

CHAPTER IV.  
THE WORLD AFTER.

MOSES.

AFTER the death and burial of Moses on Mount Pisgah, the command of the Israelites devolved on Joshua, who had shown himself to be an able captain and a good leader. The conquest of Palestine proceeded apace. Wars, sieges and battles were of frequent occurrence down to the time of Saul, who fell in battle or its equivalent. Saul was elected king, at the request of the Israelites for one, and was succeeded by David who waged successful war with the Philistines. He seems to have finally established them in a settled kingdom or state. Then came the era of Solomon, which is said to have been one of great splendour. The erection of the Temple on Mount Moriah with friendly help from Hiram of Tyre, was an achievement. There was also, intercourse with Egypt, Solomon having married a daughter of the Pharaohs. Moses, in his priestly ordinations in Leviticus, established a code which must justly be said to have gone far to establish the peculiar personality of the Jews as distinct from the surrounding nations. They have always been a race apart from others, the real reason does not come within the scope of this paper. The regulations have kept them a healthy race, immune from certain physical troubles. They were familiar with the laws of hygiene and sanitation; there had been

developed for thousands of years in Egypt, an elaborate political, religious and social system which Moses had the benefit of, hence under favourable conditions, a settled government, and a wise ruler, such as Solomon, they prospered, flourished and became a power in the land. Later, they came, through unwise rulers, in conflict with the Assyrians, who over-ran the country, carrying the Ten Tribes into captivity at Babylon. After many years they returned to Palestine, chastened and greatly altered; from that time, their entire history is modified by a Chaldean influence which profoundly affected them.

All their progress must be attributed to Moses alone, and his wise counsels. He was the only great man as a law-giver that they had. Joshua was a war-captain, not a law-giver. Eli, Samuel, Jeremiah etc. were simply prophets and seers.

### JESUS.

Till the events which led up to Calvary the adherents of Jesus were numerically weak, but the coming down alive from the Cross, popularly known as the Resurrection, had filled them with faith and renewed hope. Jesus had foretold that he would rise again in three days. He was alive, although in a swoon; his followers, with their faith strengthened and renewed, found new life and began to preach the Gospel of the Lord. Paul (a converted Jew) joined them, but he had different ideas, having become a convert after the Crucifixion. His different views made him an object of suspicion and dislike; he was virtually expelled from the community and began to preach to the Gentiles. He taught certain

things not allowable by the Jewish law. This led to schism and the formation of sects within the rising Christian Church, which was essentially a Reformed Judaism which held that Jesus was a prophet and taught according to the Jewish faith and law. The Pauline section, however, identified him with the Logos of the Alexandrian philosophy. From this followed division after division, sect after sect. After the deaths of Peter and Paul, came further divisions until the sects were exceedingly numerous. Arians, Monophysites, Nestorians, Carpocratians, Basilideans, Gnostics, Marionites, Sabelians, Valentinians were the chief among an almost endless number. This was about the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries.

With the destruction of the Churches at the sacred places in Palestine by the Persian armies under Chosroes (Khusrau), came a blow that the Church did not recover from. Faith went with the desecrated and destroyed shrines. Then followed a deplorable time; wars, persecutions, massacres, crusades, the moral and social corruption of Europe and the dark ages, when there was hardly a glimmer of intellectual life in Europe. The real teaching of Jesus had been obscured by sacerdotalism and priest-craft which entirely masked the real spirit of his doctrines. In the mediæval ages, Mr. Lecky says: — "The history of the Catholic ascendancy was the most deplorable in the history of the human mind." Draper and other writers confirm this statement. Priests monopolized everything and perverted everything; those whose minds were above the lowest level of ignorance and superstition fled to the solitudes and monasteries. The gifts of the mental and natural qualities and faculties were not given to man to be sterilized in monastic or

ascetic lives. The only class that had leisure or capacity for study, the monks, were forbidden to learn. This is contrary to the laws of nature; hence we find that a race mentally and physically alive and active—the Arabs—easily surpassed the Western nations in every department of activity, whether physical, mental or spiritual. One retrograded its peoples, the other advanced them. The intellectuals of Europe, such as there were, studied under Muslim professors in the colleges in Spain and it was there that Columbus studied geography. Religion and science went hand in hand and helped each other, they were not, as in Christian Europe, antagonistic and contradictory.

