

JOSEPH HARVEY WARD

THE HAND OF
PROVIDENCE

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J. H. Ward

The Hand of Providence. As Shown in the History of Nations and Individuals, From the Great Apostasy to the Restoration of the Gospel

CHAPTER I

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND APOSTASY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

INJUSTICE OF ROMAN GOVERNORS—NERO EMPEROR—
VESPASIAN AND TITUS SENT TO JUDEA—FORTIFICATIONS OF
JERUSALEM—TITUS OFFERS TERMS OF PEACE—HORRORS OF THE
SIEGE—WOMEN DEVOUR THEIR OWN CHILDREN—TEMPLE BURNED
—CITY DESTROYED—DISPERSION OF THE JEWS—UNIVERSAL
APOSTASY—PRIESTHOOD NO MORE—IDEAS OF GOD PERVERTED
—WORSHIP CORRUPTED WITH HEATHEN RITES—PERSECUTION
OF CHRISTIANS—EMPEROR CONSTANTINE—RISE OF MONASTIC
ORDER.

According to the best records that have come down to us, the last book of the New Testament (commonly called the Apocalypse of St. John) was written about sixty years after the ascension of our Savior.

At that time the gospel of Jesus Christ had been preached in all the principal cities and countries of the known world. Numerous branches of the primitive church had been planted in Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece and Italy.

In the meantime the awful doom which the Savior predicted against Jerusalem had been literally fulfilled. Shortly after the crucifixion and ascension of the Savior, Judea became the theatre of many cruelties and oppressions arising from contentions between the Jewish priests, the depredations of numerous bands of robbers, which infested the country; but more than all from the injustice and avarice of the Roman governors.

The last of these governors was Gessius Floras, whom Josephus represents as a monster in wickedness and cruelty, and whom the Jews regarded rather as a bloody executioner, sent to torture, than as a magistrate to govern them.

During the government of Felix, his predecessor, a dispute having arisen between the Jews and Syrians about the city of Caesarea, their respective claims were referred to the emperor, Nero, at Rome. The decision was in favor of the Syrians, and the Jews immediately took up arms to avenge their cause.

In this state of things, Nero gave orders to Vespasian to march into Judea with a powerful army. Accordingly, Vespasian, accompanied by his son Titus, marched into Palestine at the head of 60,000 well-disciplined troops. While Vespasian was thus preparing more effectually to curb the still unbroken spirit of the Jews, intelligence arrived of the death of the emperor and his own election to the throne. Departing therefore for Rome he left the best of his troops with his son, ordering him to besiege and utterly destroy Jerusalem.

Titus lost no time in carrying into effect his father's injunction. Jerusalem was strongly fortified both by nature and art. Three walls surrounded it which were considered impregnable; besides which it had numerous towers outside of the walls, lofty, firm and strong. The circumference was nearly four miles.

Desirous of saving the city, Titus repeatedly sent offers of peace to the inhabitants; but they were indignantly rejected. At length finding all efforts at treaty ineffectual, he entered upon the siege determined not to leave it until he had razed the city to its foundation.

The internal state of the city soon became horrible. The inhabitants being divided in their counsels fought with one another, and the streets were often deluged with blood shed by the hands of kindred. In the meantime famine spread its horrors abroad, and pestilence its ravages. Thousands died daily and were carried out of the gates to be buried at the public expense; until being unable to hurry them to the grave the wretched victims were thrown into houses as fast as they fell, and there shut up.

During the prevalence of the famine, the house of a certain woman by the name of Miriam was repeatedly plundered of such provisions as she had been able to procure. So extreme did her suffering become, that she entreated those around her, to put an end to her miserable existence. At length frantic with fury and despair she snatched her infant from her bosom, killed and cooked it; and having satiated her present hunger, concealed the rest. The smell of food soon drew the voracious human tigers to her house; they threatened her with tortures; she hid her provisions from them. Being thus compelled she set before them the relics of her mangled babe. At the sight of this horrid spectacle, inhuman as they were, they stood aghast, petrified with horror, and at length rushed precipitately from the house.

When the report of this spread through the city, the consternation was universal and inexpressible. The people now, for the first time, began to think themselves forsaken of God. In the mind of Titus the recital awakened both horror and indignation, and he resolved to push the siege with still greater vigor, aiming particularly to obtain possession of the temple. The preservation of this noble edifice was strongly desired by him; but one of the Roman soldiers being exasperated by the Jews, or, as Josephus says, "pushed on by the hand of Providence," seized a blazing firebrand, and getting on his comrades' shoulders, threw it through a window, and soon the whole north side was in a flame. Titus immediately gave order to extinguish the fire; but the enraged soldiers, bent on destroying the city and all it contained, either did not hear or did not regard him. The flames continued to spread until this consecrated edifice, the glory of the nation, became one mingled heap of ruins. Then followed a terrible massacre in which thousands perished, some in the flames and others by the sword of the enemy. At length the city was abandoned to the fury of the soldiers. It is said that nearly one million five hundred thousand persons perished in the siege.

The conquest of the city being achieved, Titus proceeded to demolish its noble structures, its fortifications, palaces and walls. So literally were the predictions of the Savior fulfilled respecting its destruction that not one stone was left upon another that was not thrown down.

From that day the Jews have been dispersed through the world, despised and hated, persecuted and yet upheld—lost as it were among the nations, and yet distinct—they live as the monuments of the truth of God.

While the apostles lived the churches planted by them continued to exist with more or less of spiritual life.

But the spirit of apostasy was already at work. In some places pagan rites and ceremonies had perverted the worship of the true God and but few could be found who remained pure amid the corruptions of the age or undaunted by the trials and persecutions that surrounded them on every side.

So universal was this apostasy that only seven churches throughout Asia, Africa and Europe were considered worthy of being either reprov'd or blessed by the voice of revelation. (*See Revelations 2nd and 3rd chapters.*)

The whole eastern continent of which we have authentic history was at that period under the control of Rome, and paganism was the religion of the empire. Thus the whole power of the realm was brought to bear against the infant church.

Pagan priests excited the populace to frenzy, and royal decrees delivered the saints to the most terrible tortures and death.

In a few years the apostolic organization and priesthood were no more. A few glimmerings of spiritual light remained for a short time, among those who had taken refuge in the catacombs or subterranean vaults of Rome, or had fled to the wilds of the Libyan desert. But even this light was soon extinguished, and then fell that mental, moral, and spiritual night from which mankind are only now slowly emerging.

But false religion could never satisfy the cravings of the immortal soul.

Paganism presented only a cheerless prospect. It gave itself no concern for the lowly and unfortunate, limited the hopes and destiny of man to this present life, and taught him that temporal prosperity might be selfishly gained at any cost to others in property and suffering. For example, Rome, for many ages had enriched herself with the wealth of conquered nations, and impoverished them that her sons and daughters might live in luxury and grandeur. Yet throughout her vast dominions there were no institutions of benevolence; no hospitals for the sick, no asylums for the afflicted or unfortunate. The pleasant pastimes of her populace were to witness scenes of cruelty; and the most refined ladies of that period eagerly thronged the amphitheatres to view the agonies of captives from distant tribes or early Christian martyrs as they were thrown to famished and enraged wild beasts in the public arena. Many of the early Christians were thus put to death in the Coliseum, the ruins of which are shown in the engraving.

No wonder then that when the church was taken from the earth, and its forms amalgamated with pagan institutions, the world presented an unparalleled scene of carnage and cruelty, bloodshed and terror.

But Rome was destined to endure a terrible retribution. The northern barbarians whom she had so long oppressed, and from whom she had drawn many of the victims of her gladiatorial combats now wreaked their long-sought vengeance, spreading terror and devastation wherever they went.

One of them, Attila, king of the Huns, called himself the scourge of God, and boasted that grass never grew where his horse had trodden. These incursions spread an intellectual famine throughout Europe. The only men of learning were the monks, who seldom left their cloisters, and the only books were manuscripts concealed in the libraries of the monasteries. Not only were the common people extremely ignorant, but also the rich and noble, and even the kings could scarcely read or write. The reign of superstition was universal. The simplicity of primitive worship was changed to an unmeaning round of rites and ceremonies: and the glorious principles of the gospel were hidden from sight by a dark cloud of ignorance, mysticism and unintelligible jargon, out of which there too often flashed the lurid lightnings of priestly vengeance and persecutions.

The Lord, speaking by the mouth of Jeremiah, says, "My people have committed two errors; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." When the voice of revelation was hushed men began to follow fables and traditions, and he who possessed the liveliest imagination invented the greatest number.

