

the assembly silent; none offered to accept the proffered office till the fiery Ali burst forth and declared that he would be the brother and assistant of the prophet, "I," said he, "O prophet of God, will be thy vizier; I myself will beat out the teeth, pull out the eyes, rip open the bellies, and cut off the legs, of all those who shall dare to oppose thee." The prophet caught the young proselyte in his arms, exclaiming, "This is my brother, my deputy, my successor; show yourselves obedient unto him." At this apparently extravagant command, the whole company burst into laughter, telling Abu Taleb that he must now pay obedience and submission to his own son! As words were multiplied, surprise began to give way to indignation, the serious pretensions of the prophet were seriously resented, and in the issue the assembly broke up in confusion, affording the ardent apostle but slender prospects of success among his kinsmen.

Undeterred by the failure of his first public attempt, Mohammed began to preach still more openly before the people of Mecca. He announced to them that he was commissioned by the Almighty to be his prophet on the earth; to assert the unity of the Divine Being; to denounce the worship of images; to recall the people to the true and only religion; to bear the tidings of paradise to the believing; and to threaten the deaf and unbelieving with the terrible vengeance of the Lord. His main doctrine, and that which constitutes the distinguishing character of the Koran is, that there is but one God; that he only is to be worshipped; and that all idolatry is a foul abomination, to be utterly abolished. The 112th ch. of the Koran, entitled "The Declaration of God's Unity," is held in the most profound veneration by the Mohammedans, and declared, by a tradition of the prophet, to be equal in value to a third part of the whole Koran. It is said to have been revealed in answer to the Koreish, who inquired of the apostle concerning the distinguishing attributes of the God whom he invited them to worship. It consists of a single sentence.

"In the name of the most merciful God. Say, God is one God; the eternal God; he begetteth not, neither is he begotten: and there is not any one like unto him." In the incessant repetition of this doctrine in the pages of the Koran, the author is aiming not only at the grosser errors of polytheism and idolatry, then common among the Eastern nations, but is levelling a blow also at the fundamental tenet of Christianity, that Jesus Christ is the son of God, "the only begotten of the Father." Like others in other ages, Mohammed could conceive of no mode of understanding the doctrine of the filiation of Christ, as held by Christians, which did not directly militate with the truth of the essential unity of the Most High; and in his view the first born of absurdities was, to affirm in the same breath that Christ was the son of God, and yet coequal and coeternal with the Father. The New Testament declarations, therefore, respecting the person and character of the Messiah find no mercy at the hands of the author of the Koran, who either had not the candour or the capacity to discriminate between the doctrine of the Trinity and that of Tritheism. "O ye who have received the Scriptures, exceed not the just bounds in your religion, neither say of God any other than the truth."—i. e. either by rejecting Jesus as the Jews do, or by raising him to an equality with