

Was it that he desired to defend the reputation of Jesus, the greatest prophet before him, from the stain which he considered was cast upon it by the Jews who boasted that they had slain Him? (Surah 4: 156). It may have been that to Mohammed's mind there was something abhorrent in the idea of a prophet being left to the mercy of his foes, especially in the case of one of the greater prophets. The Koran makes much of how God wrought deliverance for Noah, Abraham, Lot and others, even by a miracle. It may have been that Mohammed, therefore, borrowing an idea of certain Christian sects, believed and taught that Christ was not crucified. The Basilidians, we are told, held that the person crucified was Simon of Cyrene; the Cyrentians and Carpocratians, that it was one of Jesus' followers, while the Persian heretic Mani taught that it was the prince of darkness himself.* Perhaps there was nothing to prevent Mohammed from adopting this view, as he was but imperfectly acquainted with the real doctrines of Christianity. We say, perhaps, because another view is put forward by Koelle in his philosophical study, on the historical position of Mohammedanism.† He writes:

“Mohammed, from his low, earthly standing-point, could neither apprehend the unique excellence of the character of Christ, nor the real nature of his all-sufficient and all-comprehending salvation.

* Cf., Rice, “Crusaders of the Twentieth Century,” p. 252.

† “Mohammed and Mohammedanism,” Book III, pp. 310, 334.