

character of a divine messenger? Of his sincerity, as we have already said, there can be no doubt. It is impossible to conceive any motive, except faith in his own mission, which could have borne him up through the contempt and persecution which he underwent as long as he abode at Mecca. The mere fact of his lapse, followed as it was by his recantation, seems to us decidedly in favour of his sincerity. No act of his life reads less like the act of a conscious impostor. It is the act of a man, believing in himself and in what he taught, but whose faith failed him for a season in a moment of temptation. But his mere belief in his own mission would not of itself prove that mission to be divine; it would not even prove the work which he undertook to be a work tending to the good of mankind. Now how far Islam, as preached to the world at large, has tended to the good or evil of mankind is altogether question. That the early teaching of Mahomet, in the days of his first preaching at Mecca, was directly for the good of the men at that time and place there can be no doubt at all. His religious and moral teaching seems to us sadly imperfect; but it was a teaching which was a measureless advance on anything which his hearers had heard before. Whatever Mahomet may have been to the world at large, to the men of Mecca of his own time he was one who spake of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, one who taught, in the midst of a debasing idolatry, that there is one God, and that there is none other but he. Every man who at this stage accepted the teaching of Mahomet was at once raised to a higher rank in the scale of religious and moral beings. The fiercest revilers of the Prophet cannot deny that his first disciples, if not brought to the perfect knowledge of the truth, were at least brought far nearer to it than they had been before. The striving of his heart which led Mahomet, in the face of scorn and persecution, to preach to an idolatrous city the truth of the unity of God could never have arisen from any low personal motive; it may not be going too far to say that it could only have been a movement from God himself. The earliest Suras are the outpourings of a soul

athirst for God, a righteous soul stirred to wrath and sorrow by the unlawful deeds of the men around him. What these Suras teach is simple theism of the purest and highest kind, as opposed to a prevalent idolatry. It is not till a somewhat later stage that we have to ask any questions as to the relation of the new teaching towards the older teaching of Christianity and of Judaism. What then was the nature of the special prophetic inspiration to which Mahomet laid claim during this first and best period of his career? Dr. Sprenger, whose tendency is certainly to undervalue the character of the Prophet, insists strongly on the epileptic fits to which it appears that Mahomet was subject, and on the violent physical emotions with which throughout his life his prophetic utterances seem always to have been ushered in. If we rightly understand his theory, which is worked out at great length and with reference to a vast number of analogies in all ages, the prophetic inspiration of Mahomet was little more than what he calls a kind of 'hysteric madness.' Dr. Sprenger goes deeper into the physiology of the matter than we can profess to follow him, and it is quite consistent with his whole view to refer as much as possible to physical causes. On the other hand, the writer in the *Quarterly Review*, whose Eastern lore seems to be well-nigh as deep as that of Dr. Sprenger, attaches little or no importance to these alleged fits of epilepsy.

It is possible that fits of this kind may have suggested both to himself and to others the notion of a special inspiration, but the early Suras of the Koran, though they may be called the outpourings of a heated enthusiasm, are certainly not the ravings of a madman. Whatever share in the matter we may choose to attribute to physical causes, the moral position of Mahomet in his first days, as the teacher of a practice, imperfect doubtless, but pure as far as they went, remains untouched. Sir William Muir has another suggestion. He starts from the doubts which are said to have been entertained by Mahomet himself at one stage of his mission, whether the supernatural influence under which he felt himself might not proceed from the power of evil and