



ISLAM OUR CHOICE

طبعت على نفقة أحد المحسنين غفر الله له ولوالديه ولجميع المسلمين

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Islam - Our Choice

(Abridged Edition)

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DEDICATION

Dedicated in loving memory of my late
uncle Haji Abdul Latif Ebrahim Bawany
(May his soul rest in peace)

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

THE KA'BA

(FRONT PAGE ILLUSTRATION)

THE COVER

Ka'ba is the holy mosque, situated in the heart of the city of Mecca. Muslims all the world over offer their prayers towards the *Ka'ba*. It is the symbol of the unity of the *Ummah*: every individual may he be in the East or the West or the North or the South, turns his face towards the *Ka'ba* to offer his prayers. The Islamic fraternity is always gravitating towards this holy centre.

Ka'ba was built by Prophet Abraham several thousand years ago and has always been revered as a holy place. Before the advent of Prophet Muhammed pagan and polytheistic tribes of Arabia had installed three hundred and sixty idols in it. But on his triumphant entry into Mecca in 8th of Hijri, the Prophet of Islam cleared the holy place of all the false gods installed therein and dedicated it for the worship of one God, Allah, who has no associate in divinity and for whose worship Prophet Abraham constructed it.

The *Ka'ba* is the place which Muslims from all over the world visit once a year on the occasion of *Hajj* and at any other period of the year to perform

'*Umra*'. It is the only spot on the earth where prayers never cease. They continue round the clock. If any one wants to have the unique privilege of being the only person offering prayers at *Ka'ba*, he will have to wait for years and years and then too he cannot succeed. On the occasion of the *Hajj* the greatest congregation of the world is held around it. It is estimated that more than one million people congregate around it every year from all the four corners of the world to perform *Hajj* and an equal number visit it to perform '*Umra*'. Beyond doubt it is the greatest centre of worship on the earth.

Ka'ba is the place towards which Muslims turn their face in prayer, but it is not the *Ka'ba* to which they offer worship. Muslims worship none but Allah. They do not believe in worshipping stones, or animals, or men. *Ka'ba* only symbolises the direction towards which Muslims are to face in their prayers signifying that Muslims all the world over are like the circumference of a circular which has one and only one centre. It is a symbol and not an object of worship in itself.

Near *Ka'ba* is situated the famous historic well of **Zam Zam**, which sprang forth some five thousand years ago on the occasion Ismael and Hajra, the, the son and the wife of Prophet Abraham pented for water in the desert of Arabia. Through this well is built up the prosperity of Mecca. And what is more important the water of this well is being used all the twelve months of the year and by people all over the world. The well is catering to the needs of millions of people and knows no exhaustion.

P R E F A C E

One requires no exceptional intelligence to perceive that the contemporary non-Muslim world has to its credit a good many solid impressive achievements: it operates on much higher level of energy and efficiency than the Muslim world; it has been able to yoke the forces of nature to the service of humanity in a manner undreamt of in the past; it has been able to overpower, to a very great extent, the monsters of poverty, disease and ignorance and has brought about a tremendous rise in the standard of living.

All these are, indeed, great achievements and raise a number of serious questions for all thinking people. Has the modern civilization really been able to put man on road to his self-fulfilment? Has it really succeeded in enabling man to achieve the real goal of his existence? Has it been able to provide the bliss and happiness for which human soul has thirsted throughout the ages? Has it really been able to lift up mankind from the plane of animal existence? Has it succeeded in the enrichment, ennoblement and refinement of man's life?

Quite a few of those here in the Muslim world, who have either seen the Western world from a distance or through coloured lenses (owing to pre-conceived notions and an acute sense of inferiority), have been taken in by the artificial sheen and glamour of the modern Western civilization. Some of them have been so overwhelmingly impressed by the West that they look upon it as the apogee of man's creative achievement. For this reason they have been robbed, more or less, of faith in their own religion and its principles. In fact, they have developed an attitude of blind adoration for everything Western. Therefore, anything in their own way of life which appears to be out of tune with the precepts or practices of the West, is thoughtlessly brushed aside as old-fashioned and inapplicable to modern conditions of living. The queer thing is that although these people are admirers of a civilization which, in their view, is based on the primacy of reason, they find it absolutely unnecessary to apply their own minds to determine whether those elements of Western civilization which they seek to graft are healthy or not.

Some of these people dismiss all religions, including Islam, as unsuited to the requirements of the present age, the age of "reason". For, religion, in the opinion of these new-fangled intellectuals, is a bundle of irrational dogmas and superstitions. Little do these people care to pause for a minute and reflect that even if their statement could apply to other religions, it could not apply to Islam which is founded upon rational

principles. Indeed, the revolution brought about by the Holy Prophet in the history of religious thought is that he won over converts not by means of miracles, but by rational persuasion. Instead of paralysing the intellect of people, the demand of the Holy Quran from man is to open his eyes and exercise his rational faculty. For, if man does that without crippling his mind with prejudice, he is bound, with the help and guidance of Allah, to discover the Reality which is prepared to manifest itself, to people who do not deaden their hearts and minds, in literally everything in the universe - in the alternation of days and nights, in the wonderful creation of the heavens and the earth, in the amazing order, purposefulness and wisdom pervading the universe reflected in the faultless operation of the laws of nature, etc., which point to the fact that this universe is not a product of chance but the result of Divine Will.

But the human intellect which can discover Reality must indeed be a pure one, not the one perverted by animal lusts and base desires. The danger from the present-day civilization to mankind is not that it has set the human mind free in its search after truth. On the contrary, the danger arises from the fact that it has crippled the human mind by placing it under the dead-weight of animal passions. And the modern civilization has no dearth of tools by which it achieves this. Look at the bookstalls: they are full of filthy, almost pornographic literature. Look at the movies: they are full of erotic scenes and portrayals of sex-relationship. Look at the centres of en-

tertainments: they are full of shows and dances which are chiefly directed at arousing sex-passions, so much so that striptease shows have become one of the most popular forms of present-day entertainment. And to reap the harvest of all this, fullest opportunity of unrestricted mixing has been provided to members of both the sexes.

In this atmosphere, charged with sensual passions, it has become well nigh impossible for a large number of human beings to exercise their intellect with freedom or to respond to their inner voice - the voice of their true, God-given nature. Yes, it is impossible for a large number of people, who have opened their eyes in the unhealthy surroundings created by the contemporary civilization, to think freely; but not for all of them. Even in these perverted surroundings the voice of reason and conscience finds a response in the hearts of truth-seekers. Such men have the vision which helps them see the inner rottenness of the contemporary civilization despite its lustrous exterior. Such people are possessed of the true human nature which hungers for real satisfaction and happiness even after the physical appetites have been satisfied. For it is only in discovering and attuning itself to Reality that human soul can find real peace and contentment.

This book is an account of the discovery of truth by some of these great people - people who were burning with the desire to discover the Truth and who would be content with nothing short of it. These people were born and brought up in non-

Islamic environments and were unfamiliar with Islam and its teachings. They were part of the modern Western civilization which has such an enchanting influence on so many of us. And yet their souls remained unsatisfied until they had found the STRAIGHT PATH, the path of Islam.

The book is being published with the hope that it would prove of real help to many in their earnest search after Truth.

EBRAHIM AHMED BAWANY

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

INTRODUCTION

By
Khurshid Ahmad

Islam is the religion of God. It is the embodiment of the code of life which God, the Creator and the Lord of the universe, has revealed for the guidance of the mankind.

For a proper reconstruction of life on this planet man needs two kinds of things, *viz*: (a) innumerable substances and resources to maintain life and fulfil the material needs of the individual and the society; and (2) knowledge of the principles of individual and social behaviour to maintain justice and tranquillity in society and culture. The Lord of the Universe has provided for both these needs in full measure. To cater to the material needs of man He has provided nature with all kinds of resources, which lie at the disposal of man, who can make use of them as he likes. To provide for his spiritual, social and cultural needs He raised His Prophets from among the humankind and revealed to them the code of life which can guide man's steps to the Right Path. This code of life is known as *Islam*, the religion of all the prophets of God.*

*The Qur'an says: "He hath ordained for you (O' Muhammad) that faith which He commended unto Noah, and that which We inspire in thee, and that which commended unto Abraham, Moses and Jesus, saying: "Establish the Faith, and be not divided therein" (*Al-Qur'an*, XLII: 13).

And that: "Say: We believe in God, and in that which has been sent down to us, and sent down unto Abraham, Ishmail, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes. We believe in all that was given unto Moses, Jesus and other apostles of their Lord. No distinction do we make between them, and unto Him we surrender." (*Al-Qur'an* III: 84).

Also that: "In truth hath He sent down to thee the Book which confirmeth those which precede it." (*Al-Qur'an*, III: 2).

All of them called humanity to the way of the Lord, the way of submission to Allah,. All of them gave the same message: all of them stood for the same cause: i.e. *Islam*.

Islam is an Arabic word and connotes *submission*, *surrender* and *obedience*. As a religion, Islam stands for complete submission and obedience to Allah—and that is why it is called *Islam*. The other literal meaning of the word *Islam* is "peace" and this signifies that one can achieve real peace of body and of mind only through submission and obedience to Allah. Such a life of obedience brings in peace of the heart and establishes real peace in the society at large.

"Those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the thought of Allah—indeed, it is in the thought of Allah alone that the heart (of man) doeth really find rest—those who believe and act righteously, joy is for them, and a blissful home to return to."