They, instead of the word of God, became the rule of life; and men sought by bodily suffering to purchase admission to the courts of heaven.

We pity the devotee of India, who measures by the length of his body, the wearisome journey of hundreds of miles; or the fakir who sits with his legs in an upright position, for years until the limbs becomes, withered, distorted and useless. But what shall we say of a professed follower of the Savior who makes a pilgrimage of a thousand miles with sharp spikes driven into the inside of his shoes, by which his feet are lacerated at every step! Or of one who spends the greater part of his life sitting on a column thirty feet high and only three feet in diameter, through all the vicissitudes of the seasons,

storm and sunshine, cold and heat, with the idea that, by this means, he could secure salvation and exaltation in the presence of God! Surely it was the self-same pagan idea that actuated all.

In those days, also, even the forms and ceremonies of the primitive church underwent complete transformation. Pagan rites were celebrated at Christian festivals, and days commemorative of great events were made to conform to the times appointed for the worship of heathen divinities.

For example, the festival of Easter as observed by the Catholic church, was and still is degraded by pagan rites. And the day that commemorates our Savior's birth, which event took place in April, when the shepherds were abroad on the plains of Bethlehem, with their flocks, was changed from the beautiful Spring time to the dark and gloomy December, that it might conform to a day already set apart for pagan ceremonies, and by this means was secured its universal observance.

The ideas concerning God were also perverted. Space will permit only a glance at this subject. The passions that were said to control the character of heathen gods were attributed to the great Creator and loving Father of us all. He was represented as delighting in vengeance; and glorying in the eternal sufferings of His creatures. Thus the most inhuman persecutors claimed they were doing His will; and hence arose the doctrine of endless torments beyond the grave, which still disgraces nearly all the sects of Christendom. The doctrine of fate has ever been a prominent doctrine of pagan religions.

This dogma was also engrafted into their creed; hence, we find learned teachers of the present age gravely asserting that, owing to the unalterable decrees of God, there are young and irresponsible infants, scarcely a span in length, who are and ever will be doomed to suffer the torments of the lost.

Such was the condition of the social and religious world at the time of the Emperor Constantine.

This politic prince was not a man of religious convictions, but hoping to consolidate his power and gain vast numbers of adherents he granted universal religious toleration and even went so far as to proclaim himself a Christian.

This act of toleration gave a temporary protection to all classes and was of especial benefit to those who wished to retire from the confusion and corruption of the age, and spend their lives in pursuit of science, literature and philosophy.

Such were the tasteless and often brutal amusements, the low sensuality, the base intrigue and bloody warfare of those times, that many longed for retirement and seclusion.

Men and also women, sometimes of the highest rank, awoke, suddenly to the discovery that life was given them for nobler purposes.

Loathing society, despising themselves, and often their companions, to whom they had been wedded in loveless marriages—companions whose infidelities and licentiousness they had too often, to endure, they fled from a world which had sated and sickened them.

Thus arose the monastic order.

By the side of Alpine torrents and in the valleys of Piedmont, by the rocky shores of the beautiful Aegean sea and on its lonely yet lovely islands, as well as on the classic hillsides of Judea, arose thousands of monasteries.

At first, no doubt, the inmates sought for a higher and purer life; but after a time they too sunk into luxury, licentiousness and debauchery.

Yet these monastic institutions served one good purpose, and that one was important. During these perilous times science and literature here found an asylum. Libraries were formed and carefully preserved, which, on the restoration of learning, were of great value to the world.

The foregoing will indicate to some extent the condition of mankind at the close of the sixth century of the Christian era. The light of antiquity had perished. The dawn of modern days had not yet gilded the eastern horizon. The world presented over its whole surface one vast field of contention and bloodshed, with scarcely an object sufficiently prominent to excite interest or deserve attention.

It was the midnight hour of human history.

Though the early church had been destroyed and the priesthood taken from the earth; yet God did not give it up as lost, nor entirely withdraw His Spirit. Then as now "the earth is the Lord's," and He will yet make good His claim to it. It is a blood-bought world, and He who ransomed it at so dear a price will one day return to rule over it as King of kings and Lord of lords. The earth that was bedewed with the Savior's tears and sweat—the earth that was trodden by His hallowed feet—the earth that drank His life blood shall yet throw off the curse that has so long blighted it and receive its paradisaic glory.

Through agencies the most diverse the minds of men were developed and disciplined for the reception of truth until in the Lord's due time in a prepared place and among a people prepared to receive His truth, He would again restore His priesthood, and set up His kingdom upon the earth.

CHAPTER II

MAHOMET

DESCRIPTION OF ARABIA—ARABIAN CUSTOMS—BIRTH OF MAHOMET—EARLY LIFE—JOURNEY TO SYRIA—CHRISTIAN SECTS—DOCTRINES TAUGHT BY MAHOMET—HIS MARRIAGE—PROCLAIMS HIMSELF A PROPHET—PERSECUTION—FLEES TO MEDINA—BECOMES POWERFUL—SICKNESS AND DEATH—PERSONAL APPEARANCE.

Far away in the south-western part of Asia, lies a strange and peculiar country called Arabia. It is bounded on the north by Syria, on the east by the Persian Gulf, on the south by the Indian Ocean, and on the west by the Red Sea, and comprises more than a million of square miles, or about twelve times the area of Utah.

This vast region possesses a diversified landscape. In some places vast sandy deserts stretch away farther than the eye can reach; in others, immense piles of dark volcanic rock rear aloft their barren peaks, around whose base the dry, hot winds have drifted the sands of the desert for untold centuries. However, in the secluded valleys of the mountains, and along the base of the great mountain chains, may be found many fertile tracts, where, watered by pure and never-failing mountain streams, and warmed by the rays of a tropical sun, the earth produces in abundance nearly every kind of grain, vegetable, fruit, flower and aromatic shrub that can conduce to the happiness of man. Indeed, some portions are so wonderfully productive, that in ancient as well as modern times it has received the significant title of "Araby the blest."

Most of the inhabitants of this country are generally considered to be the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham. Many of them lead a wild, nomadic life, supported by their flocks and herds and the spontaneous productions of the soil, and retain among their laws and customs, many of the usages that prevailed in the primitive, patriarchal times of their great ancestor.

Others live in towns and cities and engage in commerce, either with foreign countries or with distant parts of their own land.

The usual method of transporting their merchandise is on the backs of camels, and sometimes several hundred or even a thousand of these animals, accompanied by their drivers, may be seen slowly wending their way across the desert, carrying with them the coffee of Mocha and spices of Muscat to the distant cities of Bagdad and Damascus.

As among the Jews the ruling priests were chosen from the tribe of Levi and family of Aaron, so, among the ancient Arabs, the guardians of the sacred things of their worship were chosen from the tribe of Koreish and family of Haschem.

Abd-Al-Mutallib was the ruling priest in Mecca, the sacred city of Arabia, at the time that his grandson, Mahomet, was born, which event occurred at Mecca, in the year 570 of the Christian era.

Of Mahomet's parents, but little is recorded, except that his father, Abdallah, was remarkable for his commanding presence and great personal beauty. He died when his future illustrious son was only two months old. Amina, his mother, who is said to have been of Jewish descent, also died when Mahomet was only six years old.

The early life of Mahomet was spent in the house of his Uncle, Abou Taleb, who had become the principal guardian of the Ca-aba, or great temple, of ancient Arabian worship.

The ceremonies and devotions connected with this temple-worship may have given an early bias to Mahomet's mind, and inclined it to those speculations and ideas in which it afterwards became engrossed. His education in childhood seems to have been neglected; for he was not taught either to

read or write. But he was a thoughtful child, quick to observe, prone to meditate on all that he had observed, and possessed of an imagination fertile, daring and expansive.

At the age of twelve years, Mahomet solicited the privilege of accompanying his uncle, Abou Taleb, to Syria, whither he was about to conduct a caravan. Their route lay through regions fertile in fables and traditions, which it is the delight of the Arabs to recount in the evening halts of the caravan.

With an attentive ear, the youthful Mahomet listened to those tales of enchantment and wonderful events which happened in days of old, and doubtless imbibed ideas that had a powerful influence on him in his after life. In this journey also he listened to the conversation of many of those exiles from the Christian sects, who, in fleeing from persecution had taken refuge in the wilds of Northern Arabia. Thus he learned many facts concerning the Christian religion.

Having arrived at the city of Bozrah, which was situated on the confines of Syria, about seventy miles south of Damascus, Mahomet was entertained at a Nestorian convent. One of the monks named Bahira, was very much interested by the spirit of inquiry and intelligence which the youth manifested, especially on religious subjects, and gave him all possible information.

