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The Qur'anic Doctrine of God

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The Qur'anic Doctrine of God

I. THE NATURE OF GOD

WE have now come in our study of the Qur'an to the question which above all others is the most difficult and yet the most alluring. As soon as one attempts to form independently and without bias a definite conception of the Qur'anic teaching concerning God, the absolute inadequacy of the orthodox theologians' treatment of the subject becomes apparent. The Doctrine of God as taught by orthodox Muslim theologians is barren and almost wholly negative.

The great difficulty there is in explaining the teaching of the Qur'an and the position of Muhammadan theologians with regard to this subject, is, perhaps, best exemplified by quoting the words of Palgrave and of Johannes Hauri side by side. "Islam", says Palgrave, "is the Pantheism of Force" . . . Johannes Hauri, in his classical study of Islam says, . . . "Muhammad's idea of God is out and out deistic. God and the world are in exclusive, external, and eternal opposition."¹

Both cannot be correct; each simply emphasizes one side of the teaching of Muhammadanism, and leaves the other out of consideration. To affirm that either the one

¹ S. M. ZWEMER'S *Islam A Challenge to Faith*, p. 87.

side or the other is a full and complete expression of Muhammadanism, gives a wrong impression of the system as a system of practical religion, and of actual belief. In practice, a man may hold contradictory beliefs, without attempting to co-ordinate or reconcile them by forming a definite theological system. He may believe that all things occur in accordance with the divine will, and yet hold that man can choose his own line of conduct and decide which of two actions he will perform. How these two beliefs are to be reconciled or co-ordinated, he may refuse to consider; and when he is urged to say how they can be reconciled intellectually or metaphysically, he may fall back, as the Muhammadans often do, on the pious ejaculation, *Allah a'lam*, 'God knows best'. This phrase, on the lips of the pious believer, has ever been a wonderful solvent of all intellectual difficulties.

As, however, our object is not to discuss the views of others, whether Muslims or Christians, we shall without further delay pass on to the proper subject of our investigation, the teaching of the Qur'an on God.

The Doctrine of God, as taught in the Qur'an, is far from being simple, and is by no means clear-cut. Muhammad appears to have had no definite theological conception of God. His doctrines were wholly those of one who sought to teach practical religion, and this fact must be taken into consideration in our interpretation and estimate of his words.

While we cannot say that Muhammad attempts to prove the existence of God, we see that he brings forward almost innumerable references to the evidences of

His existence and of His providential government of the world.

These evidences are drawn from all quarters. The heavens above us, and the earth on which we live, are claimed to be full of signs which speak in no uncertain voice to those who are willing to hear. In the movements of the celestial bodies, in the alternations of day and night, and in the recurrence of the seasons in their courses, may be seen the wise and beneficent working of one almighty will. The winds, the clouds, the rains, are the harbingers of His mercy. In the revival of vegetation after the summer drought man may behold the manifestations of his Maker's Power and Wisdom. In the adaptations of animals to their environment, and to the various uses to which they may be put by man, may be seen the signs of a mind which knows the end from the beginning, and can carry out its purpose in marvellous ways.

We have space to quote only a few of the passages which thus speak of the 'signs of God'. 'It is He who hath appointed the sun for brightness, and the moon for a light, and hath ordained her stations that ye may learn the number of the years and the reckoning *of time*. God hath not created *all* this but for the truth.¹ He maketh His signs clear to those who understand.

'Verily in the alternations of night and day, and in all that God hath created in the Heavens and in the Earth are signs to those who fear Him.'²

¹ 'That is, for a serious end, to manifest the Divine Unity.' RODWELL.

² Suratu Yunas (x) 5-6.

'It is God who hath created the Heavens and the Earth, and sendeth down water from the Heaven, and so bringeth forth the fruits for your food: And He hath subjected to you the ships, so that by His command, they pass through the sea; and He hath subjected the rivers to you: And He hath subjected to you the sun and the moon in their constant courses: and He hath subjected the day and the night to you; of everything which ye ask Him, giveth He to you; and if ye would reckon up the favours of God, ye cannot count them! Surely man is unjust, ungrateful!' ¹

'Hast thou not seen that God driveth clouds lightly forward, then gathereth them together, then pileth them in masses? And then thou seest the rain forthcoming from their midst; and He causeth *clouds like* mountains charged with hail, to descend from the heaven, and He maketh it to fall on whom He will, and from whom He will He turneth it aside. The brightness of His lightning all but taketh away the sight?

'God causeth the day and the night to take their turn. Verily in this is teaching for men of insight.' ²

'Say: Praise be to God and peace be on His servants whom He hath chosen! Is God the more worthy or the gods they join with Him?

'Is it not He, who hath made the Heavens and the Earth, and hath sent down rain to you from Heaven, by which we cause the luxuriant groves to spring up? It is not in your power to cause its trees to spring

¹ Suratu Ibrahim (xiv) 37; cf. xxi. 34; xxix. 61; xxxvi. 36; xxxix. 7; lv. 4; lxxi. 14; xliiii. 8 *ff.*

² Suratu'n-Nur (xxiv) 43-4.

up! What! A god with God? Yet they find equals for Him!

'Is not He, who hath set the earth so firm, and hath made rivers in its midst, and hath placed mountains upon it, and put a barrier between the two seas? What! a god with God? Yet the greater part of them have no knowledge!

'Is not He *the more worthy* who answereth the oppressed when they cry to Him, and taketh off their ills, and maketh you to succeed your sires on the earth? What! a god with God? How few bear these things in mind!

'Is not He, who guideth you in the darkness of the land and of the sea, and who sendeth forth the winds as the forerunners of His mercy? What! a god with God? Far from God be what ye join with Him!

'Is not He, who created a being, then reneweth it, and who supplieth you out of the Heaven and the Earth? What! a god with God? Say: Bring forth your proofs if you speak the truth.'¹

Many more passages might be quoted, or referred to, as showing the range over which Muhammad's mind passed when he sought to give evidences of the existence of God, and of the wonderful manner in which He planned, created, rules and over-rules all things.

All these evidences, however, are adduced not so much to show that there is a God, as to show that the God who is, is one God. In nature and in providence

¹ Suratu'n-Naml (xxvii) 60-5; cf. xxxi. 9; lv. 1-11; lxxxvii. 1-5; xvi. 80; vi. 95-9.

all is united by one purpose, and directed by one almighty and omniscient will, and thus there cannot be gods many and lords many whose conflicting purposes and whose contending wills would manifest themselves in opposing tendencies and discord in the world in which man finds himself.

The object of Muhammad's argument, then, is that God is One, and is Lord of all, sole Maker, Director, and Governor of Nature and of mankind.

Passing on, we shall first consider what the Qur'an teaches as to the Nature of God.

God (Allah), the evidences of whose existence lie all around us, is no mere Abstract Idea, the conception of the human mind trying to solve the problem of the world in which man lives; nor is God the Personification of the Law and Order of the world. Far from being regarded as any indefinite and undefinable 'Force' or 'Power', He is a real Being. He is *par excellence* **the Being, the Living One** (El-Hayyu). 'God! There is no God but He; the Living, the Eternal; Nor slumber seizeth Him, nor sleep; His, whatsoever is in the Heavens and whatsoever is in the Earth! Who is he that can intercede with Him but by His own permission? He knoweth what *hath been* before them and what *shall be* after them; yet nought of His knowledge shall they grasp, save what He willeth. His Throne reacheth over the Heavens and the Earth, and the upholding of both burdeneth Him not; and He is the High, the Great!' ¹ 'God! there is no god but He, the Living, the Eternal!' ²

¹ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 256.

² Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 1. Rodwell wrongly translates here, 'the Merciful'.

'And put thou thy trust in Him that liveth and dieth not, and celebrate His praise; (He fully knoweth the faults of His servants); who in six days created the Heavens and the Earth, and whatever is between them, then mounted His Throne: the God of Mercy!' ¹

In His Nature and mode of existence, He is immeasurably above anything that man can conceive. He knows all things, but man can never know Him except in so far as He reveals something of Himself. ² The words 'yet nought of His knowledge shall they grasp, save what He willeth', may mean that man can never understand the extent and comprehension of the divine knowledge, except in so far as God desires him to know; but the phrase more probably means that man can never attain to a knowledge of Him, except in so far as He reveals Himself. What He is and how He is, can never be fully comprehended by the puny mind of man. 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?' ³

The Qur'an clearly distinguishes between the Creator and the world which He has created, so that it cannot be truly said that there is in the Qur'an even a suspicion that the world is but the self-manifestation of Himself. It is the work of His hands. He is in the world; yet not a part of it: for He is its Creator and Governor.

The Qur'an never represents the forces of Nature as being in any way divine, or as being a manifestation of the divine activity. They too are the creation of God, the servants whereby He works out His purpose.

¹ Suratu'l-Furqan (xxv) 60. ² ii. 256. ³ Job xi, 7.

The divine power manifests itself directly through them, exactly as it is represented as doing in the writings of the Old Testament; but the divine power or activity and the forces of nature are never confused.

While, as we have already stated, the Qur'an teaches that God cannot be comprehended by the mind of man, it also clearly states that man may know God.

It is sufficient here to refer to the following verse: 'He is the first [better, the First] and the last [better, the Last]; the Seen (Az-Zahir) and the Hidden (Al-Batin); and He knoweth all things.'¹

The meaning of the expression, 'the Seen and the Hidden', is very far from being that which the Sufis attribute to the words. The words as uttered by Muhammad contain no esoteric teaching, but mean simply that God is one who manifests Himself and yet, at the same time, remains concealed. God is known in and through His works, His dealings with man, His revelation of Himself, His character and qualities as shown in these works and dealings and revelation, but yet remains unknown and unknowable in His Essential Being. He is the Self-revealer (Az-Zahir) and the Hider (Al-Batin).

God is Eternal, the Self-subsisting One, who has life in Himself, and in and through whom all things subsist and consist. 'God! there is no god but He, the Living, the Eternal.'² 'God! there is no god but He; the Living, the Eternal.'³ 'And humble shall be their faces before Him that Liveth, the Self-subsisting.'⁴

¹ Suratu'l-Hadid (lvii) 3.

² Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 1.

³ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 256.

⁴ Suratu Ta Ha (xx) 110

He never came into being or at any time began to be self-conscious, but has always been, and will ever continue to be; for He is the First and the Last (lvii. 3). All that He has created shall pass away, but He Himself endureth, for He is the Living One, who never dieth. What He is, He always was, and what He has ever been, He always will be. 'All on earth shall pass away, But the Face of thy Lord shall abide resplendent with majesty and glory.'¹ 'And call not on any other god with God. There is no god but He! Everything shall perish except Himself (literally, His Face).'²

He has a personal existence apart from the world which He has created, which exists only in and through Him, while yet it remains distinct from Him, the work of His hands, not the self-manifestation of His Being.

We have already said that Muhammad's aim and object in appealing to the signs of the existence of God which are to be seen on every hand, was not so much to prove that He is, as to assert that He is One.

In expounding his teaching on this point he argued against two totally different views. On the one hand, he took his stand against the polytheism of the pagan

¹ Suratu'r-Rahman (lv) 26-7.

² Suratu'l-Qasas (xxviii) 88; cf. Razi (Al-Matba'at al-'Amirat ash-Sharafiyyat, Cairo, A.H. 1308) vi, 561, where commenting on xxx. 29, he says

عبد عن الذات بالوجه كما قال تعالى كل شيء هالك إلا وجهه
["عَبَّرَ عَنِ الذَّاتِ بِالوَجْهِ، كَمَا قَالَ تَعَالَى: " كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلاَّ وَجْهَهُ]

'And he expressed "the being" by "the face", as (God) may, He be exalted, said, "Everything shall perish except His face". See also page 500.

Arabs, and denied the existence of all so-called gods, and maintained that there is but one divine Being, the Creator and Governor of all things. In this he taught a strict and absolute monotheism.

On the other hand, he took a stand against what he believed to be the teaching of the Christian Church of his day and asserted that God cannot, because of His own Majesty and Greatness, enter into physical relations with any of His creatures so as to beget children, and that no created beings can in any way be associated for purposes of worship and adoration with the One and Only true God.

Whether he was misinformed as to what was the belief of the Christian Church, or simply did not understand the information which he received, or whether he knowingly misrepresented the Christian position, as some hold, is not a question which we need discuss. The point that interests us here is that all he is supposed to have said against the doctrine of the Trinity, never once really touches that doctrine. This will be clear from the following passages. 'They surely are Infidels who say, "God is a third of three": for there is no god but one God.'¹ 'Infidels now are they who say, "Verily God is the Messiah Ibn Maryam (son of Mary)!"'²

'O ye people of the Book! overstep not bounds in your religion; and of God speak only truth. The Messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary, is only an apostle of God, and His Word which He conveyed into Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Himself. Believe therefore in God

¹ Suratu'l-Ma'ida (v) 77.

² v. 19.

and His apostles, and say not "Three" (there is a Trinity)¹ — Forbear — it will better for you. God is only one God! Far be it from His glory that He should have a son!² The last clause shows plainly that Muhammad was thinking only, and most crudely, of the supposed physical union of the divine and the human in the Son of Mary. ' And when God shall say, "O Jesus, Son of Mary: hast thou said unto mankind — Take me and my mother as two Gods, beside God?"³

It is clear from these passages that the whole argument of Muhammad was against a system of tritheism which he believed to be held by the Christian Church of his day. He nowhere says a word which leads us to suppose that he had ever heard of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. His whole attack on the Christian position was based on the supposition that the Church taught that God had entered into physical relations with Mary, and that the man Jesus and his mother were therefore associated with God in worship and adoration.

Against this tritheistic system he maintained that God was One, and only One, and never had entered, and never could enter, into such relations with the human race as physically to beget a son. 'And they say, "God hath a son." No! Praise be to Him! But — His whatever is in the Heavens and in the Earth! All obeyeth Him.'⁴ 'Say He is God alone: God the Eternal! He begetteth not, and He is not begotten; And there is none like unto Him.'⁵

¹ This is Rodwell's interpretation, following the commentators. ² Suratu'n-Nisa' (iv) 169

³ Suratu'l-Ma'ida (v) 116.

⁴ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 110.

⁵ Suratu'l-Iklas (cii).

I cannot see that these words, as they came from the lips of Muhammad, have any other meaning than that given above, though they have been used by Muhammadan theologians, from the time they came to understand the Christian doctrine of the Trinity better than Muhammad himself did, as a 'proof text ' against that doctrine, and have been accepted, for this reason, by Christians, as being intended by Muhammad himself to state formally his denial of the truth of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

When, as we have seen, Muhammad believed that the Trinity consisted of God (Allah), the man Jesus, and his mother, he cannot have been referring to anything else when he spoke the words which now form the hundred and twelfth Sura of the Qur'an, (Suratu'l-Ikhlās) or those which are found in the hundred and tenth verse of the second Sura (Suratu'l-Baqara).

The Qur'an has no direct teaching on the Nature of God, and the mode of the Divine Existence, and we must look at the indirect teaching of the book on this point to find what, if any, presuppositions as to the divine Nature lie at the base of Muhammad's teachings concerning God.

In speaking of God and His dealings with mankind, especially in those passages which speak of Jesus, the Son of Mary, Muhammad had to fall back on such expressions as 'The Spirit,' 'The Holy Spirit,' 'His Word', which are employed in most indefinite, and, at times, irreconcilable ways.

We shall, therefore, now take up those passages in which these and similar expressions occur to see what they imply.

