

religious reformer. In the early period of his career he was influenced no doubt by sincere motives. His purpose was to inaugurate a religious revolution—a revolt against the idolatry which prevailed in Arabia. The heathenism of his day was gross idolatry; and the Christianity of that age in the Orient was little better in its superstitious and idolatrous practices. It was the era of the iconoclast even within the circle of professed Christianity. It was the purpose of Mohammed to re-establish among men a spiritual worship of the one God—to demolish forever the Arabian Pantheon. The unity and spirituality of the Supreme Being were basis ideas in his religious creed, and he advocated direct communion with God in prayer and worship, and the utter rejection of idolatry, which in his age was equivalent to polytheism. This movement was certainly a remarkable one when we consider the times and the environment out of which it sprung. Had it been inspired and guided by the Spirit of God, and founded upon the revealed Word, with a divinely called and sanctified leader, we might have seen the great reformation of the sixteenth century anticipated in the seventh.

The power and prestige of Mohammed were due to the fact that men soon believed him to be a prophet sent of God, and his message was to such an extent in the name and to the honor of God that his commission seemed to be genuine. In an age of abject superstition and driveling idolatry he announced with the prophetic fervor of conviction that great truth which has ever had the power to arrest the attention of earnest minds, namely: the existence of one only and true God, supreme in His will and absolute in His power. With the music of this eternal truth Mohammed has held the attention of a large portion of the Eastern world for over twelve hundred years. This one message has seemed to guarantee him as a prophet to his misguided and indiscriminating followers. Having given bonds, as it were, of such overwhelming value in this one supreme truth, men have not been careful to scrutinize in other respects his credentials; with the charm and majesty of this one great central idea of all religion, he has swept all before him. This, in connection with the success of his arms, as his followers carried on in his name their successful aggressive warfare, has been his passport to the front rank of religious leadership; and although he hopelessly forfeited his position by the most manifest signs of moral weakness and human ignorance, yet the clarion call of "No God but God!" has held the ear of the East with a constancy at once marvelous and pathetic. It was considered in no wise to his discredit that he taught what is practically a plan of salvation by works based upon external allegiance to a religious creed, and it rather added to his popularity with his Oriental following that his religion officially sanctioned polygamy, slavery, and unlimited divorce.

The Prophet of Mecca, however, was simply a religious enthusiast