

**THE MESSIAH-IDEAL. COMPARATIVE
RELIGIOUS LEGISLATIONS, UNFOLDING THE
PROBLEMS OF MAN'S DESTINY. VOLUME II.
PAUL AND NEW TESTAMENT, MOHAMMED
AND KORAN, FROM THE
PROPHETICAL STANDPOINT. HISTORY OF THE
MESSIAH-IDEAL**

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The Messiah-Ideal. Comparative Religious Legislations, Unfolding the Problems of Man's Destiny. Volume II. Paul and New Testament, Mohammed and Koran, from the Prophetical Standpoint. History of the Messiah-Ideal by Maurice Fluegel

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MAURICE FLUEGEL

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VOLUME II.

Paul and New Testament, Mohammed
and Koran,

FROM THE PROPHETICAL STANDPOINT.

History of the Messiah-Ideal.

BY

MAURICE FLUEGEL,

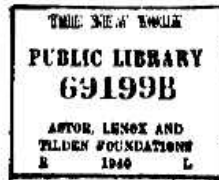
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"Jesus of Nazareth," etc.

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TRANS. TO CENTRAL RESERV.



To the Memory of
Baron Maurice de Hirsch.

"A sprout of the stem of Jesse, with the divine spirit of wisdom, sympathy and munificence; a champion of peace, justice and redemption for all; one of the exemplars of our age embodying the Messianic idea." (Isaiah II—XI.)

Dedicated by the Author.

"The just do not die.
Their memory is ever a blessing.
Their work is their monument."

ודמיהו כבודו כבודו

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INTRODUCTION.

VIEW FROM THE HEIGHTS OF THE MOUNT SERMON.

In the preceding volume⁽¹⁾ we have carefully and closely examined into the chapters and verses, the tenor, the environments, the intellectual, ethical and social atmospheres of the Sermon on the Mount, according to Matthew v—vii. That scrutiny furnishes us with the safest and best materials and colors for an adequate picture of the Christian founder, for the appreciation of the character, the aspirations and the teachings of the writer of that document. In the foregoing volume and especially in the course of the following pages, the reader will find adduced, as much as it is at our disposal, all the facts, incidents and opinions concerning that theme, culled from Apochryphae, Gospels, Talmud, Haggadah, historians, etc. But we think that the Mount Sermon, inclusive of a few leading Gospel passages, hands us the safest key to that historical era and its bearer. Let us now try to have a view of that teacher of Nazareth and his epoch from the height of the Mount Sermon, leaving it to the Gospel studies to perfect our impressions.

We shall take even a vaster view and compare the merits of each of the historic claimants to the messiah-crown; of all those who impersonated our ideal and brought man nearer to the messianic age. Let us grasp in our mind's eye the ethical and social history of the entire ancient world in one comprehensive and comparative tableau. Let us put in juxtaposition the Nazarean epoch with the several other great religious eras and their leaders in the East, and compare the respective mental, moral and social calibre of those initiators with the ideas, ideals and schemes they have inaugurated.

(1) Messiah-Ideal, Vol. I.

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The heights of the Mount Sermon are favorable for such a universal, historical survey, which we shall try to hold in this page and in the following ones.

JESUS, MOHAMMED, BUDDHA, ZOROASTER.

Let us compare Jesus with Mohammed, Buddha and Zoroaster, all four exponents of the messiah ideal, and judge of the importance of their respective teachings.

Zoroaster, no doubt, was a shining pattern of Eastern humanity. The Zend-Avesta contains many fine pearls of ethics and wisdom. But it can hold no comparison with the telling and salient Sermon on the Mount, the many fine ethical and social parables and the wise teachings of Nazareth available for human improvement. Nor can the doctrines of both compare. Zoroaster, or rather the Avesta, as now extant, admits and acknowledges the principle of Evil as at par with that of Good. And that is fatal pessimism. Jesus teaches a vanquished Satan and preaches a world without hell. True, it is but a utopia; yet we profit by it, strive after it, and that is worth millions of sober Zoroastrian schemes. For enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm, and the faith in the good creates good. Buddha was, no doubt, a great and good man, and perhaps as self-sacrificing as Jesus was. But, unfortunately, he was a sceptic, without a God-ideal, nor any great human ideal; he posited nothing, he denied and negated, and his doctrine was despair; his very goodness was from sheer despair, not from hope; and hence he miscarried. He abrogated the Hindoo mythology, and left but negation, cold and barren negation! But people need something positive to go by, some faith. So his successors had to supply it and to create a new mythology, anticipating Heine: "Lampe needs a god." And the Buddhistic new mythology is hardly an improvement upon the old Hindoo one. Whilst Lamaism, now, has little, or nothing of its teacher's, Buddha's, original philanthropy, ethically and theologically it is no real gain over Brahmanism. Politically and socially perhaps it is: Buddha was a friend of the poor. As to Jesus, he too was deified, yet monotheism

was, if dimmed, at least not stifled. Trinity became the Jacob's ladder to reach the transcendental God of the patriarchs, monotheism is its essence. The Gentile races could not grasp the idea of mind, of something not body. The biblical God, the Only One, omnipresent and omniscient, was *unknowable* to them. They oscillated between anthropomorphism and atheism or pantheism. So Christianity became the ethereal scaffold, raising them to the sublime God-idea of Mosaism. The Gentile masses ascended to the presence of the *Shechinah*, through the vestibule of the Galilean messiah. Lifted upon Jesus' shoulders, they better grasped the abstruse God and Father of the universe; and this is a substantial gain. Again: Jesus' Sermon and parables, his ideality, self-denial and living picture of righteousness are yet sources of man's noble strivings and advancement. Compare the Christian world to the Buddhaistic one, and there you see the realized, the embodied Jesus and Buddha and their social results. Compare Western Europe to Eastern Asia, and you have the distance between the two teachers, between Christianity and Buddhism.

Mohammed was a great man. He was, essentially, a good man too. But he had not the stamina to remain so always; nor was his goodness universal, cosmopolitan. He liberated his country, not the world. He was essentially an Arabian. He first, indeed, preached universal righteousness; but seeing he succeeded not, he gave in and threw the ethics of the Decalogue to the winds; he connived at the reigning vices, shut an eye to slavery and polygamy, fostered intolerance and fanaticism—in the name of God; thus he connived at religious war, pillage, lust, cruelty, conquest, assassination—and admitted the black-eyed ever rejuvenated *houris* to the Arabian Paradise;—no doubt, because he could not help it. He had to please his followers. He wanted to live and triumph. He was a practical man, not an ideologue. Most probably, had he continued in his first principles of universal justice and impartial goodness, etc., he would have wrecked; no recognition, no adhe-