

CHAPTER II.

MORAL INFLUENCE OF THE THREE, ON THEIR FOLLOWERS.

MOSES.

THE personal and individual influence of Moses on the Israelites in their wanderings in the wilderness, kept them in subjection as long as they had a visible and human guiding influence; but their stubbornness and refusal to accept the spiritual guidance of which Moses was the accredited representative led them into murmurings and complaints of their hardships on the journey. When the pursuing Egyptians came in sight of them, they became afraid and said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." Later, they complained of the want of water and 15 days after the departure, they murmured again, lamenting the flesh pots of Egypt and bewailing their hunger, still again they complained and Moses ensured them water and food, quails and manna. Whilst Moses was in communion and retreat on Mount Sinai for 40 days, they promised obedience, but, in his absence, they made a Golden Calf (a reminiscence of the

Bull of Apis of Egypt) and worshipped it, and made peace offerings to it. Aaron made the reply to Moses as an excuse for the making "that they are set on mischief."

The Children of Israel murmured against Moses and said, "Let us make a captain and let us return to Egypt" (Numbers, ch. 14 v. 4). The Qur-án says: ——"O my people enter the holy land which Allah has prescribed for you and turn not your backs, for then you will turn back losers." They said, "O Moses surely there is a strong race in it and we will on no account enter into it until they go out from it, so if they go out from it, then surely we will enter" and again, they said, "O Moses we shall never enter it so long as they are in it; go therefore you and your Lord, then fight you both, surely we will here sit down" (ch. 5 v. 21-24). Their pride, stiff-necked nature and materialism kept them bound to physical affairs and the objects of sense. The account of the spoliation of the Egyptians of their gold and silver is a testimony to the love of luxury and comfort which possessed them. The want of faith and sincerity in spite of the covenants which had been established is a feature in the character of the Israelites which shows their insincerity and faithlessness.

JESUS.

The popular Messianic idea held by the Jews was the same as that held in their earlier history. They repudiated the Prophets as in the days of Eli and Samuel, pinned their faith on temporal and material things and wanted kings to rule them. They were soaked through and through with materialism. The time of Jesus was

one of great unrest and expectation, the heel of Rome was heavy and the Jews looked for political emancipation and freedom. The Jewish Apocalypse describes the Messiah as granting life to the nations which had submitted to Israel. Under the leadership of Joshua they had subjugated the surrounding peoples and expected to do the same now. The prevailing idea was a Kingdom of Glory in Palestine, with the capital at Jerusalem, where the Messiah was to rule; the dead were to arise from their graves and share the Messianic privileges. The whole idea was terrestrial. Jesus could not refuse the traditional terms nor could he accept the popular interpretation which believed that he had come to restore the Kingdom of David from whom he was said to have descended. He had recourse to flight when they wanted to make him king, and for this they followed him and hailed him on his entry into Jerusalem. But, later, when they found their hopes of an earthly kingdom not realized, they had not the spiritual conception of a heavenly one and repudiated him. His followers fell away, his disciples abandoned him and his apostle denied him, then came Calvary.

Jesus again and again refers to the want of faith and a low intellectual standard in the Jews. Mark (ch. 7, v. 5-9), "The Pharisees and Scribes asked him, 'Why walk thy disciples not according to the traditions of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?' He answered and said unto them, 'Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the com-

mandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups and many other such like things ye do.' And he said unto them, 'Full well ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition (v. 13) making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition: which ye have delivered, and many such like things do ye.' Mark (ch. 9. v. 19). He answered him and said 'O faithless, generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you.'

MUHAMMAD.

From the very commencement of his mission career he disclaimed the possession of treasures out of which to enrich those who listened to his teaching and admitted that he had no extraordinary knowledge and was not a worker of the marvellous (Qur-án 7. 186) "Say I do not control any benefit or harm for my own soul except as Allah pleases; and had I known the unseen I would have had much of good and no evil would have touched me; I am nothing but a warner and a giver of good news to a people who believe." He did not have nor did he claim to possess that which allures mankind in general, that is, earthly possessions in abundance from which to bestow great gifts on his followers, he lived all his life in a frugal and abstemious manner and he had the ability or gift of drawing all men to him. All those who were brought under the charm of his personal influence, became his true followers—they loved him and did not turn back on him nor desert him. In the Qur-án (ch. 9. 111), he says, "Surely Allah has bought of the believers their persons and their property for this,

that they shall have the garden; they fight in Allah's way, so they slay and are slain, a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'án; and Who is more faithful to His Covenant than Allah? Rejoice therefore in the pledge which you have made; and that is the mighty achievement."

The personal influence exercised by Muhammad on his followers is without parallel in the religious world. This loyalty and devotion impelled them to declare that, unlike the followers of Moses, they would not disobey the commands of God and refuse to accompany him to the Promised Land, but would stand by him in his defence and support, if such were needed, on his left and right side, before him and behind him to the death. These words and the promise were faithfully fulfilled at the Battle of Ohod, where in action, he was hard pressed by the enemy, fell down in a pit and fainted. He had received over 80 wounds, two of his helmet rings had been driven into his cheek, his face was covered with blood and one of his teeth was knocked out by a blow. The enemy was advancing, sending volleys of arrows and he was in great danger. Abu Bakr instantly went to his help and his example was followed by many. He was still in the pit and senseless; the fighting was hand to hand; his followers made a rampart around him of their bodies as a protection; many fell, but their places were instantly filled by others; women as well as men took part in the protection accorded to him on the field of Ohod. This unparalleled act of devotion, unique in religious history, is eloquent proof of the influence he exercised by the force of his character on his followers.