Mahomet returned to Mecca, his imagination teeming with the wild tales and traditions picked up in the desert, and his mind deeply impressed with the teachings he had received among the Nestorians.

In order that we may understand the nature of the teachings which Mahomet received on this and subsequent journeys to Syria, an enumeration of the leading dogmas of the jarring sects of oriental Christians will be necessary:

The most numerous of these sects were the Arians, so called from Arius, a great religious teacher of Alexandria. They claimed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the Father; that His existence commenced at His advent in this world; that He was created for a special mission, but was subject to the influences of virtue and vice like common mortals.

The followers of Nestorius, the great bishop of Constantinople, were also very numerous; and Mahomet, in his subsequent journeys to Syria, frequently came in contact with them. They claimed that Christ had two distinct natures, human and divine; that Jesus was a man; that Mary was only His mother according to the flesh, and that it was an abomination to style her "Mary the mother of God," as was and still is the custom of the Catholic church.

Another sect was the Marianites, or worshippers of Mary. They regarded the trinity as consisting of God, the eternal Father, Mary, the eternal mother, and Christ, their Son.

The Valentinians were another sect, who taught that Jesus Christ was only a wise and virtuous mortal, selected by God to reform and instruct mankind. Their creed is still professed by some of the Unitarian sects of the present day.

The Nazarenes were a sect of Jewish Christians, who considered Christ as the promised Messiah, but conformed in all other respects to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law.

Many other sects might be enumerated who took their names from learned and zealous leaders, and who were subdivided into various and opposing parties of fanatical enthusiasts.

A glance at these dissensions which convulsed society at this period is sufficient to acquit Mahomet of any charge of conscious blasphemy in the opinions he taught concerning the nature and mission of our Savior.

The principal doctrines taught by Mahomet were drawn from the writings of the Old and New Testaments. He recognized in all about three hundred prophets. This number included all the ancient worthies of the Old Testament, as well as the Savior and the apostles, evangelists and martyrs mentioned in the New. However, four persons were considered as greater prophets than the rest, and were revered as the founders of four distinct dispensations. These were Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mahomet.

The book containing the writings and revelations of Mahomet is commonly called the Koran. However, Mahomet should not be held responsible for all that the Koran contains, as there is abundant evidence that it has been changed and corrupted in many places since his death.

Prayer, fasting and acts of charity are inculcated by it. Merchants were especially commanded to perform acts of charity, as they were the class who were most liable to the sins of deception and extortion. The creed which all were required to believe, was simply, "There is one God, and Mahomet is His prophet."

But little is known of Mahomet's history between his twelfth and twenty-fifth year. He seems to have been engaged principally in conducting caravans across the desert. He thereby gained much practical knowledge, and became known as a young man of ability and integrity, pleasing appearance, and engaging manners.

At the age of twenty-five, he became the steward or business agent of a certain wealthy widow, named Cadijah; and a few years later she married him and faithfully followed him till her death, through all the vicissitudes of his strange and eventful life.

When Mahomet, in his fortieth year, proclaimed himself the prophet of God, Cadijah replied, "I will be thy first believer." They knelt down in prayer together.

Twelve centuries have passed since then, and nine thousand millions of human beings have followed her example.

We are told that as Mahomet lay wrapped in his mantle, in the silent watches of the night, he heard a voice calling upon him. Uncovering his head, a flood of light burst upon him of such intolerable splendor that he swooned away.

On regaining his senses, he beheld an angel, who, approaching him from a distance, displayed a scroll, covered with written characters. "Read," said the angel.

"I know not how to read," replied Mahomet.

"Read," repeated the angel, "in the name of God, who has created all things."

Upon this, Mahomet instantly felt his understanding illumined, and read what was written. These words were afterwards promulgated in the Koran, which also contains many of the doctrines taught in the New Testament.

When he had finished reading, the heavenly messenger announced, "O, Mahomet, verily thou art a prophet of God, and I am His angel Gabriel."

Mahomet, we are told, came trembling and agitated to Cadijah in the morning, and told her what he had seen and heard. She saw everything with the eye of faith, and embraced those teachings with the devotion of an affectionate woman.

"Joyful tidings dost thou bring!" exclaimed she. "By Him in whose hand is the soul of Cadijah, I henceforth regard thee as the prophet of our nation. Rejoice! rejoice! Allah will not suffer thee to come to shame. Hast thou not been loving to thy kindred, kind to thy neighbors, charitable to the poor, hospitable to the stranger, faithful to thy word, and ever a defender of the truth?"

The announcement of Mahomet's message provoked bitter opposition among his kindred. Only one of them, his cousin Ali, became his disciple. Those who had known him from his infancy, who had seen him a boy about the streets of Mecca, and afterwards engaged in the ordinary concerns of life, scoffed at the idea of his assuming the prophetic character. When he walked the streets he was subjected to jeers and insults. If he attempted to preach, his voice was drowned by discordant noises and ribald songs. As gradually his followers increased, so did the opposition in bitterness and intensity.

At length he was obliged to flee from his native city and take refuge in Medina, a city of north-western Arabia.

Space will not permit a recital of the numerous intrigues of his enemies, or his various successes. Suffice it to say that, in a few years he became the leader of a powerful, constantly-increasing and enthusiastic people.

The time had at length arrived when the wild, wandering and discordant tribes of Arabia were to be marshalled under one banner, united in one creed and animated by one cause; when a mighty genius had arisen, who should bring together those scattered remnants, inspire them with his own religious zeal and daring spirit, and send them forth an invincible host, to shake and overturn the empires of the earth.

Mahomet survived the most of his children, and died in the sixty-third year of his age.

In his last illness, he gave his followers three parting commands: "Expel all idolaters from Arabia; allow every believer equal privileges with yourselves; devote yourselves to prayer and the propagation of the faith."

When the hour of death approached he feared it not, but, gazing upwards with unmoving eyelids, he exclaimed, "O, Allah! be it so, forever with the glorious associates in paradise."

Thus passed away the man who gave embodiment to a faith that is still adhered to by more than 130,000,000 of the human family; and who founded an empire that was the most extensive the world has ever seen.

In appearance, he was of the middle stature. His head was capacious, and well set on a neck that rose like a pillar from his ample chest. He had an oval face; dark eyes, long, wavy hair and a full beard. His deportment was calm and dignified, and he is said to have possessed a smile of captivating sweetness. His complexion was fairer than Arabs usually are, and in his enthusiastic moments there was a glow and radiance to his countenance. He was extremely cleanly in his person, abstemious in his diet, and simple and unaffected in his dress and manners. He seemed to have an intuitive knowledge of human nature, and an innate power to counsel, command, reprove and inspire his followers with his own ardent nature. Take him all in all, the race has seldom seen a teacher more kind, more noble or more sincere.

CHAPTER III

THE SARACENIC CONQUEST

CAUSES OF TRIUMPHS—ABOU-BEKER ELECTED CALIPH—WAR DECLARED—FALL OF BOZRAH—BATTLE OF AIZNADIN—SIEGE OF JERUSALEM—DEPARTURE OF ROMAN EMPEROR—SARACEN FLEET—EASTERN CONQUESTS—FALL OF ALEXANDRIA—CONQUEST OF NORTHERN AFRICA—CONQUEST OF SPAIN—BATTLE OF POICTIERS—EXTENT OF SARACEN EMPIRE.

After the death of Mahomet, his followers assumed the name of Saracens, by which title they were afterwards generally known. This term, it is said, is derived from two Arabic words which signify eastern, or oriental, and conquerors.

Scarcely was Mahomet buried, when it was found necessary to form a civil and political constitution and code of laws, by which his followers were to be governed. This government was called the Caliphate.

Mahometanism, even during the life of its founder, gave unmistakable indications of overpassing the bounds of Arabia.

A few years later it entered upon a system of conquest unparalleled in the history of the world.

One cause of this phenomenon is to be found in the moral and social condition of the world. The influence of religion had long before ceased. Christianity was completely paganized. Her popes were busy denouncing and excommunicating each other, in their rivalry for earthly power; or bribing royal females and courtesans to influence the decision of councils, that were supposed by the masses to speak with the voice of God. Her bishops no longer sought to feed their flocks with the bread of life. On the other hand they were concerned in assassinations, poisonings, adulteries, riots, treason and civil war. The religious teachers of those days never raised their voices in the sacred cause of liberty, or spoke in defense of the outraged rights of man.