(*Al-Qur'an*., XIV: 29)

This message was preached by all the prophets of God, who guided man to the right path. But man not only left the right path again and again, but also lost or distorted the code of Guidance which the prophets gave him. That was why other prophets were sent to re-present the original message and bring man to the right path. Last of these prophets was Muhammad (peace be upon him) who presented God's Guidance in its final form and preserved it for all times to come. It is this guidance which is now known as Islam and is enshrined in the Qur'an and the life-example of the Prophet.

II

Basic Postulates of Islam

The basic Islamic concept is that the entire universe was created by God, whom Islam calls Allah and Who is the Lord and the Sovereign of the universe. He is One and has no associate with Him in divinity. He is the Ruler of the universe, its Sustainer and Maintainer. He created man and appointed for each human being a fixed period which he is to spend upon

the earth. Allah has prescribed a certain code of life as the correct one for him, but has at the same time conferred on man absolute freedom of choice as to whether or not he adopts this code as the code of his life. One who chooses to follow the code revealed by God becomes a *Muslim* (believer) and one who refuses to follow it becomes a *Kafir* (non-believer).

A man joins the fold of Islam by honestly believing in and professing faith in the unity of God and the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him). Both these beliefs are epitomised in the *Kalima*

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

"There is no God except Allah; Muhammad is His Prophet."

The first part of this *Kalima* presents the concept of *Tawheed* (unity of God) and the second part of it affirms the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Tawheed is a revolutionary concept and constitutes the essence of the teachings of Islam. It means that there is one Supreme Lord of the universe. He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and the Sustainer of the world and of the mankind.

How can one who observes the inexhaustible creativity of nature, its purposefulness, its conscious relativeness, its preservation of that which is morally useful and destruction of that which is socially injurious, fail to draw the conclusion that behind nature lives an All-pervading Mind of whose incessant creative activity the processes of nature are but outward manifestations! The stars scattered through almost infinite space, the vast panorama of nature with charm and beauty stealing into hearts, the planned waxing and waning of the sun, the astonishing harmony of the seasons and the days and nights, the incessant supply of water, the delicate flowers and crystals beneath our feet—all point towards one fact: *there is a God, the Creator, the Governor.* We wit-

ness a superb, flawless plan in the universe—can it be without a Planner? We see great enchanting beauty and harmony in its working—can they be without a Creator? We observe wonderful design in nature—can it be without a Designer? We feel lofty purpose in physical and human existence—can it be without a Will working behind it? We find that the universe is like a superbly written fascinating novel—can it be without an Author? Truly,

‘O, Mankind: worship your Lord, who hath created you and those before you, so that ye may ward off (evil). Who hath appointed the earth a resting place for you, the sky a canopy; and causeth water to pour down from the heavens, thereby producing fruits as food for you. And do not set up rivals to Allah, when ye know (better).
(*Al-Qur’an*, II: 21-23)

This is the basic tenet to which Muhammad (peace be upon him) asked humanity to adhere to.

It is an important metaphysical concept and answers all the riddles of the universe. It points to the *supremacy of the law* in the cosmos, the all pervading unity behind the manifest diversity. It presents a unified view of the world and offers the vision of an integrated universe. It is a mighty contrast to the piecemeal views of the scientists and the philosophers and unveils *the truth* before the human eye. After centuries of groping in the dark man is now coming to realise the truth of this concept and modern scientific thought is moving in this direction.**

But it is not a mere metaphysical concept or just a jumble of barren words. It is a dynamic belief and a revolutionary doctrine. It means that *all men are the creatures of one God—they are all equal*. Discrimination based on colour, class, race or territory is unfounded and illusory. It is a remnant of the days of ignorance which had chained men down to servitude. Humanity is one single family of God and there can be no sanction for those barriers. Men are

**See: Francies Mason (Ed.) *The Great Design*, Duckworth, London.

one—and not Bourgeois or Proletariat, White or Black, Aryan or non-Aryan, Westerner or Easterner. Islam gives the revolutionary concept of *the unity of mankind*. The prophet came to unite humanity on the Word of God and make the dead live again. Allah says:

“Hold tight to the rope of God, all together and never again fall out. Remember God's gifts and blessings unto you all. When you were enemies; remember how He forged your hearts together in love, and, by His grace, you became brethren.” (*Al-Qur'an*, III: 102)

This concept also enunciates the true position of man in the universe. It says that God is the Creator, the Sovereign; and man is His vicegerent on the earth. This exalts man to the noble and dignified position of being Gods' deputy on earth and endowes his life with a lofty purpose: *to fulfil the Will of God on the earth*. This will solve all the perplexing problems of human society and establish a new order wherein equity and justice and peace and prosperity will reign supreme.

The starting point of Islam is this belief in the Unity of God (*Tawheed*).

The second part of the *Kalima*, on the other hand, signifies that God has not left man without any guidance for the conduct of his life. He has revealed His Guidance through His Prophets and Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the last prophet. And to believe in a prophet means to believe in his message, to accept the Law which he gave and to follow the Code of Conduct which he taught.

Thus the second basic postulate of Islam is to believe in the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), to accept the religion which he presented and to follow his commands.

This automatically brings us to the third basic postulate of Islam: *belief in the hereafter*.

The world, according to Islam, is a place of trial and man

is being judged in it. He will have to give an account of all that he does herein. Life on the Earth will, one day, come to an end, and after that a new world will be resurrected. It will be in this life-after-death that man will be rewarded or punished for his deeds and misdeeds. Those who live in the present world a life of obedience to the Lord will enjoy eternal bliss in the hereafter and those who disobey His commands will have to garner the bitter fruits of their disobedience. According to the Qur'an:

"And every man's deed have We fastened about his neck: and on the Day of Resurrection will We bring forth-with to him a book which shall be proffered to him wide open: 'Read thy book: there needeth none but thyself to make out an account against thee this day.'"

(*Al-Qur'an*, XVII: 14-15)

"Whosoever will come with a good deed, for him there shall be the like of it ten-fold, while whosoever will come with an ill-deed, he shall be requited with only one like it, and they shall not be treated unjustly."

(*Al-Qur'an*, VI: 16)

Thus the basic articles of Islamic faith are three, *viz* :

- (a) Belief in the Unity of God;
- (b) Belief in the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and in the guidance he gave; and
- (c) Belief in the Life-after-death and in man's accountability before God on the Day of Judgement.

Whoever professes these beliefs is a Muslim. And all these concepts are epitomised in the *Kalima*: "*There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is His Prophet.*"

III

Major Characteristics of Islam

G.B. Shaw once said:-

"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the

only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him—the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Saviour of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much needed peace and happiness: I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today.”***

The question is what are those characteristics of Islam which won innumerable converts to the faith in the past and which make it so appealing to the modern age? Some of the major characteristics of Islam are given in the following pages.

1: Simplicity, Rationalism and Practicalism

Islam is a religion without any mythology. Its teachings are simple and intelligible. It is free from superstitions and irrational beliefs. Unity of God, Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the concept of life-after-death are the basic articles of its faith. They are based on reason and sound logic. All the teachings of Islam follow from these basic beliefs and are simple and straight-forward. There is no hierarchy of priests, no far-fetched abstractions, no complicated rites and rituals. Everybody is to directly approach the Book of God and translate its dictates into practice.

Islam awakens in man the faculty of reason and exhorts him to use his intellect. It enjoins him to see things in the yellow light of reality. The Qur'an advises man to say: "O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge" (XX: 114). It asserts that those who have no knowledge are not an equal to those who have (XXXIX: 9), that those who do not observe and understand are worse than cattle (VII: 179), that the meanings of revelation become manifest to those "who have know-

***G.B. Shaw, *The Genuine Islam*, Singapore, Vol. I, No. 8, 1936

ledge" (VI: 98) and "who have understanding" (VI: 99) that "whosoever has been given knowledge has indeed been given an abundant good" (II: 269), that they deserved government who, among other things, have physical strength coupled with knowledge (II: 249) and that of all things it is knowledge by virtue of which man is superior to angels and has been made the vicegerent of God on the earth (II: 30). The Prophet of Islam said:

"He who leaves home in search of knowledge walks in the path of God."

"To seek knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim male and female."

"Acquire knowledge, because he who acquires it in the way of the Lord performs an act of piety; he who speaks of it praises the Lord; he who disseminates it bestows alms and he who imparts it to others performs an act of devotion to Allah."

This is how Islam brings man out of the world of superstition and darkness and initiates him into that of knowledge and light.

Then, Islam is a practical religion and does not indulge in empty and futile theorisings. It says that faith is not a mere profession of beliefs; it is the very mainspring of life. Righteous conduct must follow belief in Allah. Religion is something to be *lived*, and not an object of mere lip-praise and lip-service. The Qur'an says:

"Those who *believe* and *act righteously*, joy is for them, and a blissful home to return to".

(*Al-Qur'an*, XIV: 29)

And Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"God does not accept belief, if it is not expressed in deed; and does not accept deed, if it does not conform to belief."

Thus, Islam is a simple, rational and practical religion.

2: Unity of Matter and Spirit

A unique feature of Islam is that it does not divide life into water-tight compartments of matter and spirit. It regards life as a unity. It stands, not for life-denial, but for life-fulfilment. Islam does not believe in asceticism. It does not ask man to avoid things-material. It holds that spiritual elevation is to be achieved by living piously in the rough and tumble of life and not by renouncing the world. The Qur'an advises us to pray as follows:

“Our Lord! Give us the *good in this world* and the *good in hereafter.*”
(*Al-Qur'an*, II: 201)

Allah strongly censures those who refuse to enjoy his blessings: The Qur'an says:-

“Say (to them): By whose order have you denied yourself those amenities which God has created for His people and those good things to eat and use (which He made for you).”
(*Al-Qur'an*, VII: 32)

Islam's injunction is: “Eat and drink, but exceed not (and become extravagant).”
(*Al-Qur'an*, VII: 31)

The Holy Prophet said:

“The Muslim who lives in the midst of society and bears with patience the afflictions that come to him is better than the one who shuns society and cannot bear any wrong done to him.”