1. God, when He created man, breathed into him 'of His Spirit'.¹ This is the first use of the expression which we shall consider. What exactly Muhammad meant by it, it is difficult to say. The expression is evidently to be traced to the Jewish Scriptures, and like other expressions taken by Muhammad from the Jews or the Christians was employed by him without there being attached to it any clear, definite, or precise meaning. Yet there it stands in the Qur'an, and unless it is to be passed by as unintelligible, we must try to see what it implies.

The frequent and easy comment of the expositors that the words 'the Spirit', 'the Holy Spirit', etc., refer to Gabriel, cannot, of course, be made here. The nearest approaches to reasonable explanation are those given by Baidawi and Zamakhshari on xxxii. 8.

Baidawi says: 'He joined him (Adam) to Himself as an honour, and as a mark that he was a wonderful creation, and that he has a dignity which has some kind of relation (analogy) to the divine Majesty; and on this account, he who knows himself knows his Lord.'

Zamakhshari writes on the same verse: 'And he showed by the addition of the Spirit to his being, that he was a wonderful creation, whose real being (kunhuhu) no one knows but He. (The meaning is) similar to His words, "And they will ask thee of the Spirit. Say The Spirit (proceedeth) at my Lord's command: but of knowledge only a little to you is given." It is as if He

1 See xv. 29; xxxii. 8; xxxviii. 72.

2 BAIDAWI (Maimaniyya Press, Cairo A. H. 1320), vol. ii, 157.

had said, "And He breathed into him (of) something which, and the knowledge of which, belongs to (or concerns) Him alone." ' ' ¹

The expression undoubtedly implies that God bestowed on Adam, and still bestows on the individual members of the human race (see xxxii. 8), something most closely related to His own Being; and the action by which it is bestowed (He *breathed* into him) symbolizes the close connexion of its origin with the very mode of the Divine Existence.

The statements of the Qur'an are not such as to lead us to suppose that by the bestowal of 'His Spirit' to man, is meant simply the bestowal of life. The gift is something far greater. All animals have life, but there is no suggestion that into them God breathes of His Spirit.

It is the possession of this Spirit which raises man far above all other created beings, so that even the angels are commanded to come and bow in reverence before Adam, the representative of God on earth.

We see then, in this passage, at least a suggestion, that the Essential Being of God is Spiritual.

2. The second use of the word 'Spirit' which we shall consider is found in those passages which speak of it as the means whereby God reveals to man His purpose and will, or, generally speaking, enters into personal relations with him.

It is through the 'Spirit', that God reveals His will to mankind, and inspires His prophets. 'Call then on

¹ *Al-Kashshaf* (Government Press, Boulac, A.H. 1318), vol. ii. p. 419.

God, offering Him a pure worship, though the infidels abhor it. Of exalted grade, of the throne possessed, He sendeth forth the Spirit at His own behest on whomsoever of His servants He pleaseth, that He may warn of the day of meeting.'¹

It is through the instrumentality of 'the Spirit' that Muhammad himself professed to have received the revelation contained in the Qur'an. 'Say: The Holy Spirit hath brought it down with truth from thy Lord, that He may establish those who have believed, and as guidance and glad tidings to the Muslims.'²

'We have sent the Spirit to thee with a revelation by our command.'³

This Spirit may take the form of a man in order to hold converse with mankind. 'And make mention in the Book of Mary, when she went apart from her family, eastward.

'And took a veil *to shroud herself* from them: and we sent our spirit (better, Our Spirit) to her, and he took before her the form of a perfect man.'⁴

The Spirit, it is, through which God strengthens believers. It is the means or instrument whereby the divine power acts on the human will and the human intelligence, apart from any special revelation or manifestation. 'Thou shalt not find that any one of those who believe in God, and in the last day, love him who opposeth God and His Apostle . . . On the

¹ Suratu'l-Mu'min (xl) 14, 15.

² Suratu'n-Nahl (xvi) 104.

³ Suratu'sh-Shura (xlii) 52; see also xxvi. 198.

⁴ Suratu Maryam (xix) 16, 17.

hearts of these hath God graven the Faith, and with His own Spirit hath He strengthened them.'¹

This Spirit is in no way represented as a metaphor to explain the working of the divine power and wisdom. The Spirit has essential being; and at times is associated with the angels, who are also God's messengers and ministers; but it is always clearly distinguished from them. 'Therein descend the angels and the spirit (better, the Spirit) by permission of their Lord for every matter.'² 'On the day whereon the Spirit and the Angels shall be ranged in order, they shall not speak save he whom the God of Mercy shall permit, and who shall say that which is right.'³ '... the master of those ascents, By which the angels and the spirit (better, the Spirit) ascend to Him in a day, whose length is fifty thousand years.'⁴

The orthodox Muhammadan belief is that by 'the Spirit', in such passages as these, is meant a high and lofty creature, far surpassing the angels in dignity and being, and it is held by some that the Spirit is the nearest of all creatures to God Himself. But there is nothing in the Qur'an to show clearly that Muhammad believed 'the Spirit' to be a creature at all. His references to it are so indefinite that it is impossible to maintain that he had any precise idea or belief on the subject of its nature and being. In this connexion it is worth while quoting the following words of Zamakhshari: '(It is related) on the authority of Abu Buraida,

¹ Suratu'l-Mujadala (Iviii) 22.

² Suratu'l-Qadar (xcvii) 4.

³ Suratu'n-Naba (lxxviii) 38.

⁴ Suratu'l-Mu'arij (lxx) 3-4.

that the prophet passed away without knowing what the Spirit is.'¹

When Muhammad was asked to say plainly what he meant by 'the Spirit', he refused to give a clear answer, and replied: 'And they will ask thee of the Spirit. Say The Spirit *proceedeth* at my Lord's command: but of knowledge only a little to you is given.'² We shall come back to this passage later.

3. In some passages Muhammad calls this Spirit, when acting as the medium of inspiration, Gabriel; but this cannot be said to explain anything, for we have no reason to believe that in using this name he meant to express anything more precise than when he employed the words 'the Spirit'. Both expressions are equally indefinite on his lips. In any case, he did not in any way attempt by the use of the name 'Gabriel' to define or even qualify the nature of 'the Spirit'. 'It is probable that Muhammad's ideas of the Spirit were at first indefinite, but that the two expressions, Gabriel and the Holy Spirit, became ultimately synonymous.'³

It would appear that he had heard from Jewish sources of 'the Angel of the Lord' as a means of the manifestation of the divine power and will, and that in his mind this Angel was associated, though indistinctly, with Gabriel, of whom he had also heard, and that he then carried over the association to 'the Spirit'.

All that we are entitled to say, arguing from the language of the Qur'an itself, is, that Muhammad

¹ *Al-Kashshaf*, vol. ii. 197.

² Suratu Bani Isra'il (xvii) 87.

³ RODWELL, *The Koran*, p. 346 note. 2

uses the name 'Gabriel' to express that embodied manifestation in which he believed 'the Spirit' sometimes appeared when He sought to enter into direct intercourse with men, for the purpose of revealing the divine will to some individual, or of exercising the divine power for some definite object.

We have already said that the Qur'an nowhere states that this Spirit is *created*. It is true that Muslim commentators have drawn this conclusion from, among others, the following verse: 'And they will ask thee of the Spirit. Say: The Spirit *proceedeth* at my Lord's command: but of knowledge, only a little to you is given.'¹ But in all their explanations of the use in the Qur'an of the word 'Spirit' they reflect with exaggeration the indefiniteness and incoherence that is found in the Qur'an itself.

If the point under discussion in this verse is the nature of the 'Spirit' by the possession of which all animals have life, and this seems to be the view generally adopted by the commentators, the decision arrived at as to the nature of this spirit will in no way affect our views as to the teaching of the Qur'an on 'the Spirit' which is the medium of the divine direction and revelation and inspiration and encouragement and strengthening of, believers.

We cannot but feel that the question raised in this verse is by no means the nature of the spirit which gives life to all members of the animal kingdom, but must be understood as being the nature of 'the Spirit',

¹ Suratu Bani Isra'il (xvii) 87.

elsewhere in the Qur'an called 'the Holy Spirit', or 'Gabriel'. The true teaching of the verse appears to be that the movements and manifestations of the Spirit are matters that belong to God alone, and that all that man can understand of them is that 'the Spirit *proceedeth* at the command' of God; 'but of knowledge, only a little to you is given.'¹

Elsewhere the angels are spoken of as the messengers through whose instrumentality this Spirit at times descends on man. 'By His own behest will He cause the angels to descend with the Spirit on whom He pleaseth among His servants bidding them (the original does not make it clear who it is who bids), "Warn that there is no God but me; therefore fear me."' ²

This verse increases the difficulty of making a definite and clear statement as to the teaching of the Qur'an on the Spirit. It may be that here the word 'Spirit' is used with even more indefiniteness than usual to express simply 'inspiration', while in other passages the Spirit is spoken of as itself the medium of inspiration, or it may be that as the 'Spirit' may take the form of a man, as we have already seen, so it is supposed at other times to manifest itself through an angel who may appear in the figure of a man. The following passage is worth quoting in this connexion: 'And if we had appointed an angel, we should certainly have appointed one in the form of a man, and we should have clothed him before them in garments like their own.'³

¹ Cf. John iii, 8.

² Suratu'n-Nahl (xvi) 2.

³ Suratu'l-An'Am (vi) 9.

Before proceeding further we must notice the use of the expression *min amr* (at the command of) when speaking of the descent of the Spirit. We find it employed in this connexion in three passages,² and whether it be true (as it may well be) that the word is an echo of the Aramaic word *memra* which signifies 'God's everlasting Word',² or not, it is certainly possible that the word *amr* here refers more to the act of giving the command, that is, to the fact that God speaks, than to the intent of the command. And this leads us to believe that 'the Spirit' is, at times, spoken of as being the manifestation or expression of the Divine Word.

The belief that this is so is supported and strengthened by the implication of these passages which speak of the miraculous birth of Jesus, the Son of Mary, and we must now pass on to the consideration of these passages.

Two of them speak of the inbreathing of 'the Spirit' into Mary. 'And her who kept her maidenhood, and into whom we breathed of Our Spirit, and made her and her son a sign to all creatures.'³ 'And Mary, the daughter of 'Imran, who kept her maidenhood, and into whose womb we breathed of Our Spirit, and who believed in the words of her Lord, and His Scriptures, and was one of the devout.'⁴

It is to be noted that the Qur'an itself knows nothing

¹ xvi. 2; xvii. 87; xlii. 52.

² The Islam Series, *The Spirit in the Qur'an and Bible*, p. 32.

³ Suratu'l-Anbiya (xxi) 91.

⁴ Suratu't-Tahrim (lxvi) 12.

of the coarse and forbidding ideas which are to be found in the Commentary of Baidawi. According to the Qur'an, the Spirit appeared in the form of a perfect man simply to announce to Mary the birth of a son,¹ and this passage must be taken, as we have already taken it, in connexion with those which speak of the Spirit as the medium whereby God reveals His will to individuals.

To return to the two passages quoted above, we see that Muhammad believed in the virgin birth, and the Spirit which was breathed into Mary cannot be explained as the spirit of life, for that is spoken of elsewhere as being breathed into each individual of the human race, (xxxii. 6) while what is said here is given as an explanation of the way in which the miraculous birth of Jesus was brought about. The words are really equivalent to those in the Gospel of St. Luke, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.'²

Nor can the words of the Qur'an be taken as referring to the Spirit whereby God reveals to the individual His will and purposes; for the annunciation, as we have already seen, is otherwise described.

Again, the words cannot rightly be explained as referring merely to the creative fiat of God, for the Spirit is said to have been breathed *into* her. What Muhammad sought to teach appears to be that the birth of Jesus was miraculous, being due to the direct action of God. Elsewhere he teaches that when God creates, He simply

¹ Cf. xix. 16-17.

² Luke i. 35.

says, 'Be', and it is; but here, the words he uses imply that in some way which apparently he never sought to understand, though he acknowledges it to be a fact, the Holy Spirit was the direct cause of the birth of Jesus. What the words imply is that the Spirit here spoken of is a creative Spirit, and cannot, therefore, be other than divine, for there cannot be two creators.

So, again, we come, but this time by another path, to the same conclusion which we formerly reached, that the words of the Qur'an imply that God is Spirit, and that it is the Divine Spirit itself which is spoken of as 'the Spirit'.

4. The last passage which we desire to quote in this connexion uses words which carry us a step — a long step — farther. 'O ye people of the Book! overstep not bounds in your religion; and of God, speak only truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is only an apostle of God, and His Word which He conveyed into Mary, and a Spirit *proceeding* from Himself. Believe therefore in God and His apostles, and say not, "Three"; (there is a Trinity) — Forbear — it will be better for you. God is only one God! Far be it from His glory that He should have a son!' ¹

We have already seen that this passage, when correctly viewed, cannot be regarded as being an objection to the true Christian doctrine of the Trinity (page 12), and now we must endeavour to understand what it really implies as to the nature of the son of Mary. We have used the word *implies* rather than the word *means*,

¹ Suratu'n Nisa' (iv) 169.

for it is clear that Muhammad used words the true purport of which he did not comprehend. Let us note again the tradition already referred to. '(It is related) on the authority of Abu Buraida, that the prophet passed away without knowing what the Spirit is.'

The words which we desire to consider in particular are, 'The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, is only an apostle of God, and His Word which He conveyed into Mary, and a Spirit *proceeding* from Himself.'

These words are now, and since Muslim interpretation of the Qur'an became fixed have always been, understood as meaning that Jesus was a man and nothing more; but it is difficult to see why the latter part of the verse was added, 'and His Word which He conveyed into Mary, and a Spirit *proceeding* from Himself', unless they were intended to state something additional or in modification of the previous clause — 'an apostle of God'. It must be noted that the word 'only' does not in the original text apply to the first part of the sentence alone. It refers to the whole sentence. There is in the Arabic no contrast between 'an apostle of God' and 'His Word which He conveyed into Mary, and a Spirit *proceeding* from Himself', and the whole explanation as to who Jesus is must be considered as one statement.

Jesus was man. The full and complete humanity of Jesus was asserted in opposition to any teaching that his humanity was only apparent, that is, that the body of Jesus was a phantom, or appearance, the medium only, whereby some spiritual being manifested itself to mankind. Yet Muhammad had heard, and had apparently

accepted as true, certain teachings as to Jesus which showed that this statement of his humanity was not a full and adequate expression of his person. While being man, he was yet 'His Word', the Word of God; and this expression takes our thoughts back to those others which we have already considered, in which the Spirit is spoken of as proceeding 'from the command (or Word) of God'.

The Spirit is the embodiment, so to speak, of God's Word. This Word is not a mere command, for it is conveyed into Mary. Jesus was this Word. He was not born merely by the action or in virtue of the Word, but he was the very Word itself conveyed into Mary.

Further, this Word is identified with the 'Spirit *proceeding* from Himself'. The expression *wa Ruhun minhu* is but feebly translated by the words, 'Spirit *proceeding* from Himself'. The original is a poetical form whereby in a most emphatic manner the Spirit is identified with the very Spirit of God Himself. Jesus is 'His Word which He conveyed into Mary, and His own very Spirit'.

The teaching against which Muhammad protested, was the calling of Jesus, who while he was man, was also God's Word and Spirit, by the name 'Son', because he associated with the idea of sonship those polytheistic ideas according to which the deity might enter into physical relations with mankind, and beget children. It is for this reason that the words are added, 'Far be it from His glory that He should have a son.'

Our object, however, in this place is not to attempt to give any statement of the teaching of the Qur'an on the

Person of the Messiah, Jesus, but to study those passages which speak of the Spirit, that we may see what the words of the Qur'an imply in their relation to Muhammad's doctrine of the Nature of God; and for this purpose they have now been sufficiently considered.

