

# The Affinity between the Original Church of Jesus Christ and Islam

BY

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TRUST FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT  
AND CIRCULATION OF  
MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LITERATURE,  
THE MOSQUE, WOKING

## PREFACE

DURING my tour in South Africa with Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din I never failed to emphasize two facts ; the one being that our mission was entirely non-political, and the other that our object was not the denunciation of Christianity, which in my view is the sister religion of Islam. Without going into details it is not difficult to show that the whole trend of modern thought is thoroughly averse to any dogmatism which makes salvation dependent on any particular way of *thinking* rather than on a right way of *acting*.

When we also see that the tendency of leading Christian teachers is all in favour of abandoning these dogmas, which were tacked on to the religion of Jesus some three hundred years after his time, we realize that the march of Reason is clearing the way and that the most highly educated and ablest Divines of to-day now confess that they can no longer preach and support the doctrine that what I have often called the "fripperies" of Christianity are in any way necessary to salvation.

Such being the case, it is not hard to see that this is the time of times for Islam to assert its claims and present to the non-Muslim world the simplicity and

solidity of its tenets. To bring the Truth to the front, and controvert the assertions of our over-zealous traducers, we have started a Muslim literary fund, which has for its object the collection of funds which will enable us to carry on the literary propoganda on a very much larger scale than has been heretofore attempted.

I am happy to say that we have succeeded in South Africa and Portuguese East Africa, and that the response to our appeals has been worthy of the object we have in view, and I may mention that all the contributions have been, and will be, acknowledged in the *Islamic Review* month by month.

One of the first items in our programme is the translation of the Qur-án into English, together with a commentary, to be published at a nominal price. These volumes will be sold and, in certain cases, given away when thought desirable. Then we intend to spread the truth about Islam by means of a large number of fresh pamphlets and booklets of, say, forty or fifty pages, and by this means we hope to remove doubts, which exist, as to what the Muslim Faith really is.

I am sorry to say that much of this ignorance of the Truth is due to the wilful misrepresentations of our opponents, who spread about such fictions as that "Muslims worship Muhammad," "Have to marry four wives," "Women have no souls," "Women may not enter the mosque." That much of this imparted ignorance is prevailing amongst non-Muslims in South

Africa was forced upon me by conversations I had with various friends and acquaintances with whom I spoke during the tour. I was, however, more impressed by the willingness they showed to hear the correct version, and in many cases they said : " Why, if what you say is true, I am a Muslim, for I hold exactly your views on religion."

One thing is in our favour, for, in the twentieth century, no eloquence or sophistry can be found which will persuade educated people that a belief in the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity, the Sacraments, the Atonement, and the Immaculate Conception is essential for the salvation of their immortal souls. The clergy complain of empty churches, but it is not, as has been suggested, that their sermons are bad ; it is because the materials from which they have to compose those sermons are unreliable and unsound. The priests and prelates may thunder forth the dogmas of sacerdotalism, but in these days, when people have learned to think for themselves, they carry no more weight than would the whisperings of the Delphic Oracle, could that ancient piece of jugglery be again called into play.

Science, the most valuable of all the allies of religion, is ever giving us a nearer view of the realities of life, and turning over the leaves of the wonderful Book of Nature which an Almighty and Ever-present God has given us to read. There are at the very present moment tens of thousands of people, openly professing no religion at all, who are at heart Muslims,

and I feel convinced that these—many of whom are earnest seekers for the Truth—will embrace Islam if they can only be made to see what its advantages really are. *Now*, therefore, is the time to supply these people with suitable literature, for never in history has a more favourable opportunity been presented.

As is well known there are about 230 millions of Muslims in the world, and nearly 100 millions are British subjects, and I think that as many as possible of these should be in possession of translations of the Qur-án.

It is to the masses of our Muslim brethren we would appeal, and I feel confident that if the importance of the work we have in hand could be brought before these masses by means of thoroughly efficient organization we should be able to secure subscriptions which, in the aggregate, would enable us to attain the objects we have in view. In this case the pen must be made the mightiest weapon in our armoury, and we hope with God's help to succeed in forwarding the great cause all good Muslims have at heart—the advancement and establishment of Islam in all the countries of the world.

I need hardly tell those who have listened to my many speeches in various South African towns, that I am a Muslim by conviction : the grandeur, simplicity, absence of sacerdotalism and freedom from dogmas would alone have been sufficient to draw me to the Faith ; but there were all through my life even

weightier considerations—connected with manifestations which I will not attempt to explain here—which have combined to make me a follower of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and have sustained me in times of misery, and given me strength to resist many of the forces of evil.

It was said, at the time when I openly embraced Islam, that I had become apostate, but since I had never believed in the baptisms and creeds of the Christian religion as being *necessary to salvation*, it can hardly be argued that I deserted a Faith which never appealed to my intelligence or my heart.