He said:

“Keep fast and break it (at the proper time) and stand in prayer and devotion (in the night) and have sleep—for your body has a right over you, and your eyes have a right over you, and your wife has a right over you, and the person who pays a visit to you has a right over you.”

On another occasion he said:

“These three things also enter faith: (a) to help others, even when one is himself economically hard-pressed; (b) to pray ardently for the peace of all mankind, and (c) to administer justice to one’s own self.”

Thus Islam does not admit any separation between ‘material’ and ‘moral’, ‘mundane’ and ‘spiritual’ life and enjoins man to devote all his energies to the reconstruction of life on healthy foundations. It teaches him that moral and material powers must be welded together and that spiritual salvation can be achieved by using the material resources for the good of man, and not by living a life of asceticism.

The world has suffered at the hands of the “brilliant” onesidedness of many a religion and ideology. Some have laid emphasis on the spiritual side of life but have ignored the material and the mundane side. They have looked upon the world as an illusion, a deception and a trap. On the other hand materialistic ideologies have totally ignored the spiritual and moral side of life and have dubbed it as fictitious and imaginary. Both these attitudes have spelled disaster. They have robbed mankind of peace, contentment and tranquillity. Even today the unbalance is manifest. French scientist Dr. De Brogbi rightly says:-

“The danger inherent in too intense material civilization, to sum up, is to that civilization itself; it is the disequilibrium which would result if a parallel development of the spiritual life were to fail to provide the needed balance.”

Christianity erred on one extreme; Modern Civilization has erred on the other. According to Lord Snell:

“We have built a nobly proportioned outer structure, but we have neglected the essential requirement of an inner order; we have carefully designed, decorated and made clean the outside of the cup, but the inside was full of extortion and excess; we used our increased

knowledge and power to administer to the comforts of the body, but we left the spirit impoverished."

Islam aims at establishing an equilibrium between these two aspects of life: the material and the spiritual. It says that everything in the world is for man—but man himself is for the Lord: his mission in life is to fulfil the will of God. Its teachings cater to the spiritual as well as the temporal needs of man. It enjoins man to purify his soul and also to reform the mundane life—individual and collective both—and to establish right over might and virtue over vice. Thus, Islam stands for the middle path.

3: A Complete Way of Life

Islam is not a religion in the common, distorted meaning of the word, confining its scope to the private life of man. It is a complete way of life, catering to all the fields of human existence. Islam provides guidance for all walks of life—individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, national and international. The Qur'an enjoins man to enter the fold of Islam without any reservation and to follow God's guidance in all fields of life. In fact it was an unfortunate day when the scope of religion was confined to the precincts of the private life of man and its social and cultural role was reduced to naught. No other factor has, perhaps, been more important in causing the decline of religion in the modern age than its self-retreat into the realm of the private life. In the words of a modern philosopher:

"Religion asks us to separate things of God from those of Caesar. Such a judicial separation between the two means the degrading of both the secular and the sacred That religion is worth little, if the conscience of its followers is not disturbed when war clouds are hanging over us all and industrial conflicts are threatening social peace. Religion has weakened man's social conscience and moral sensitivity by separating the things of God from those of Caesar."

Islam totally denounces this concept of religion and clearly states that its objectives are purification of the soul and the reform and the reconstruction of the society. Says the Qur'an:

"We verily sent our Messengers with clear proofs and revealed with them the Scripture and *the Balance* (i.e. the authority to establish justice), *that mankind may observe the right measure*; and He revealed iron (i.e. coercive power) wherein is mighty power and many uses for mankind and that Allah may see who helpeth Him and His Messenger though unseen."

(*Al-Qur'an* LVII: 25)

"The command is for none but Allah: He hath commanded that ye obey none but Him: that is the right path."

(*Al-Qur'an*, XII: 40)

"(Muslims are) those who, if We give them power in the land, establish the systems of *Salat* (prayers and worship) and *Zakat* (poor-due) and *enjoin virtue and forbid vice and evil*." (*Al-Qur'an* XVII: 41)

The Holy Prophet said:-

"Every one of you is a keeper or a shepherd and will be questioned about the well-being of his fold. So, the Head of the State will be questioned about the well-being of the people of the State.

"Every man is a shepherd unto his family and will be questioned about the well-being of every member of it. Every woman is a shepherd unto the family of her husband and will be questioned about the well-being of every member thereof. And every servant is a shepherd unto his master and will be questioned about the property of his master."

Thus even a cursory study of the teachings of Islam shows that it is an all-embracing way of life and does not leave out any field of human existence to be ruled roughshod by 'satanic forces.'

4: Balance between Individualism and Collectivism

Another unique feature of Islam is that it establishes a balance between individualism and collectivism. It believes in the individual personality of man and holds everyone personally responsible and accountable to God. It guarantees fundamental rights of the individual and does not permit any one to tamper with them. It makes the proper development of the personality of man as one of the prime objectives of its educational policy. It does not subscribe to the view that man must lose his individuality in the social-collective or in the state. According to the Qur'an:

"Man shall have nothing but what he strives for."
(*Al-Qur'an*, LIII: 40)

"And whatever suffering ye suffer, it is what your hands have wrought."
(*Al-Qur'an*, XLII: 29)

"God does not change the condition of a people unless they first change that which is in their hearts."
(*Al-Qur'an*, XIII: 12)

"For each is that which it hath earned and against each is only that which it hath deserved."
(*Al-Qur'an*, II: 286)

"Unto us are our deed and unto you are yours."
(*Al-Qur'an*, XXVIII: 55)

On the other hand, it also awakens a sense of social responsibility in man, organizes human beings in a society and a state and enjoins the individual to subscribe to the social good. Prayer, in Islam, is offered in congregation which inculcates social discipline among the Muslims. Everyone is enjoined to pay *Zakat* and it has been laid down in the Qur'an that: "In their wealth the begger and the destitute have their due-right." (*Al-Qur'an* LI: 19). *Jihad* has been made obligatory, which means that the individual should, when the occasion arises, offer even his life for the defence and protection of Islam and the Islamic state. The Holy Prophet said:

"All mankind is a fold every member of which shall be a keeper or shepherd unto every other, and be accountable for the welfare of the entire fold."

"Live together, do not turn against each other, make things easy for others and do not put obstacles in each other's way."

"He is not a believer who takes his fill while his neighbour starves."

"The believer in God is he who is not a danger to life and property of any other."

In short, Islam neither neglects the individual nor the society—it establishes a harmony and a balance between the two and assigns to each its proper due.

5: Universalism and Humanism

The message of Islam is for the entire human race. God, in Islam, is the God of all the worlds (*Al-Qur'an*, I: 1) and the Prophet is a Messenger for the whole of mankind. In the words of the Qur'an: "O people! I am the Messenger of God to you all." (*Al-Qur'an* VIII: 158), "A warner to all the nations." (XXV: 1) and "We have not sent thee but as a mercy for all the nations." (XXI: 102)

In Islam all men are equal, whatever be their colour, language, race or nationality. It addresses to the conscience of humanity and banishes all false barriers of race, status and wealth. There can be no denying the fact that such barriers have always existed, and do exist even today in this so-called enlightened age. Islam removed all these impediments and gave the idea of the entire humanity being the one family of God. The Holy Prophet said:-

"All creatures of God form the family of God and he is the best loved of God who loveth best His creatures."

"O Lord! Lord of my life and of everything in the universe! I affirm that all human beings are brothers unto one another."

“Respect the ways of God and be affectionate to the family of God.”

Islam is international in its outlook and approach and does not admit barriers and distinctions of the days of ignorance. It wants to unite the entire humanity under one banner, and to a world torn by national rivalries and feuds, it is a message of life and hope and of a glorious future.

6: Permanence and Change

Mr. Justice Cardoza has emphatically declared, and rightly so : “that the greatest need of our time is a philosophy that will mediate between conflicting claims of stability and progress and supply a principle of growth.” Islam presents an ideology which satisfies the demands of stability and change both.

Deeper reflection reveals that neither life is rigid beyond change, nor it is change pure and simple. The basic problems of life remain the same in all ages and climes, but the ways and means to solve them and the techniques of handling the phenomenon undergo change with the passage of time. Islam provides for both.

The Qur'an and the *Sunnah* contain the eternal guidance given by the Lord of the universe. This guidance comes from God Who is free from the limitations of 'space' and 'time' and as such the principles of individual and social behaviour revealed by Him are based on nature and are eternal. But God has given us the general principles only and has endowed man with the freedom to apply them in every age in the way suited to the spirit and conditions of that age. It is through *Ijtihad* that the men of every age try to implement and apply divine guidance to the problems of their times. Thus the basic guidance is eternal and permanent while the method of its application can change in accordance with the peculiar needs of every successive age. That is why Islam always remains as fresh and modern as the tomorrow morn.

7: Complete Record of Teachings Preserved

Last, but not the least, is the fact that the teachings of Islam are preserved in their original form and God's Guidance is available without the change of a jot or title. The Qur'an is the revealed book of God which has been in existence for the last thirteen hundred years and the Word of God is available in its real form. Detailed accounts of the life of the Prophet of Islam and his teachings are available in their pristine purity. There has not been an iota of change in this unique historic record. The sayings (*Ahadith*) and the entire record of the life of the Holy Prophet have been handed down to us with unprecedented precision and authenticity. Even non-Muslim critics admit this eloquent fact. Professor Reynold A. Nicholson in his "*Literary History of the Arabs*" says :

"the Koran is an exceedingly human document, reflecting every phase of Muhammad's relationship to the outward events of his life; so that here we have materials of unique and incontestable authority for tracing the origin and early development of Islam—such materials as do not exist in case of Buddhism or Christianity or any other ancient religion." (p. 143)

These are some of the unique features of Islam and establish its superiority as the religion of man—the religion of tomorrow. These aspects have appealed to hundreds of thousands of people in the past and the present and have made them affirm that Islam is the religion of truth and the right path for mankind; and this will continue to appeal them in the future. Men with pure hearts and sincere longings for truth will always continue to say;

"I affirm that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, that He is One, with none to associate with; and I affirm that Muhammad is His servant and His Prophet."

