

sort a new revelation silenced the jealous murmurs of his wives Ayesha and Hafsa when his affections strayed to Mary, his Egyptian slave. Here, if anywhere, we are tempted to charge Mahomet with conscious imposture. His sin in the matter of Zeinab was at least far less than the sin of David in the matter of Bathsheba. But David sinned and repented; he poured forth his soul in a psalm of penitence, while Mahomet was ready with a revelation to reprove himself, not for his guilty passion, but for the delay of its gratification. Yet even here we are not inclined to believe that Mahomet willingly invented a sanction for his own weakness and sin. The abiding belief in his own mission, combined with the power which man ever has to find excuses for his own conduct, would lead him to look on those excuses as coming from a divine prompting. But in no case do we see so distinctly how utterly Mahomet had fallen away from the bright promise of his first years; in no other case had the light within him been so utterly turned into darkness; in no case was he so bound to pause and to reflect whether that could really be a revelation from on high which took the form of an excuse for conduct which it is plain that his own conscience condemned.

We hold then that Mahomet was, from the beginning to the end of his career, honestly convinced of the truth of his own mission. We hold also that, in a certain sense, at least in his earlier years, his belief in his divine mission was not ill founded. But we hold also that he gradually fell away, and that he fell away mainly from not taking due pains to find out the real nature of the Christian revelation. When the first downward step had been taken, the other steps of the downward course were easy. The prophet of truth and righteousness, the asserter of the unity of God against the idols of the Kaaba sank to the level of an earthly conqueror, extending the bounds of his dominion by the sword. He died while waging war to force his own imperfect system on those who, amid all the corruptions of the Christianity of those days, still held truths which he had rejected and blasphemed. The real charge against Mohamet is, that, after the Gospel had

been given to man, he fell back on the theology and morality of the Law. And the effects of his life and teaching on the world at large have been in close analogy to his own personal career. In his own age and country he was the greatest of reformers—a reformer alike religious, moral, and political. He founded a nation, and he gave that nation a religion and a jurisprudence which were an unspeakable advance on anything which that nation had as yet accepted. He swept away idolatry; he enforced the practice of a purer morality; he lightened the yoke of the slave; he even raised the condition of the weaker sex. If he had done nothing but wipe away the frightful practice of burying female children alive, he would not have lived in vain in his own land in his own age. But when his system passed the borders of the land in which it was so great a reform, it became the greatest of curses to mankind. The main cause which has made the religion of Mahomet exercise so blighting an influence on every land where it has been preached is because it is an imperfect system standing in the way of one more perfect. Islam has in it just enough of good to hinder the reception of greater good. When Islam is preached to a tribe of savage heathen, its acceptance is in itself an unmixed blessing. But it is a blessing which cuts off all hope of the reception of a greater blessing; the heathen, in his utter darkness, is far more likely to accept the faith of Christ than the Mahometan in his state of half enlightenment. In all the lands where Islam has been preached it has regulated and softened many of the evils of earlier systems. But in regulating and softening them it has established them for ever. The New Testament nowhere forbids slavery; it can hardly be said to contain any direct prohibition of polygamy. Preached as the Gospel was to subjects of the Roman Empire, among whom a frightful licentiousness was rife, but among whom legal polygamy was unheard of, there was little need to enlarge on the subject. But it is plain that the principles of Christian purity would of themselves, without any direct precept, hinder polygamy from becoming the law of any Christian land. But Islam, by the very fact of regulating and restraining