

A Western Awakening

to Islam.

BY

LORD HEADLEY.

GREAT ALLAH, Lord, our God, our King,
Who knowest what for us is best,
We praise Thy Name, and loudly sing
The fusion of the East and West.

"For Christ was an Eastern Man."

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THE BROTHERS IN ISLAM.



It had been said we could not meet,
Or join in prayers for further grace—
Together reach Thy mercy seat—
Or mingle praise in the same place.
O Heavenly Father, Thou hast shown
To us, Thy loving faithful sons,
How brotherhood has quickly grown
Insep'able while time still runs.
In all the ages of the past,
In all the future years to come,
Thy Name alone can bind us fast,
Whilst we can say, "Thy Will be done."
Great Allah, Lord, our God, our King,
Who knowest what for us is best,
We praise Thy Name and loudly sing
The fusion of the East and West.

El Farooq,

January 5, 1914.

PREFATORY NOTE.

MANY years ago Mr. Arthur James Balfour, in one of his famous speeches, made use of the aphorism, "There is but one counsellor worse than panic, and that counsellor is despair." It struck me very much at the time and, in reference to the matter contained in the following pages and the animadversions which are sure to follow my openly expressed convictions with regard to the Muslim religion, I would say there is but one companion worse than disbelief, and that companion is *fear*. The fear of consequences holds many a man to the open profession of beliefs he has no real confidence in. We all like to secure what is best, the best food, best dwelling, best surroundings, and the best friends; but how many of us take any thought about the best religion? Most of us are quite content with that which has been handed down to us, and from a purely selfish point of view, perhaps we are right, as it saves so much "bother," and we keep steadily on in the path so well worn by our ancestors, refusing to even look at or enquire into any other beliefs.

By a strange coincidence the very morning on which I wrote the above I read an account of Lord Haldane's capital address to the Edinburgh students, November 14th. 1913. Speaking of reverses, great and small, he is reported to have said that there was

only one way of providing against the depressions which they brought in their train, and that was by acquiring the large outlook. The undergraduate might find himself "ploughed" in an examination, or in debt or in love, or he might suffer from the depression which was deepest when it arose from no external cause. "If he would escape from the consequent sense of despair he must visualise his feelings and set them in relief by seeking and searching out their grounds. They must aim at the largest and widest view of life, and devote their highest energies to attaining it. To some it would come in the form of Christianity; to others in that of some other high religion, it might be, originating in the East. To others it would come in the shape of philosophy. To yet others art would bring the embodiment of the truth that the ideal and the real, the infinite and the finite did not really exist apart, but were different aspects of a single reality." Speaking of the religious outlook, Lord Haldane said we "now sought God not without but within. The hindrances to spiritual life to-day were moral rather than intellectual. They arose from a lessened readiness to accept authority of any kind."

Now, I humbly submit that it is impossible for any man to attain to a large and wide view of life—life in its greater sense—if he is closely bound round by the thongs of dogmatic teaching and is dependent for his very salvation on baptisms and other sacerdotal ministrations.

Having been brought up as a Protestant, and having lived for a great many years in a Roman Catholic

country, I have had excellent opportunities of observing two forms of Christianity, as followed by two of the most important sects in the Christian Church. I have also lived in the East, and am obliged to confess that there is far less bitterness and far more charity to be found amongst the Muslims than amongst the Christians in the British Isles. The Muslims, for example, are far more tolerant and well disposed towards every branch of the Christian Church than the branches of that Church are towards one another. Sad, but true.

I venture to say that if a committee of really able Englishmen—say, of the type of the late Lord Salisbury, the late Lord Beaconsfield, Mr. Balfour, Lord Haldane, Sir Rufus Isaacs, etc., etc.—were appointed to consider the merits of the world's religions, they would be unanimous in selecting Islam, which appeals to the reason as well as to that natural longing of the heart and soul to be in touch with the Creator.

We must not lose sight of the fact that our loyal fellow subjects, the Muslims, outnumber all the other religious bodies in the Empire: His Majesty the Emperor of India has no more faithful supporters than the followers of Islam.

The thought now occurs to me that very possibly Lord Haldane, in the speech above alluded to, may have had the Muslim religion in his mind when he spoke of "some other high religion." But I may be mistaken.

I make no apology for compiling the few chapters which appear between the covers of this book, nor

am I in the least afraid of the accusations of apostasy I shall have to face. I do not believe, and never have believed, it *essential to my salvation* to believe in the Divinity of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, or the Sacraments supposed by the "Church" to be "generally necessary to salvation." I do believe in the Divine messages God has sent to us by His chosen ones.



INTRODUCTION.

By way of introducing the following pages to my readers, I feel I cannot do better than re-print *in extenso* a short article, from my pen, which appeared in one of the London weeklies in November, 1913 :—

In several newspapers notices have appeared commenting on my religious belief, and it is highly gratifying to me to find that so far all criticism has been of a most kindly nature. It is not to be expected that any decided step can be taken out of the beaten track of every-day custom without attracting attention.