And the following pages present the impressions of some such persons, unfolding the stories of their pilgrimage to Islam.

SECTION I
STATESMEN & DIPLOMATS

AL-HAJ LORD HEADLEY AL-FAROOQ
(England)
(Peer, Statesman and Author)

It is possible some of my friends may imagine that I have been influenced by Mahomedans; but this is not the cause, 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.

Conversion, according to the Koran, should come out of free choice and spontaneous judgement, 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 there. . . . (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 missonaries have also tried these methods with their Muslim brethren; though, I am at a loss to conceive, why should they try to convert those who are already better Christians than they are themselves? I say 'better Christians' advisedly, because 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 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 think of the Trinity if we want to be saved* - in other words that the idea is of a God whom we in one breath hail as merciful and almighty and in the very next breath whom we accuse of injustice and cruelty, qualities which we would attribute to the most blood-thirsty 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 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 message 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 doubts, 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 of men. Whoever heard of a Muslim turning atheist? There may have been some 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 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 relatives 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 the 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 any one looking upon the step as one in advance rather than one in any way hostile to true Christianity.

Lord Headley al-Farooq (Rt. Hon. Sir Rowland George Allanson) was born in 1855 A.D. and was a leading British peer, statesman and author. Educated in Cambridge, he became a peer in 1877, served in the army as a captain and later on as Lieut. Colonel in 4th Battalion of North Minister Fusiliers. Although an engineer by profession he had wide literary tastes. One time he was the editor of the "Salisbury Journal". He was also the author of several books, most well known amongst them being: *A Western Awakening to Islam*. Lord Headley embraced Islam on 16th November 1914 and adopted the Muslim name of Snaikh Rahmatullah al-Farooq. The Lord was a widely travelled man and he visited India in 1928.

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MUHAMMAD ASAD

(Austria)

Statesman, Journalist and Author

In 1922 I left my native country, Austria, to travel through Africa and Asia as a Special Correspondent to some of the leading Continental newspapers, and spent from that year onward nearly the whole of my time in the Islamic East. My interest in the nations with which I came into contact was in the beginning that of an outsider only. I saw before me a social order and an outlook on life fundamentally different from the European; and from the very first there grew in me a sympathy for the more tranquil—I should rather say: more human—conception of life, as compared with the hasty, mechanised mode of living in Europe. This sympathy gradually led me to an investigation of the reasons for such a difference, and I became interested in the religious teachings of the Muslims. At the time in question, that interest was not strong enough to draw me into the fold of Islam, but it opened to me a new vista of a progressive human society, organised with a minimum of internal conflicts and a maximum of real brotherly feeling. The reality, however, of present-day Muslim life appeared to be very far from the ideal possibilities given in the religious teachings of Islam. Whatever, in Islam, had been progress and movement, had turned, among the Muslims, into indolence and stagnation; whatever there had been of generosity and readiness for self-sacrifice, had become, among the present-day Muslims, perverted into narrow-mindedness and love of an easy life.

Prompted by this discovery and puzzled by the obvious incongruity between Once and Now, I tried to approach the problem before me from a more intimate point of view: that is, I tried to imagine myself as being *within* the circle of Islam. It was a purely intellectual experiment; and it revealed to me, within a very short time, the right solution. I realised that

the one and only reason for the social and cultural decay of the Muslims consisted in the fact that they had gradually ceased to follow the teachings of Islam in spirit. Islam was still there; but it was a body without soul. The very element which once had stood for the strength of the Muslim world was now responsible for its weakness: Islamic society had been built, from the very outset, on religious foundations alone, and the weakening of the foundations has necessarily weakened the cultural structure—and possibly might cause its ultimate disappearance.

The more I understood how concrete and how immensely practical the teachings of Islam are, the more eager became my questioning as to why the Muslims had abandoned their full application to real life. I discussed this problem with many thinking Muslims in almost all the countries between the Lybian Desert and the Pamirs, between the Bosphorus and the Arabian Sea. It almost became an obsession which ultimately overshadowed all my other intellectual interests in the world of Islam. The questioning steadily grew in emphasis—until I, a non-Muslim, talked to Muslims as if I were to defend Islam from their negligence and indolence. The progress was imperceptible to me, until one day—it was in autumn 1925, in the mountains of Afghanistan—a young provincial Governor said to me: "But you are a Muslim, only you don't know it yourself." I was struck by these words and remained silent. But when I came back to Europe once again, in 1926, I saw that the only logical consequence of my attitude was to embrace Islam.

So much about the *circumstances* of my becoming a Muslim. Since then I was asked, time and again: "Why did you embrace Islam? What was it that attracted you particularly?"—and I must confess: I don't know of any satisfactory answer. It was not any *particular* teaching that attracted me, but the whole wonderful, inexplicably coherent structure of moral teaching and practical life programme. I could not say, even now, which aspect of it appeals to me more than any other. Islam appears to me like a perfect work of architecture. All its parts are harmoniously conceived to complement and support each other; nothing is superfluous

and nothing lacking, with the result of an absolute balance and solid composure. Probably this feeling that everything in the teachings and postulates of Islam is "in its proper place," has created the strongest impression on me. There might have been, along with it, other impressions also which today it is difficult for me to analyse. After all, it was a matter of love; and love is composed of many things; of our desires and our loneliness, of our high aims and our shortcomings, of our strength and our weakness. So it was in my case. Islam came over me like a robber who enters a house by night; but, unlike a robber, it entered to remain for good.

Ever since then I endeavoured to learn as much as I could about Islam. I studied the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him); I studied the language of Islam and its history, and a good deal of what has been written about it and against it. I spent over five years in the Hijaz and Najd, mostly in al-Madinah, so that I might experience something of the original surroundings in which this religion was preached by the Arabian Prophet. As the Hijaz is the meeting centre of Muslims from many countries, I was able to compare most of the different religious and social views prevalent in the Islamic world in our days. Those studies and comparisons created in me the firm conviction that Islam, as a spiritual and social phenomenon, is still in spite of all the drawbacks caused by the deficiencies of the Muslims, by far the greatest driving force mankind has ever experienced; and all my interest became, since then, centred around the problem of its regeneration.

MUHAMMAD ASAD, Leopold Weiss, was born in Livow, Austria (later Poland) in 1900, and at the age of 22 made his visit to the Middle East. He later became an outstanding foreign correspondent for the *Franfurter Zeitung*, and after his conversion to Islam travelled and worked throughout the Muslim world, from North Africa to as far East as Afghanistan. After years of devoted study he became one of the leading Muslim scholars of our age. After the establishment of Pakistan, he was appointed the Director of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction, West Punjab and later on became Pakistan's Alternate Representative at the United Nations. Muhammad Asad's two important books are: *Islam at the Crossroads* and *Road to Mecca*. He also produced a monthly journal *Arifiat*. At present he is working upon an English translation of the Holy Qur'an.

SIR ABDULLAH ARCHIBALD HAMILTON

(England)

Statesman and Baronet

Since arriving at an age of discretion, the beauty and the simple purity of Islam have always appealed to me. I could never, though born and brought up as a Christian, believe in the dogmatic aspect of the Church, and have always placed reason and commonsense above blind faith.

As the time progressed, I wished to be at peace with my Creator, and I found that both the Church of Rome and the Church of England were of no real use to me.

In becoming a Muslim I have merely obeyed the dictates of my conscience, and have since felt a better and a truer man.

There is no religion that is so maligned by the ignorant and the biased as is Islam; yet if people only knew, it is the religion of strong for the weak, the rich for the poor. Humanity is divided into three classes. First, those on whom God has, out of His bounty, bestowed possessions and wealth; secondly, those who have to work to earn their living; and lastly, the great army of the unemployed, or those who have fallen by the wayside through no fault of their own.

Again Islam recognizes genius and individuality. It is constructive and not destructive. For example, if a landowner who is rich and is not in need of cultivating his land refrains from doing so for some time, his property *ipso facto* becomes public property, and according to Islamic Law, passes into the hands of the first person who cultivates it.

Islam strictly forbids its adherents to gamble or to indulge in any games of chance. It prohibits all alcoholic drinks and interdicts usury, which alone has caused enough sorrow and

suffering to mankind. Thus, in Islam, none can take a mean advantage of another who is less fortunate.

We neither believe in fatalism nor in predestination, but only in pre-measurement; that is to say the fixity of the laws and the intelligence to follow them.

To us, Faith without Action is a dead-letter; for in itself it is insufficient unless we live up to it. We believe in our own personal accountability for our actions in this life and the Hereafter. We must carry our own cross and none can atone for another's sin.

Islam teaches the inherent sinlessness of man. It teaches that man and woman come from the same essence, possess the same soul, and have been equipped with equal capabilities for intellectual, spiritual and moral attainment.

I do not think I need say much about the Universal Brotherhood of man in Islam. It is a recognized fact. Lord and vassal, rich and poor, are all like. I have always found that my brother Muslims have been the soul of honour and that I could believe their word. They have always treated me justly, as a man and a brother, and have extended to me the greatest hospitality, and I have always felt at home with them.