It remains to try to sum up what we have found to be Muhammad's teaching and see whether we can form any general conclusions.

There is but one, the Living God, and there is none other than He. He is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting, the First and the Last. He can be known by mankind, but not comprehended, for He is the Seen and the Hidden. He is not some indefinite Power or Force, which expresses itself, or finds its self-manifestation in the world, for the world is His creation, the work of His hands. He acts as a Personal Being, creating and ruling the world, revealing Himself to man according to His good-pleasure through His Word, from which and through which 'the Spirit', His own Spirit, manifests itself.

On the Nature of the Divine Existence, or the mode of it, Muhammad has nothing clear and definite to say, and it is at this point that his words on the Spirit come in to assist us.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of these words for the formation of a full Qur'anic doctrine of God, though, as we have already said more than once, the teachings on this question are not on the surface, but are rather of the nature of implications.

We may even go further and say that apparently Muhammad had no conception of what many of his

teachings implied and in places seems to deny conclusions which follow logically from other statements which he emphatically made.

The Qur'an teaches that this one God reveals Himself to man, that He enters into relations with mankind, whereby He guides and directs and strengthens and encourages. As soon as Muhammad comes to the practical question of explaining how this is done, he finds himself, of necessity, compelled to fall back on those expressions which were employed by the Jews and Christians, and speak of 'the Spirit' and 'the Word'. Apart from the Spirit and the Word, God remains afar off, unapproachable by man, and, we may say it reverently, unable Himself to approach man.

It is through His Spirit and His Word, that, according to the Qur'an, He does as a historical fact enter into relations with mankind and reveal Himself.

The conclusion to which we are compelled to come is that without references to the Spirit and the Word, Muhammad was unable to explain how God could have any relations with mankind at all.

The teaching concerning the Spirit and the Word must, therefore, be regarded as having essential importance in any attempt to estimate Muhammad's teaching as to the Nature of God; and yet it is not too much to say that this has been wholly and absolutely neglected by the Muhammadan Theologians in their endeavours to explain and systematize the Qur'anic teaching on the Nature of God.

It is for this reason that according to orthodox Muhammadan theology God is a God afar off, while according

to the Qur'an, God, though He is high and lofty and far beyond the comprehension of man, enters into a most close and intimate relation with believers through His Spirit, with which He strengthens their faith, and encourages them at all times. 'Thou shalt not find that any of those who believe in God, and in the last day, love him who opposeth God and His Apostle, even though they be their fathers, or their sons, or their brethren, or their nearest of kin. On the hearts of these hath God graven the Faith, and with His own Spirit hath He strengthened them.'¹

¹ Suratu'l-Mujadala (lviii) 22.

II. THE CHARACTER AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

WE must now pass on to consider what the Qur'an teaches concerning the character and attributes of God.

We have already seen that according to the Qur'an the Nature of God is incomprehensible by man, though man may know something of God because He has chosen to reveal Himself. When we come now to consider what the Qur'an has to say of the divine character and attributes we shall find that it takes up the same position. Man cannot understand these fully, but he can nevertheless know something of the divine character and attributes, because God has declared these also, in part, to mankind.

1. The first attribute which we shall consider is His Unchangeableness. All else shall pass away, but He shall remain, for He is the Steadfastly-existing (AlQayyim). God's continued existence means necessarily that He has not only unbroken and everlasting continuity of Being, but that He continues in the same condition. He remains unchangeable in His Being, He remains that which He always was. How this unchangeableness of God determines His attitude to man and to His own character in its relation to right and wrong we shall see later.

2. God is Omnipresent. He sits on His throne, it is true, in majesty above and beyond man; but He is not

therefore a God afar off. While there is not a little in the Qur'an concerning the Throne of God, which leads one to think that Muhammad, at times at least, pictured God as actually seated on a Throne, and while the commentators tell us how the throne of God is one of His creations though the manner of His sitting thereon is not to be enquired into, there can be little doubt but that, for the most part, God's 'sitting on His throne' is to be regarded as a figure of speech whereby is expressed His ruling and sustaining the world which He has created. 'Your Lord is God, who in six days created the Heavens and the Earth, and then mounted the throne.'¹ The verse draws a distinction between the work of creation and the subsequent ruling by God of this world which he made. This ruling of the world is so far above the conceptions which man can have of what it is to govern a world, that the throne itself is spoken of in terms which are intended to convey to man's mind the greatness of Him who rules, and the incomprehensible manner of His government. God Himself is frequently spoken of as 'the possessor of the glorious throne'² 'the Lord of the Throne'³ 'Lord of the stately Throne'⁴ 'of the Throne possessed'.⁵

That by 'the Throne of God' we are to understand the divine rule and government of the world, is further borne out by the verse which speaks of the universality of God's rule, by stating that 'His Throne reacheth over the Heavens and the Earth'.⁶

¹ Suratu'l-A'raf (vii) 52; cf. x. 3; xiii. 2; xx. 4; xxv. 60; xxxii. 3.

² ix. 130; cf. xxiii. 88; xxvii. 26; xliii. 82; lxxxi. 20; lxxxv. 15.

³ xxi. 22. ⁴ xxiii. 17. ⁵ xl. 15. ⁶ ii. 256.

God, then, as we have already said, sits on His Throne, ruling and directing the world and all therein, yet not in solitary dignity, nor in inaccessible grandeur, for while over and above all, He is present with men wherever they may be. 'Dost thou not see that God knoweth all that is in the Heavens and all that is in the Earth? Three persons speak not privately together, but He is their fourth; nor five, but He is their sixth; nor fewer nor more, but wherever they be He is with them.'¹ 'He knoweth that which entereth the earth, and that which goeth forth from it, and what cometh down from Heaven, and what mounteth up to it; and wherever ye are He is with you; and God beholdeth all your actions!'²

Man need not, therefore, look afar to try to find God, He can be found everywhere, and to seek the Face of God man need not turn in any one direction. 'The East and the West is God's: therefore, whichever way ye turn, there is the face of God. Truly God is immense, and knoweth all.'³ But God is not merely with man, He is near unto him; in closer proximity to his inner being than the warm blood pulsing through his veins. 'We created man: and We know what his soul whispereth to him, and We are closer to him than his neck-vein.'⁴

The distinctness of God from His creation and the immanence of God in His creation are alike taught in the Qur'an with the same absoluteness as is to be found in the Old Testament.

¹ Suratu'l-Mujadala (lviii) 8.

² Suratu'l-Hadid (lvii) 4.

³ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 109.

⁴ Suratu'l-Qaf (l) 15.

3. The omnipresence of a God who knows, naturally means that He is Omniscient. We find, therefore, that according to the Qur'an, God's knowledge is infinite. 'He knoweth all things.'

¹ This knowledge is His because all is His, He made all and rules all; therefore He knows all. 'Knowest thou not that the dominion of the Heavens and the Earth is God's?' ²

Various illustrations are employed by Muhammad to throw light on this divine omniscience, and these are chosen to suit the intellectual attainments of the audience addressed. 'And with Him are the keys of the secret things; none knoweth them but He; He knoweth whatever is on the land and in the sea; and no leaf falleth but He knoweth it; neither is there a grain in the darknesses of the earth, nor a green thing or sere, but it is noted in a distinct writing.'

The smallest of His creatures is not forgotten by Him, nor does His infinite knowledge disdain to take cognizance of it and of its needs. 'There is no moving thing on the earth whose nourishment dependeth not on God; He knoweth its haunts and final resting place: all is in the clear Book.'⁴

His knowledge concerns not merely the persons of His creatures, but enters into the sphere of their mental and moral natures. He knows the thoughts and intents of the heart whether expressed or hidden. 'Do they not doubly fold up their breasts, that they may hide themselves from Him? But when they enshroud themselves

¹ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 27; cf. lvii. 3.

² Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 101.

³ Suratu'l-An'am (vi) 59.

⁴ Suratu Hud (xi) 8.

in their garments, doth He not know *alike* what they conceal and what they show? For He knoweth the very inmost of their breast.'¹

'Know they not that God knoweth their secrets and their private talk, and that God knoweth the secret things?'² 'He knoweth the very secrets of the breast.'³

All that is to be known is known by God, 'and ye shall be brought before Him who knoweth alike the Hidden and the Manifest, and He will tell you of all your works.'⁴

The language used in the Qur'an may not be, to our mind or to our way of thinking, so high and noble as that of the Old Testament when it speaks of God's omniscience, but there can be no shadow of doubt that the conception that Muhammad had of the knowledge of God, and of His seeing all things, was exactly the same as that of the Hebrew writers.

His piercing eye sees not merely material objects but penetrates to the subtle workings of the human mind, and discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. 'Know that God cometh in between a man and his own heart.'⁵ Whether this verse is to be understood as the commentators understand it, that God overrules the very thoughts of man, and thus comes in between a man and his heart, or not, the fact remains that it claims for God a knowledge of the human heart which is exactly

¹ Suratu Hud (xi) 5-7.

² Suratu't-Tauba (ix) 79.

³ Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 45; cf. xxxi. 22; lxiv. 4.

⁴ Suratu't-Tauba (ix) 106.

⁵ Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 24.

the same as that claimed for Him by the psalmist when he says, 'Thou understandest my thought afar off.'¹

This knowledge of God is not acquired. It was and is and ever remains an attribute of the Almighty. God knows because He is God, the one and only Creator. 'We created man: and we know what his soul whispereth to him, and We are closer to him than his neckvein.'² 'What! shall He not know who hath created? for He is the Subtil,³ the Cognisant.'⁴

4. The divine omniscience is not a mere acquaintance with facts. It is a full and complete understanding and comprehending of all things. We therefore find the Qur'an, in very many passages, speaking of the divine Wisdom, or describing God as 'the Wise'.

The word 'Wisdom' is clearly another of those words which Muhammad borrowed from the Jews. He had apparently heard of 'the Wisdom', and seems to have had a truer conception of what was meant thereby than he had of some other expressions which he took over bodily from the former revelations. 'The Wisdom of the Hebrew sages is practical moral inspiration — that by which the good man moulds his conduct.'⁵

In several passages Muhammad speaks of this Wisdom having been revealed by God. 'And He will

¹ Psalm cxxxix. 2.

² Suratu'l-Qaf (l) 15.

³ The primary meaning of the Arabic root is *to draw near*; hence the above signification, in the sense of God's presence as *interpenetrating all things*: hence also the other sense of *benign*, as in Sura [lxxxiii.] xlii. 18. RODWELL, *The Koran*, p. 143 note.

⁴ Suratu'l-Mulk (lxvii) 14.

⁵ A. R. GORDON, *The Poets of the Old Testament*, p. 295.

teach him the Book, and the Wisdom.'¹ 'We gave of old the Scriptures and the wisdom to the line of Abraham.'² 'And when I taught thee (Jesus) the Scripture, and Wisdom, and the Law, and the Evangel.'³

It is this same 'Wisdom' which has been bestowed on Muhammad. 'Now hath God been gracious to the faithful, when He raised up among them an apostle out of their own people, to rehearse unto them His signs, and to cleanse them, and to give them knowledge of the Book, and of Wisdom.'⁴ 'And God hath caused the Book and the wisdom to descend upon thee.'⁵

It is difficult at times to say whether Muhammad distinguishes between the Qur'an itself and this Wisdom. They are, in some passages, spoken of in such a way as to lead to the conclusion that Muhammad practically identified them.⁶ But it is probable that 'the Wisdom' refers to moral and religious teaching, or rather to moral and religious enlightenment which comes to those who accept the divine revelation. For the 'Wisdom' is not described by Muhammad in such a way as to compel us to say that it is confined to what is in the Qur'an. It was given to other prophets before the time of Muhammad.⁷ Nay, it may be given to any whom God pleaseth. 'He hath given wisdom (literally, the Wisdom) to whom He will; and he to whom wisdom

¹ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 43.

² Suratu'n-Nisa' (iv) 57.

³ Suratu'l-Ma'ida (v) 110.

⁴ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 158.

⁵ Suratu'n-Nisa' (iv) 113.

⁶ See MARGOLIOUTH, *The Early Development of Muhammadanism*, p. 68.

⁷ See iii. 75; xliiii. 63; xxxi. 11; ii. 252; iv. 57; v. 110.

(literally, the Wisdom) is given, hath had much good given him; but none will bear it in mind, except the wise of heart.'¹

In one passage it is clearly used in reference to a preceding part of the Sura in which is given what some commentators regard as a summary of the teaching and commands given to Moses on the Mount. 'This is a part of the Wisdom which thy Lord revealed to thee.'²

It seems, therefore, best to interpret the expression as meaning very much the same as it did in the mouths of the Jewish thinkers — practical, moral teaching and inspiration.

The source of this teaching and inspiration is God. It is He who has caused it to descend upon mankind, for He is 'the Wise' (Al-Hakim). God is not only 'the Knowing', He is 'the Wise'. In other words, God's knowledge is not mere mental or intellectual acquaintance with facts and truths, but has as its basis a moral conception of the true value and the proper relation of all things. God sees all things and knows all things according to their essential and intrinsic values. He views things from a moral standpoint, and all His actions and all His commands have as their foundation this Wise Knowledge.

This is the thought which seems to have been in the mind of Muhammad when he used, as he so frequently does, the refrain, 'God is Mighty and Wise'.

5. God manifests His Omnipresence and His Omniscience through His Sovereign Will which is Omnipotent

¹ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 272.

² Suratu Bani Isra'il (xvii) 41.

over all things and with God is the Sovereignty of the Heavens and the Earth, and of all that is between them.'¹ 'But thou art only a warner, and God hath all things in His charge.'² 'And He gave you their land, and their dwellings, and their wealth, for an heritage — even a land on which ye had never set foot: for the might of God is equal to all things.'³ 'God is not to be frustrated by aught in the Heavens or in the Earth; for He is the all-knowing, the All-Mighty.'⁴ 'And other booty, over which ye have not yet had power: but now hath God compassed them for you; for God is over all things Potent.'⁵

All that has ever been, or is, or shall be, is the expression of the divine will. The manner in which this supreme divine will is related to the course of events in the world of nature on the one hand, and on the other to the consequences and the results of the action of the human will is a question on which the Qur'an has no definite teaching. Nowhere does Muhammad try to explain the method by which God governs and overrules all things. And this silence is nothing more than what we should expect from one whose aim it was to teach practical religion, and who cared nothing for theory.

He taught that the divine will is over all, but his conception of this will and of the method of its operations being but confused and imperfect, it is not surpris-

¹ Suratu'l-Ma'ida (v) 21.

² Suratu Hud (xi) 15.

³ Suratu'l-Ahzab (xxxiii) 27.

⁴ Suratu'l-Fatir (xxxvi) 43.

⁵ Suratu'l-Fath (xlviii) 21.

ing that many statements are to be found in the Qur'an which it is hard to reconcile with one another, especially those which refer to the action of the human will and its relation to the divine will.

In certain passages, the operation of the divine will appears, at least at first sight, to be described as absolute and as depending solely on the divine pleasure irrespective of any moral considerations, or of the desert or non-desert of man. Thus we find such passages as the following: 'Knowest thou not that the sovereignty of the Heavens and of the Earth is God's? He chastiseth whom He will, and whom He will He forgiveth. And God hath power over all things.'¹ 'No mischance chanceth either on the earth or in your persons, but ere We created them, it was in the Book;² for easy is this to God.'³ 'And if God had pleased, they who came after them would not have wrangled, after the clear signs had reached them. But into disputes they fell: some of them believed and some of them were infidels; yet if God had pleased, they would not have thus wrangled: but God doth what He will.'⁴

But in any estimate of Muhammad's teaching concerning the operation of the divine will, we must ever bear in mind what he says concerning the divine justice, which as we shall see, means moral justice, and not what the theologians mean when they speak of the justice of God. Nor must we forget those passages

¹ Suratu'l-Ma'ida (v) 44.