I am very glad that such is the case. I am fond of my profession, and certain forms of athletics and sport have ever been my hobbies, but there has never been any desire for notoriety or publicity on my part; but in this case, if my action is the means of making people tolerant and broad-minded, I am quite prepared to put up with every kind of ridicule and abuse.

The other day a letter reached me from a devout Christian, informing me that the Mohamedan religion was one of sensuality, and that the Prophet had a great many wives! What an idea of Islam! But it is the idea in the mind of ninety-nine out of one hundred Britishers, who will not take the trouble to inquire into the plain facts as to the religious beliefs of over 100 million of their fellow subjects. The Holy Prophet of Arabia was particularly self-restrained and chaste. He was true to his one wife

Khadijah, who was fifteen years older than himself. She was the first to believe in the Divine messages. After her death he married Ayesha. He also married a great many of the widows of those of his adherents who had fallen in battle, not because he had the slightest desire for them, but in order to provide them with a home and give them a position they could not otherwise enjoy. This was quite in keeping with his unselfish and noble life. He gave away so much of his worldly belongings that he hardly ever had quite enough to live on.

We Britishers are wont to pride ourselves on our love for fair play and justice, yet what can be more unfair than condemning, as so many of us do, the Mahomedan faith without first attempting to find out even so much as an outline of its tenets or the meaning of the word Islam?

It is possible that some of my friends may imagine that I have been influenced by Mahomedans; but this is not the case, for my present convictions are solely the outcome of many years of thought. My actual conversations with educated Muslims on the subject of religion only commenced a few weeks ago, and need I say that I am overjoyed to find that all my theories and conclusions are entirely in accord with Islam? Even my friend Khwaja Kamal-ul-Din has never tried to influence me in the slightest degree. He has been a veritable living concordance, and has patiently explained and translated portions of the Koran which did not appear quite clear to me, and in this respect he showed the true spirit of the Muslim missionary, which is never to force or even persuade. Conversion, according to the Koran, should come out of free choice and spontaneous judgment, and never be attained by means of compulsion. Jesus meant the same thing when He said to His disciples: "And whosoever shall not receive you

nor hear you, when ye depart thence. . . ." (St. Mark vi., 2).

I have known very many instances of zealous Protestants who have thought it their duty to visit Roman Catholic homes in order to make "converts" of the inmates. Such irritating and unneighbourly conduct is, of course, very obnoxious, and has invariably led to much ill-feeling—stirring up strife and tending to bring religion into contempt. I am sorry to think that Christian missionaries have also tried these methods with their Muslim brethren, though why they should try to convert those who are already better Christians than they are themselves I am at a loss to conceive. I say "better Christians" advisedly, because the charity, tolerance and broad-mindedness in the Muslim faith come nearer to what Christ himself taught than do the somewhat narrow tenets of the various Christian Churches.

To take one example—the Athanasian Creed, which treats of the Trinity in a very confusing manner. In this Creed, which is very important and deals conclusively with one of the fundamental tenets of the "Churches," it is laid down most clearly that it represents the Catholic faith, and that if we do not believe it we shall perish everlastingly. Then we are told that we *must thus think of the Trinity* if we want to be saved—in other words, that a God we in one breath hail as merciful and almighty in the next breath we accuse of injustice and cruelty which we would not attribute to the most bloodthirsty human tyrant. As if God, Who is before all and above all, would be in any way influenced by what a poor mortal "thinks of the Trinity."

Here is another instance of want of charity. I received a letter—it was apropos of my leaning towards Islam—in which the writer told me that if I did not believe in the Divinity of Christ I *could not*

be saved. The question of the Divinity of Christ never seemed to me nearly so important as that other question,—Did He give God's messages to mankind? Now, if I had any doubt about this latter point it would worry me a great deal, but, thank God, I have no doubt, and I hope that my faith in Christ and His inspired teachings is as firm as that of any other Muslim or Christian. As I have often said before, Islam and Christianity *as taught by Christ Himself*, are sister religions, only held apart by dogmas and technicalities which might very well be dispensed with.

In the present day men are prone to become atheists when asked to subscribe to dogmatic and intolerant beliefs, and there is doubtless a craving for a religion appealing to the intelligence as well as to the sentiments. Who ever heard of a Muslim turning atheist? There may have been cases, but I very much doubt it.

There are thousands of men—and women, too, I believe—who are at heart Muslims, but convention, fear of adverse comments, and a desire to avoid any worry or change, conspire to keep them from openly admitting the fact. I have taken the step, though I am quite aware that many friends and relations now look upon me as a lost soul and past praying for. And yet I am just the same in my beliefs as I was twenty years ago; it is the outspoken utterance which has lost me their good opinion.

Having briefly given some of my reasons for adopting the teachings of Islam, and having explained that I consider myself by that very act a far better Christian than I was before, I can only hope that others will follow the example—which I honestly believe is a good one—which will bring happiness to anyone looking upon the step as one in advance rather than one in any way hostile to true Christianity.