In conclusion, I would like to say that whereas Islam guides humanity in the daily workaday life, the present-day so-called Christianity, indirectly in theory and invariably in practice, teaches its followers, it would seem, to *pray* to God on Sundays and to *prey* on His creatures for the rest of the week.

SIR ABDULLAH ARCHIBALD HAMILTON Bart, formerly Sir Charles Edward Archibald Watkins Hamilton, embraced Islam on 20th December 1923. A well-known English statesman, fifth baronet of the first (1770) and third baronet of the second creation (1819) Sir Abdullah was born on 10th December 1876. He was a Lieutenant in the Royal Defence Corp. and was also the President of the Selsy Conservative Association.

MUHAMMAD ALEXANDER RUSSEL WEBB

(U.S.A.)

Diplomat, Author & Journalist

I have been requested to tell you why I, an American, born in a country which is nominally Christian, and reared under the drippings, or more properly perhaps the drivelling, of an orthodox Presbyterian pulpit, came to adopt the faith of Islam as my guide in life. I might reply promptly and truthfully that I adopted this religion because I found, after protracted study, that it was the best and only system adapted to the spiritual needs of humanity. And here let me say that I was not born as some boys seem to be, with a fervently religious strain in my character. When I reached the age of 20, and became practically my own master, I was so tired of the restraint and dullness of the Church, that I wandered away from it and never returned to it...Fortunately I was of an enquiring turn of mind—I wanted a reason for everything, and I found that neither laymen nor clergy could give me any rational explanation of this faith, but either told me that such things were mysterious or that they were beyond my comprehension. About eleven years ago I became interested in the study of Oriental religions..I saw Mill and Locke, Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Huxley, and many other more or less learned writers discoursing with a great show of wisdom concerning protoplasm and monads, and yet not one of them could tell me what the soul was or what became of it after death...I have spoken so much of myself in order to show you that my adoption of Islam was not the result of misguided sentiment, blind credulity, or sudden emotional impulse, but it was born of earnest, honest, persistent, unprejudiced study and investigation and an intense desire to know the truth.

The essence of the true faith of Islam is resignation to the will of God and its corner stone is prayer. It reaches universal fraternity, universal love, and universal benevolence,

and requires purity of mind, purity of action, purity of speech and perfect physical cleanliness. It, beyond doubt, is the simplest and most elevating form of religion known to man.

MUHAMMAD ALEXANDER RUSSEL WEBB was born in 1846 at Hudson, Columbia county, New York, Educated at Hudson and New York he became an essayist and a short-story writer. He took to journalism and became the editor of *St. Joseph Gazette* and of *Missouri Republican*. In 1887 he was appointed United States Consul at Manila, Phillipines. It was during this assignment that he studied Islam and joined its fold. After becoming Muslim he extensively toured the world of Islam and devoted the rest of his life to Missionary work. He also became the head of the Islamic Propaganda Mission in U.S.A. Mr. Webb died on 1st October 1916.

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ISLAM - OUR CHOICE

SIR JALALUDDIN LAUDER BRUNTON

(England)

Statesman and Baronet

I am deeply grateful for this opportunity of saying a few words as to why I embraced Islam. I was reared under the influence of Christian parents. At an early age I became interested in theology. I associated myself with the Church of England, and took an interest in Mission work without an actual active part in it. Some years ago I gave my attention to the doctrine of "Eternal Torment" of all mankind except a few elect. It became so abhorrent to me that I almost became a sceptic. I reasoned that, a God that would use His power to create human beings whom He foreknew and predestinated should be Eternally Tormented, could be neither wise, just, nor loving. His standard would be lower than that of many men. I continued, however, to believe in the existence of God, but was not willing to accept the commonly understood teachings of God's revelation of Himself to men. I then turned my attention to the investigation of other religions, only to feel myself baffled.

An earnest desire to worship and serve the True God grew in me. The creeds of Christianity claim to be founded on the Bible, but I found these to be conflicting. Is it possible that Bible and the teaching of Jesus Christ had been misrepresented? So, I turned my attention again to the Bible and determined to make a careful study, and I felt that there was something wanting.

I determined to strike out for myself ignoring the creeds of men. I began to teach that men possessed a "Soul", and an "Unseen Force" which was immortal, that sins were punished both in this world and in the next, that God in His Goodness and Mercy was ever ready to forgive our sins if we only were truly repentant.

Realising the necessity of living up to the Truth and digging deep, so that I may find the "pearl of great price", I again devoted my time to the study of Islam. There was something in Islam which appealed to me at this time. In an obscure and almost unknown corner of the village of Ichhra I was devoting my time and service to God's glory amongst the lowest classes of society with the earnest desire to uplift them to the knowledge of the True and only God, and to instil a feeling of brotherhood and cleanliness.

It is not my intention to tell you as to how I laboured amongst these people, nor what were the sacrifices I had undertaken nor the extreme hardships I had undergone. I was simply going on with a singleness of purpose to benefit these classes both physically and morally.

I eventually took up the study of the life of Prophet Muhammad. I knew very little of what he did, but I knew and felt that the Christians with one voice condemned the celebrated Prophet of Arabia. I was now determined to look into the matter without the spectacles of bigotry and malice. After a little time I found that it was impossible to doubt the earnestness of his search after Truth and God.

I felt that it is wrong, in the extreme, to condemn this Holy Man after reading his great achievements for humanity. People who were wild idol-worshippers, living in crime, filth and nakedness, he taught them how to dress, filth was replaced by cleanliness, and they acquired personal dignity and self-respect, hospitality became a religious duty, their idols were destroyed and they worship the True and only one God. Islam became the most powerful Total Abstinence Association in the world. And many other good works were accomplished which are too numerous to be mentioned. In the face of all this and his own purity of mind, how sad to think that such a Holy Messenger of God should be run down by the Christians. I became deeply thoughtful, and during my moments of meditation an Indian gentleman named Mian Amiruddin came on a visit, and strangely enough it was he who fanned the fire of my life into a flame. I pondered over the matter a great deal; brought one argument after the other bearing upon the Chris-

tians' present day religion and I concluded in favour of Islam, feeling convinced of its truth, simplicity, toleration, sincerity and brotherhood.

I have now but a little time to live upon this earth and I mean to devote my all to Islam.

Sir Jalaluddin Lauder Brunton was educated at Oxford University. He was an English Baronet and a public man of wide repute.

TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

By
Abul Ala Maudoodi

Translated and Edited by Khurshid Ahmad

This small book is a concise and authoritative introduction of Islam and contains a brief but lucid discussion over the principles of the Islamic ideology from the pen of one of the greatest thinkers of the Muslim world. It provides all those persons - Muslims and non-Muslims - who have no access to the original sources of Islam, with a comprehensive and all-embracing view of Islam as a way of life. The chief merit of the book is that it portrays the entire picture of Islam in one perspective and above all does not merely present what Muslims believe in and stand for, but also shows why they believe in what they believe in. It is a first primer of Islam, a clear exposition of its beliefs and modes of worship, and a lucid presentation of the basic outliners of Islamic law and culture.

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MUHAMMAD AMAN HOBOHM

(Germany)

Diplomat, Missionary and Social Worker

Why Do Westerners embrace Islam? There are various reasons for it. In the first place, truth always has its force. The basic tenets of Islam are so rational, so natural and so appealing that an honest truth-seeker cannot help being impressed by them. To take, for example, the belief in monotheism. How it raises the dignity of man and how it frees us from the grip of superstition! How naturally it leads to the equality of men, for all have been created by the same God and all are servants of the same Lord. For the Germans, in particular, the belief in God is a source of inspiration, a source of fearless courage and a source of the feeling of security. Then the idea of a life after death turns the tables. Life in this world remains no more the main objective, and great part of human energy is devoted to the betterment of the Hereafter. The faith in the Day of Judgement automatically spurs a man to give up misdeeds, for good deeds alone can ensure eternal salvation, although the wrong deeds may prosper here for a limited period. The belief that none can escape the consequences of the judgement of a Just, Impartial and Omniscient Lord makes one think twice before one does anything wrong and surely this internal check is more effective than the most efficient police in the world.

Another thing that attracts foreigners to Islam is its emphasis on tolerance. Then the daily prayers teach one punctuality and the one month of fasting enables one to exercise self-control over oneself and without doubt punctuality and self-discipline are two of the most important attributes of a good man and a great man.

Now comes the real achievement of Islam. It is the only ideology which has succeeded in instilling in its followers

the spirit of observing the ethical and moral limitations without external compulsion. For a Muslim knows that, wherever he is, he is being observed by God. This belief keeps him away from sin. As man is naturally inclined towards goodness, Islam also offers peace of mind and heart—and this is what is totally absent from the Western society of today.

I have lived under different systems of life and have had the opportunity of studying various ideologies, but have come to the conclusion that none is as perfect as Islam.

Communism has its attractions, so have secular democracy and Nazism. But none has got a complete code of a noble life. Only Islam has it, and that is why good men embrace it.

Islam is not theoretical; it is practical. Islam is not a departmental affair; it means complete submission to the will of God.

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ISLAM - OUR CHOICE

SECTION II
SCIENTISTS, SCHOLARS & WRITERS

PROFESSOR HAROON MUSTAPHA LEON

(England)

Etymologist, Geologist & Author

One of the glories of Islam is that it is founded upon reason, and that it never demands from its followers an abnegation of that important mental faculty. Unlike certain other faiths, which insist upon their votaries implicitly accepting certain dogmas without independent inquiry, but simply on the authority of, "The Church". Islam courts inquiry and counsels its disciples to study, search and investigate prior to acceptance. The Holy Prophet, of ever-blessed memory, said:

"Allah hath not created anything better than reason, the benefits which Allah giveth are on its account, and understanding is begotten of it."