No wonder then that, in the midst of the wrangling of sects, and unintelligible jargon of Arians, Augustinians, Nestorians and Marianites, society stood in breathless awe, when it heard the terrible Arabian battle cry, "There is but one God, and Mahomet is His prophet!" enforced as it was by the tempest of Saracen armies. These warriors, armed with lances and cimeters, and mounted on fleet Arabian steeds, passed swiftly from city to city, and frequently found the masses of the people so crushed by tyranny, so worn out by wrangling and civil wars, that they welcomed the Saracens as deliverers.

Mahomet's life had been almost entirely occupied in the conquest or conversion of his native country. It is true, in the latter part of his career he felt himself strong enough to threaten Persia for the aid she had given his enemies; and he even declared war against the Roman Empire for the same reason. But failing health frustrated his designs. He had made no provision for the perpetuation of his own power. Hence, a struggle ensued before a successor was appointed. At length, Abou Beker, the father of his wife Ayesha, was selected. He was proclaimed the first Caliph, and immediately attacked both the Romans and the Persians.

The renowned general, Khaled, commonly called by Saracen historians, "the sword of God," was despatched into Syria. His name struck terror into the hearts of the inhabitants. The fortified town of Bozrah fell into his hands without a struggle. This was the same town where fifty years previous the youthful Mahomet had been entertained at the Nestorian convent. Marching northward seventy miles, to Damascus, Khaled laid siege to the Syrian capital. A decisive battle took place on the plain of Aiznadin. The Roman army was overthrown and dispersed. A few days later Damascus surrendered to the Saracens.

Guarded on the right by the beautiful river Orontes, and on the left by the snow-clad peaks of Lebanon, they still continued their march northward. To resist their further progress, the Roman emperor, Heraclius, collected an army of one hundred and forty thousand men. A great battle took place on the plains of Yermuck. At the first onset the Saracens were repulsed; but driven back to the field by the heroism of their women, who also aided them, they ended the conflict by the complete overthrow of the Roman army.

The whole of Syria now fell into the hands of the Saracens.

They then turned south and laid siege to the city of Jerusalem. After a defense of four months the patriarch, Sophronius, appeared on the wall and asked the terms of capitulation. It was stipulated that the surrender should take place in the presence of the Caliph himself. Accordingly, he came all the way from Medina for that purpose. At that time such were the customs among the Saracens, that it is said the ambassador found the Caliph Omar asleep under the shadow of a mosque. It is also said that he journeyed alone on a red camel, carrying with him a bag of dates for his own food and one of corn for his camel, a wooden dish and a leathern water bottle.

After receiving the surrender of the city, Omar returned to Medina as quietly as he had come.

Thus fell the Roman power in Syria and Palestine, after having ruled those countries nearly eight hundred years. Thus was transferred without tumult or outrage the religious capital of the professedly Christian world into the hands of the Caliph Omar. Thus, Jerusalem, so long considered the birthplace of Christianity, the scene of its most sacred and tragic memories, passed into the hands of the Mahometans. Considerably more than a thousand years have elapsed since then, and it is still under their dominion. The mosque of Omar now rears its glittering dome where once stood the temple of Solomon.

Heraclius, the Roman emperor, struggled valiantly to retain his possessions. He plainly saw that the corruptions of Christianity were among the causes of Saracenic triumphs. He made a heroic attempt to rouse the clergy to their duties, but it was then too late. Heraclius himself was obliged to seek safety in flight. From the deck of the little vessel that bore him homeward, he gazed intently on the receding hills, and in bitterness of anguish exclaimed, "Farewell, Syria, forever farewell!"

The remaining details of the Saracen conquest we need not here relate. The naming of their victories is sufficient to indicate the greatness of their triumphs.

The great cities of Tyre and Caesarea were captured. With the cedars of Lebanon and sailors of Tyre they equipped a fleet that drove the Roman navy into the Hellespont. Thus they gained undisturbed control of the Mediterranean, and conquered or colonized the islands of Cyprus, Candia, Rhodes, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and many others. A Saracen naval expedition even appeared before the walls of Rome, and after threatening the imperial city, carried away the altar of silver from St. Peter's church, and gathered other relics from the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul.

One of the Saracen armies turned eastward, and on the battlefield of Cadesia the fate of Persia was decided. After the battle of Neha-vend the treasury and royal arms of Persia fell into the hands of the Saracens.

After this battle the eastern army divided into two divisions. One marched northward to the Caspian Sea and took possession of the neighboring countries; another, southward to Persepolis, from whence the king of Persia fled for his life across the dreary deserts of Khorassan. The name of Saracen terrified the wild tribes of independent Tartary, and they hastened to pay tribute and accept the faith of their conquerors.

The emperor of China, in his palace at Peking, heard of their exploits, and sent ambassadors to them, craving their friendship. The kingdoms now included in Afghanistan and Beloochistan surrendered at their approach, and the Mahometan standard of the crescent waved on the banks of the Indus.

Meanwhile important events were transpiring in the west. A large proportion of the Egyptian people welcomed the Saracens. The Arabs of the desert loitered in the palaces of the ancient

Pharaohs. Alexandria, aided by Roman troops, alone held out. After a siege of fourteen months it also fell, and with it Egypt and Abyssinia were added to the dominions of the Caliphs.

The most powerful religious empire that the world has ever seen had suddenly sprung into existence. It stretched from the Great Wall of China to the burning sands of Tripoli, and from the Caspian Sea on the north to Abyssinia on the south. Yet this was but little more than half the territory that it soon afterwards controlled. One of its armies advanced on Constantinople. It did not fall then, but afterwards became the capital of the Mahometan power in Europe. Another took possession of the whole north of Africa, and, having consolidated its power there, under the command of their general, Tarik, they crossed the straits that separate Africa from Spain, and landing on the rocky cliff of Gib-el-Tarik, or mountain of Tarik (now called Gibraltar), unfurled their green banner with golden crescent for the first time on the soil of Europe.

Tarik was soon followed into Spain by his superior officer, the emir Musa. They took possession of the whole southern portion of Spain and Portugal, which in their own picturesque language, they named Andalusia, or the region of the evening.

It was soon found that the whole peninsula was ripe for revolution. The Jews comprised a large proportion of the Spanish people. They were, to a great extent, the cultivators of the soil, which pursuit well repaid their labors. They were then, as now, famous as merchants and money-lenders, and many of them held high positions in the government, while thousands of them were scattered in every city, town and village, as the physicians and teachers of the people.

Their wrongs had been accumulating for centuries. Bigotry, envy and avarice had conspired to point them out as objects of persecution. Laws were passed which were never intended to be executed. It was expected that they would purchase a remission of the penalties by pouring their hard-earned treasures into the lap of Rome. No doubt the Jews exulted as the tide of Saracen conquest swept onward. They did not deplore a change of masters for those who would leave them in possession of civil and religious liberty.

Before long the whole Iberian peninsula fell into the hands of the Mahometans. Not content with this, they crossed the Pyrenees, and took possession of that portion of France that lies to the south of the river Loire. All Central France was overrun. Castles, churches and monasteries were despoiled. For a time they held undisturbed dominion. The empire of the Saracens was then at its greatest extent. It reached from the confines of China to the Atlantic ocean, and comprised within its limits forty degrees of latitude and nearly one hundred and twenty of longitude. In Western Europe alone it stretched in an unbroken line more than a thousand miles northward from the cliffs of Gibraltar. More than thirty-six thousand cities paid tribute to the successors of Mahomet in the city of Medina.

In attempting to extend their conquests northward the Saracens were met by an army under Charles Martel, king of France, A. D. 732. Between Tours and Poitiers a terrible battle was fought, which lasted seven days. The Franks and Goths lost so many that it was impossible to tell the number of the slain. But these losses were more than counterbalanced by the losses of the Saracens whose great general, Abderahman, was found among the slain. Their previous successes had filled them with pride. They looked with contempt upon their enemies. For example, when the Roman emperor, Nicephorous, had sent a threatening letter to the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, the latter replied, "In the name of the most merciful God, Haroun-al-Raschid, commander of the faithful, to Nicephorous, the Roman dog! I have read thy letter, O thou son of an unbelieving mother! Thou shalt not hear my words; thou shalt behold my reply!" A few weeks later it was written in letters of blood on the plains of Phrygia.

Although the Saracen empire had reached the zenith of its power, in one sense Mahometanism had not reached its culmination. The day was to come, when under the name of Ottoman Turks, it would expel the descendants of the Caesars from their capital, hold the classic land of Greece in subjection, and under the very walls of Vienna dispute the empire of Europe in the center of that

continent; and in Africa extend its dogmas and faith across burning deserts and pestilential forests far south of the equinoctial line.

