

## CHAPTER I.

## THE PEACE OF ISLAM.

IF we fail to recognize that God can suspend or alter any of the Laws He has established we cannot believe in His omnipotence, and we must at once place all the miraculous happenings we have read of in the Bible under the heading of Fairy Tales. Walking on the water, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, feeding a multitude with a few loaves and fishes, and many other equally supernatural events, firmly believed in by all good Christians, could not have taken place but for a suspension of the ordinary laws of Nature. When the children of Israel passed dry-shod on the sea bed, when Moses performed other miracles, when Christ followed with His miracles, and when Mahomet was miraculously carried to Heaven, and when other wonders were performed, the Hand of God was there in each and every case directing and guiding. If He wished, He could stay the movements of the earth and all the planets round the sun, and that without any of the disasters learned men assure us would ensue on the slightest checking of the annual or diurnal movements.

Of the universal law of gravitation it has been truly said :—

“ That very law which moulds a tear and bids it trickle from its source—

“ That law maintains the Earth a sphere, and guides the planets in their course.”

But as God made all the solar system and established the law, so He can arrange matter and the laws governing that matter in such a way that no disastrous results follow on any new arrangements He may select.

There is a story told of a very devout old lady—a most earnest and zealous Christian—whose feelings had been very much harrowed by a clergyman's description of the sufferings of Christ and His followers—exclaiming, "Ah, well, it's a long time ago; let us hope it is not true." This is just the point. For many hundreds of years there have been no miracles, and men's minds have become used to ordinary every-day happenings, but if suddenly a Divine Message were revealed they would be so much surprised and upset that they would refuse to give any credit to the manifestations, and would probably try to make away with the medium as an uncanny and dangerous person.

In this fast moving age religion is looked upon as rather a bore, and men are either atheists or blind followers of dogmatic lines of thought which their reason rebels against, but which they outwardly profess because they think it looks well and they find it pays. One of the best men I ever knew—an excellent husband and father—assured me he was an atheist, and that he looked forward to nothing but annihilation. Yet he was perfectly happy, and nothing I could advance had the slightest effect in making him change his terrible belief. Another man I heard of took religion in quite a cheerful spirit. He was very rich, and a friend once remonstrated with him on his rather free mode of life, and asked him if he ever thought of the future state, and what would become of his soul in the next world. He replied, "Not I. Why should I worry about such things? I pay my doctor so much a year

to attend to my physical health, and the priest gets about £600 a year for looking after my spiritual wants. Why should I bother my head?" This man, too, was quite happy in his own way, and had reconciled himself to the payment of a certain annual sum, for which he was relieved of all "bother."

So much has been written, thought, and spoken for ages past on the all-absorbing and all-important subject of religion, that it may well be that there is nothing fresh to be advanced from any human quarter. That there is good in *all* religions must be admitted, as also that some forms are better than others.

If it were only possible to get a sound "non-professional" opinion in the selection of our religion it would be a grand step in the right direction. If we go to the priests or monks, or others, who make it their business to supply a particular kind of article of which they approve, we cannot get much assistance because the various tenets or dogmas are so diametrically opposed to one another.

Take the Christian Church alone—we shall have such bewilderingly different directions to Heaven from the Church of England, the Church of Rome, and the Nonconformists, that we shall gain nothing at all. What we want is the assistance of some *outside* and *unbiased* onlooker who has had opportunities for contemplation, and who has nothing whatever to gain by an openly expressed and honest opinion.

What we really want is a religion which will recognise and support the laws of the country. In these days the law is constantly brought into ridicule: there is abroad an unhealthy and maudlin sympathy with nearly every form of wrong-doing

and crime. A just sentence has but to be pronounced and it will call forth shrieks from the sentimentalists for remission or reprieve. Let there be full justice in religion; as it is, the backbone of the country is being softened by this soppy sentimentalism, which is not by any means humane or likely to improve the character of the nation. "Mercy but murders, pardoning those that kill," applies to all this sympathy with wrong-doing, and though we may feel the deepest sorrow for the criminal whose bringing up and miserable environment have led up to the trouble, we must punish in order to deter others and prevent repetitions. It is often the most cruel action to "turn the other cheek"—cruel because it encourages the evil-doer in his course of crime, and other members of society suffer through our misplaced kindness. Unless I am much mistaken the milk-and-water justice we often see dispensed in the present day in this country is responsible for half the evils we so bitterly complain of. It would be far better to go back to the old "Lex talionis" than go on as we are now doing.