On another occasion he said:

"Verily, I tell you, a man may have performed prayers, fasts, charity, pilgrimage and all other good works, but he will not be rewarded but by the manner in which he hath used and applied his reason."

The parable of the 'Talents' narrated by Saiyiddena 'Issa', i.e. Jesus (on whom be peace) is in strict accordance with Islamic doctrine, as also is the maximum: 'Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good.' The similitude of those who follow blindly and who neglect to use the intelligence which the Divine Giver, of all good, hath bestowed upon them, is declared in the imperishable pages of Al-Qur'an (*Sura 52: Al-Jumm'a - 'The Assembly'*) to be that of 'an ass laden with books.'

The noble and learned Caliph, Hazrat Ali (on whom be peace) said:

“The world is darkness; knowledge is light; but knowledge without truth is a mere shadow.”

Muslims believe that Islam is a term synonymous with truth, and that under the glorious and ever-brilliant sun of Islam, by the light of reason and knowledge, truth can be obtained but in order to obtain that knowledge, and thus attain that truth, man must use his reasoning faculties.

A most poignant pronouncement on this question was given by our Holy Prophet only a few days prior to his decease.

There he lay, the last and greatest of the grand chain of mighty men whom Allah, in His everlasting mercy and compassion, had sent to the world as inspired messenger of truth and of righteousness, his saintly head pillowed upon Hazrat ‘Ayesha’s loving knee.

The true believers of Medina, old and young, men and women—nay, even the children—had gathered, in loving sympathy there around the mat whereon lay Mustapha Al-amin, the chosen, the faithful, *ar-Rasul-Allah*. Tears glistened in their eyes, and coursed down the cheeks of even the most grizzled and valiant of the veteran warriors of Islam. Their leader, their friend, their beloved pastor, and, above all, their Prophet, he who had led them from the darkness of ignorance and superstition into the radiant brightness of the truth, had brought them into Islam, the habitation of peace, was about to pass from them. No wonder, then, that their eyes became fountain of tears, and their hearts were heavy and oppressed.

In the agony of distress, almost of despair, one exclaimed: “O Prophet of Allah, thou art ill, thou mayest die, then what is to become of us?”

“You have Al-Qur’an” said Allah’s Messenger.

"Oh, yes, *Rasul-Allah*, but even with that enlightening book and unerring guide before us, we have had at times to ask from you advice, counsel, and instruction, and if you are taken from us, O Prophet, who is there to be our guide?" said the companions.

"Do as I did and as I have said," was the reply.

"But, O Prophet, after you have gone fresh circumstances may arise which could not have arisen during thy blessed lifetime; what are we to do then? And what are they to do who follow us?"

The Prophet slowly raised his illustrious and saintly head, and with the lurid light of prophecy and inspiration shining radiantly from his noble eyes exclaimed: "Allah hath given to every man as a personal monitor, a *conscience* and as a guide, his *reason*; then, use them in respect of all things and Allah's blessing will ever guide you aright."

The Late PROFESSOR HAROON MUSTAPHA LEON, M.A., Ph.D., LL.D., F.S.P., accepted Islam in 1882. He was a Fellow and Honorary Member of many learned societies in Europe and America. He was an able Philologist, and was at that time contributing a series of articles on the "Etymology of the Man's Language" to the '*Isle of Man Examiner*'. His services to this important branch of science had frequently been recognised by learned bodies. The Potomac University (U.S.A.) conferred upon him the degree of M.A. Dr. Leon was also an earnest geologist. He frequently lectured on scientific and literary subjects before learned and other societies. He occupied the important position of Secretaire-General of "*La Societe Internationale de Philologie, Sciences et Beaux-Arts*" (founded 1875) and was the Editor of "*The Philomathe*" a scientific magazine, published from London. Dr. Leon received many decorations from Sultan Abdul Hamid Khan, the late Shah, and the Emperor of Austria.

ALI SELMAN BENOIST

(France)

Doctor of Medicine

As a Doctor of Medicine, and a descendant of a French Catholic family, the very choice of my profession has given me a solid scientific culture which had prepared me very little for a mystic life. Not that I did not believe in God, but that the dogmas and rites of Christianity in general and of Catholicism in particular never permitted me to feel His presence. Thus my unitary sentiment for God forbade my accepting the dogma of the Trinity, and consequently of the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

Without yet knowing Islam, I was already believing in the first part of the *Kalima*, *La ilah illa 'l-Lah* (There is but One God), and in these verses of the Qur'an:

"Say: He, the God, is One; God is an absolute unity; He never begot, nor was He begotten; and there is none equal to Him." (*Al-Quran C XII: 1-4*)

So, it was first of all for metaphysical reasons that I adhered to Islam. Other reasons, too, prompted me to do that. For instance, my refusal to accept Catholic priests, who, more or less, claim to possess on behalf of God the power of forgiving the sins of men. Further, I could never admit the Catholic rite of Communion, by means of the host (or holy bread), representing the body of Jesus Christ, a rite which seems to me to belong to totemistic practices of primitive peoples, where the body of the ancestral totem, the taboo of the living ones, had to be consumed after his death, in order better to assimilate his personality. Another point which moved me away from Christianity was the absolute silence which it maintains regarding bodily cleanliness, parti-

cularly before prayers, which has always seemed to me to be an outrage against God. For if He has given us a soul, He has also given us a body, which we have no right to neglect. The same silence could be observed, and this time mixed with hostility with regard to the physiological life of the human being, whereas on this point Islam seemed to me to be the only religion in accord with human nature.

The essential and definite element of my conversion to Islam was the Qur'an. I began to study it, before my conversion, with the critical spirit of a Western intellectual, and I owe much to the magnificent work of Mr. Malek Bennabi, entitled *Le Phenomene Coranique*, which convinced me of its being divinely revealed. There are certain verses of this book, the Qur'an, revealed more than thirteen centuries ago, which teach exactly the same notions as the most modern scientific researches do. This definitely convinced me, and converted me to the second part of the *Kalima*, 'Muhammad al-Rasul 'al-Lah' (Muhammad is the Messenger of God).

This was my reason for presenting myself on 20th February 1953 at the mosque in Paris, where I declared my faith in Islam and was registered there as a Muslim by the Mufti of the Paris Mosque, and was given the Islamic name of 'Ali Selman'.

I am very happy in my new faith, and proclaim once again:

"I bear witness that there is but one God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is God's servant and Messenger."

SAYINGS OF THE HOLY PROPHET
(*May Allah's peace and blessings be on him*)

KNOWLEDGE

He dieth not who taketh to learning.

An hour's contemplation is better than a year's adoration.

Wisdom (learning) is the stray camel of the faithful ;
take hold of it wherever ye come across it.

DR. UMAR ROLF BARON EHRENFELS

(Austria)

Professor of Anthropology

The essential features of Islam which impressed me most and attracted me to this great religion are as follows:-

(1) The Islamic teaching of successive revelation implies in my opinion the following: The source from which all the great world religions sprang is one. The founders of these great paths, prepared for peace-seeking mankind, gave witness to one and the same basic divine teaching. Acceptance of one of these paths means search for Truth in Love;

(2) Islam, in essence, means peace in submission to the Eternal Law.

(3) Islam is, historically speaking, the last founded among the great world religions on this planet.

(4) Prophet Muhammad is the messenger of Islam and is thus the last in the sequence of great religious world-prophets.

(5) The acceptance of Islam and the path of the Muslims by a member of an older religion thus means as little rejection of his former religion, as for instance the acceptance of Buddha's teachings meant the rejection of Hinduism to the Indian co-nationals of Buddha. It was only later that schools of thought within Hinduism rejected the Buddhist way as heretical. The differences of religions are man-made. The unity is divine. The teachings of the Holy Qur'an stress this basic unity. To witness it, means acceptance of a spiritual fact which is common to all men and women.

(6) The spirit of human brotherhood under the all-encompassing divine fatherhood is much stressed in Islam and not

hampered by concepts of racialism or sectarianism, be it of linguistic, historic-traditionalistic, or even dogmatic nature.

(7) This concept of divine fatherly love, however, includes also the motherly aspect of Divine love, as the two principal epithets of God indicate: *Al-Rahman - Al-Rahim*, both being derived from the Arabic root *rahm*. The symbolic meaning of this root equals Goethe's *Das Ewing-Weibliche Zieht uns hinan*, whilst its primary meaning is womb.

In this spirit the Church of Hagia Sophia at Constantinople has been made the principal source from which the great Muslim architects in the Near East took their inspiration when building mosques like that of Sultan Ahmad or Muhammad Fatih at Istanbul.

In this spirit the prophet gave these unforgettable words to his followers:

"Paradise lies at the feet of the Mother."

Born as the only son of the late Baron Christian Ehrenfels, the founder of the modern structural (Gestalt) Psychology in Austria, Rolf Freiherr von Ehrenfels felt already as a child a deep attraction towards the East in general and towards the world of Islam in particular. His sister, the Austrian poetess Imma von Bodmershof, described this phase in her contribution to Islamic Literature, Lahore 1953. As a young man Ehrenfels travelled in the Balkan countries and Turkey, where he used to join prayers in mosques, (though a Christian) and was hospitably accepted by Turkish Albanian, Greek and Yugoslav Muslims. His interest in Islam increased by and by and Ehrenfels accepted Islam in 1927 and took on Umar as his Muslim name. He visited Indo-Pakistan sub-continent in 1932 and took particular interest in the cultural-historical problems connected with the status and position of women. After his return to Austria, Baron Umar specialised in the study of anthropological problems of Matilineal Civilizations in India. The Oxford University Press published his first anthropological book (Osmania University Series, Hyderabad, Deccan, 1941) on this subject.