It is a mistaken idea that the progress of the Saracens depended on the sword alone. The causes of their success were many and various. One of these, the paganization of Christianity, has already been noticed. The long and desolating wars of the Romans had thrown the whole oriental and African trade into the hands of the Arabs. Hence a commercial interest and sympathy had grown up between these peoples. Another reason was the mildness of the Saracen government in comparison with that of the Romans. The only taxation was a single annual tribute, amounting to less than one-half the various taxes by the Romans. Another feature was complete religious toleration except to idolators. The only creed required was simply, "There is but one God, and Mahomet is His prophet." Still, another cause of Saracen success was the effective plan adopted for the consolidation of their power. In battle they were simply terrible, and the destruction of human life was in some instances without a parallel; yet the widows and children of their fallen foes were universally treated with kindness. As a consequence, the children became ardent disciples of Mahometanism, and the widows often married their former conquerors. This was all the more frequent as polygamy was an established custom. The children of these unions gloried in their descent from their conquering fathers.

No wonder then, that in a little more than a single generation Abderahman wrote to the Caliph that in North Africa and Andalusia all tribute must cease, as all the children born in those regions were Mahometans, and Arabic had become the language of the county.

But above all these causes, the careful student of history will perceive the hand of Providence. Though Christianity was paganized, and the priesthood and divine authority were taken from the earth, God had put forth His hand, and through agencies the most diverse was disciplining the minds of men for the reception of truth, and preparing a place and a people for the coming of the Son of Man.

CHAPTER IV

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE SARACENS

INTELLECTUAL STAGNATION—SARACENS AND JEWS REVIVE LEARNING—UNIVERSITY OF BAGDAD—PUBLIC SCHOOLS—MEDICAL COLLEGE OF CAIRO—CIRCULATING LIBRARY—MODERN FORM OF BOOKS—ARABIC NOTATION—DISCOVERIES IN CHEMISTRY—ROTUNDITY OF THE EARTH—MARINER'S COMPASS—DISCOVERIES OF ALHAZIN—ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORIES—GOLDEN AGE OF JUDAISM—CITIES OF ANDALUSIA—SARACEN DWELLINGS—CONDITION OF WOMEN—FEMALE PHYSICIANS.

The civilized world is dotted over with theological seminaries, the teachers in which are considered to be men well educated in the learning of ancient and modern times. The avowed purpose of these institutions is to teach the facts, philosophy and history of the so-called Christian religion, yet not a teacher in these institutions can be found who dares to assert the stupendous fact that from the time of the apostles to the ninth century science, literature and philosophy were well nigh extinct. During all this time, with the exception of Jewish and Saracen writers, scarcely a work can be found of sufficient merit to rescue the name of the author from oblivion. Let the skeptic answer this question: Why was it that when the voice of inspiration was hushed and the gospel and its ordinances taken from the earth, there fell upon it an intellectual stagnation, an invisible atmosphere of oppression, ready to crash down morally and physically whatever provoked its weight? Thus the dreary and weary centuries rolled on, until a nation, hitherto considered barbarous, yet of the seed of Abraham, and heirs of the promises made to Ishmael and Esau, aroused society from the hideous fanaticism, ignorance and superstition into which apostasy had plunged it.

If it be true that the Saracens burned the Alexandrian library, it must be considered that this was the act of an uneducated general and the vengeance of the soldiery after a terrible siege, rather than the deliberate policy of the government. Within twenty-five years from the death of Mahomet the Caliphs had become famous for their patronage of learning. Ali, the fourth Caliph and son-in-law of Mahomet, used to say, "The world is sustained by four things only: the prayers of the good, the learning of the wise, the justice of the great, and the valor of the brave." This sentiment was echoed and re-echoed until it became an honored maxim in the minds of millions.

Under the influence of Jewish, Nestorian and Saracen teachers the manners of the Saracens became more polished and their thoughts more elevated. They made conquests in the realms of science, literature and the arts as quickly as in the provinces of the Roman empire.

For example, Almansor, who reigned as Caliph from A. D. 753 to 775, established the University of Bagdad, and endowed it with two hundred thousand pieces of gold, and an annual revenue of fifteen thousand dinars, equal in commercial value to one hundred and twenty thousand dollars of our money. He invited thither learned men from every land, irrespective of their religious opinions. By these men were founded celebrated schools of mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, law and languages.

His grand-son, Haroun-al-Raschid, ordered in A. D. 786, that a public school should be attached to every mosque in his dominions. This was more than seven hundred years before the establishment of the famous parish schools of Scotland.

The Caliph-al-Mamun, in A. D. 813, founded the great medical college of Cairo, which required students to pass a rigid examination before receiving authority to enter on the practice of their profession. At this college we have the first account of dissecting human bodies for the purpose of ascertaining the nature and locality of diseases, and the first circulating library for students. These

books were bound according to the modern form, which then began to be used among the Saracens in place of the ancient form of the scroll.

By the means just mentioned, the ancient sciences were greatly extended and new ones introduced. To the Saracens we are indebted for our present system of arithmetical notation. If, for example, we wish to multiply 1882 by 125 and then attempt it by the ancient method MDCCCLXXXII., multiplied by CXXV., we shall soon perceive the vast superiority of the Arabic system over that formerly in use. No wonder, then that under the ancient system those who were engaged in solving difficult mathematical problems were frequently styled "sweating calculators."

In this case as in many others the Arab has left his impress on this science. For instance, our word cipher, and kindred words, such as decipher, ciphering, etc., are derived from the word *tsaphara*, or *ciphra*, the name for the 0 in the Arabic language.

In experimental sciences, they originated chemistry and discovered the nature and properties of sulphuric acid, nitric acid, alcohol and many other chemical agents. From their schools of medicine may be traced such words as julep, syrup, elixir, alchemy, etc. To them we are indebted for algebra, or universal arithmetic, and in astronomy they made such advances that many constellations and stars of the first magnitude still retain the Arabic names.

In geography, the Saracens made important discoveries. Hitherto mankind had been taught that the earth was a vast plain, surmounted by an immense vault commonly called the sky. They were the first to prove that the earth is a vast globe, or ball; and in order to determine its size, they first ascertained on the level shore of the Red sea the exact position of the North Star. Then traveling directly north until it had attained another degree of elevation, they measured the distance between these points, and multiplying the result by three hundred and sixty (the number of degrees in a circle), they found the earth to be nearly twenty-five thousand miles in circumference. So accurate were their observations and measurements that the best calculators of recent times differ from them less than one-third of a mile.

Five hundred years later the Roman pontiffs were excommunicating and torturing those who taught the rotundity of the earth. While Catholic monks were teaching, in all its absurdity, the flatness of the earth, and how it rested on a vast rock, and that rock on another and so on all the way down to the bottom(?), the Saracens were teaching geography from globes in their common schools. It cost a long struggle through several centuries, "with spiritual wickedness in high places," before the truth finally triumphed.

European historians have generally given great credit to Pope Gregory for the invention and adoption of the Gregorian calendar and a more accurate method of measuring the exact length of the civil year. Yet, Gregory only adopted what had been discovered and taught by Thebit-Ben-Corrah, the Saracen astronomer, more than five hundred years before, and what Gregory himself had learned in youth while attending a Saracen university.

The mariner's compass was well known to the Arabs, who probably brought it from China and introduced it to the nations of Europe. From this we may correctly infer that they were a maritime people. In fact, long before the time of Mahomet, Arabian merchants were acquainted with the Indies, and even China and the eastern coast of Africa as far south as Madagascar.

Alhazin, who wrote about A. D. 1080, made the great discovery of atmospheric refraction—that a ray of light when it touches the atmosphere is bent from a straight line; and consequently we see the sun before it rises and after it sets, in the same manner that an object lying at the bottom of a bucket filled with water appears in quite a different position from that in which it really is. He was the first to give that beautiful and scientific explanation of twilight, viz., the refraction of light, which is still regarded by modern scientists as the true one. He even attempted to ascertain the height of the atmosphere, which he estimated to be about fifty-eight and a half miles. This philosopher also wrote a treatise on weights and measures, and introduced that excellent system of weighing by means of a small, movable weight attached to the longer arm of a lever, as in our modern scales or steelyards.

The Arabian astronomer, Ebn-Junis, was the first who made use of the pendulum in the machinery of clocks for the accurate measurement of the hours.

In the golden age of the Saracen empire, there were colleges in every part of its vast dominions. So numerous were these institutions, that more than six thousand students received instructions in them annually. In the far east were the college and astronomical observatory of Samercand; while in the western province of Andalusia were the famous school and observatory of Giralda.

The first medical college established in Europe was that founded by the Saracens at Salerno, in Italy; the first famous school of mathematics and astronomy was that established by them at Seville, in Spain.