#### MUSLIM DUTY.

It seems to me that we Muslims should endeavour to show all those with whom we come in contact, that our religion is not exactly hostile or antagonistic to what is now called Christianity: it is rather a religion possessing some six hundred years of additional enlightenment, but based, like Christianity, on duty to God and our neighbour. No broad-minded and enlightened Christian minister should object to discussing these matters with us, and even if there is no result reached there need be no ill-feeling between fair-minded men anxious to do their best for the human race.

There are, as I have often pointed out, thousands of men and women who are at heart Muslims but do

not like to openly acknowledge the fact for fear of adverse criticism.

Those who, like myself, do not find it possible to subscribe to the dogmatic teachings of the various Christian sects, will find no difficulty in embracing the simple faith which concentrates every thought and wish on complete submission to God, and God alone.

There are many who, finding it impossible to agree with any religion placed before them up to now, have practically become atheists, and I think that to these—seeing that happiness, without some belief in Divine assistance and a future state, is almost impossible—Islam will appeal with great force.

Attention and a fair hearing is all we want, and it is gratifying to realize that the people of England are beginning to free themselves from the misunderstandings which have existed for so many years past. It has been the habit of many Europeans to look upon Muhammadanism as barbarism, but now that they are learning all that the Holy Prophet did to mitigate the savagery and barbarism he met with in Arabia, a much fairer conception has come to life.

Islam stands on a solid foundation and is a religion which appeals strongly to the intellect as well as to the natural sentiments engrafted in human nature, and we should, I think, give most careful attention to the delicate and difficult task of showing that a universal adoption of the Faith by

Western nations is *possible* without seriously interfering with the manners and customs of the West or the spirit of the teachings we find in the Qur-án. There is so much adaptability in Islam that we may hope in the end to surmount the difficulties which are sure to arise. Manners and customs are not Islam.

Most of the conditions of life in the East and West are different, and the habits and customs of thirteen hundred years ago were not like the present-day habits and customs either in the East or West ; but the grand fundamental principles laid down over and over again by the Holy Prophet are as correct and applicable to-day as they were in his day. Light and darkness, as well as right and wrong, were apparent thousands of years ago : they exist to-day and will probably be in evidence to the end of time—nothing changes *them*.

We must therefore draw a distinction as follows : When we are told that absolute belief in and submission to God and beneficence to all our fellow-creatures are necessary to our salvation, we are not asked to subscribe to any dogmatic teaching, and we have no difficulty in recognizing Islam, and there is nothing an intelligent Westerner need take exception to ; but if an attempt is made to insist on the rigid observance of certain forms and ceremonies intended for certain people thirteen hundred years ago, in different climate and different conditions, and it is insisted that these forms and ceremonies are VITALLY

IMPORTANT, we shall find it very hard indeed to make much headway, and we shall, moreover, lay ourselves open to the accusation of doing exactly what we find fault with the Christians for doing, that is to say making Baptism, belief in the Divinity of Christ, and the Sacraments, NECESSARY TO SALVATION.

The strongest and most convincing argument we can bring forward to support our claims and win Western sympathy is that *no idea of atheism or idolatry can possibly exist in the mind of the true believer*; and this fact should go far to mark Islam as the great Religion of the future and of the world.

In advancing our arguments we should, I think, point out that many religions obscure the view of Heaven by introducing dogmas which are nearly always traceable to priestcraft. The Muslim feels that, *wherever he is*, there also is Allah; the All-seeing and All-powerful God is approachable by him individually. The key to Heaven is always there, and can be turned by the humblest or most miserable human being without any help from prophet, priest, or king. It is like the blessed air we breathe, free to all God's creatures, and those who try to make mankind think otherwise are probably guided by interested motives.

I do not think I can too strongly recommend the policy of advancing the *essentials* of our religion before touching on minor matters of detail. We want people to see for themselves the beauty and simplicity of Islam—matters of form and ceremony which are of no vital importance should, I think, be left for future consideration.

## LITERARY PROPAGANDA.

I should like to see translations of the Qur-án in every Muslim house where English is spoken. Unfortunately the translation, side by side with long commentaries, leads to considerable cost. We want something well within the reach of the people—say 2s. 6d. or 3s. a copy: short books or pamphlets, fifty or sixty pages, which can be published at a low cost. My dear brother the Khwaja has this matter under his most earnest consideration, and I doubt not that we may soon see a move taken in the right direction. In England the Bible—Old and New Testaments combined—is produced at a very low figure, but of course no attempt is made in popular editions to give the Hebrew or Greek original text. It has always struck me that Europeans make a mistake in giving out the whole Bible for general reading. It is a collection of various books written at widely different times, and much of it is entirely unfit for children to read. In this respect the Qur-án takes a great lead, for it contains nothing like the revolting and debasing stories which disfigure the earlier books of the Old Testament. It is quite true that there are thousands of excellent people who have been brought up to read the whole Bible from cover to cover and from earliest childhood, but that does not prove that it is desirable to put horrible ideas into children's minds.

