

**THE RELIGIONS OF THE
WORLD AND
THEIR RELATIONS
TO CHRISTIANITY**

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FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE

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RELATIONS TO CHRISTIANITY.

BY

(John)
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"That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath
showed it unto them." — ROMANS i. 19.

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PREFACE.

THE substance of these Lectures was delivered, according to the directions of Boyle's will, in one of the London churches, on the first Mondays of certain months in the years 1845 and 1846. Though it is not imperative on the preacher to print his Discourses, it has been the custom to do so. Indeed, the intention of the founder seems to be scarcely fulfilled by addressing a series of Sermons on subjects requiring some attention, at distant intervals, to the eight or ten persons who in the present times compose an ordinary week-day congregation. In preparing them for publication I have omitted the texts, which were little more than mottoes, and have altered the forms of language which belong especially to pulpit composition.

The object of the Lectures will, I hope, be sufficiently intelligible to those who read them. But it is a

duty to speak of some writers who have discussed the same subjects, and to whom I am indebted.

In the first Lecture I have not touched upon the question which is considered in Mr. Forster's *Mahometanism Unveiled*. My business was with popular views upon the subject, not with learned and ingenious speculations. Of Mr. Forster's theory I do not feel competent to express an opinion; so far as it evinces a desire to deal fairly with facts which Christian apologists have often perverted, and a confidence, that the cause of Christianity must be the better for such fairness, it must, I am sure, have done good, even if the basis upon which it rests should be found untenable.

Mr. Carlyle's Lecture on Mahomet in his *Hero Worship*, is probably much better known to my readers than Mr. Forster's treatise. Some persons may have been led by that Lecture to identify Mahometanism with reverence for the person of Mahomet; they will strongly object to the sentiments which I have expressed in one passage of this book. But I do not anticipate any such objection from Mr. Carlyle himself. No writer has more distinctly recognized the Islamite principle of subjection to an absolute Will as the vital one in this faith; or has exhibited a more earnest, I had nearly said a more exclusive, veneration

for that principle. A man seems to him to be strong or weak, admirable or contemptible, precisely as he is possessed by it, or as he substitutes some notion of happiness, some theory of the Universe, in place of it. Those who feel that they are under the deepest obligation to Mr. Carlyle for the power with which he has brought the truth of this principle to their minds, for the proofs which he has given that, as much in the seventeenth century as in the seventh, it could break down whatever did not pay it homage, cannot be persuaded to look upon any phrases of his which appear to convey an opposite impression, however much they may be quoted, however partial he may seem to them himself, as the most genuine expressions of his mind. They rather recognize in these phrases an attempt, confessedly unsuccessful, to bridge over the chasm which separates, as Mr. Carlyle thinks, the ages in which this faith could be acted out from our own, in which it has become only a name. That no phrases or formulas, from whatever period or country they may be borrowed, can accomplish this object, Mr. Carlyle is a sufficient witness; that it must be accomplished in some way, his lamentations over the present state of the world abundantly prove. Those who think that it is the first duty of an author to provide them with sunshine, find these lamentations intolerable;

there are some who seem to be pleased with them, as they might be with any unusually strong exhibition of passion upon the stage. There are others who hear in his wailings the echoes of their own saddest convictions, but who for that reason cannot be content to spend their time merely in listening to them or repeating them. One who desires to lead an honest life, and learns that men in former days were honest, because they believed in a Personal Being, who is, and was, and is to come, must ask himself whether such a belief has become impossible for him. And if we are assured by Mr. Carlyle that under the conditions of Mahometanism or even of Christian Puritanism it is now impossible, then we must again ask, Why so? Is it because the truth which made these faiths so energetic is not what it was, or is it because it dwelt in them apart from other truths, without which, in our days, it can scarcely even exist, much less live? These questions may never present themselves to a dilettante admirer of Mr. Carlyle; those whom his writings have really moved, and who regard him with hearty, though perhaps silent, gratitude and affection, are, I know, haunted by them continually. If these Lectures should lead any one such questioner even to hope for an answer, they will do the work for which I especially designed them.

In illustration of the remark that the Mahometan conquerors were not *merely* "Scourges of God," however they may have deserved that title, I would suggest to the reader a comparison of their wars with those of Zinghis Khan. May I advise him also to read with some attention the passage in Gibbon (Chap. LXIV. Vol. XI pp. 391, 392, 8vo Ed.) on the philosophical religion of that Mogul whom Frederic II., the accomplished Suabian, the enemy of Popes, the suspected infidel, denounced as the common foe of mankind, against whom he invoked a crusade of all princes? Gibbon's panegyric, illustrated as it is by his faithful narrative of the proceedings of Zinghis Khan and his successors in Persia, Russia, Hungary, &c., of their incapacity to preserve a record of their own acts, and their ultimate conversion by the bigoted Mussulman, is full of the deepest instruction.

In connection with the remarks upon the constitution of Mahometan society as exhibited in the Ottoman Empire, I would recommend the study of Ranke's excellent Essay upon that subject in his *Fürsten und Völkern*.

The second Lecture is a collection of hints which may not, I hope, be quite useless to some whose personal observations of India, or whose knowledge of its languages, may enable them to detect my mistakes, and,