Among them, learning was not confined to the rich, but every class received its benefits. The teachers of their colleges were paid liberal salaries for their services, and an allowance was made for indigent scholars, so that the son of the mechanic could graduate from the same class as the heirs of the Caliphs.

At first glance it seems remarkable that the wild ferocity of the Arabs should so suddenly change into a passion for intellectual pursuits; yet it should not be forgotten that this ferocity was to a great extent caused by religious enthusiasm. Thus, when the General Akbah had conquered his way from Egypt to the Atlantic ocean, opposite the Canary Islands, he rode his horse into the sea and drew his sword, exclaiming, "Great Allah! if my course were not stopped by this sea, I would still go on to the unknown regions of the West, preaching the unity of thy holy name, and putting to the sword the rebellious nations who worship any other gods than thee."

Again, when we consider that a large majority of their teachers and philosophers were of the Jewish nation, we see a beautiful Providence in all this. The remnants of God's chosen people, though exiles and wanderers, despised and down-trodden by the Gentiles, were yet the instruments in God's hands for the execution of His purposes and the elevation of the race.

Surely there is a broader, higher, grander meaning in the promise given to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," than many are willing to admit! And this is all the more remarkable, that, at the very time when mankind so much needed instruction, should occur what Milman so aptly terms, "The golden age of Judaism." Not an age of royal pomp and political power—that passed away with David and Solomon—but an age of intellectual culture, scientific research and practical discovery.

Strange it would appear to the casual student, if upon further research he should find that all great religious teachers have been of Israelitish origin, as well as a large proportion of those who have achieved distinction in the arts and sciences. But it was in Spain, southern France and Sicily that the Saracens attained their greatest power and influence; for there they came in contact with the nations of western Europe, and so influenced European manners, customs and modes of thought that through them that influence has been transmitted to our times.

To the ingenuity of the Saracens we are indebted for the origin of many articles of clothing and personal comfort. Their religion taught them to be clean in person. They did not therefore clothe themselves, according to prevailing customs in that age, in an under-garment made from the skins of wild beasts—a garment which remained unwashed and unchanged until it dropped to pieces of itself, a loathsome mass of vermin, stench and rags. They taught us the use of that often-changed and often-washed garment commonly called a shirt, which still is known among the ladies under its old Arabic name, *chemise*.

To them we are indebted for some of our most valuable fruits, such as the apricot and peach.

Remembering the cooling effects of water in their own hot climate, they spared no pains in constructing artificial lakes and fountains and streams for the irrigation of their gardens.

Andalusia became the paradise of the world. The capital was Cordova, which they greatly embellished as well as the rival cities Toledo, Seville and Granada. A person might walk for miles through their cities after night-fall by the light of their public lamps. Seven hundred years afterwards,

not a single public lamp could be found in the city of London. The streets of these cities were solidly paved, through which rolled magnificent carriages, drawn by horses, the fame of which has descended to our times. Five hundred years later the sovereigns of Great Britain and Germany were still traveling in uncouth wagons, drawn by oxen, goaded on by pedestrian drivers.

The sidewalks of Cordova, Toledo, Seville and Granada were paved with flagstones; while at a corresponding period the inhabitant of London or Paris who ventured beyond his threshold on a rainy day sank ankle-deep in filth and mud. Their residences were frequently in the midst of orchards or embosomed in shady groves. They had cool and spacious porches for rest in the heat of the day. Often these porches had roofs of stained glass, on which fell in soothing cadences the glittering pearl-drops of water from elevated fountains.

Their houses were usually built of brick or stone, and contained many apartments, such as sleeping rooms, baths, libraries, parlors and dining halls. In the best class of dwellings, the ceilings were frescoed and the walls covered with paintings, representing scenes of paradise, groves and fruits, lawns and fountains. Yet, delineations of the human form, either nude or partly so, were religiously forbidden, as it was considered that such representations were promotive of licentiousness.

Some of these apartments were furnished with musical instruments, where the young of both sexes were wont to join in mirth and festivity, and dancing to the music of the lute and mandolin. In others, the sedate and reflecting, could engage in scientific research or philosophical discussion. The dwellings of the rich were carpeted, and sometimes warmed by furnaces in winter and cooled in summer with perfumed air, brought by under-ground pipes from distant flower gardens. The use of wine was prohibited. The feasts of the Saracens were marked with sobriety, and furnished a pleasing contrast to the drunken revelries of their northern neighbors.

The enchanting moonlight evenings of Andalusia were frequently spent by the devout in sequestered gardens, consoling themselves for the disappointments of this life by the hope of immortality, and reconciling themselves to their daily toil by the expectation of the joys of paradise, where flowers never fade nor fruits decay, where sickness, and sorrow, and death are known no more.

Under Saracen government, religious persecution was unknown. Students from Great Britain, Ireland, France and Germany came to study at Saracen universities. There, among distinguished characters, whose names and influence have descended to our times, was Frederick, afterwards Frederick II., king of Italy; Gerbert, afterwards famous as Pope Sylvester II.; Peter the Venerable, Abelard, the poet, and Arnold of Brescia.

No wonder then that the Saracens looked with contempt upon the barbarism of the native races of Europe, who could scarcely be said to have emerged from the savage state—unclean in person, benighted in mind, inhabiting huts in which it was a mark of wealth if there were bulrushes on the floor and straw mats against the wall; subsisting on barley, beans, cabbages, herbs and even the bark of trees; clothed in rudely-tanned skins of wild animals, which were famous indeed for durability, but not very conducive to personal cleanliness.

But the arts, sciences and general culture were not confined to the Saracen men alone. Among the women there were many who, like Valada, Ayesha, Labana and Algasania, achieved a national reputation. Some of these were daughters of Caliphs, who considered it not beneath their dignity to devote their lives to science and the elevation of their sex. Where shall we find their equals at that time in so-called Christian countries? Albucasis, a celebrated physician of Cordova, in his medical works, makes mention of several female physicians, and recommends the employment of such in certain cases. No doubt the condition of women was superior and their duties and position better understood among polygamous Saracens than in monogamous Christendom.

The foregoing will indicate to some extent the condition of Saracen society in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Shall we compare it with the contemporary barbarism of the other portions of Europe?

Were we to pursue this subject further it would not be difficult to show that Venice owed her commercial greatness to Saracen fleets and Jewish merchants; that Marco Polo only traveled over countries already well delineated on maps, and well described by Abulfeda and other Arabian geographers; that Columbus himself first received scientific proof of the rotundity of the earth while corresponding with Torricelli, the great Florentine astronomer, who in turn had received his education at the Saracen university of Seville, and modelled his globes, maps and charts from those in its possession.

The careful student of history must deplore the attempts made by many historians to ignore our indebtedness to the Saracens, who in the providence of God have left their impress on the religions, arts and sciences of the world. Surely prejudice founded on national conceit and sectarian bigotry cannot last forever.

CHAPTER V

REMARKABLE CITIES OF MEDIEVAL TIMES

JERUSALEM THE SACRED CITY—ALEXANDRIA NOTED FOR PHILOSOPHY—SCHOOL OF HYPATIA—MOB MURDERS HER—DOCTRINES OF CYRIL—JERUSALEM A SCENE OF SUFFERING—FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY—HERCULANEUM AND POMPEII—THEIR DESTRUCTION—EVIDENCES OF THEIR WICKEDNESS—EXCAVATIONS—ROMAN RULE—REMOVAL OF CAPITAL—CRIMES OF CONSTANTINE—COMMENCEMENT OF GREEK EMPIRE—DESCRIPTION OF CONSTANTINOPLE—ITS CAPTURE BY CRUSADERS—TAKEN BY THE TURKS—INTELLECTUAL DEGRADATION—PRIESTCRAFT—DEBAUCHERY—TURKISH RULE.

The four great cities of medieval times were Jerusalem, Rome, Alexandria and Constantinople. The first named has ever been the sacred city, not merely of the Jews, but also of devout Christian pilgrims of all ages. During the crusades it was the great object for the possession of which so much blood and treasure were expended.

Alexandria, for the first three centuries of the Christian era, was the commercial metropolis of the world, as well as the chief seat of pagan learning and philosophy. It was here that Hypatia, the daughter of Theon, the mathematician, held her famous school. Each day before her academy stood a long train of chariots. Her lecture room was crowded with the cultured classes of Alexandria. They came to ask those profound questions that human reason, unaided, can never answer: "What am I? Where am I? What can I know?"