² Of our eternal decrees. RODWELL, *The Koran*, note *in loco*.

³ Suratu'l-Hadid (lvii) 22.

⁴ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 254.

which plainly show that Muhammad recognized that evil was not of God, but of man.'¹

We shall return to these passages when we take up the teaching of the Qur'an on the relation of God to mankind in creation and providence.

6. We have just said that in considering the teaching of the Qur'an concerning the will of God we must not forget to consider His justice, one of the most prominent features in the representation given in the Qur'an of the character of God. Time and again Muhammad appeals to history to show how in the past God destroyed individuals, or cities, or nations, but he affirms with great earnestness that these divine judgements were not capricious acts, but were the due punishment of the guilty, who had had time and opportunity to turn from their evil ways. 'Hath not the history reached them of those who were before them? — of the people of Noah, and of Ad, and of Themud, and of the people of Abraham, and of the inhabitants of Madian, and of the overthrown cities? Their apostles came to them with clear proofs *of their mission*: God would not deal wrongly by them, but they dealt wrongly by themselves.'² 'We dealt not unfairly by them, but they dealt not fairly by themselves.'³ 'Were the generations before you, endued with virtue, and who forbad corrupt doings on the earth, more than a few of those whom we delivered? but the evildoers followed

¹ See *The Qur'anic Doctrine of Man*, pp. 44-5: also, *The Qur'anic Doctrine of Salvation*, pp. 3-4.

² Suratu't-Tauba (ix) 71.

³ Suratu Hud (xi) 103.

their selfish pleasures, and became transgressors. And thy Lord was not one who would destroy those cities unjustly, when its inhabitants were righteous.'¹ 'We never destroyed a city whose term was not prefixed: No people can forestall or retard its destiny.'²

In other passages Muhammad teaches that though God is long-suffering with mankind, or with individuals of the human race, His indulgence and patience is not to be understood to mean indifference. Time is given to the sons of men to turn from their evil ways, and to enter into the right path; but if the opportunities for repentance are neglected, and the warning of God's apostles and messengers is not heeded, God is swift and terrible in punishing. 'To hasten evil rather than good will they challenge thee: but, before their time have been like examples. Full, truly, of mercy is thy Lord unto men, despite their sins; but, verily, thy Lord is right vehement to punish.'³ 'And it is He who hath made you the successors of *others* on the earth, and hath raised some of you above others by various grades, that He may prove you by His gifts. Verily thy Lord is swift to punish. But He is also Gracious, Merciful!'⁴

On the day of judgement the decision given in each case will be in accordance with justice. 'Just balances will We set up for the day of the resurrection, neither shall any soul be wronged in aught; though, were a work but the weight of a grain of mustard seed, we would bring it forth *to be weighed*: and our reckoning

¹ Suratu Hud (xi) 118-9.

² Suratu'l-Hijr (xv) 4-5.

³ Suratu'r-Ra'd (xiii) 7.

⁴ Suratu'l-An'am (vi) 165.

will suffice.'¹ The good actions of men and their evil actions will all be considered, and none shall be able to say that he has been treated unjustly. 'Verily God will not wrong men in aught, but men will wrong themselves.'² 'And persevere stedfastly, for verily God will not suffer the reward of the righteous to perish.'³ 'And of whatever good ye do, ye shall not be denied the meed. God knoweth those who fear Him.'⁴ Those who suffer for their evil deeds will recognize on that day the justice of their condemnation. 'Just, therefore, is the doom which our Lord hath passed upon us. We shall surely taste it.'⁵ This is one of the passages which teaches most clearly that what Muhammad meant by God's justice was exactly what men mean when they speak of justice.

Further, the justice of God may be seen from the fact that He layeth no burden on any beyond that which He is able to bear. The duties demanded and the conduct of life prescribed are such as man can fulfil and carry out. 'God will not burden any soul beyond its power.'⁶ Elsewhere also it is shown that this justice is no hard and fast law which by demanding absolute outward adherence to such and such lines of conduct overleaps itself and becomes injustice in endeavouring to be pure absolute justice. 'And unless made with intent of heart, mistakes in this matter shall be no crime in you: for God is Lenient, Merciful.'⁷

¹ Suratu'l-Anbiya' (xxi) 48.

³ Suratu Hud (xi) 117.

⁵ Suratu's-Saffat (xxxvii) 30.

⁷ Suratu'l-Ahzab (xxxiii) 5.

² Suratu Yunas (x) 45.

⁴ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 111; cf. iii. 104.

⁶ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 286.

The fires of hell were not lighted simply that they might be filled irrespective of man's deserts. Hell has been prepared for those who will not believe, and who follow the seduction of Iblis. 'And fear the fire which is prepared for them that believe not!' ¹ It would almost appear that Muhammad had heard the words, 'Depart from me ye cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' ² In several passages he speaks of hell as the place to which Iblis and those who follow him will assuredly be cast. 'He said, "Go forth from it, a scorned, a banished one! Whoever of them shall follow thee, I will surely fill hell with you, one and all." ' ³

7. While teaching the Justice of God, the Qur'an has not a little to say of His Goodness. To begin with, we may note that the very fact that it teaches that God bestows His grace and favour on mankind implies that God is Good, Kind, Beneficent, It is indeed true that the displeasure and wrath of God against those who set themselves up in opposition to His will, is very fully described, and their punishment is depicted in lurid colours. But such realistic pictures of the fate of the unbeliever and the rebellious as are to be found in the Qur'an were perhaps absolutely necessary to bring home to the minds of the Arabs that God is not Good and Beneficent in the sense that opposition to His will is regarded by Him with indifference. He is not an easygoing despot who demands that His will be carried out, and bestows on His favourites special marks of His

¹ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 126.

² Matt, xxv. 41.

³ Suratu'l-A'raf (vii) 17; cf. xi. 20; xxxii. 13; xxxviii. 85.

pleasure, while He passes by those who oppose Him, simply neglecting to give them any marks of His approbation.

The Qur'an rather takes up the position of St. Paul when he says, 'Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.'¹

This goodness of God to mankind is represented as being general. It is seen in the works of creation and in those means which God employs for the provisioning and supplying the needs of man. 'And if thou ask them, who created the Heavens and the Earth, they will say: "The Mighty, the Sage, created them both," who hath made the Earth a couch for you, and hath traced out routes therein for your guidance; and who sendeth down out of Heaven the rain in due degree, by which we quicken a dead land; thus shall ye be brought forth *from the grave*: and who hath created the sexual couples, all of them, and hath made for you the ships and beasts whereon ye ride: that ye may sit balanced on their backs and remember the goodness of your Lord as ye sit so evenly thereon, and say: "Glory to Him who hath subjected these to us! We could not have attained to it of ourselves: And truly unto our Lord shall we return."'²

This goodness is common alike to the good and the evil and is irrespective of desert. But His goodness is not merely general. It works out, in the particular

¹ Rom. xi. 22.

² Suratu'z-Zukhruf (xlili) 8-13. cf. ii, 159.

events of His providence whereby He so orders and arranges things as to deliver those who are His from ills and enemies. 'Remember the kindness of God to you, when He rescued you from the family of Pharaoh who laid on you a cruel affliction, slaughtering your male children, and suffering only your females to live.'¹

'O believers! remember the goodness of God towards you, when the armies came against you, and we sent against them a blast, and hosts that ye saw not; for the eye of God was upon your doings.'²

The goodness of God is boundless in its extent and man cannot count up the number of His favours. 'It is God who hath created the Heavens and the Earth, and sendeth down water from the Heaven, and so bringeth forth the fruits for your food: . . . of everything which ye ask Him, giveth He to you; and if ye would reckon up the favours of God, ye cannot count them!'³

A more special manifestation of the goodness of God is seen in His offer of mercy and guidance to fallen man. He did not leave mankind to perish without a revelation of the divine mercy, and the divine purpose of salvation.⁴ He has, simply and wholly of His own goodness, sent to them from time to time apostles and prophets to admonish and warn. 'And *remember* when Moses said to his people, "O my people! call to mind the goodness of God towards you when He appointed Prophets among you, and appointed you kings, and gave

¹ Suratu Ibrahim (xiv) 6.

² Suratu'l-Ahzab (xxxiii) 9.

³ Suratu Ibrahim (xiv) 37; cf, xvi. 18.

⁴ See *The Qur'anic Doctrine of Salvation*, p. 1.

you that which had never been given before to any human beings."¹ 'And hold ye fast by the cord² of God all of you, and break not loose from it; and remember God's goodness towards you how that when ye were enemies, He united your hearts, and by His favour ye became brethren; and when ye were on the brink of the pit of fire, He drew you back from it. Thus God clearly showeth you His signs that ye may be guided.'³

The most marked manifestation of the goodness of God is that He revealed His will through Muhammad, and has promised to those who follow him and obey God's will, a special light which will guide them. 'O ye who believe! fear God and believe in His apostle: two portions of His mercy will He give you. He will bestow on you light to walk in, and He will forgive you: for God is Forgiving, Merciful; that the people of the Book may know that they have no control over aught of the favours of God, and that these gifts of grace are in the hands of God, and that He vouchsafeth them to whom He will; for God is of immense bounty.'⁴

Acceptance by Him and the forgiveness of sin are further marks of His goodness, for they are wholly of His goodness and mercy. 'Say: Verily, I fear, should I rebel against my Lord, the punishment of the great day. From whomsoever it shall be averted on that day, He will have had mercy on him: and this will be

¹ Suratu'l-Ma'ida (v) 23; cf. v. 10.

² RODWELL, *The Koran*, note *in loco*.

³ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 98, 99; cf. xii. 38.

⁴ Suratu Hadid (lvii) 28, 29; cf. iii. 158; lxii. 2.

the manifest bliss.'¹ . . . and but for the goodness of God towards you, and His Mercy, no one of you had been cleansed for ever.'²

This leads to the further thought of the reward which God has prepared for those who obey Him. The reward and the blessedness in store is boundless as God's goodness. All that can make the blessed happy, shall be granted in full abundance. 'And whoever shall obey God and the Apostle, these shall be with those of the Prophets, and of the Sincere, and of the Martyrs, and of the Just, to whom God hath been gracious. These are a goodly band! This is the bounty of God; and in knowledge doth God suffice.'³ 'Vie in hasting after pardon from your Lord, and Paradise — whose outspread is as the outspread of the Heaven and of the Earth prepared is it for those who believe in God and His apostles: such is the bounty of God: to whom He will He giveth it: and of immense bounty is God.'⁴

8. When the Qur'an has so much to say of the goodness, the kindness and the mercy of God, it is remarkable that it does not speak of the *love* of God with any fulness, and when it does employ the word *love*, it does not do so in the same sense in which it is used in the Christian writings.

The love of God which is spoken of in the Qur'an is not what is meant in the Bible by the expression 'the love of God'. In the first place, it does not express an attribute of God Himself, but a relation which He assumes towards men conditioned by their attitude to

¹ Suratu'l-An'am (vi) 15, 16.

² Suratu'n-Mr (xxiv) 21.

³ Suratu'n-Nisa' (iv) 71, 72.

⁴ Suratu'l-Hadid (lvii) 21.

Him. 'Say: If ye love God, then follow me; God will love you, and forgive your sins, for God is Forgiving, Merciful. Say: Obey God and the Apostle; but if ye turn away, then verily, God loveth not the unbelievers.'¹ 'And fight for the cause of God against those who fight against you: but commit not injustice by attacking them first:² God loveth not such injustice.'³ 'Give freely for the cause of God, and throw not yourselves with your own hands into ruin and do good, for God loveth those who do good.'⁴ The expression 'the love of God' is thus seen to mean the approbation of God. That which God approves He 'loves'. The use of the verb *to love* in Arabic, both in and out of the Qur'an fully bears out this view that what is really meant by *hubb* (love) and *ahabba yuhibbu* (to love) is something different from what is meant in the New Testament by those words which are commonly translated in Arabic by *Mahabbah* (love) and *ahabba yuhibbu* (to love).

In the Qur'an, for instance, we see the verb used to express simply desire, choice, or preference. 'Thou truly canst not guide whom thou desirest (*man ahabta*); but God guideth whom He will.'⁵ It is used similarly in speaking of Abraham in the following: but when it set, he "said, 'I love not *gods* which set:'"⁶ and

¹ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 29.

² The words 'by attacking them first' are not in the text of the Qur'an.

³ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 186.

⁴ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 191.

⁵ Suratu'l-Qasas (xxviii) 56.

⁶ Suratu'l-An'am (vi) 76.

disobeyed, after that *the prophet* had brought you within view of that for which ye longed.'¹ 'Desire ye not (*ala tuhibbuna*) that God should forgive you?'² 'O believers! make not friends of your fathers or your brethren if they love unbelief above faith.'³ 'And as to Themoud, We had vouchsafed them guidance; but to guidance did they prefer (*fastahabbu*) blindness.'⁴

This use of the word and its derivatives is seen most clearly in the following passage. 'But God hath endeared (*habbaba*) the faith to you, and hath given it favour in your hearts, and hath made unbelief, and wickedness, and disobedience hateful to you.'⁵ God hath made the faith such that it is to be preferred, and hath then inclined their hearts to it, so that it is easily and naturally chosen.

With regard to the use of the verb (to love) in describing man's feelings and desires and affections, there is doubtless a trace at least of the thought that man's love for a thing expresses the fact that his affections are set on it; but there is ever present also the thought that his affections are set on it because of the supposed advantages to be derived from the object loved. Of disinterested and unselfish love there is no trace at all in the use of the word in the Qur'an. How the verb is used may be seen from the following passages. 'This, because they have loved the present life beyond the next, and because God guideth not the unbelievers'⁶

¹ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 145.

² Suratu'n-Nur (xxiv) 22; cf. xlix. 12; lxi. 13.

³ Suratu't-Tauba (ix) 23.

⁴ Suratu Fussilat (xli) 16.

⁵ Suratu'l-Hujurat (xlix) 7.

⁶ Suratu'n-Nahl (xvi) 109.

'Aye, but ye love the transitory, and ye neglect the life to come.'¹ 'And ye love riches with exceeding love.'² 'Ye shall never attain to goodness till ye give alms of that which ye love.'³

Even in those passages in which the object of love is a person, we still are far seeing that true affection of the soul which we are accustomed to associate with the word *love*. 'I (Saleh) did indeed announce to you the message of my Lord: and I gave you faithful counsel, but ye love not faithful counsellors.'⁴ 'They of *Madina* who had been in possession of their abodes, and embraced the faith before them, cherish (*yuhubbuna*) those who take refuge with them; and they find not in their breasts any desire for what hath fallen to their share they prefer them before themselves, though poverty be their own lot. And with such as are preserved from their covetousness shall it be well.'⁵

There is one phrase which is used at times to express the motive from which certain actions are performed. It is 'from love of Him' (*ala hubbihi*). But even here it is difficult to be sure that anything more is meant than 'for His approbation'. The phrase does not mean what we should understand in English by the same expression. It means 'for His love' — love being here that sentiment or feeling which He will have for those who do these actions, and the expression is best translated 'from desire to win His approbation'.

¹ Suratu'l-Qiyamat (Ixxv) 20-21; cf. lxxvi. 27; xiv. 3.

² Suratu'l-Fajr (lxxxix) 21; cf. c. 8. ³ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 86.

⁴ Suratu'l-A'raf (vii) 77.

⁵ Suratu'l-Hashr (lix) 9.

