

a Satanic inspiration, he is putting forth a view which he has a perfect right to maintain as a theological proposition, but he is treading on ground whither the historian of events and creeds must refuse to follow him.

In truth, the great difficulty of the subject is that, while it is the duty of the historian to avoid committing himself on questions which are purely theological, yet, in considering the life of Mahomet and the effects of Mahometanism, he cannot help for ever treading on the very verge of the forbidden region. Through the whole history, both of the man and of the nations which have adopted his system, the religious element underlies everything. Mahomet was a conqueror and a ruler; but he was a conqueror and a ruler only because he declared himself to be a divinely-commissioned prophet. His immediate followers founded the vastest empire that the world ever saw, an empire which, though it soon split asunder in actual fact, has maintained a theoretical unity ever since. But that empire was not, strictly speaking the dominion of a nation or of a dynasty. It was the dominion of a religious sect which had risen to political power, of a religious sect with which the acquisition of political power was a religious principle. In the Mahometan system there is no room for national distinctions; religious belief stands in the place of nationality; every fellow-believer is a fellow-countryman. There is no distinction between Church and State; we cannot even say that Church and State are two different aspects of the same body. In Islam the Church comes first in idea and in fact; the State is simply the Church in its unavoidable temporal relations. In Islam there is no rivalry, no distinction, between Pope and Cæsar simply because he is Pope. In every Mahometan country the whole civil and social fabric rests on the groundwork of a divine law once revealed. The professions of the canon and the civil lawyer, even the professions of the lawyer and the theologian, are in Islam one and the same. In everything the spiritual element comes first, and the temporal element is its mere appendage. The appendage may indeed sometimes over-

8

shadow the inherent substance. We can conceive that a modern Ottoman Sultan admitted as a member of the commonwealth of Christian Europe may sometimes forget that he is the Caliph of the Prophet of Islam. So German archiepiscopal Electors seem sometimes to have forgotten that they were Christian priests. But if the Caliph has forgotten his own mission, there are million of believers throughout the world who will remember it. The last time that a Roman Emperor set foot in Rome, he himself seemed to have forgotten his own being. But the Roman People had not forgotten it, and, though the successor of Augustus lurked in the person of Joseph the Second, they welcomed the successor of Augustus to his own home. With far more truth, with far more effect, might the Caliph of Mahomet, casting aside his trust in an arm of flesh, appeal to the religious zeal, not only of his own political subjects, but of all true believers throughout the world. It would be no small trial for Christendom, it would be a special trial for those Christian governments which bear rule over Mahometan subjects, if such a day should ever come.

The primary fact then from which we start is that Mahomet was a man who founded a temporal dominion, but who grounded his claim to temporal dominion solely on his claim to be a divinely-commissioned teacher of religion. He taught a doctrine; he founded a sect; and the proselytes of that sect presently set forth, in the name of their new faith, to conquer the world. In the first burst of its newborn enthusiasm, in the successive revivals of that enthusiasm, they actually did conquer and keep no small part of the world. Every Moslem was, as his first duty, a missionary; but he was an armed missionary. In this the religion of Mahomet forms a marked contrast to the two religious systems which had gone before his own, and with which his own must be compared at every step. To understand the position of Mahomet and the results of his teaching, we must throughout compare the origin and growth of Judaism and of Christianity. And we must for this purpose look on Judaism and Christianity in their purely historical aspect; for the moment we must look on