At this time, Cyril, archbishop of Alexandria, was attempting to force upon the world his trinitarian views. His absurd ideas could not endure the sharp criticism of philosophic minds. Cyril employed a mob of Alexandrian monks. Amid the fearful yelling of these bare-legged and black-cowled fiends, Hypatia was dragged from her chariot. In mortal terror she fled to an adjacent church, and was there brutally murdered by the club of Peter the Reader. But this was not all. We can only get a faint idea of the depraved condition of paganized Christianity, when we call to mind the fact that the monks finished their infernal crime by dismembering her body and scraping the flesh from her bones with oyster shells.

Cyril then procured the banishment of all who held opposing doctrines, and thus his absurd doctrines were forced upon society. Such was the debased condition of society in a city where had been planted one of the apostolic churches. As vice increased her prosperity decreased. During the reign of Constantine, the influence of Alexandria was much diminished, and with the Mahometan conquest it fell to the rank of a provincial town.

Jerusalem, once the "glory of the earth, and the pride of the nations," never recovered from the siege by Titus, in A. D. 70. The answer which the Jews made to Pilate, "*His blood be upon us and upon our children,*" which they spake in reference to the Savior, has been terribly and literally fulfilled. It may be safely asserted that Jerusalem has witnessed more scenes of human suffering than any other spot on earth.

Who does not see the hand of Providence in her retribution, as well as in the fate of Herculaneum and Pompeii?

These cities were destroyed in A. D. 79, by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, and buried by a shower of ashes, sand and stones. Herculaneum was situated about eight miles south of the present city of Naples, and Pompeii about fifteen miles eastward.

Thus they remained buried for nearly seventeen hundred years. Extensive excavations have been made during the past century, disclosing the city walls, streets, temples, theatres, private dwellings, domestic utensils and statuary. Many objects have been found which indicate the wicked and licentious character of the inhabitants, and go to prove that they were ripe for the destruction which awaited them. The inhabitants died just as the catastrophe found them, guests in their banqueting halls, soldiers at their posts, prisoners in their dungeons, maidens at the mirror and students at their books.

When the city was unearthed, the houses were found standing. The interior paintings were still fresh, and the skeletons remained in the very position and the very place in which death had overtaken them so long ago. The marks left by the cups of the tilters still remained on the counters; the prisoners still wore their fetters, the ladies their chains and bracelets. The researches are still going on, new wonders are every day coming to light, and we shall soon have quite a distinct idea of Roman towns in the first century of the Christian era.

Rome, from before the commencement of the Christian era, had been the political and military capital of the world. From her gates issued forth those imperial armies that conquered nations and crushed the liberties of mankind. Her rule was not one of reason but one of force. From the age of Augustus Caesar her power had been waning, and when the Emperor Constantine removed the capital to Constantinople, Rome became a city of secondary importance. Though her political prestige was gone she became the seat of a religious empire which had and still has a mighty influence in the nations of the earth. The wrongs which she inflicted on others have recoiled with terrible retribution on herself. Her ruins are silent and majestic witnesses of the providence of God.

To the reign of Constantine the Great, must be referred the commencement of those dark and dismal times which oppressed Europe for a thousand years.

Constantine, while dwelling at Rome, had murdered his son Crispus, his nephew Licinius, and had suffocated, in a steam bath, his wife, Fausta, to whom he had been married twenty years, and who was the mother of three of his sons.

The public abhorrence of his crimes could no longer be concealed. Constantine therefore determined to change his residence and build another metropolis, which he named in honor of himself. He also found it politic to favor the paganized and wrangling Christian sects, that by their aid he might be able to triumph over the powerful coalition that had been formed against him. The reign of Constantine is therefore the true close of the Roman empire: the beginning of the Greek. The transition from the one to the other is emphatically and abruptly marked, by a new metropolis and a new national religion.

Constantinople, at present the capital of the Turkish empire, stands, like Rome, on seven hills, and on a tongue of land projecting into the Bosphorus, which here forms an inlet or small bay known as the Golden Horn.

The Bosphorus, as most of our readers are aware, is the name given to the strait through which flow the waters of the Black sea into the sea of Marmora, and which divides Europe from Asia.

Constantinople is admirably situated for commerce. This is one reason why Russia has so long looked upon it with a covetous eye. In fact, the reason why the bay, on the shores of which the city is built, has been called the "Golden Horn," or horn of abundance, is because into it was brought the wealth of three continents and the products of every clime.

That which is commonly called Constantinople, in reality consists of three great cities, divided by arms of the sea, yet so near to each other that the edifices of either of the cities may be seen distinctly from the other two.

The view here given represents Constantinople looking from the north. In the background is seen the city of Scutari, on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus. The hills in the distance are those of Asia Minor. On the right is shown the city of Stamboul, which stands on the site of the ancient Byzantium, and the foreground represents the modern city of Galata, where the greater part of

the foreign population resides, and where the exchange, custom-house, and most of the churches, convents and hospitals are situated.

As here depicted the current of the Bosphorus flows from left to right and disappears in the distance.

The history of this city is very remarkable, and runs far back into the mist of antiquity. Long before the Christian era it was a place of considerable trade and political importance. Here the barbarians from the coast of the Black sea came to barter their furs for the products of more favored regions. Near this point Alexander the Great crossed the Bosphorus on his great campaign of eastern conquest. In the second century before Christ, the Romans having subdued the neighboring countries, built a fort on the site of the ancient city and named it Byzantium.

The Roman emperor, Constantine the Great, enlarged and beautified the city and made it the capital of the Roman empire, and in honor of himself changed the name to Constantinople. After his death the Roman empire was divided, and Constantinople continued to be the capital of the eastern division.

For more than one thousand years it was the residence of the Caesars and the commercial metropolis of the world.

Owing to the religious rivalry of Rome it was taken and partly burned, by the Crusaders, in A. D. 1205. But the most memorable siege it has ever endured was in A. D. 1453, when it fell into the hands of the Ottoman Turks. By a strange coincidence a Constantine gave his name to the city, and a Constantine reigned at its fall.

It was on the morning of April 6th, A. D. 1453. that Mahomet II., gave the signal for the attack, and the Turkish cannon (then a new invention) thundered against the walls of the city. For fifty days the siege was carried on with little success. At last, food was getting scarce, and the pangs of hunger were sorely felt by the Christians within the city. But hope revived as away on the sea of Marmora, they spied five great ships well laden with supplies and with the Christian flag unfurled. Onward the vessels flew before the breeze, but what a sight met them as they neared the port! Three hundred Turkish ships were drawn up in a line across the straits, each filled with troops and eager for the fight. But there were brave hearts in those five gallant Christian ships, full willing to meet the outnumbering enemy. Gaily they careened before the swelling breeze, and steering straight for the Turkish line bore down upon the foe. Suddenly from the Christian ranks there burst a joyous shout, as the Turkish ships first wavered and then fled. In vain the fierce sultan, Mahomet II., mad with rage, called upon his captains to make good the fight. But the rent was made, and amid a hundred thousand Christian cheers the succoring ships sailed in victoriously to the Golden Horn, and many a mother's heart was glad as she closely clasped her half-famished child.

A strong chain had meanwhile been placed across the harbor, to prevent the entrance of the Turkish fleet. But Mahomet was determined not to be baffled. In the silence of the night he caused eighty boats to be dragged ten miles across the neck of land that divides the sea of Marmora from the tip of the Golden Horn. Rafts were then made, on which cannon were floated to bombard the city from the harbor.

By the 29th of May all was ready for the final battle. The great Byzantine empire, once foremost in the powers of the world, had shrunk into the narrow limits of a few square miles.

The sun had set, and night fell upon the contending hosts. Christian warriors, as they lay under the starry canopy of heaven, cast off the sterner half of man, and let their softer natures free: and loving thoughts of sisters, mothers, wives went winding through the air, to meet in last embrace.

And now the solemn calm before the storm drew near, and all was hushed and still. Constantine did not sleep. He knew that his hour was at hand. With a few chosen knights, he retired to the great church of St. Sophia, and there uncovered stood before the cross. To-morrow the great Byzantine empire would pass away with him! His tears fell thickly at the thought; and he prayed that he might

die as became a Christian knight. Then for the last time he partook of the sacrament, and, turning to those around, he said, "I pray forgiveness if I have injured any one in thought, or word, or deed."

He stepped to the portal of the church, where stood his impatient steed, placed his helmet on his noble head, and mounting into the saddle, the humble penitent rode off as warrior Christian king, to battle and to die. He was afterwards found among a heap of the slain.

The banner of the crescent waved over the waters of the Bosphorus, and what was then the richest capital and finest country in Europe. Four hundred and thirty years have rolled by since then. It is still in their possession.