When Austria was overrun by the Nazis in 1938 Baron Umar again went to India, worked in Hyderabad at the invitation of the late Sir Akbar Hydari and carried on anthropological field-work in South India and with the support of the Wenner-Gern Foundation, New York, in Assam. Since 1949 he has been Head of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Madras and was awarded the S.C. Roy Golden Medal for original contributions to social and cultural Anthropology by the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1949. His numerous scientific and Islamic publications also include an illustrated two-volume work on Indian and General Anthropology, "*Ilm-ul-Aqwam*" (Anjuman Taraqqi-i-Urdu, Delhi, 1941) and a tribal monograph on the "*Kadar of Cochin*" (Madras 1952)

DR. ABDUL KARIM GERMANUS

(Hungary)

Professor of Oriental Studies

It was on a rainy afternoon in my adolescence that I was perusing an old illustrated review. Current events mingled with fiction, and descriptions of far-off countries, varied in its pages. I turned the leaves indifferently for a while when suddenly a wood-cut arrested my eyes. The picture represented flat-roofed houses from among which here and there round cupolas rose gently into the dark sky enlivened by the crescent. The shadow of men squatting on the roof clad in fantastic robes stretched out in mysterious lines. The picture caught my imagination. It was so different from the usual European landscapes: it was an Oriental scene, somewhere in the Arabian East, where a story-teller told his gaudy tales to a bur-noused audience. It was so realistic that I fancied I could hear his melodious voice as he entertained us, his Arab listeners on the roof and me, a sixteen-year-old student sitting in a soft arm-chair in Hungary. I felt an irresistible yearning to know that light which fought with the darkness in the picture.

I began to learn Turkish. It soon dawned upon me that the literary Turkish language contains only a small amount of Turkish words. The poetry is enriched by Persian, the prose by Arabic elements. I sought to master all the three, in order to enter that spiritual world which spread such a brilliant light on humanity.

During a summer vacation I was lucky to travel to Bosnia, the nearest Oriental country adjacent to ours. As soon as I settled in a hotel I dashed forth to see living Muslims, whose Turkish language had only beckoned to me through its intricate Arabic script from the pages of grammar books. It was night, and in the dimly-lit streets I soon discovered a humble cafe in which on low straw stools a couple of Bosnians enjoyed their *kayf*. They wore the traditional bulging trousers kept straight at the waist by a broad belt bristling with daggers.

Their headgear and the unfamiliar costume lent them an air of truculence. It was with a throbbing heart that I entered the *kahwekhume* and timidly sat down in a distant corner. The Bosnians looked with curious eyes upon me and I suddenly remembered all the bloodcurdling stories read in fanatical books about Muslim intolerance. I noticed that they were whispering among themselves and their topic was my unexpected presence. My childish imagination flared up in horror; they surely intended to draw their daggers on the intruding 'infidel'. I wished I could safely get out of this threatening environment, but I dared not budge.

In a few seconds the waiter brought me a cup of fragrant coffee and pointed to the frightening group of men. I turned a fearful face towards them when one made a gentle *salaam* towards me accompanied with a friendly smile. I hesitatingly forced a smile on my trembling lips. The imagined 'foes' slowly rose and approached my little table. What now?—my throbbing heart inquired—will they oust me? A second *salaam* followed and they sat around me. One of them offered me a cigarette and at its flickering light I noticed that their martial attire hid a hospitable soul. I gathered strength and addressed them in my primitive Turkish. It acted like a magic wand. Their faces lit up in friendliness akin to affection—instead of hostility they invited me to their homes; instead of the falsely anticipated daggers they showered benevolence upon me. This was my first personal meeting with Muslims.

Years had come and passed in a rich variety of events, travels and study. Each opened new vistas before my curious eyes. I crossed all the countries of Europe, studied at the University of Constantinople, admired the historic beauties of Asia Minor and Syria. I had learnt Turkish, Persian and Arabic, and gained the chair of Islamic studies at the University of Budapest. All the dry and tangible knowledge that was hoarded up through centuries, all the thousands pages of learned books I had read with eager eyes—but my soul remained thirsty. I found Ariadne's thread in the books of learning, but I yearned for the evergreen garden of religious experience.

My brain was satiated but my soul remained thirsty. I had to divest myself of much of that learning I had gathered,

in order to regain it through inner experience, ennobled in the fire of suffering, as the crude iron which the pain of sudden cold tempers into elastic steel.

One night Prophet Muhammad appeared before me. His long beard was reddened with henna, his robes were simple but very exquisite, and an agreeable scent emanated from them. His eyes glittered with a noble fire and he addressed me with a manly voice, "Why do you worry? The straight path is before you, safely spread out like the face of the earth; walk on it with trusty treads, with the strength of Faith."

"O Messenger of God", I exclaimed in my feverish dream in Arabic, "it is easy for you, who are beyond, who have conquered all foes when heavenly admonition has started you on your path and your efforts have been crowned with glory. But I have yet to suffer, and who knows when I shall find rest?"

He looked sternly at me and then sank into thought, but after a while he again spoke. His Arabic was so clear that every word rang like silver bells. This prophetic tongue which incorporated God's commands now weighed upon my breast with a crushing load; '*A lam naj'al'l-Arda mihadan*—Have We not set the earth as a couch, and the mountains as stakes, and created you in pairs, and made your sleep for rest....!

"I cannot sleep." I groaned with pain. "I cannot solve the mysteries which are covered by impenetrable veils. Help me, Muhammad, O Prophet of God! help me!"

A fierce interrupted cry broke forth from my throat. I tossed chokingly under the burden of the nightmare—I feared the wrath of the Prophet. Then I felt as if I had dropped into the deep—and suddenly I awoke. The blood knocked in my temples, my body was bathed in sweat, my every limb ached. A deadly silence enveloped me, and I felt very sad and lonely.

The next Friday witnessed a curious scene in the huge Juma' Masjid of Delhi. A fair-haired pale-faced stranger elbowed his way, accompanied by some elders, through the

thronging crowd of believers. I wore an Indian dress, on my head a small Rampuri cap, I put on my breast the Turkish orders, presented to me by previous sultans. The believers gazed at me in astonishment and surprise. Our small party paced straight on to the pulpit, which had been surrounded by the learned, respectable elders, who received me kindly with a loud *salaam*. I sat down near the *mimbar* (pulpit) and let my eyes gaze on the beautifully ornamented front of the mosque. In its middle arcade wild bees had built their nests and swarmed undisturbed around it.

Suddenly the *adhan* (call to prayers) was sounded and the *mukabbirs*, standing on different spots of the courtyard, forwarded the cry to the farthest nook of the mosque. Some four thousand men rose like soldiers at this heavenly command, rallied in close rows and said the prayer in deep devotion - I one among them. It was an exalting moment. After the *Khutba* (sermon) had been preached, 'Abdul Hayy took me by my hand and conducted me to the *mimbar*, I had to walk warily so as not to step on someone squatting on the ground. The great event had arrived. I stood at the steps of the *mimbar*. The huge mass of men began to stir. Thousands of turbaned heads turned into a flowery meadow, curiously murmuring towards me. Grey-bearded '*ulama* (Savants) encircled me and stroked me with their encouraging looks. They inspired an unusual steadfastness into me, and without any fever or fear I slowly ascend to the seventh step of the *mimbar*. From above I surveyed the interminable crowd, which waved below me like a living sea. Those who stood after stretched their necks towards me, and this seemed to set the whole courtyard in motion. '*Ma'sha Allah*' exclaimed some nearby, and warm, affectionate looks radiated from their eyes'.

"*Ayyuh al-Saadaat al-Kiram,*" I started in Arabic— 'I came from a distant land to acquire knowledge which I could not gain at home. I came to you for inspiration and you responded to the call'. I then proceeded and spoke of the task Islam had played in the world's history, of the miracle God has wrought with His Prophet. I explained on the decline of present-day Muslims and of the means whereby they could gain ascendancy anew. It is a Muslim

saying that all depends on God's will, but the Holy Qur'an says that 'God betters not the condition of people unless they improve themselves'. I built my speech on this Qur'anic sentence and wound up with the praise of pious life, and the fight against wickedness.

Then I sat down. I was aroused from the magnetic trance of my speech by a loud '*Allahu Akbar*', shouted from every nook and corner of the place. The thrill was overwhelming, and I hardly remember anything but that Aslam called me from the *mimbar*, took me by the arm and dragged me out of the mosque.

"Why this hurry?" I asked.

Men stood before me and embraced me. Many a poor suffering fellow looked with imploring eyes on me. They asked for my blessing and wanted to kiss my head. "O God! I exclaimed, 'don't allow innocent souls to lift me above them! I am a worm from among the worms of the earth, a wanderer towards the light, just as powerless as the other miserable creatures.' The sighs and hopes of those innocent people ashamed me as if I had stolen or cheated. What a terrible burden it must be for a statesman, in whom people confide, from whom they hope for assistance and whom they consider to be better than themselves!"

Aslam liberated me from the embraces of my new brethren, put me in a tonga and drove me home.

The next day and the following ones people flocked to congratulate me and I gathered so much warmth and spirit from their affection as will suffice me for a lifetime.

AL-HAJ DR. ABDUL KARIM GERMANUS is a well known Orientalist of Hungary and is a scholar of world repute. He visited India between the wars and for sometime was also associated with Tagore's University *Shanti Niketan*. Later on he came to *Jamia Millia* Delhi. It was here that he embraced Islam. Dr. Germanus is linguist and an authority on Turkish language and literature and it was through oriental studies that he came to Islam. At present Dr. Abdul Karim Germanus is working as Professor and Head of the Department of Oriental and Islamic Studies at the Budapest University, Hungary.