We cannot quite look upon Christ as a Law-giver. He presented to the world gentle and beautiful precepts, but the Devil, as he walks abroad to-day, will not be put down by soft answers and turnings of the other cheek: nothing short of the strongest measures should be used with all emissaries of the evil one. Moses was a law-giver, and Mahomet was a law-giver, and we now need something of the firmness and absolute justice of the Holy Prophet—stern but altogether *free from the savagery of Old Testament vengeance*. Successions of party Governments, playing for power rather than to the good of the nation, have brought us to such a pass that we cannot even look after and keep in order our

own women folk! A truly shocking state of affairs for descendants of the Vikings and citizens of the grandest Empire the world has ever seen.

The laws we have are good enough if they were only enforced. Truckling to vice only leads to further vice. We don't want any return to the methods of torture or of any form of cruelty, nor would we shed one drop of blood to enforce our views on religion or politics, but we should like to see the laws obeyed and justice meted out to all. I firmly believe that if the teachings of Mahomet through the Koran were carefully followed there would be far less difficulty in governing the country, and it would not be very strange either, since more than half His Majesty's subjects in his vast Empire are Mahomedans. The age has altogether passed when it will be sought to establish any religion by force of arms and, even if they had the power to do so, I am certain that the Muslims—who are all loyally inclined—would never attempt to establish Islam by any violent methods. *Sedition and rebellion are absolutely forbidden by the Koran.* "Let there be no violence in religion" is one of the maxims of the Muslim faith.

To secure attention and fair hearing is all the Mahomedans want; and I feel certain that, if the people of England fully grasped what Islam really means—common sense, and the natural desire we all possess to have appeals made to our reasoning side, as well as to our feelings—would help to put away the shameful misunderstandings which at present exist. Europeans very commonly look upon Mahomedanism as barbarism—when they learn all that Mahomet did to mitigate the savagery and barbarism he met with in Arabia they will alter those opinions. It is the Christian missionaries who have spared no pains to misinterpret the Muslim

faith : this is greatly to their discredit, though according to their lights they may mean well, and it has often occurred to me that if they would talk a little less about salvation and a little more about the importance of veracity, they would meet with more favour and be more respected. What a contrast is there between this wilful *suppressio veri* and the manner in which the Muslim missionary approaches his work !

The Governments of this country have often been sadly harassed by having to accede to the demands of religious bodies. The Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Nonconformists, and many others, all have to be considered, for they all have power, and all want more.

There is, as far as one can see, no class in the Mahomedan religion or Church which bids for the temporal power. The grandeur of Islam is uninfluenced by any such sordid considerations. Every true follower of the Holy Prophet looks to a reward which is as far above mere mundane advantages and riches as the light of the sun is above that of the *ignis fatuus*. There are no popes, no bishops, and no ministers requiring large endowments and emoluments, for God Himself is the Head of this Church of the Spirit. History tells us of Christian Churches making heavy bids for the temporal power, and we can point to the sale of indulgences and the not always impartial distribution of fat livings to show how terribly matters which should only be connected with the highest aspirations of the soul have been mixed up with sordid considerations of purely worldly profit. It is not going too far to say that the vast majority of so-called Christians regard "religion" as a good, respectable, Sunday institution, which offers exceptional opportunities for showing off their best clothes and talking about their

neighbours. This curious religion is also going to take them to some heaven—the position in that heaven depending in many cases on the amount paid, just as certain coins admit to the boxes and stalls, and others to the pit and gallery of a theatre.

Much of the religion of the West is the outcome of the superstitions of mediæval times—a relic, indeed, of the Dark Ages, and not much in sympathy with the teachings of Moses or Christ. In those cloudy and troublesome times—say between the third and fifth centuries and later—when Europe was the vast arena over which hordes of wild and warlike races vied with each other and spread terror and desolation on all sides, the great rulers of States, like the warlike barons or lords in England, were often men more conspicuous for their prowess with sword or battle-axe, wielded in defence of their estates, their hearths and homes, than they were for any book learning and culture. In order to keep things going at home they had to employ clerks or clerics, who were able, by means of their superior learning, to maintain a sort of stewardship over the establishments, to keep records of current events, &c., &c. These clerics in time became necessary adjuncts to large establishments, and exercised great power, and had great influence. Opportunities then often occurred for increasing this influence by using the mysteries of the unknown as a fulcrum against which to place those astonishingly long levers—dread of hell and terrors of future punishment. Skilful handling of these terrors produced in the minds of the credulous a feeling not far removed from panic, which was, however, soothed and smoothed down by the assurance that, on embracing a certain form of religion and swallowing some craftily evolved dogmas, salvation might be gained. But it was somehow contrived that absolute security as regards