Modern civilization is not by any means entirely due to Christianity, for certain sects did their level best—or worst—to suppress or overthrow education, science or advancement of all kinds.

Our present civilization is very largely due to the benefits and results of Islamic culture in Spain, Sicily and the Near East, which permeated European life after the Reformation and during the Renaissance.

The Church had always been the bitter enemy of progress and enlightenment. All measures destined to benefit the community in general, such as better conditions of labour, education and temperance were opposed steadily and consistently by the Church, both established and non-conformist. The bishops in their attitude in the House of Lords by their voting on these measures showed themselves hostile to improvement. The Wesleyans, at the beginning of the temperance movement forbade the use of their chapels or meeting-places for lectures and meetings.

Slavery is a principle which expresses the real feeling of man for man, in both aspects, the civil and the religious. Christianity had approved it and practiced it. The monastic communities held slaves and rarely freed them, they being corporate property, their condition was bad, they were not fed or clothed like their owners, as Islam insists, but were serfs and chattels purely. Later in time, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands, who traded in Guinea, owned slaves on their plantations in Barbadoes and did not even give them religious instruction. The Baptists and Methodists in U.S.A, owned large numbers, 225,000 and 250,000 respectively. In the Southern States, girls were sold at auction, special qualifications being that they were Christians. In London, in 1760, there were 80,000 black slaves, who were regularly advertised and bequeathed in wills. Mr. Brace says, "The African slave trade was the most dreadful curse that has perhaps ever afflicted humanity" and admits that "the guilt of this great crime rests on the Christian Church as an organized body."

Islam abolished the various ways of manumission. No one could purchase the life of another person. One kind of what one may call slavery was allowed; that is, men taken by your right hands, or, in other words, those who were war-prisoners. They were treated as slaves but the Prophet raised their status. They were given the best treatment in the family of the master, equal treatment, lodgment, food and clothing. They had to pay the ransom for their liberation, they were allowed some leisure hours every day to earn something to pay their ransom. They were also allowed to choose their own master or induce someone to pay their ransom.

Sometimes the owner himself handed him over to some one for what he thought to be his ransom value. This led to the sale of war-prisoners which was afterwards abused. In one word, Islam put an end to all kinds of slavery, and introduced a new institution for prisoners of war and framed laws more generous and favourable to them than ever were met with under the international law of the present day. Muhammad had not treasures at his disposal for the emancipation of the slaves, but he appealed to the charitable nature of man and made the emancipation of slaves a great virtue and an act of very high merit in the eye of God, so much so, that he saw the expiation of many sins in the liberation of slaves from bondage. Thus, he worked out the salvation of slaves.

#### MUHAMMAD.

One thing can be observed in regard to him. The more that his time is approximated to, the greater, broadly speaking, is the progress, in Islamic countries. It may be illustrated, as, the nearer one gets to a light, the more intense it is. In the Christian Church this is not the case, because their not following the teachings of Jesus, they had no light to give. Hence the schisms, wars, general corruption and rottenness which existed in every department of Christian activity, from the Popes down to the priests and the laity, for details of which, the student is referred to "History of Sacerdotal Celibacy" (Lea) and the "Popes and their Church" (MacCabe). But when the grip of the Church had loosened on the human intellect, at the Reformation, came intellectual freedom and emancipation, nourished and developed by

Islamic thought and influence. To particularize, we will briefly enumerate the state of, and progress in, Islamic countries while Christians were busily occupied in cutting each others throats etc.