When we come to consider those expressions in which the Qur'an speaks of God's love, or states that He loves or does not love, we are confirmed in the opinion already expressed that in the Qur'an 'love' refers to the divine approbation rather than to that which in the Christian sense we call God's love. Even in the following verse what is spoken of is that benevolent approbation which is the reward of those who put their trust in Him. 'Of the mercy of God thou hast spoken to them in gentle terms. Hadst thou been severe *and* harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from thee. Therefore, forgive and ask for pardon for them, and consult them in the affair *of war*, and when thou art resolved, then put thy trust in God, for God loveth those who put their trust in Him.'¹

God's love is not something which goes out to the sinful and the erring. To such He is kind, gracious, forgiving; but His love is reserved solely for the believers who do that which is good, the repentant and pure ceremonially, the pious who fear Him, the patient, the just.²

Very many of the verses which speak of God's love are negative, declaring that God does not love those who act in such and such a way, and implying by contrast that He does love those who act in the opposite way. If there were but one or two expressions which declared plainly the love of God for mankind in general, irrespective of their ethical and moral qualities, we might be

¹ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 153.

² Cf. iii. 29; ii. 277; xxx. 44; ii. 191; iii. 128; iii. 141; v. 16; v. 94; iii. 70; iii. 140; ix. 4, 7; v. 46; lx. 8.

prepared to pass by these repeated expressions which refer simply to approbation or disapprobation; but in the absence of even one single verse which plainly teaches that God loves mankind because of what He is Himself, and not because of what the individual is or has done, we are compelled to conclude that these many passages which speak of God as loving this one or that one, or not loving this one and that one, give a true representation of what was in the mind of Muhammad when he spoke of God's love; and we have already said that what he refers to is clearly the divine approval or approbation.

Notwithstanding that the word 'love' in the Qur'an has not the same shade of meaning that it has in the Christian writings, it would be a mistake to argue that the Qur'an does not teach the love of God. That the loving-kindness of God follows the sinner and seeks to bring him back to the right way is certainly the teaching of the Qur'an. We find this teaching specially insisted on in those passages which speak of God's grace and mercy.

God's goodness and beneficence are manifested most of all in the fact that He did not leave mankind after the fall but promised guidance and direction to lead him back again to Himself, and this purpose of love to man His manifested in and through His grace and mercy which He bestows on all who will accept it.

9. God's goodness and benevolence to mankind are not arbitrary, but are based on and governed by His truth and faithfulness. He bestows His blessings on men that He may lead them to repentance; yet when

they reject His offered mercy, He is swift in punishing. Muhammad taught that this implied no change or arbitrariness on the part of God. It is not because He changes that He pardons some and punishes others. God is faithful. To those with whom He has entered into covenant relations He remains true. This covenant relation may be particular, as it was with the Jews; and the fact that it was a mutual covenant made it obligatory on them to observe the terms by which they were bound if they desired that He should fulfil to them the promises which He had made. 'O children of Israel! remember my favour wherewith I shewed favour upon you, and be true to your covenant with me; I will be true to my covenant with you.'¹

The relation into which God enters with mankind may, however, be less formal. It may spring simply from a promise that He will act in such and such a way if men will act towards Him in a specified manner. 'O our Lord! and give us what thou hast promised us by thine apostles, and put us not to shame on the day of the resurrection. Verily, Thou wilt not fail Thy promise.'² Other verses speak more generally of the faithfulness of God. 'Say: Have ye received such a promise from God? for God will not revoke His promise.'³ 'It is the promise of God: To His promise God will not be untrue but most men know it not.'⁴ 'Verily, of the faithful hath God bought their persons and their substances on condition of Paradise for them *in return*: on the path of God shall they fight, and slay, and be slain: a

¹ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 38.

² Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 74.

³ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 192.

⁴ Suratu'r-Rum (xxx) 5.

promise of this is pledged in the Law, and in the Evangel, and in the Qur'an — and who more faithful to His engagement than God? ' ¹

In other passages Muhammad enters into the question of how and why God changes His attitude to men as nations or as individuals, and explains that the relation which God holds to man must necessarily vary with any variation of the attitude they take up towards Him. Any change on His part is more apparent than real; and at any rate is not the result of any arbitrary change of feeling towards men, or any sudden indifference or anger. 'Verily, God will not change His gifts to men, till they change what is in themselves.' ² 'This, because God changeth not the favour with which He favoureth a people, so long as they change not what is in their hearts.' ³

This is the teaching of the Qur'an throughout as to God's faithfulness in His dealings with mankind, and it conveys the idea of God as One who is true and faithful to His covenant, One who does not to-day say one thing and to-morrow another. 'Set thou thy face then, as a true convert, ⁴ towards the faith which God hath made, and for which He hath made man. No change is there in the creation of God. This is the right Faith, but the greater part of men know it not.' ⁵

The basis of this faithfulness lies in the fact that He is true and doeth truth; and this must ever be kept in

¹ Suratu't-Tauba (ix) 112.

² Suratu'r-Ra'd (xiii) 12.

³ Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 55; cf. xlviii. 23.

⁴ Literally, as a Hanif, RODWELL, *The Koran*, p. 212 note.

⁵ Suratu'r-Rum (xxx) 29.

mind in considering those passages which speak of God as doing as He pleaseth. He doeth what He pleaseth.. This means that there is none that can gainsay Him, and not that His will and pleasure may change from day to day. His faithfulness prevents this.

10. We come now to the last of the divine attributes which we shall consider — God's Holiness.

In one passage, the angels are represented as claiming that they extol the Holiness of God, 'When thy Lord said to the angels, "Verily, I am about to place one in my stead on earth," they said, "Wilt thou place there one who will do ill therein and shed blood, when we celebrate thy praise and extol thy holiness?" ' ¹

In two other passages we find God described as the Holy One. 'He is God beside whom there is no god: He is the King, the Holy.' ²

In none of these passages is there anything from which we can argue to a conclusion as to wherein Muhammad conceived the holiness of God to consist. The teaching of the Muhammadan theologians is, for the most part, quite clear that what is intended by God's holiness is His transcendence above all things; including, of course, all that is evil or blameworthy. ³ But even were we to admit (what Muhammadan theologians will scarcely allow us to admit without objection and protest on their part) that by holiness in these passages is meant what Christian writers mean when they employ

¹ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 28. ² Suratu'l-Hashr (lix) 23; cf. lxii. 1.

³ See *Ar-Razi* (Al-Amirat Ash-Sharafiyyay Press, Cairo A.H. 1308), vol. i, pp. 267, 269, 270-1. Also *Al-Karhshaf*, vol. i, p. 209.

the word, we cannot but see how unimportant a place the Holiness of God held in the mind of Muhammad, when he could say all that he had to say on the subject in these three passages, which, as we have seen cannot be said to contain any *teaching on* either the fact or the nature of God's holiness.

If we look through the Qur'an in search of other passages which, without specifically speaking of God's holiness, teach that He hates evil with a moral detestation, we look in vain, and are forced to conclude that Muhammad nowhere realizes the importance of insisting on the holiness of God.

God condemns evil, that is true, especially evil which shows itself in unbelief and opposition to His will; but He does so apparently not because of what evil is as opposed to His holy nature, but because of what it is as opposed to His majesty and His omnipotent will.

The doctrine of the Qur'an concerning the forgiveness of sins shews plainly that sin is viewed as something expressing despite to a properly constituted authority, and not as something contrary to the very nature of God Himself, and from cover to cover there is nothing in the book to show that Muhammad appreciated the necessity of insisting on the Holiness of God and of the need for moral purity on the part of the believer.

It is because of this want that while Muhammadanism has always been and still remains a successful missionary religion when in contact with paganism, it has yet always failed as an instrument for the inculcation of

moral purity in life among those tribes and nations that have come under the influence of its sway. Islam has never insisted on the necessity of a morally pure life on the part of the believer, because it has never taught as an essential a belief in the Holiness of God.

III. GOD'S WORKS IN CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

1. We have already seen that the Qur'an teaches that God alone is the Self-subsisting, the Eternal. This implies that all else has come into existence, and must therefore have a Creator, and that this Creator is none other than God. Muhammad does not in any part of the Qur'an thus reason logically, but the passages which speak of God as the Creator are many. It will not be necessary to do more than quote a few of them. 'Praise be to God, who hath created the Heavens and the Earth, and ordained the darkness and the light!' ¹ 'Will they not look forth on the realms of the Heaven and of the Earth, and on all things which God hath made, to see whether haply their end be not drawing on?' ² 'It is God who hath created the Heavens and the Earth.' ³

2. God is not only the cause of all, that is, He is the *direct* Creator. All that is external to Him is the works of His hands. None assisted Him, nor did He depute any part of the work of creation to those higher ethereal beings whom He brought into existence before the worlds were framed. He is the sole Creator. 'Yet have they assigned the Djinn to God as His associates,

¹ Suratu'l An'am (vi) 1.

² Suratu'l-A'raf (vii) 184.

³ Suratu Ibrahim (xiv) 37 see also ii. 27; vii. 52; ix. 36; xv. 85; xxi. 16; xxiii, 17; xxxi, 24; xxxviii. 26; xlv. 38.

though He created them; . . . Sole Maker of the Heavens and of the Earth! how, when He hath no consort, should He have a Son? He hath created everything, and He knoweth everything!' ¹ 'Say: What think ye? As for those whom ye invoke beside God, show me what part of the Earth it is which they have created. Had they a share in the Heavens?' ² 'This is the creation of God: shew me now what others than He have created. Ah! the ungodly are in a manifest delusion.' ³

3. The work of creation was not a labour and a toil whereby some giant putting forth the utmost of his strength succeeded at last in achieving the purpose he had in mind. God was not wearied in bringing the universe into existence. All to Him was simple and easy. 'See they not that God who created the Heavens .and the Earth, and was not wearied with their creation, is of power to quicken the dead? Yea, He is for all things Potent.' ⁴ 'We created the Heavens and the Earth and all that is between them in six days, and no weariness touched us.' ⁵

Nor did creation in any way exhaust the divine power. It is not, therefore, in any sense, merely the exhibition or expression of His self-manifestation. It is *an* expression of His will, but not *the* expression of His will. 'Do they not perceive that God, who created the Heavens and the Earth, is able to create their like?' ⁶ Seest thou not that in truth hath God created the

¹ Suratu'l-An'am (vi) 100, 101. ² Suratu'l-Ahqaf (xlvi) 3.

³ Suratu Luqman (xxxii) 10. ⁴ Suratu'l-Ahqaf (xlvi) 32.

⁵ Suratu'l-Qaf (l) 37. ⁶ Suratu Bani Isra'il (xvii) 101.

Heavens and the Earth? Were such His pleasure He could make you pass away, and cause a new creation to arise.'¹

These passages which speak of the power of God to cause a new creation to arise are chiefly arguments for the resurrection and the hereafter, but the idea that the power of God to create is not limited to the creation which exists, but is indefinite, runs through the Qur'an.

4. There is nothing in the Qur'an which can rightly be called 'the story of creation'. Muhammad's statements are meagre and far from clear. The creation of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them was the work of six days. 'Your Lord is God, who in six days created the Heavens and the Earth.'²

But when Muhammad makes even a very slight attempt to explain the sequence of events in the work of creation, the account he gives is confused and absolutely wanting in detail. The best we can say is that he apparently held that the formation of the earth occupied two days, that two more were taken up with the creation of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, making four, and that the creation of the heavens was the work of the last two days. 'Say: Do ye indeed disbelieve in Him who in two days created the earth? and do ye assign Him peers? The Lord of the worlds is He. He hath placed on the earth the firm mountains which tower above it; and He blessed it, and distributed food throughout it, for the cravings of all alike,

¹ Suratu Ibrahim (xiv) 22.

² Suratu'l-A'raf (vii) 52; see also x. 3; xi. 9; xxi. 60; xxxii. 3, 1. 37; lviii. 4.

in four days: then He applied Himself to the Heaven, which then was but smoke: and to it and to the Earth He said, "Come ye, whether in obedience or against your will?" and they both said, "We come obedient". And He made them seven heavens in two days, and in each heaven made known its office; and We furnished the lower heaven with lights and guardian angels.'¹

5. This world which God created He did not leave to its fate, withdrawing Himself from the works of His hands, and leaving its destiny to the working out of impersonal law or predetermined decree apart from actual living personal guidance. When the work of creation was accomplished, God took His seat on the Throne as Ruler, Governor, and Director of the world which He had made. And as He was the sole Creator, so now He is and ever has been and ever will be the sole Sustainer and Ruler. 'Verily your Lord is God who made the Heavens and the Earth in six days — then mounted His throne to rule all things.'² 'And put thou thy trust in Him that liveth and dieth not, . . . who in six days created the Heavens and the Earth, and whatever is between them, then mounted His Throne: the God of Mercy!'³

The providential government of the world is represented in the Qur'an as being accomplished by 'acts of creation'. 'For with God is the sovereignty of the Heavens and of the Earth, and of all that is between them! He createth what He will: and over all things is God Potent.'⁴ 'And thy Lord createth what He

¹ Suratu'l-Fussilat (xli) 8-11.

² Suratu Yunas (x) 3.

³ Suratu'l-Furqan (xxv) 60.

⁴ Suratu'l-Ma'ida (v) 20.

will and hath a free choice. But they, *the false gods*, have no power to choose.'¹

In both of these passages as well as in many others the word 'create' does not carry us back to the beginning of all things, but refers to the life-history of the world, all whose events are the *creation* of God. He not merely at some time in the distant past created the world, but He now rules it by continuing to *create*.

In this providential government of the world the divine purpose may be expressed by a spoken command. 'His command when He willeth aught, is but to say to it BE and IT IS.'²

In other passages the words of command are represented as written. 'If all the trees that are upon the Earth were to become pens, and if God should after that swell the sea into seven seas *of ink*, His Words would not be exhausted: for God is Mighty, Wise.'³ 'And with Him are the keys of the secret things; none knoweth them but He: He knoweth whatever is on the land and in the sea; and no leaf falleth but He knoweth it; neither is there a grain in the darkneses of the earth, nor a green thing or sere, but it is noted in a distinct writing.'⁴ 'There is no moving thing on earth whose nourishment dependeth not on God; He knoweth its haunts and final resting place: all is in the clear Book.'

¹ Suratu'l-Qasas (xxviii) 68.

² Suratu Ya Sin (xxxvi) 82; see also ii. 111; iii. 42, 52; xvi. 42; xix. 36; xl. 70.

³ Suratu Luqman (xxxii) 26.

⁴ Suratu'l-An'am (vi) 59.

⁵ Suratu Hud (xi) 8.

It is to be noted that these passages do not refer to the divine decrees. The 'words' which are here referred to are the *creative* words whereby God brings to pass whatsoever He wills. The teaching of the verses quoted may be summarized thus: The creative power of the Most High is infinite.¹ All things not merely happen in accordance with God's will, the expression of which forms a written record of all that comes to pass, but nothing can happen without its being recorded.²

This record is what may be called, for want of a better expression, a day-book of the continuous commands of God whereby all things came to pass. In another passage we find: 'No mischance chanceth either on the earth or in your persons, but ere We created them, it was in the Book: — for this is easy to God.'³ This verse is often taken as a 'proof-text' of the doctrine of Predestination; but when it is properly considered it is seen to refer to this same 'day-book' of the divine actions.

6. We see then that by Muhammad no clear distinction is drawn between the nature of those actions which are strictly creative and of those that deal with the providential ruling and governing of the world. All God's acts are *creative*. His providential dealings are all the outcome or result of the divine will, which act of will is frequently, if not regularly, described as a divine *decree*. This aspect of the teaching of the Qur'an must be carefully noted, for it has an important bearing on the interpretation of many passages which

¹ xxxi. 26.

