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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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RELIGION AND CLIMATE

The late Professor Ward, in his book "Climate Considered Especially in Relation to Man," quotes the belief expressed by several authorities that an arid climate has a definite relation to religious ideas. Ernest Renan points out that the uniformity of the desert suggests a belief in the unity of God, or, in other words, inculcates the doctrine of monotheism. The desert is, moreover, conducive to a solitary, meditative life; even to a morbid and fanatical state of mind. Such conditions, it is believed, furnished good ground for the growth of such a religion as Mohammedanism.

Ralph Abercromby, in his "Seas and Skies in Many Latitudes," publishes two maps, showing respectively the areas of Mohammedanism and the districts in Asia and Africa with a mean annual rainfall of less than ten inches. The maps are strikingly similar. The author remarks: "Whether this distribution of a great creed is the result of chance or of some deep connection between the tenets of that religion and climatic influences I cannot say; but still the relation is so remarkable that I have thought it well to bring the matter forward."

Ward says: "The rain ceremonies and rain dances among the native tribes of central Australia, the Indian celebrations of the rise of water in the Peruvian rivers, the ancient Aztec sacrifices to the god of rain in Mexico and other similar customs in tropical deserts are natural in a region where water is of supreme importance. In one of the Australian rain ceremonies the men dance around a mimic water-hole, imitating the calls and motions of aquatic animals. These dances are reported as being carefully timed, by experienced individuals, to come at the seasons when rain is likely to fall."

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