a safe and high place in the next world could not be obtained unless by very handsome gifts to "the Church," and these gifts took the form of large grants of land, palaces, cathedrals, and rich endowments. Here we saw the birth of sacerdotalism, and the determined bids for temporal authority have been very noticeable ever since, and right up to the present date. The advent of Mahomet, some six hundred years after Christ, exposed the unreality of all such ideas as atonements, priestly interventions, supplications to the saints, and those other cumbersome and involved methods of approaching the Almighty. However grand the Mosaic laws, however beautiful the gentle and forgiving precepts of the Holy Prophet of Nazareth, it must be admitted that the Mahomedan teaching contained the most sublime message, over-riding by its very simplicity all obstacles in the way of the believer on his path to God.

In Chapter IX. of the Koran lines occur which leave no doubt as to their meaning and applicability to all who are under sacerdotal domination and insist on taking human beings for their guides.

"They take their priests and their monks for their lords, besides God, and Christ the son of Mary,\* although they are commanded to worship one God only : there is no God but He ; far be that from Him which they associate with Him." . . . . "O true believers, verily many of the priests and monks devour the substance of men in vanity, and obstruct the way of God." [The italic is the writer's.]

The religion of Christ is not quite the religion of St. Paul, who seems to have added to it and altered

---

\* Jesus said to the young man who asked what he could do to inherit eternal life : "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God."

it very considerably, and various authorities have interpreted these later teachings and varied them from time to time. There is, in fact, not much uniformity in so-called Christianity, but we find in Islam that which should satisfy the longings of the created to be at one with and return to the Creator—the ever present and omnipotent protector of all creatures. According to Islam there is only one God we may worship and follow. He is before all, above all, and no other, however holy and pure, may be named in the same breath. Indeed, “it is surprising that human beings with brains and intelligence should have been so foolish as to allow dogmas and the tricks of sacerdotalism to obscure their view of Heaven and their Almighty Father, Who is always approachable by each one of His creatures, whether human or saintly (*i.e.*, Divinely inspired). The key to heaven is always there, and can be turned by the humblest or most miserable human being without any help from prophet, priest, or king. It is like the blessed air we breathe, free to all God’s creatures, and those who try to make mankind think otherwise are probably guided by interested motives, *e.g.*, salaries and stipends, which keep professions going, or some other worldly advantages.”†

My chief object is not so much to attack any particular branch of the Christian religion as to point out the beauty and simplicity of the Muslim faith, which, in the writer’s humble opinion, is free from the objections so apparent in many other religions. Granting, for the sake of argument, that Islam is free from sacerdotalism with its attendant dogmas and greed for power, we must concede that the

---

† “Thoughts for the Future.” By A. W. (Walter Scott Publishing Co., Ltd., Felling-on-Tyne, Durham.)

government of a nation or empire would go on more smoothly if such a peaceful religion were universally adopted. It seems impossible even to imagine the government of, say, the British Empire under such conditions, though 'tis "a consummation devoutly to be wished."

It is indeed, a much to be deplored fact that "religion" has been responsible for more bitterness, cruelty, and shedding of blood than any other cause we know of. Is it possible, then, that a religion can be found which can ever bring all mankind to be unanimous in the simple worship of the One God who is above all and before all? Imagine for a moment if everyone in the British Empire became a true Mahomedan in heart and spirit—an Utopian idea, indeed! Government would be much easier, because men would be actuated by true religion and there would be no Church parties to consider, no dissenters to conciliate, and no heavy bills to pay the tolls on the path to heaven. There is some simplicity in religion as taught by Moses, Christ, and Mahomet, but the confusion which has been brought about by others who have tried to improve on God's Holy Revelations is inextricable and hopelessly bewildering to the single minded and earnest inquirer for truth.

One form of religion incited the Crusades, in which our ancestors sacrificed tens of thousands of human lives—for what? An unseemly quarrel over a sepulchre in which it is believed Christ laid for a short time. Was it worth while? Another form of religion taught us to burn alive and otherwise torture those who did not agree with us on quite minor points of religion. Was it worth while? Another very common form is that of those whose intolerance is so great that they consign all their fellow-creatures to everlasting perdition if they will not swallow certain

dogmatic ideas. Is it worth while? Is it desirable to show a want of charity which must be hateful to the God of Mercy, and which either Christ or Mahomet would condemn in no measured terms? General Gordon said: "I do not see the sect of Pharisees among the Mussulmans. Whatever they may think they never assume, as our Pharisees do, that A and B are doomed to be burned; and you never see the unamiable features which are shown by our Pharisees." Gordon had lived long amongst the Mahomedans in the East and the beauties of Islamic teachings had not escaped his notice, and there seems to be no doubt that in writing the above he truly felt that there was more real Christian charity in Islam than there was at home. In much the same spirit, he wrote: "No comfort is equal to that which he has who has God for his stay, who believes not in words but in facts, that all things are ordained to happen and must happen. He who has this belief has already died, and is free from the annoyance of this life."