² vi. 15; xi. 8.

³ Suratu'l-Hadid (lvii) 22.

are often regarded as relating to the doctrine of Predestination.

7. In view of this want of clearness and definiteness we must consider in greater detail the manner in which the Qur'an employs the words 'to create' (*khalaqa*) and to 'form' (*ja'ala*) so that we may determine, if possible, whether Muhammad really meant to teach that all things are God's *creation* in the strict sense of the word.

Muslim theologians, starting from the fact that in many passages in the Qur'an the providential and governing acts of God are described by the word 'create' (*khalaqa*), have elaborated a doctrine of 'creation' along certain definite lines, and maintain that every movement of every animate and inanimate being on the face of the earth is the direct creative act of God, using the words 'create', 'creation', etc., in what may be called their strict sense. Thus, for instance, when a man thinks that of his own will he moves his hand he is, they teach, deceiving himself. It is in truth God who creates, and annihilates, and recreates the hand in every successive position which it occupies during the supposed movement. Such an interpretation of the teaching of the Qur'an is based, in so far as it is at all based on the words of the book, on a one-sided explanation of the Qur'anic use of the words 'create', 'creation', etc.

In many passages in the Qur'an the word *khalaqa* (to create) expresses nothing more than that the action happens or takes place in accordance with the divine purpose, and does not in any sense preclude the use of means or secondary causation. The fact that the word

khalaqa, is employed in any passage in the Qur'an to describe the act of God, must never be regarded as in any way defining the manner or method of the divine action. When, for instance, Muhammad said that God created something, he never dreamed of maintaining, by the mere employment of the word *khalaqa*, that the object came into being *ex nihilo* or by the *immediate* act of God. This was not the intent of the word. For example, we find it used in the following verse to express the gradual formation of man: 'Was he not a mere embryo? Then he became thick blood of which God formed (literally *created*) him and fashioned him.'¹ With this we must compare another passage in which the word (*ja'ala*) is employed. 'God, too, hath given (*ja'ala*) you wives of your own race, and from your wives hath He given (*ja'ala*) sons and grandsons, and with good things hath He supplied you.'²

Nor must it be forgotten that the word *create* (*khalaqa*) is employed in the Qur'an to express the actions of human beings themselves. 'Hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with Ad, at Irem adorned with pillars, whose like have not been reared (*lain yukhlaq* lit. have not been created) in these lands.'³

Even the false gods which mankind worships are the 'creation' of men. 'Ye only worship idols beside God, and are the authors of a lie' (lit. and create a lie).⁴ What! will ye join those with Him who cannot create

¹ Suratn'l-Qiyama (ixxv) 37-8; see also xxiii. 12-14; lvi. 58-9.

² Suratu'n-Nahl (xvi) 74; see also xxxii. 6.

³ Suratu'l-Fajr (lxxxix) 5-7. ⁴ Suratu'l-'Ankabut (xxix) 16.

anything, and are themselves created, and have no power to help them, or to help themselves.'¹

The word *ja'ala* is employed very frequently in the Qur'an to express divine action, and the shades of meaning which the word covers are most diverse. In Rodwell's translation we find the following which do not even exhaust the list; *to make, to form, to ordain, to appoint, to fix, to place, to give, to allow.*

In some places where we should expect to find *khalaqa*, we find *ja'ala* employed instead, showing that the acts which in some passages are spoken of as *creative* may be more generally described. This leads to the conclusion that in the mind of Muhammad acts of *creation* did not have that sharp and special definiteness which theologians usually ascribe to them.

The following verses will show how *ja'ala* is thus used. 'And one cried to her (Mary) from below her "Grieve not thou, thy Lord hath provided (*ja'ala* a streamlet at thy feet."'² 'Is not He who hath set (*ja'ala*) the earth so firm, and hath made (*ja'ala*) rivers in its midst, and hath placed (*ja'ala*) mountains on it, and put (*ja'ala*) a barrier between the two seas?'³ 'Who hath made everything which He hath created most good; and began the creation of man with clay; Then ordained (*ja'ala*) his progeny from germs of life, from sorry water.'⁴

8. In attempting to understand Muhammad's doctrine of the relation in which God stands to the world which

¹ Suratu'l-A'raf (vii) 191. See also xvi. 20; xxv. 3.

² Suratu Maryam (xix) 24.

³ Suratu'n-Naml xxvii. 62.

⁴ Suratu's-Sajda, (xxxii) 6, 7.

He created, and especially to what we may call the history of the world, using the word history in the widest possible sense, we must not argue from any preconceived idea of what Muhammad must or ought to have meant when he used the word 'create' to describe the acts of God in His providential government of the world. We must argue inversely from the manner in which he employs the word *create* to cover all the various acts of God, as to what his conception was when he spoke of creation.

And when we do this we come to the conclusion that while to 'create' means at times to cause directly by an expression of will — the command 'Be' — yet, generally speaking, Muhammad employs the word to express simply the fact that what occurs, occurs in accordance with the will of God, without any clear intention of stating how and by what means His will makes itself fulfilled.

9. Yet, while the teaching of the Qur'an on this subject is indefinite, one thing stands out clear. God in His all-wise sustaining and ruling of the world employs means for the accomplishment of the decisions of His almighty will. 'He it is who sendeth the winds as the forerunner of His mercy (rain); and pure water send We down from Heaven, that We may revive by it a dead land: and We give it for a drink to Our creations, beasts and men in numbers.'¹

The winds are the means whereby God carries the rain-clouds whithersoever they are needed, and these

¹ Suratu'l-Furqan (xxv) 50, 51. See also xxvii. 61; xxxi, 9; l. 9-11.

pour down the rain whereby God vivifies the dead land. In other passages, the springing up of the vegetation and the sprouting of the seeds are described as the acts of God. 'It was We who rained down the copious rains; then cleft the earth with clefts, and caused the upgrowth of the grain, and grapes and healing herbs, and the olive and the palm, and enclosed gardens thick with trees, and fruits and herbage for the service of yourselves and your cattle.'¹

10. These means and the laws whereby they work out His will, having Him as their fount and origin, remain within His control, and He may sometimes dispense with one or other of the secondary causes whereby, as a rule, He works. Such dispensations manifest themselves in those events which mankind calls miraculous. Thus, for instance, the birth of Jesus was miraculous, for in it God dispensed with secondary causes. 'She (Mary) said, "How, O my Lord! shall I have a son, when man hath not touched me?" He said, "Thus: God will create what He will; when He decreeth a thing, He only saith, Be, and it is."'²

The very fact that the birth of Jesus is noted in the Qur'an as an exception, is sufficient proof that Muhammad recognized that this is not the manner in which God usually works. God's acts are not, as a rule, immediate, but mediate by and through those laws by which He has settled the course of nature; and those vital powers of life with which He has endowed animals and plants, and,

¹ Suratu'l-'Abasa (lxxx) 25-32. See also vi. 95-9; xxii. 5.

² Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 42.

we may also say, that principle of choice which He has bestowed on man and often His purpose is shown to work out through these laws and through the exercise of the powers and capacities without being, because of this mediateness, any the less the fulfilment of the divine purpose and the expression of His will.

11. We shall now consider what the Qur'an has to say about the will of God, of which His actions or acts are but the outward expression. We must repeat here what has already been said in section 5 of 'The Character and Attributes of God'. According to the teaching of Muhammad God's will is over all. All that has ever been or is or ever shall be, is in some way or other the expression of the divine purpose and will; but how this supreme divine will is, as a matter of actual experience, related to the world of nature and to the working of the human will is a question concerning which the Qur'an has no explanation to give, and many of its statements are made from such opposing standpoints that it is hard if not impossible to reconcile them with one another. Yet when we find such opposing statements we must not put down their presence to the fact that Muhammad was simply an opportunist. We must rather say that Muhammad saw that there were two sides to the question and sometimes emphasized the one side and sometimes the other. Do not all preachers do the same? Muhammad was not a theologian but a preacher.

In certain passages, the operation of the divine will appears, at least at first sight, to be described as absolute, and as depending solely on the divine pleasure, irrespective of any moral considerations or of the deser-

or non-desert of man. 'He chastiseth whom He will, and whom He will He forgiveth. And God hath power over all things.'¹ 'And if God had pleased, they who came after them would not have wrangled, after the clear signs had reached them. But into dispute they fell: some of them believed, and some were infidels; yet if God had pleased, they would not have wrangled, but God doth what He will.'²

In this last verse we have the two verbs *sha'a* (to please) and *arada* (to will), which are employed most commonly in the Qur'an to express the divine pleasure or will. In some passages they appear to be used interchangeably. For example, in Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 254 we have 'God doth what He will (*yurid*),' while in Suratu Ibrahim (xiv) 32 we find 'God doth His pleasure (*yasha*).' The use of the word *yurid* in (ii) 254 shows plainly that the verb does not necessarily express the idea of a direct *act of will*. It is used here to express the good pleasure and desire of God, which from the human standpoint, at least, precedes the decree or command or ordinance.

It is perhaps not unnecessary to insist on the fact that the expressions whereby Muhammad refers to the divine pleasure and will are remarkably variable. The word *ardda* (imperfect *yuridu*) 'to will', though it is the word which we should expect to find used with a definite and clear meaning, is employed so indiscriminately that it may express every shade of gradation from simple *desire* to absolute *determination* involving an act of will,

¹ Suratu'l-Ma'ida (v) 44.

² Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 254.

and when the will referred to is the divine will, the determination or resolve becomes a divine decree. 'Mothers, when divorced, shall give suck to their children two full years, if the father desire (*yurid*) that the suckling be completed.'¹ '... if the prophet desired to wed her.'² 'and it will be more just in their husbands to bring them back when in this state, if they desire (*arada*) what is right.'³ 'Was the time of *my absence* so long to you? or desired ye (*aradtum*) that wrath from your Lord should light upon you, that ye failed in your promise to me?'⁴ 'Ye desire (*turiduna*) the passing fruitions of this world, but God desireth (*yurid*) the next life for you.'⁵

This desire may result in some act which, so to speak, gives it body, and the word then expresses purpose or intention. 'What meaneth (*yurid*) God by his comparison?'⁶ 'And truly we know not whether evil be meant (*urida*) for them that are on the earth, or whether their Lord meaneth (*arada*) guidance for them.'⁷ 'So Pharaoh sought (*ardda*) to drive them out of the land; but We drowned him and all his followers.'⁸ 'Nor if God desire (*yurid*) to mislead you, shall my counsel profit you, though I fain would (*aradtu*) counsel you aright.'⁹

¹ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 233.

² Suratu'l-Ahzab (xxxiii) 49, See also iv. 24.

³ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 228. ⁴ Suratu Ta Ha (xx) 89.

⁵ Suratu'l-Anfal (viii) 68. See also iv. 63; v. 9, xxxv. 11; lxxiv, 52.

⁶ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 24.

⁷ Suratu'l-Jinn (lxxii) 10. See also ix. 55; iv. 31, 32; viii. 7; xxxiii. 33.

⁸ Suratu Bani Isra'il (xvii) 105. See also vii. 107; xxvi. 34.

⁹ Suratu Hud (xi) 36.

'They will surely swear, "Our aim was (*aradna*) only good.'" ¹

A slightly different shade of meaning comes into the word when it is used to describe the attempt to carry out the desire. 'So oft as they, for very anguish, would fain (*aradu*) come forth thence, back shall they be driven into it.' ² 'For when our distinct signs are recited to them, they say, "This is merely a man who would fain (*yurid*) pervert you from your father's worship.'" ³

At other times the act of will in making a choice between different objects, or different possible desires, is more prominently brought into view, and then the word seems to point to this choice or act of will rather than to the simple desire. 'Some of you were for (*yurid*) this world, and some for (*yurid*) the next.' ⁴ 'If any one desire (*yurid*) the reward of this world, yet with God is the reward of this world and of the next.' ⁵ 'But man chooseth (*yurid*) to deny what is before him.' ⁶

Again, in other passages there seems to be a union of the two thoughts of desire and choice, apparently with the underlying implication that desire leads to choice, or decision of will. In the passages which speak of God, there seems to be felt less need to distinguish between the two, or in other words, there seems to be a greater

¹ Suratu't-Tauba (ix) 108. See also iv. 65.

² Suratu'l-Hajj (xxii) 22. See also xxxii. 20.

³ Suratu's-Saba' (xxxiv) 42. See also xxxvii. 96; xxi. 70.

⁴ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 146.

⁵ Suratu'n-Nisa' (iv) 133. See also xlii; 19; iii. 139; liii. 30.

⁶ Suratu'l-Qiyama (ixxv) 5. See also xi. 18; xvii; 19.

tendency to speak of the two as one. 'And who can have any power over God in your behalf, whether He will (*arada*) you some loss, or whether He will (*arada*) you some advantage?'¹ 'But if they choose (*aradu*) to wean the child by consent and by bargain, it shall be no fault in them. And if ye choose (*aradtum*) to have a nurse for your children."² 'Moreover, had they been desirous (*aradu*) to take the field, they would have got ready for that purpose the munitions of war.'³ 'And God willeth not (*ma Allah yurid*) injustice to mankind.'⁴ 'God desireth (*yurid*) to make this known unto you, and to guide you into the ways of those who have been before you, and to turn Him unto you in mercy.'⁵

Thus it happens that in many passages where Muhammad speaks of the divine pleasure, it is difficult, if not impossible, to say whether he intended by the words used to express the idea that a special act of the divine will, in other words, a special decree, lay at the base of such and such occurrences, or whether he merely meant to express in a general way his conviction that all things were working out a divine plan, and were in accordance with the divine good pleasure.

With regard to some of these passages, it seems most probable that in them Muhammad is not speaking at all of the divine decrees, but of the providential dealings of God whereby He causes all that occurs to accomplish the wise purpose of His will. For instance, in the

¹ Suratu'l-Fath (xlvi) 11.

² Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 233.

³ Suratu't-Tauba (ix) 46.

⁴ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 104.

⁵ Suratu'n-Nisa' (iv) 31. See also verse, 32.

following passage it is probably this sense that the words really bear. 'And whom God shall please (*yurid*) to guide, that man's breast will He open to Islam; but whom He shall please (*yurid*) to mislead, strait and narrow will He make his breast, as though he mounted up into the very Heavens! Thus doth God inflict dire punishment on those who believe not.'¹

With the verse just quoted we may compare the following from the Old Testament. 'Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay (literally, *desired* or *willed* to slay) them.'²

In many of the passages which teach that all things occur in accordance with the divine will, Muhammad does not assert that all things happen in accordance with a series of cut and dry decrees from all eternity. He simply affirms that nothing can happen in contradiction to the divine will, though he does not enter into the question of how this is possible and how it works out in the divine economy of the world. 'Yet if God had pleased, they would not have thus wrangled: but God doth what He will.'³ The idea in this and similar passages seems to be that God could have prevented certain things from happening had He desired to over-ride the human will, and not that God by a positive decree ordained that they should act in a certain manner.

Muhammad is careful in other passages to assert that evil actions are not from God. 'And if they answer

¹ Suratu'l-An'am (vi) 125. See also vi. 25.

² 1 Sam. ii. 25.

³ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 254.

thee not, then know that verily they are following their own caprices: and who goeth more widely astray than he who followeth his own caprice without guidance from God? for God guideth not the wicked.'¹ 'But the wicked, devoid of knowledge, follow their own desires and those whom God shall mislead, who shall guide, and who shall be their protector? '²

Moral. evil God has not created. It is the outcome of the perverted will misled by Satan and those who act for him. 'Recite to them the history of him to whom We vouchsafed our signs, and who departed from them, so that Satan followed him and he became one of the seduced. Had We pleased, We had certainly thereby exalted him but he crouched to the earth and followed his own lust.'³ 'And if stirrings to evil from Satan stir thee, fly thou for refuge to God: He verily heareth, knoweth.'⁴

It is difficult to believe that Muhammad could have delivered such a verse. if he had imagined that these very 'stirrings to evil from Satan', from which one is to turn for refuge to God, were the result of God's own decree.

12. Finally, in any estimate of Muhammad's teaching concerning the operation of the divine will we must ever bear in mind what he teaches of the divine justice; and we must insist most strongly on the fact, which we have already noted, that by God's justice Muhammad means moral justice, and not what the theologians call His justice. The teaching of the Qur'an is that God is

¹ Suratu'l-Qasas (xxviii) 50.

² Suratu'r-Rum (xxx) 28.

³ Suratu'l-A'raf (vii) 174-5.

⁴ Suratu'l-A'raf (vii) 199.

just in all His dealings with mankind, in the meaning and sense which that word has when employed to describe the dealings of man with man.

Thus when we speak of God's will and the operations of His will which nothing can oppose, we must remember that Muhammad teaches that God cannot will injustice, and this not because there is any other whose will constrains Him, but because He cannot deny Himself.. His attributes are fixed and eternal, and He cannot because of His very nature will anything which is contrary to His attributes.

In the teaching of the Qur'an the divine omnipotence is placed well in the foreground, but the divine justice is also so insisted on that no one who honestly attempts to express the teaching of Muhammad can say that God's will is represented in the Qur'an as that of an immoral giant who acts merely according to caprice.

IV. PREDESTINATION

1. We shall now conclude our study of the Qur'anic doctrine of God with a consideration of Muhammad's teaching on the relation of the eternal divine purpose to the works of God in Creation and Providence. In other words, we shall now study the teaching of the Qur'an on Predestination.

In doing this it will be impossible to avoid repeating much of what has already been said. This repetition is necessary to bring out clearly the bearing of the Qur'anic conceptions of creation and of the divine will on this doctrine.

The orthodox Muhammadan teaching on Predestination is 'that all that has been and all that will be was decreed in eternity and written on the Preserved Tablet.'¹ This cold and dry doctrine of the Decrees, which in practice has tended towards fatalism, is based on a one-sided interpretation of certain passages, some of which we shall now consider. Let us take first the verse that is perhaps the strongest support that the Muhammadan theologians can find. 'Verily it is We who will quicken the dead, and write down the works which they have sent on before them, and the traces

¹ SELL, *The Faith of Islam*, p. 269.

which they shall have left behind them: and everything have we set down (literally *enumerated*) in the clear Book *of our decrees*.'¹

The verse is one which gives much trouble to those commentators who take pains to consider it carefully. They do not all do so. In the first place, the fact that the writing of men's deeds is mentioned as if taking place after the resurrection is a difficulty for which none of the expositors can find an explanation that to a critical and independent mind gives any satisfaction. Secondly, the word *ahsaina* (We have enumerated) is past tense and apparently refers to something already written, and is therefore explained as referring to the writing from all eternity of the divine decrees. Thirdly, the word *imamin* (prototype) is far from certain. Apart from those passages where it means Imam or Leader, it occurs in the Qur'an only here (xxxvi. 11) and once elsewhere (xv. 79). In xv. 79 it means 'rule' or 'example', and in the verse we are considering it may refer not to a prototype, but to a book, or rather to the lines of a book so clearly written that they may serve as *an example* or pattern of writing. The commentators all suggest that the meaning may be the Preserved Tablet, and many give this meaning as certain; but their conception of what this is, is far from clear, for the Preserved Tablet is strictly speaking the prototype of

¹ Lit. *in the clear prototype*, that is, in the Preserved Tablet on which all the actions of mankind are written down. RODWELL, *Koran*, p. 130 note. Surat Ya Sin (xxxvi) 11[12].

the Qur'an alone. ¹ Tabari relates a tradition that the word meant simply 'a book'.

The meaning of the verse may be brought out by translating 'Verily, it is We who will quicken the dead, and We write down the works which they have sent on before them, and the traces which they have left behind them: and everything have We set down (as it has happened) in the clear book (of our record).'

The verbs *nuhyi* (we quicken) and *naktubu* (we write) do not particularly refer to the future, but to the fact that it is *God* and none other who will quicken and who writes the record of their deeds. There is in the original nothing to make it necessary to suppose that Muhammad referred to any writing *after* the resurrection. Further, the word *ahsaina* (we have set down, or enumerated) though past tense, does not necessarily refer to any past writing concerning events still to occur. ² 'Behold! how they lie against themselves — and the *gods* of their own inventing desert them.' In this verse both the verbs *lie* and *desert* are in the past tense, and the prophet is summoned to see how the infidels have lied and how they have been deserted by their false gods, events which have not yet happened, but which have been described as certain to take place on the day of judgement. ³

In another passage we have an expression which throws light on the use of the word *ahsaina* in the passage we are considering. 'For they looked not forward to their account; and they gave the lie to

¹ Boulac Press, A.H. 1323-9, vol. xxii. p. 100.

² Compare vi. 24.

³ Compare also vi. 28.

Our signs, charging them with falsehood. But, We noted and wrote down all (*ahsaina kitgban*)'.¹

In whatever way the verse may be taken, it hardly seems a sufficient basis for such a doctrine as the Muhammadan theologians have developed from it.

2. We shall now consider some of those passages in which words such as *haqqa*, *katab*, *qada* and *qadara*, usually interpreted as referring to the decrees of God, are employed.

3. *Haqqa*, *haqqat* (is rightly decreed or pronounced). It might be possible to dispense with any consideration of these words were it not that in some passages they are usually translated by such terms as to lead to the conclusion that they refer to the eternal decrees of the Almighty, as, for example, in the following passages: 'Verily they against whom the decree of thy Lord is pronounced (*haqqat 'alaihim*) shall not believe. Even though every kind of sign come unto them, till they behold the dolorous torment!'² 'And to every people have We sent an apostle *saying*: Worship God and turn away from Taghout. Some of them there were whom God guided, and there were others decreed to err (*haqqat 'alaihi 'd-dalalatu*). But go through the land and see what hath been the end of those who treated my apostles as liars.'³

These translations, however, do not give the proper sense of the words as used in these passages. The words express the justice or rightness or truth of the saying or of the action to which they refer. To see the

¹ Suratu'n-Naba' (lxxviii) 27-9.

² Suratu Yunas (x) 96, 97.

³ Suratu'n-Nahl (xvi) 38.

true meaning of the words we must look at several other passages first. 'Just, therefore, (*fahaqqa*) is the doom which our Lord hath passed upon us. We shall surely taste it.'¹ 'Nought did they all but charge the apostles with falsehood: just, therefore, (*fahaqqa*) is the retribution.'² 'And Ad and Pharaoh, and the people of Lot and the dwellers in the forest, and the people of Tobba, all gave the lie to their prophets: justly, therefore, were (*fahaqqa*) the menaces inflicted.'³

From this meaning the words pass to express that some sentence or doom is justly due. 'Seest thou not that all in the Heavens and all on the Earth adoreth God? the sun and the moon and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees, and the beasts, and many men? But of many is chastisement the due (*wakathirun haqqa 'alaihi'l-'adhabu*).'⁴ 'Him then on whom the sentence of punishment hath justly lighted (*afaman haqqa 'alaihi kalimatul-'adhabi*) — him who is *doomed* to the fire canst thou rescue?'⁵ 'And by troops shall the unbelievers be driven towards Hell, until when they reach it, its gates shall be opened, and its keepers shall say to them, "Came not apostles from among yourselves to you, reciting to you the signs of your Lord, and warning you of the meeting with Him on this your Day?" They shall say, "Yes". But just is the sentence of punishment (*haqqat kalimatul-'adhabi*) on the unbelievers.'⁶ 'We have not taught him (Muhammad) poetry, nor would it beseem him. This *Book* is no other than

¹ Suratu's-Saffat (xxxii) 30.

² Suratu Sad (xxxviii) 13.

³ Suratu Qaf (l) 13.

⁴ Suratu'l-Hajj (xxii) 18.

⁵ Suratu'z-Zumar (xxxix) 20.

⁶ Suratu'z-Zumar (xxxix) 71.

a warning and a clear Qur'an. To warn whoever liveth and, that against the infidels sentence may be justly given (*wayahaqqu'l-qaulu'ala'l-kafirina*).¹

The sentence of doom which is spoken of in the preceding passages is God's judicial decree that the unrepentant unbelievers shall in no wise escape punishment, but shall be cast into Hell with Iblis and all who have followed him. This is clearly brought out in many verses. 'Had We pleased We had certainly given to every soul its guidance. But true shall be the word (*haqqa'l-qaulu minni*) which hath gone forth from me — I will fill Hell with Djinn and men together.'² 'Just, now, is Our sentence (*laqad haqqa'l-qaulu*) against most of them; therefore they shall not believe.'³

This sentence of judgement is recorded plainly in such terms as to show that it does not refer to any eternal decree of damnation, but is a judicial declaration that those who in spite of the offer of mercy and forgiveness made by God still persist in following Satan and in regarding his lies as truth, and harden their hearts against divine guidance are doomed to eternal torment. 'He said: "It is truth, and the truth I speak. From thee (Iblis) will I surely fill Hell, and with such of them (men) as shall follow thee, one and all,"'⁴

In other passages the thought that this judgement

¹ Suratu Ya Sin (xxxvi) 67, 70. Compare also xxviii, 63; xvii. 17.

² Suratu's-Sajda (xxxii) 13.

³ Suratu Ya Sin (xxxvi) 6. Compare also xlvi. 17; xli. 24; xl. 5, 6.

⁴ Suratu Sad (xxxviii) 85.

included the judicial hardening of the hearts of the unbelieving is clear. 'This God then is your true Lord: and when the truth is gone, what remaineth but error? How then are ye so perverted? Thus is the word of thy Lord made good (*haqqat kalimatu rabbika*) on the wicked, that they shall not believe.'¹

The words *haqqa*, *haqqat*, are also used to express the justice of God in leaving the obstinately unrepentant to follow the errors of their own choosing. 'Say: My Lord hath enjoined what is right. Turn your faces therefore toward every place where He is worshipped, and call upon Him with sincere religion. As He created you, to Him shall ye return: some hath He guided, and some hath He justly left in error (*wafariqan haqqa'ala-ihimu'd-dalalatu*), because they have taken the Satans as their tutelars beside God, and have deemed that they were guided aright.'² 'And to every people have We sent an apostle *saying*: Worship God and turn away from Taghout. Some of them there were whom God guided, and there were others decreed to err (*haqqat 'alaihimu'd-dalalatu*). But go through the land and see what hath been the end of those who treated my apostles as liars.'³ In both these passages the idea is the same not that God has decreed from all eternity that they shall err, but that God has acted justly in leaving them to their errors when they would not listen to the apostles who came to them with the truth. They who will not believe shall not believe.

¹ Suratu Yunas (x) 33, 34. Compare also x. 96.

² Suratu'l-A'raf (vii) 28.

³ Suratu'n-Nahl (xvi) 38.

It will be seen, then, that all these verses which refer to the sentence of doom, do not speak of anything which can correctly be regarded as a 'decree' of the Almighty in the proper sense of that term.

2. The second word we shall examine is *kitab* (book).

This word is used most frequently to express the record of men's actions which is kept by the recording angels and of which God Himself is at times spoken of as the author or writer. Again we might pass by the consideration of the word were it not that it is often understood by readers as referring to the book of God's decrees wherein all that comes to pass was written from eternity before the foundation of the world.

As examples of the way in which it is employed we may cite the following passages: 'And each shall have his book put *into his hand*,'¹ 'And the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord, and the Book shall be set.'² In the last passage the word *az-zubur* is used instead of *kitab*.

Sometimes this 'book' is spoken of as the book of the individual, as in the first passage just quoted above.³ At other times it is referred to simply as the Book which, as we have already seen, is, as it were, God's Day-Book in which He writes all that He does or all that comes to pass. It is sometimes difficult, indeed, to distinguish which of these Books is meant. In the following passages it is the Day-Book of the Almighty

¹ Suratu'l-Kahf (xviii) 47.

² Suratu'z-Zumar (xxxix) 69. See also vi. 59; x. 62; xi. 8; xvii. 14,15; lxxxiii. 18-20; lxxiii. 7-9; liv. 52.

³ See also, lxix. 19, 25; xlv. 27; xvii, 73.

to which reference is made. "But what," said he, "was the state of generations past?" He said, "The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in the Book (of His decrees). My Lord erreth not nor forgetteth."¹ The words 'of His decrees' are inserted by Rodwell without any note to show that they are not in the original text. This is clearly a wrong interpretation of the passage; for the last clause shows plainly that the idea is that God makes no mistake in what He writes and never forgets to put anything down. The record is not only correct but is also complete. It is the truth and the whole truth. God's Day-Book is without error and without omission. 'Knowest thou not that God knoweth whatever is in the Heaven and on the Earth? This truly is *written* in the Book: this is easy for God.'² 'This Our Book will speak of you with truth: therein have We written whatever ye have done.'³

In a few passages there is some doubt as to the exact meaning of the word, but in all probability it is this same Day-Book of God which is referred to. As examples of such verses we may quote the following: 'Moreover, God created you of dust — then of the germs of life — then made you two sexes: and no female conceiveth or bringeth forth without His knowledge and the aged ageth not, nor is ought minished from man's age, but in (accordance with) the Book. An easy thing truly is this to God.'⁴ 'No kind of beast is there on the earth nor fowl that flieth with its wings, but is a

¹ Suratu Ta Ha (xx) 53-4.

² Suratu'l-Hajj (xxii) 69.

³ Suratu'l-Jathiya (xlv) 28. See also lxxviii. 27-9; xxvii. 77.

⁴ Suratu'l-Mala'ikat (xxxv) 12.

folk like you: nothing have We passed over in the Book: then unto their Lord shall they be gathered.'¹ In both of these passages Rodwell takes the word 'Book' as referring to the Book of the decrees, but when the passages in which they occur are carefully considered it seems best to explain the words as referring to the Day-Book of God. The subject referred to in both the verses is the minute and complete knowledge God has of even the unseen changes which affect the life of man, and of the doings of the brute beasts which also on the day of resurrection will have to give an account of the deeds done in the body. In the following passage this is very clearly brought out. All is written, nothing *escapes* Him. 'Not the weight of a mote either in the Heavens or in the Earth escapeth Him; nor is there aught less than this or aught greater, which is not in the clear Book.'²

Yet while the word *book* is employed in the Qur'an most frequently to designate the *record* of all that comes to pass, it is also used otherwise. There is, according to the Qur'an, another book, the book of fate. In the following passages we can see references to this book. 'And who is worse than he who deviseth a lie of God, or treateth our signs as lies? To them shall a portion *here below* be assigned in accordance with the book *of our decrees*, until the time when Our messengers, as they receive their souls, shall say.'³ 'No one can die except by God's permission, *according to the Book that fixeth the term of life.*'⁴ It appears to me, however, that to

¹ Suratu'l-An'am (vi) 38.

² Suratu's-Saba' (xxxiv) 3.

³ Suratu'l-A'raf (vii) 35.

⁴ Suratu Ali'Imran (iii) 139.

describe this book as 'the Book of God's decrees' from all eternity is not truly in accordance with the usage of the Qur'an itself. ¹ We have already seen (see 'God's Works in Creation and Providence,' Section 5) that nothing can come to pass without God's creative *command* which is sometimes referred to as written and sometimes as spoken. In such passages as the two preceding, therefore, it seems preferable to explain the *Book* as the Day-Book of the divine acts, rather than as the Book of the divine decrees.