Islam is a religion of Humanity, Toleration and Progress. The first step in the evolution of mankind is the freedom of the reason, the liberty of thought; without this, no advance can be made. Christian Europe was under the rule of the Papacy, by which all independent thinking was sternly prohibited and repressed. The first step of development must be from below, that is to say, from the individual, rather than the community. Hence rightness of action is imperative. Dealing first with woman; her position in the Church was not enviable. She had been charitably described by the Christian Fathers as "the gate of hell", and what is delightfully naive "a wicked work of nature, covered with a shining varnish" and "a desirable temptation." In pre-Islamic Arabia as well as in Europe, she had no status, no rights or privileges. Under Islam, she had equal rights with man, having her own property under Muslim law, whereas in England only quite recently has she had legal individual rights under the Married Women's Property Act. Slavery was practically universal and the position of the slaves was bad. They could not intermarry and had no shadow of any personal rights. In Europe it prevailed until the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in America until the Civil War in 1860. In Islam, there was virtual equality between the owner and his so-called slave. Slavery was, as shown before, mainly a name. Slaves under Islam are better placed than many free citizens in Europe. No Muslim

can actually be a slave. Now we emerge from the individual to the general and deal with things affecting the communities.

Law and order protect the new-born individual ideas and rights. In Islam, civil law was evolved and enforced, a law of procedure in war humanized it. Regulations in matters of hygiene were introduced, also in morality; asceticism, which is probably one of the greatest evils introduced by the Church, was prohibited. Briefly, a complete revolutionary spirit was introduced which went far on the road to real progress. A brotherhood was established, not like the dreamy utopia conceived of in the mind of the Church, but a real and a co-operative one. There were no privileged classes, spiritual or temporal to lord it over the community. The most remarkable proof and comparison showing the benefits of Islam, will be found in Spain. This country had been under Roman rule. A small minority of the nobles possessed nearly all its wealth; the agriculturist and serf were in a deplorable state; their only way of escape from tyranny was to take refuge in the forests and wilds and start brigandage—hence chaos. The Visigoths came and conquered—more chaos; to the accompaniment of pillage, battle and flame, the Visigoths fell under the power of the clergy, the result being utter and undiluted confusion. The Church perpetuated the evils of serfdom, alleging that it was ordained by nature. Complaints as to the condition of the country approximating to the domain ruled by the devil, drew forth the answer that it was because the Jews were not punished for the death of Jesus; this was followed by an outbreak of Jew-baiting. The Jews and many Christians escaped to

Morocco, then under Islam. Muslim armies were invited to invade Spain, which they conquered and succeeded in completely altering the condition of the people and the state of the country.

They set about a re-generation; firstly, formulating just laws which bettered the condition of the masses and then devoted their attention to scientific instruction in schools and universities. Agriculture, viticulture, sericulture and architecture were introduced, studied and developed, one happy result being the transformation of the fertile valleys of Andalusia into a garden. Attention was then paid to hygiene and sanitation, aqueducts and baths were constructed. Medicine and surgery were studied and practiced, whilst in many towns and cities, suitable hospitals were erected. Natural sciences, such as astronomy and geography together with navigation were taught. Abstract sciences and arts, mathematics, algebra, geometry, chemistry (which owes so many of its most important processes to the Arabs) were elaborated, botany, poetry, music, rhetoric, political economy, the fine arts, paper making and science and art in all their branches were taught at the Muslim universities of Cordova, Seville and Malaga and other cities. Libraries were established; there were 70 public ones in Spain, one royal library containing 600,000 volumes. All this culture, all this civilization was destroyed by the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, and the country is now an intellectual byword.

Spain was not the only country that had been blessed by the benefits of Muslim rule, Egypt, Persia, Turkestan, Afghanistan and India all benefited by them.

As an illustration of the general scope of Muslim

learning, apart from Moorish Spain, we quote the article: —“A study in contrasts” printed in the Islamic Review of June 1917, which briefly epitomizes the above in an illuminating and instructive manner.

The Muslims have carried their culture and thought far and wide even in the present time, when African races owe so much to Islamic teaching and religion, lifting them up, as it does, from ignorance, superstition and barbarism into a sober, progressive, enterprising and independent people.

Muhammad's work was a series of revolutions, religious, civil and social, by which were sown the seeds of a new civilization.

In this connection I could not do better than to reproduce in these pages, a very beautiful and able article which appeared in the pages of the Islamic Review in the year 1918-1919.