Possibly some apology may be due to my readers for quoting so freely from other works, e.g., the

*Sources of Christianity, A Western Awakening to Islam, Thoughts of the Future*, etc., but one very good reason is that my dear Brother the Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din has so ably dealt with certain important subjects—vital to the present work—that I felt I could not do better than quote his actual words.

With regard to the excerpts from my own works, written some fourteen or fifteen years ago, I have in many cases given the original text in order to show that my views have not materially altered since I openly embraced Islam.

In the Chapter on "Spiritualism and the Occult" I have taken the liberty of quoting several passages from the works of Sir A. Conan Doyle and the Rev. W. Tweedale, who have for many years past made a study of spirit phenomena.

Somewhere away in the remote Dark Ages it was the custom of a certain tribe of primeval savages to feed up a youthful member of the tribe for a whole year until he was in what we should call "prime condition." Then on a certain date, probably connected with the stars or the moon, they escorted him to the top of a mountain, where they bound him tightly to a stone altar. The sacrificial priest then advanced upon him with the sacrificial flint knife and cut the heart out of the living victim, and then held the bleeding and almost palpitating trophy up to the sky shouting: "Now is the angry god propitiated."

Thinking over this and the records of even greater

cruelties, which seem to have clung like wax to Christianity and certain other religions, I wrote the following lines in 1918 :—

## THE SACRIFICIAL VISTA.

To pacify an angry god  
The primal savage poured out blood,  
From victims, innocent and young,  
And deemed such murders right and good.

Then idols rose and priestly power  
Increased, and Moloch's victims cried—  
The altars reeked from hour to hour  
As " substitutes " in torture died.

Then, later still, we find the rack,  
The thumbscrews, pincers, red-hot knife,  
Applied to make men change their faith  
In God, the Author of our life.

This avenue of senseless crime  
Is trod to-day, just as of yore—  
Men laud that murder as sublime  
Which killed the Being they adore.

With ruthless pertinacity  
The pagan cult still holds its sway ;  
And death and blood on Calvary  
Alone for us could win the day.

To make " wrong " " right " by added wrong  
Is tried at every point adown  
The sacrificial vista long  
With craven fear, lest God should frown.

O God, whose mercy shineth forth,  
Wilt Thou wreak vengeance on Thine own ?  
Can murders foul appease Thy wrath ?  
Can cruel deaths for sin atone ?

The man-made dogmas of the past,  
 In many forms still hold full sway—  
 We pray that change may come at last,  
 When darkness meets the light of day.

It is sometimes urged that the case is altered when the victim is a "willing" victim; but surely brutal cruelty is equally loathsome in either case?

Possibly I may not have the right kind of brain to discriminate, but at present I fail to detect any very great difference between the angry god of the early savage, and the angry god of the educated twentieth-century Christian, who persists in believing that nothing but the murder of the poor Carpenter's Son could save mankind from everlasting damnation, and propitiate the Great Creator of all things in Heaven and on Earth! As a child I always resented the idea that the "Eternal Father, strong to save," could be in need of a sort of propitiatory bribe or "sop to Cerberus"; as a man I am lost in wonder that a large proportion of the human race have been induced to nurse the absurd figment for so many centuries, and that even now the Christian God is but a copy of the ancient Moloch.

A distinction must be drawn in the case of punishments for the commission of crimes. For instance, we hang or shoot a murderer simply as a deterrent, and to prevent the recurrence of the crime. The laws must be enforced and it is necessary for the good of the whole community that the guilty should suffer; it is quite another matter when we kill an innocent

person because someone else has done wrong, for, in this case, we emulate the principle of the "whipping boy" in a school, which is an absurdity. How can it be held that there is any fairness in a Being who will first of all create mankind in His own Image ("in the Image of God created He him") and place the created in situations also of His own making, and well aware of all the pitfalls and temptations, and then in consequence of a few failures in the course of an infinitesimally short period (the span of human life), pass a sentence of everlasting damnation! Such a deity would have to be approached by the suppliant, "hat in hand," with some such remarks as the following: "I know that you are cruel and vengeful, and for that very reason I cannot respect or love you, but I am told that if I satisfy your lust for blood and sacrifices, you may to some extent mitigate the severity of the tortures you have prepared for me in the next stage of my existence." It is a healthy sign of the times that all such miserable ideas concerning the Almighty are rapidly fading away.

Modern Christianity has failed to keep the churches filled, because education and enlightenment have advanced by leaps and bounds during the past century. More inventions useful to mankind have come to the front within that short span of a hundred years than in all the previous ages since the first appearance of man upon the earth. Only think of it: over one hundred millions of years have passed by before men found out the use of steam and electricity, the existence of

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the atom and the electron, radium and the Hertzian waves, and countless other previously unsuspected phenomena, and all these giant strides have been taken within the narrow compass of the concluding century of the enormous period named !

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