The appearance of Constantinople at the present time is very peculiar. The city is embosomed in gardens, orchards and vineyards. The houses are for the most part built in the form of a hollow square, with flat roofs and the windows facing inward. This gives to the compact parts of the city a rather dingy appearance. The streets, especially in the ancient portions, are extremely narrow, and frequently filthy. It is therefore pleasant to turn from these crowded thoroughfares, and in a few moments' walk, find yourself surrounded with shady trees, singing birds, fountains and flowers.

Here, in the limits of a single city, may be found representatives of almost every race and clime. The fair-haired natives of northern Europe, the swarthy inhabitants of Tartary, tall fierce-looking Circassians, and flat-nosed, woolly-headed negroes from central Africa; all mingling with the more polished inhabitants of western Europe, each dressed in his own peculiar garb, and presenting a living picture no less striking than strange. In this great hive of humanity may be heard at least fifty different languages making a complete Babel of sounds. Here, also, may be seen in striking contrast, the different manners, customs and usages of oriental and western nations.

The different methods used in the transportation of merchandise are no less peculiar; for while on the eastern side of the city, may be seen approaching long caravans of camels laden with the rich products of the East, on the western side may be heard the shriek of the locomotive, announcing the arrival of a train, bringing passengers, merchandise and latest intelligence from western nations.

But the most significant custom is that five times a day the *muezzins*, or Mahometan priests, ascend to the top of the mosques (as places of worship are called) and which are thickly scattered through the city, and in a loud wailing voice exclaim, "God is great! There is one God! Mahomet is His prophet! Come to prayer!" This is repeated four times facing the east, south, west and north, and has a penetrating effect on the mind of the hearer, much more than the sound of the church-bell of the Christians, or the trumpet of the Jews.

Most European historians have lamented the seizure of Constantinople by the Turks as a terrible disaster. To the unprejudiced student of history there seems to be but little reason for regret. For eleven hundred years Constantinople had greatly influenced the destinies of the world; but during all that time her power had tended more to the degradation than to the elevation of mankind. Her citizens possessed all the classical writings and works of art of the great authors of antiquity; yet in a thousand years they never produced one original, never advanced one step in philosophy or science, or made a single practical discovery. What was it that produced this barrenness, this intellectual degradation in Constantinople? It was the tyranny of priestcraft over thought. For a thousand years Constantinople had been not merely the leading commercial city, but also the leading city in debauchery and crime. In this respect it has vastly improved under Turkish rule. At the present time, especially in the Mahometan portions of the city, it is the least licentious of all the great capitals of modern Europe.

CHAPTER VI

RELIC-WORSHIP, PILGRIMAGES AND CRUSADES

GROWTH OF RELIC-WORSHIP—SCHEMES OF THE ROMAN PONTIFFS—MANUFACTURE OF RELICS—THEIR GREAT VARIETY—VALUE OF RELICS—INSULTS OFFERED TO PILGRIMS—PETER THE HERMIT—CRUSADES—DISORDERLY RABBLE—TERRIBLE SUFFERING—CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM—TERRIBLE MASSACRE—CAPTURE OF CONSTANTINOPLE—CRUSADES OF THE CHILDREN—RESULT OF THE CRUSADES—REVIVAL OF LEARNING.

In previous chapters has been traced the apostasy of the early church, also the career of Mahomet, and the conquests and achievements of the Saracens. While these events were transpiring, other causes were at work which led eventually to the elevation of mankind, the history of which plainly indicates the workings of an All-wise Providence.

At this period there were no printed books, and the only means of religious instruction to which the masses had access, were the pictures and images to be found in the churches, together with the explanations of them given by the priests. By means of these practical object-lessons much useful information was imparted. The principal events in the life of our Savior were thus depicted, and, though the people did not fully understand the grandeur of His mission, they at least learned something of His history, their duties to each other and their own future destiny.

Thus there came to be associated in their minds a reverence for the picture or image itself, and this idea extended until it included the localities where the great events of the Savior's life, death and resurrection transpired.

With the growth of devotion to the person of Christ, grew the feeling of reverence for every place which He had visited and every memorial which He had left behind Him. The impulse once given, soon became irresistible. Every incident of the gospel narratives was associated with some particular spot, and millions believed that the sight of these places brought them nearer to heaven. The cave or excavation in which it was said the Redeemer was born, and where the wise men of the East laid before Him their royal gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, the mount from which He uttered His blessings on the meek, the merciful and the pure in heart, in short, every spot connected with his life, death and resurrection called forth emotions of passionate veneration. These feelings were greatly intensified by the alleged discovery of the cross on which the Savior died, together with the two crosses on which the thieves were crucified.

The splendid churches raised by the Emperor Constantine and his mother Helena over the supposed spot of our Savior's birth at Bethlehem, and His sepulchre at Jerusalem, became for the Christian of that day what the tomb of the prophet at Medina became afterwards to the followers of Mahomet.

The remission of sins and eternal rewards in the world to come were the blessings promised to the weary pilgrim when he should tread the classic soil of Judea, bathe in the river Jordan, chant his quiet anthem of praise in the cave at Bethlehem, walk in the quiet shades of Gethsemane and kneel in reverence at the Savior's tomb.

No wonder then that a hundred thousand pilgrims might have been seen each year wending their way across the plains of Asia Minor, destined for Jerusalem.

The Roman pontiffs, owing to the ignorance of the times, had already built up a wide-spread system of superstition.

They held almost imperial sway over the countless hordes of central and northern Europe. Even kings and emperors paid tribute, and sovereigns dared not disobey their commands. As an instance,

might be mentioned Henry IV., of Germany, who having displeased Pope Gregory VII., was obliged, under penalty of losing his kingdom, to stand as a penitent at the pope's castle gate during three dreary winter days, seeking pardon and reconciliation of the inexorable pontiff.

It is not surprising that the popes, who had long trafficked in human credulity, saw, in the growth of relic-worship, an opportunity to increase their own power and the revenues of the church of Rome. Accordingly an understanding was made with the monks of Palestine and relics were manufactured in untold numbers.

An amusing and instructive chapter might be written on this subject: amusing because of its absurdity, and instructive as it shows to what extremes of folly men will go when left without the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The crimes and corruptions of the papacy had destroyed public confidence. The devout instinctively turned with reverence towards every object that recalled the memories of the pure and good who once lived upon the earth.

No sooner had the wild rage for relics fairly set in than each monastery in the vicinity of Jerusalem made a specialty of some particular relic. The monks at Bethlehem sold thousands of pounds of half rotten rags, each fragment purporting to be a portion of the swaddling cloths of the infant Savior. The monks who guarded the supposed sepulchre of Christ, sold hundreds of thousands of little chips of stone said to have been broken off from the very walls of the tomb where the body of Jesus had lain. It does not seem to have shaken the credulity of the pilgrims in the least, that the tomb still remained in as good repair as ever, and showed no marks of demolition.

The monks who inhabited the monasteries on the banks of the Jordan could point to at least twenty places where it was said the Savior had been baptized, and each monastery possessed numerous pebbles which the monks claimed had been touched by His feet. No less than seven monasteries claimed to have the true cross in their possession, and thousands of pieces, of wood amounting to many tons in weight, were sold to devout pilgrims. Each of these pieces, it was claimed, was a part of the true cross.

But it would require a long and tedious list to even enumerate the various articles comprised in this relic-worship. In order to get some faint idea of their extent and variety, the relics which the Abbot Martin obtained for his monastery in Alsace might be mentioned. These, among other things, included "a piece of the true cross, a fragment of the infant Savior's swaddling cloths, some pebbles from the river Jordan which the Savior's feet had touched, a branch of the tree under which He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, a piece of the Savior's robe, for which the Roman soldiers cast lots," (see Matthew, 27th chapter), "a tooth of St. Mark, seven hairs of the martyr, Stephen, a thigh bone of the animal which Jesus rode into Jerusalem," (see Luke, 19th chapter), and (I hesitate to write such blasphemy) "a bottle of the milk of the mother of God."

In connection with this relic-worship, an amusing anecdote is related: It so happened that about thirty pilgrims were traveling homeward from Palestine together. Being somewhat weary, they concluded to rest and refresh themselves. Having partaken of some wine too freely they commenced to boast of the various relics which each had in his possession. One claimed that he had actually the identical piece of money which Peter took out of the fish's mouth (see Matthew, 17th chapter, 27th verse). But, to their mutual surprise, they soon found that each had made a similar purchase. It was plain that at least twenty-nine of them had been defrauded. But they reasoned that if it was not wrong for the monks to defraud them, it would not be wrong for them to defraud others. So they quietly sold the pieces of money as soon as possible.

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