In reply to the above it will probably be advanced that Eastern ideas do not blend with Western ideas, and there can be no "fusion," so to speak, and that to attempt to govern the nations of the West whilst an Eastern religion was recognised and influenced men's minds and actions would be quite incongruous and out of the question. Well, in reply, the writer wishes to point out that for nearly two thousand years every country in Europe has been governed under the religions of the East—*i.e.*, Jewish and Christian.

The spirit of Islam soars far above petty jealousies and the racial distractions of East and West, and if Eastern Christianity led by the great Prophet of Nazareth has gone so far towards enlightening mankind, there seems to be no valid reason why the

more extended and simpler Islamic faith expounded by the great Prophet of Arabia should not continue the good work. There is a great similarity between the characters of the leaders as anyone will find out on inquiring into Mahomet's life. Also a study of the Koran will reveal the fact that there is nothing antagonistic to previous revelations—Mahomet's instructions, as laid down in the book, completely back up the Bible teachings, extending them to suit the requirements of the time. On the principle that it is unfair to condemn a man unheard, so it is unfair to do what 99 out of every 100 Christians do—*i.e.*, condemn the Mahomedan faith without even finding out the meaning of the word Islam. The *laissez faire* principle is often applied by those who do not want to be enlightened; being enlightened means being worried, and they would rather remain in darkness than stretch out a hand to open the door letting in light. "What I've got is good enough for me, I don't want to look at anything else," they say in effect, thus refusing to make an effort to advance even in the knowledge of God and His messages to mankind.

For years past one of my chief thoughts has been how can the Muslim faith be "Westernised" so as to bring it into practical touch with the nations of Europe? Or, in other words, How can we Westerns apply ourselves so as to gain a better comprehension of what Islam really means? Then followed a second thought: How is it that we do not complain about the nationality of Christ, Who we must believe was a swarthy Asiatic? His mother, the Virgin Mary, was an Asiatic, and Moses and nearly all the inspired Prophets were Easterns. The Holy Prophet Mahomet was, like the others, an Eastern, and was given his instructions from on high: the Holy Koran contains the Word of God like the Bible and other

inspired works, and confirms the Bible and previous revelations. The Koran gives additional teachings, emphasising the importance of those teachings, and *above all* insists on the abandonment of all that savours of idolatry; the SPIRIT of the revelation being that no other name should be even mentioned along with the holy name of Allah our All-Mighty Father—the All-Seeing, the All-Merciful.

“ Then Mahomet, Thy chosen son,\*  
 Inspired by fire Divine,  
 Laid down the law, the greatest one,  
 Which must for ever shine.

That Thou alone most merciful,  
 Our Father dear dost reign,  
 And that we must all time throughout  
 From other gods refrain.

No other must approach to Thee,  
 However great and pure,  
 No savour of idolatry  
 Can Thy dear heart endure.

Thy ways are not our ways, O God,  
 Tho' near Thy mercy seat  
 Are many souls of purity  
 Thy loving eye to greet.”

The spirit of praise is the essence of the Muslim creed—the main supplication is for Divine direction and guidance. Though my gratitude for God's favours and loving care has been profound from my

---

\* The word son is not here used as the Christians use it when alluding to Christ. Mahomet claimed *Divine inspiration*, but never claimed *Divinity*. He was a man and, as such, a son of God—God's creation.

earliest youth, I cannot help observing that within the past few years, since the pure and convincing faith of the Muslims has become a reality in my heart and mind, I have found happiness and security never approached before. Freedom from the weird dogmas of the various branches of Christian Churches came to me like a breath of pure sea air, and on realizing the simplicity, as well as the illuminating splendour, of Islam, I was as a man emerging from a cloudy tunnel into the light of day.

“ For Moses, Christ, and Mahomet  
 Did each Thy love proclaim,  
 And we must not their words forget,  
 Or judge them not the same :

For though their words have twisted been  
 By those who Thee profess,  
 Their revelations can be seen  
 In simple blessedness.

Of human birth they all proclaim,  
 In happy language clear,  
 Thy one eternal glorious name,  
 Which is to us so dear.

