries separated to work in Moslem fields is fractional compared with those working in other fields. It is true that progress is slow, and converts much fewer in this work, but surely, fierceness of resistance and scantiness of visible results ought to be a challenge to our loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ rather than an excuse for the comparative neglect of this vast field.

Thank God that, during the past few years the labours of the faithful witnesses, who for years have been content to go forth at the Lord's bidding, and labour without visible encouragements or results, have been yielding fruit. Lands rigidly closed, even a decade ago, have been open to colporteurs,

and other witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ, and small Christian communities have been formed. Some of these lands are now war areas, and further progress may be hindered, if not stopped, by anti-Christian powers. The Adversary is using all his force, visible and invisible, material and spiritual, to withstand the spread of the Gospel in the Moslem world, held in the power of this great false religion. We know what the final result will be, but what a privilege is offered to us now—to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

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