There is one passage which seems to show clearly that such an explanation of the word *Book* is not merely in accordance with the use of the expression in the Qur'an, but is demanded by the language we find employed. '...and as soon as ye are secure, observe prayer; for to the faithful, prayer is a prescribed duty' (*kitabān mauqūtan*). ² Prayer is a duty which God has written down in His Book, that is, in non-figurative language, which God has commanded.

Before passing on to the next word we must glance at the uses of the verb *kataba* (to write). We find that a very frequent use of the word is to express simply *command* or *order*, as in the following. 'O believer! retaliation for bloodshedding is prescribed to you' (*kutiba'alaikum*). ³

There are, however, two passages in which the word is used otherwise. 'Say: Had ye remained in your homes,

¹ See vi. 2; xxxiv. 13, as explained on page 88.

² Suratu'n-Nisa' (iv) 104.

³ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 173. See also ii. 176, 179, 212, 147; iv. 79, 126; ix. 121, 122.

they who were decreed (*kutiba'alaihim*) to be slain would have gone forth to the places where they lie.'¹ 'There is a man who, without knowledge, wrangleth about God, and followeth every rebellious Satan; concerning whom it is decreed (*kutiba'alaihi*), that he shall surely beguile and guide into the torment of the flame, whosoever shall take him for His Lord.'²

With regard to the first of these two passages there is nothing in the verse which demands that the reference be to an eternal decree, It is necessary to repeat even to weariness that while all that comes to pass happens in accordance with the will and commands of God, the commands, which are but the outward expression and embodiment, so to speak, of God's will, are given in the course of history, in time, not in eternity, and are often spoken of as *written*. In the second of the two passages there seems to be no doubt that the reference is to the judicial decision of God of which we have more than once spoken, and which is recorded in the following verse. 'He said, "Begone; but whosoever of them shall follow thee, verily, Hell shall be your recompense; an ample recompense."³

So far in our study of these words we cannot say that we have come on anything which can be regarded as being akin to the orthodox Muhammadan doctrine of Predestination.

3. The third word we take up is *qada* (to decide, to decree, to settle finally, to end). As may be seen from the various shades of meaning in the words employed to

¹ Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 148.

² Suratu'l-Hajj (xxii) 3, 4.

³ Suratu Bani Isra'il (xvii) 65. See also vii. 17; xxxviii. 85.

translate *qada*, the word expresses many allied conceptions.

In many passages the word conveys simply the idea of the completion or fulfilment of some action. 'And when the prayer is ended' (*qudiyat*).¹ 'Be not hasty in its recital while the revelation of it is incomplete' (*min qubli an yuqha ilaika wahyuhu*).² 'Whichever of the two terms I fulfil' (*qadaitu*).³ 'Some have fulfilled their course, (*qada nahbahu*) and others await *its fulfilment*.'⁴ 'Should God hasten evil, upon men as they fain would hasten their good, then were their end decreed' (*laqudiya ilaihim ajluhum*).⁵ This last verse may be taken as a typical example of the misuse of the word *decreed* as a frequent translation of the word *qada*. The decree here spoken of cannot be an eternal decree, for it is clearly conditional, and the verse itself states that the condition is not fulfilled; God does 'hasten evil upon men'. Similarly, the *decree* referred to in the following passage cannot be the eternal decree of God, for it is said that it will never be decreed. 'But for infidels is the fire of Hell; to die shall never be decreed them.'⁶

In other passages, the word *qada* is used to express a definite decision of the divine will whereby something is determined and settled irrevocably, but there is nothing in the Qur'an to lead us to believe that this decision is regarded as an eternal decree of the Almighty; most of

¹ Suratu'l-Jumu'a (lxii) 10. ² Suratu Ta Ha (xx) 113.

³ Suratu'l-Qasas (xxviii) 28.

⁴ Suratu'l-Ahzab (xxxiii) 23. See also, ii. 196; iv. 104: xii. 63; xiii. 43, 46; lxxx. 23; xlvi. 28; xix. 40.

⁵ Suratu Yunas (x) 12.

⁶ Suratu'l-Mala'ika (xxxv) 33.

the passages, indeed, lead to the conclusion that the decision is regarded as taking place in time, and as referring, to an act of 'creation' in the sense in which the word is so frequently used in the Qur'an, to express the manner in which God providentially rules and regulates the affairs of the world. 'Sole maker of Heaven and Earth! And when He decreeth (*qada amran*) a. thing, He only saith to it, "Be," and it is.'¹

Sometimes the use of the word shows plainly that the 'decree' or decision referred to is regarded as not merely taking effect in time, but as itself occurring in time. Thus we see that it is after the creation of a man that the time or period of his life on earth is determined. 'He it is who created you of clay — then decreed the term *of your life (qada ajalān)*: and with Him is another pre-fixed term *for the resurrection.*'² In the following passage this is even more clearly brought out. The death of Solomon is said to have taken place in a certain manner *when God decreed it.* Solomon did not die in virtue, so to speak, of an eternal decree, but in virtue of a decree which immediately preceded the actual death. 'And when We decreed the death *of Solomon (falamma qadaina 'alaihi 'l-mauta)*, nothing shewed them that he was dead but a reptile of the earth that gnawed the staff *which supported his corpse.*'³

The word is also employed to express the command given to some one by God. 'And thou wast not on the western slope *of Sinai* when We laid his charge on Moses, nor wast thou one of the witnesses' (*idhqad*

¹ Suratu'l-Baqara (ii) 111. See also xix. 36; iii, 42; x1. 70.

² Suratu'l-An'am (vi) 2.

³ Suratu's-Saba' (xxxiv) 13.

aina ila Musa amrahu).¹ Anything which comes to pass, or which must necessarily come to pass in the future because of a determinate act of the will of God may be described as a thing which is *decreed*; but even here there is nothing in the use of the word in the Qur'an to lead us to the conclusion that such events are decreed from all eternity. Thus, in the following passage the true meaning of the words is simply that God has determined to bring about the events of which Joseph speaks, and not that these events have had their origin in an eternal decree of the Almighty. O my two fellow prisoners! as to one of you, he will serve wine unto his lord: but as to the other, he will be crucified and the birds shall eat from off his head. The matter is decreed (*qadiya 'l-amru*) concerning which 'ye enquire.'²

If anything more were necessary to prove that the word *qada* does not necessarily refer to an eternal decree, we can find it in the use of the word in reference to divine decisions which still lie in the future. 'Truly thy Lord will decide (*yaqdi*) between them on the day of Resurrection concerning that in which they differed.' It is worth while noting in passing that the word may also express human decision. 'And when Zaid had settled concerning her to divorce her (*qada Zaidun minha wataran*).'⁴

¹ Suratu'l-Qasas (xxviii) 44. See also xv. 66; xvii. 4.

² Suratu Yusuf (xii) 41. See also xix. 21, 72.

³ Suratu Yunas (x) 93. See also xxvii. 80; l. 21; xlv. 16; x. 55; xxxix. 69, 75.

⁴ Suratu'l-Ahzab (xxxiii) 37. See also iv. 68; xx. 75; x. 72.

It is unnecessary here to refer to the expression *qada ala* (to finish with, to kill).'¹

4. The last word which we shall consider is *qadar* (*qadara*). This word has come to represent *fate, destiny*, but in the word itself there is little of this idea. It expresses rather the amount or measure of anything which has been bestowed on an individual; and though it may be difficult to dispossess the word of the idea of inexorable and unchangable fate, there is little of this conception to be seen in the Qur'an.

In many passages the word is employed to express the doing of something in measure, or according to a certain amount or capacity. 'But when he proveth him and limiteth his gifts to him' (*faqadara'alaihi rizqahu*).² Here the meaning is that God sometimes bestows His gifts in a limited measure. 'And no one thing is there, but with Us are its storehouses; and We send it not down but in settled measure' (*biqadarin ma'lumin*).³

Qadar may also be used to denote a certain measure of time, or a fixed term. 'For everything hath God assigned a period (*qad ja'ala Allahu likulli shai'in qadaran*).⁴

God's actions are all in accordance with the due relations which things bear to one another; in other words they are in accordance with *measure*. 'And He made them seven heavens in two days, and in each heaven

¹ See xxviii. 14; xliii. 77; lxix. 27.

² Suratu'l-Fajr (lxxxix) 16.

³ Suratu'l-Hijr (xv) 21. See also lxv. 7; xxiii. 18; xlii. 26; xlii. 10; xiii. 18; lxxvi. 16; lxxiii. 20.

⁴ Suratu't-Talaq (xlv) 3. See also lxxvii. 22.

made known its offices: and We furnished the lower heaven with lights and guardian angels. This, the disposition (*taqdiru*) of the Almighty.

That the word conveys the idea of doing things by measure or plan may be seen from the following passages. 'May he be cursed! How he planned!' (*kaifa qaddara*) Again may he be cursed! How he planned!' (*kaifa qaddara*).²

It then comes to apply to anything which has been fixed or planned. 'Praise be the name of thy Lord the Most High, Who hath created and balanced *all things*. Who hath fixed their destinies (*qaddara*) and guideth them.'³ It is to be noted that it is exactly the same word which is translated in lxxiv. 19, 20 *planned* that is here in lxxxvii. 1-3 translated *fixed their destinies*.⁴ In these verses the translation of Rodwell varies from *decreed* through *ordained* to *fashioned* and *arranged*.

While the Qur'an undoubtedly teaches that all things happen in accordance with the eternal purpose and will of God, a study of the employment in the Qur'an of such words as the preceding does not enable us to deduce satisfactorily a doctrine of the divine decrees. The use of the words is too general, and their meanings are too varied to permit any doctrine of Predestination being based on them; nor do they even show us clearly what Muhammad meant when he spoke of such and

¹ Suratu Fussilat (xli) 11. See also, xx. 42; vi. 29; xxxvi. 38.

² Suratu'l-Mudaththir (lxxiv) 19, 20.

³ Suratu'l-A'la (lxxxvii) 1-3.

⁴ See also lxvi. 60; xxxiv. 17; x. 5; xxxvi. 39; xxvii. 58; xxxiv.10; lxxx. 17-19.

such events as being the outcome of the divine decision or judgement, or decree.

The use of these words in the Qur'an leads us rather to the conclusion we came to formerly when speaking of the relation between the creative and the providential acts of God; namely, that God's will is represented as continuing to act through the course of the ages, and that He takes into consideration, in His various decisions and determinations, all the circumstances of His creatures, and so decides day by day and moment by moment. All is in His power and under the omnipotent rule of His divine Will, but the working out of His purposes is far from being the result of a distantly past and almost impersonal decree. It is rather the effectual working of a Will which enters into the closest contact, and the most sympathetic relation with the world which He has created.

5. Several other passages which are usually quoted as teaching the doctrine of Predestination, we have already considered; but it may be well to look at some of them again. 'No mischance chanceth either on the earth or in your persons, but ere We created them, it was in the Book.'¹ Here we should probably translate, 'before We created it,' and in any case, the Book referred to is what we have elsewhere described as the Day-Book of the divine acts. 'No one can die except by God's permission *according to* the Book that fixeth the term *of life*.'² This is commonly explained as meaning that from all eternity God has predetermined the very day

¹ Suratu'l-Hadid (lvii) 22.

² Suratu Ali 'Imran (iii) 139.

and hour on which each individual shall die; but we have already seen that the writing *by* which the term of the individual's life is fixed, takes place after the creation of the individual, and the reference here cannot therefore be to the book of God's decrees.¹

And every man's fate (lit. *bird*) have We fastened about his neck: and on the day of resurrection will We bring forth to him a book which shall be preferred to him wide open.'² The meaning of the verse is not quite certain, but the translation *fate* is almost certainly not correct. The sense of the passage appears rather to be that the consequences or outcome of a man's actions are so closely bound to and associated with the doer that he cannot escape from them.³

'All things have We created after a fixed decree; Our command was but one word, swift as the twinkling of an eye. Of old too, have We destroyed the like of you yet is any one warned? And everything that they do is in the Books; Each action both small and great, is written down.'⁴ In this passage the object of the words is not to shew that everything which occurs in this world has been absolutely predestined, but to explain *how* God created. He created not by a laborious work, but by a simple decree, a mere command swift as the twinkling of an eye. Verse forty-nine might be freely rendered: 'All that We created was by decrees,'

¹ See vii. 2; xxxiv. 13, as explained on page 26.

² Suratu Bani Isra'il (xvii) 14.

³ See *Al-Kashshaf* in loco.

⁴ Suratu'l-Qamar (liv) 49-53.

as we might say, 'I did everything with patience,' meaning, 'everything I did was done with patience.' It is to be noted that there is no word in the original corresponding to Rodwell's 'fixed'. Further, the Books referred to are the Books kept by the recording angels, which God Himself is spoken of as writing.

'Many, moreover, of the Djinn and men have We created for Hell. Hearts have they with which they understand not, and eyes have they with which they see not, and ears have they with which they hearken not. They are like the brutes: Yea they go more astray: these are the heedless.'¹ The word which in this verse is translated 'created' is not *khalaqa* but *dhara'a* which does not necessarily mean *to create*, but may also mean *to multiply, to sow*. The sense of the verse is rather, 'We have scattered to Hell.' And the last part of the verse seems rather to suggest the thought that this is a judgement on them because they have been heedless of the divine invitation, and not a doom predetermined from all eternity. With this verse we may compare another. 'And by troops shall the unbelievers be driven towards Hell.'²

'Say: nothing can befall us but what God hath destined (*kataba*) for us.'³ Here also the reference is not necessarily to the eternal decrees of God, but is rather to the creative commands of God, in accordance with which all events take place, and which, as we have seen, are often spoken of as *written*.

¹ Suratu'l-A'raf (vii) 178.

² Suratu'z-Zumar (xxxix) 71.

³ Suratu't-Tauba (ix) 51.

'Revile not those whom they call on beside God, lest they, in their ignorance, despitefully revile Him. Thus have We planned out their actions for every people.'¹ The word translated 'planned out' is *zayyanna* and does not mean 'to plan out', but 'to make to appear attractive', and the passage does not refer to the divine decrees, but to the providential dealings of God.²

Many more passages might be quoted, but it is not necessary to do so. From those examined, it will be seen that the true Qur'anic doctrine of Predestination is almost the same as that of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The conclusion, then, to which we come, is that, according to the Qur'an, all actions and events are in accordance with the omnipotent will of God, and work out His divine purpose, and are determined before they come to pass by a command or appointment of God.'³ but that this command or appointment represented as taking place in time, and is nowhere distinctly said to have been an eternal decree. Moreover, some passages show that means or secondary causes are recognized as being used by God in the working out of His purpose.

The development of the orthodox Muhammadan doctrine of Predestination which, if it is not in itself fatalistic, has, in practice, at least, led to fatalism, appears to be a wrong interpretation of Qur'anic teaching.

¹ Suratu'l-An'am (vi) 108.

² See 'The Islam Series', *The Qur'anic Doctrine of Salvation*, pp. 13, 14.

³ See vii. 35; iii. 139; vi. 2; xxxiv. 13; iii. 148; xxii. 3, 4.

The germ or basis of the misinterpretation is probably to be looked for in the idea that, the purpose of God being eternal, all that He purposes and commands and brings to pass was fixed and settled from all eternity by a hard and fast decree; whereas the Qur'an represents the working out of the purpose of God as being not the result of a distant, fixed and impersonal decree, but as the effectual working of a Will which enters into the closest contact and the most sympathetic relation with the world which He has created.

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