Contention should not rise between  
 The followers of these,  
 The greatest prophets ever seen  
 Who lived but Thee to please.

They gave in all humility  
 Thy messages of love,  
 That all mankind might clearly see,  
 Nor from Thy precepts rove.”

The above quoted simple lines were written many years ago by one who was always at heart a follower

of Mahomet, though at the time of writing he was almost entirely ignorant of the main features of Islam.

Having definitely decided that no comfort could possibly be obtained from dogmatic teaching, the thought came to me that God certainly watches and controls every desire and every action. He has always done so, no doubt, but the teaching gleaned from the pages of the Koran have enabled me to grasp that wonderfully comforting thought in a way previously impossible. If every move in life is directed by the Almighty there may be true comfort for those who are not only sore let and hindered in running the race of life, but are heavily weighed down by sorrow for their many foolish and evil actions. All such may have hope that God will—in His infinite wisdom and goodness—use them as an example for others, showing them what to avoid. It is a rather terrible thought, but the true believer will face any trial, any disgrace, or any degradation in God's service. His ways are not our ways. The spirit of Islam points to salvation for the unfortunate, the unhappy, and the wicked when there appears repentance, and obedience, and resignation, and desire to assist our fellow-creatures to the greatest possible extent. Even through the greatest suffering we should feel happy in having been allowed to be the instruments to carry out Divine instructions.

Bigotry and fanaticism have wrought havoc in the contending Christian Churches, but this cannot be said of Mahomedanism, which is an united church, save only for some minor disputes as to the descendants of Mahomet. How much better, then, would it be if we in the West made up our minds to abandon the complicated forms of religion at present obtaining, and to adopt Islam?

Some years ago the rulers of a very enlightened nation in the Far East had serious doubts as to whether their form of religion was the right one or not, so they appointed certain wise men to examine all the leading religions of the world and report thereon. The wise men deliberated and came to the conclusion that their own religion was as good as any of the others, and they therefore declined to advise any changes. Following up this idea I firmly believe that if all the best intellects of Europe could be brought into play in a search for a religion which should be based on worldly reason or common sense, no less than on the inspired writings of Divinely inspired prophets, the unanimous selection would be in favour of Islam, the simplicity and grandeur of which is quite without question. Is it not a blessing to be very grateful for to have the chance of embracing a religion which appeals to the reason as well as to the heart and inward longings of mankind, and is at the same time free from sacerdotalism and other complications?

There are those at present living on this earth, both in the East and in the West, to whom revelations establishing the truth of Islamic teaching have been made in the clearest manner, and it is possible that the time may not be far distant when God will allow these revelations to be made clear to all His children on earth; but this is a matter for Divine guidance, for no man knows the appointed time of God.

In an age of scepticism like the present, if one of the divinely inspired Prophets were to now re-appear in the person of any ordinary individual and repeat the statements or utter truths at all similar to those he uttered when on earth hundreds of years ago, he would be immediately regarded as insane, and be either imprisoned or placed in an asylum.

The many "Churches" of Christianity are so much at variance one with the other, and their "Divines" have made such an inextricable tangle of Christian teaching, and the dogmas are so hopelessly bewildering, that the clear reasoning mind and open ingenuous heart of man both crave for a religion which is tangible and convincing, as well as simple.

"The dogmas of the Christian Church—I care not whether Roman Catholic or Protestant—have repelled me ever since earliest childhood, and I do not know whether my boyish distrust of the Creed as laid down by St. Athanasius was less strong than is my contempt to-day for the man who lays down the law from a pulpit and consigns millions of his fellow-men to everlasting perdition because they do not agree with him. It has always seemed to me very remarkable that educated gentlemen should be found who, in order to get into the Church, will cheerfully subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles and that horrible Creed, well knowing in their hearts that they do not and cannot believe one half they put their names to. After forty years of thought and prayerful effort to arrive at a correct view, the dominant idea in my mind is that the whole fabric of so-called religion is of man and not of God. I must also confess that visits to the East have filled me with a very deep respect for the simple faith of the Mahomedans, who really do worship God all the time, and not only on Sunday, like so many Christians."

The above extract from a little book entitled "Thoughts for the Future"\* probably finds an echo

---

\* "Thoughts for the Future." By "A. W." (Walter Scott Publishing Co., Felling-on-Tyne, Durham, 1913.)

in the more inward feelings of many who consider the question of religion and the future state.

Islam is the religion of grand simplicity; it satisfies the noblest longings of the soul, and in no way contravenes the teachings of Moses or Christ.