DR. HAMID MARCUS

(Germany)

Scientist, Author & Journalist

As a child I had felt an inner urge to learn all I could about Islam, and I had carefully studied an old Qur'an translation which I had found in the library of my home town and which dated back to 1750. It was the edition from which Goethe also drew his knowledge of Islam. At that time I had been deeply struck by the absolutely rationalistic and at the same time imposing composition of the Islamic teachings. I had also been very much impressed by the gigantic spiritual revolution which they evoked in the Islamic nations of that time. Later, in Berlin, I had the opportunity of working together with Muslims and listening to the enthusiastic and inspiring commentaries which the founder of the first German Muslim Mission at Berlin and builder of the Berlin Mosque, gave on the Holy Qur'an. After years of active co-operation with this outstanding personality and his spiritual exertions, I embraced Islam. Islam supplemented my own ideas by some of the most ingenious conceptions of mankind ever thought of. The belief in God is something sacred to the religion of Islam. But it does not proclaim dogmas which are incompatible with modern science. Therefore there are no conflicts between belief on the one hand and science on the other. This fact is naturally a unique and enormous advantage for a man who participated to the best of his ability in scientific research. The second advantage is that the religion of Islam is not an idealistic teaching which runs along blindly beside life as it is, but that it preaches a system which actually influences the life of a human being. . . . the laws of Islam are not compulsory regulations which restrict personal freedom, but directions and guides which enable a well-contrived freedom.

Throughout the years I have noticed time and again with.

deepest satisfaction that Islam holds the golden mean between individualism and socialism, between which it forms a connecting link. As it is unbiased and tolerant, it always appreciates the good, wherever it may happen to come across it.

DR. HAMID MARCUS was also the editor of *Moslemische Revue*, Berlin.

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ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

WILLIAM BURCHELL BASHYR PICKARD

(England)

Author, Poet and Novelist

“Every child is born with a disposition towards the natural religion of obedience (*i.e. Islam*); it is the parents who make him a Jew, A Christian or a Magian.”—a saying of Muhammad.

Having been born in Islam it was a good many years before I realized this fact.

At school and collége I was occupied, perhaps too intensely, with the affairs and demands of the passing moment. I do not consider my career of those days brilliant, but it was progressive. Amid Christian surroundings I was taught the good life, and the thought of God and of worship and of righteousness was pleasant to me. If I worshipped anything it was nobility and courage. Coming down from Cambridge, I went to Central Africa, having obtained an appointment in the administration of the Uganda Protectorate. There I had an interesting and exciting existence beyond what, from England, I had everdreamt, and was compelled by circumstances, to live amongst the black brotherhood of humanity, to whom I may say I became endearingly attached by reasons of their simple joyous outlook upon life. The East had always attracted me. At Cambridge I read the *Arabian Nights*. Alone in Africa I read the *Arabian Nights*, and the wild roaming existence I passed in the Uganda Protectorate did not make the East less dear to me.

Then upon my placid life broke in the First World War. I hastened homewards to Europe. My health broke down. Recovering, I applied for a commission in the Army, but on health grounds this was denied to me. I therefore cut losses and enlisted in the Yeomanry **managing somehow or other to**

pass the doctors and, to my relief, donned uniform as a trooper. Serving then in France on the Western Front, I took part in the battle of the Somme in 1917, where I was wounded and made prisoner of war. I travelled through Belgium to Germany where I was lodged in hospital. In Germany I saw much of the sufferings of stricken humanity, especially Russians decimated by dysentery. I came to the outskirts of starvation. My wound (shattered right arm) did not heal quickly and I was useless to the Germans. I was therefore sent to Switzerland for hospital treatment and operation. I well remember how dear even in those days was the thought of the Qur'an to me. In Germany I had written home for a copy of Sale's Koran to be sent out to me. In later years I learnt that this had been sent but it never reached me. In Switzerland after operation of arm and leg my health recovered. I was able to go out and about. I purchased a copy of Savary's French translation of the Qur'an (this today is one of my dearest possessions). Therein I delighted with a great delight. It was as if a ray of eternal truth shone down with blessedness upon me. My right hand still being useless, I practised writing the Qur'an with my left hand. My attachment to the Qur'an is further evidenced when I say that one of the most vivid and cherished recollections I had of the *Arabian Nights* was that of the youth discovered alive alone in the city of the dead, seated reading the Qur'an, oblivious to his surroundings. In those days in Switzerland, I was veritably *resigne a la volonte de Dieu* (Muslim). After the signing of the Armistice I returned to London in December 1918 and some two or three years later, in 1921, I took up a course of literary study at London University. One of the subjects I chose was Arabic, lectures in which I attended at King's College. Here it was that one day my professor in Arabic (the late Mr. Belshah of Iraq) in the course of our study of Arabic mentioned the Qur'an. "Whether you believe in it or not," he said, "you will find it a most interesting book and well worthy of study." "Oh, but I do believe in it," was my reply. This remark surprised and greatly interested my teacher in Arabic, who after a little talk invited me to accompany him to the London Prayer House at Notting Hill Gate. After that I attended the Prayer House frequently and came to know more of the practice of Islam, until, on New Year's day, 1922, I openly joined the Muslim

Community.

That is more than quarter of a century ago. Since then I have lived a Muslim life in theory and practice to the extent of my ability. The power and wisdom and mercy of God are boundless. The fields of knowledge stretch out ever before us beyond the horizon. In our pilgrimage through life I feel assured that the only befitting garment we can wear is submission and upon our heads the headgear of praise and in our hearts love of the One Supreme.

"Wal-Hamdu lil' Lahi Rabbi 'l-'Alameen'

W.B. BASHYR PICKARD B.A. (Cantab), L.D. (London) is an author of wide repute. His pen-production include: *Layla and Majnun, The Adventures of Alcassim, A New World etc.*

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ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

COL. DONALD S. ROCKWELL

(U.S.A.)

(Poet, Critic & Author)

The simplicity of Islam, the powerful appeal and the compelling atmosphere of its mosques, the earnestness of its faithful adherents, the confidence inspiring realization of the millions throughout the world who answer the five daily calls to prayer—these factors attracted me from the first. But after I had determined to become a follower of Islam, I found many deeper reasons for confirming my decision. The mellow concept of life—fruit of the Prophet's combined course of action and contemplation—the wise counsel, the admonitions to charity and mercy, the broad humanitarianism, the pioneer declaration of woman's property rights - these and other factors of the teachings of the man of Mecca were to me among the most obvious evidence of a practical religion so tersely and so aptly epitomised in the cryptic words of Muhammad, 'Trust in God and tie your camel'. He gave us a religious system of normal action, not blind faith in the protection of an unseen force in spite of our own neglect, but confidence that if we do all things rightly and to the best of our ability, we may trust in what comes as the Will of God.

The broadminded tolerance of Islam for other religions recommends it to all lovers of liberty. Muhammad admonished his followers to treat well the believers in the Old and New Testaments; and Abraham, Moses and Jesus are acknowledged as co-prophets of the One God. Surely this is generous and far in advance of the attitude of other religions.

The total freedom from idolatry. . . . is a sign of the salubrious strength and purity of the Muslim faith.

The original teachings of the Prophet of God have not been engulfed in the maze of changes and additions of doc-

trinarians. The Qur'an remains as it came to the corrupt polytheistic people of Muhammad's time, changeless as the holy heart of Islam itself.

Moderation and temperance in all things, the keynotes of Islam, won my unqualified approbation. The health of his people was cherished by the Prophet, who enjoined them to observe strict cleanliness and specified fasts and to subordinate carnal appetites....when I stood in the inspiring mosques of Istanbul, Damascus, Jerusalem, Cairo, Algiers, Tangier, Fez and other cities, I was conscious of a powerful reaction the potent uplift of Islam's simple appeal to the sense of higher things, unaided by elaborate trappings, ornamentations, figures, pictures, music and ceremonial ritual. The mosque is a place of quiet contemplation and self-effacement in the greater reality of the One God.

The democracy of Islam has always appealed to me. Potentate and pauper have the same rights on the floor of the mosque, on their knees in humble worship. There are no rented pews nor special reserved seats.

The Muslim accepts no man as a mediator between himself and his God. He goes direct to the invisible source of creation and life, God, without reliance on saving formula of repentance of sins and belief in the power of a teacher to afford him salvation.

The universal brotherhood of Islam, regardless of race, politics, colour or country, has been brought home to me most keenly many times in my life and this is another feature which drew me towards the Faith.

SAYINGS OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

(May Allah's peace and blessing be on him)

He who leaveth home in search of knowledge walketh in the path of Allah.

Allah is gentle and loves gentleness.

Mr. R. L. MELLEMA

(Holland)

Anthropologist, writer and Scholar.

What is for me the Beauty of Islam?

What has Attracted me to this faith?

I began with my study of eastern languages at the University of Leiden in 1919 and attended the lectures of Prof. C. Snouck Hurgronje, the well-known Arabist. I learned Arabic, read and translated at-Baidawi's commentary on the Qur'an and al-Ghazali's reflexions on the Law. I studied the history and institutions of Islam from European handbooks as was usual in that time. In 1921 I stayed in Cairo for one month and visited the Al-Azhar. Besides Arabic I studied other languages such as Sanskrit, Malay and Javanese. In 1927 I left for the then Netherlands Indies to teach Javanese language and Indian cultural history at a special secondary school for advanced studies in Jogjakarta. For 15 years I specialised myself in Javanese language and culture (modern and old) and had little contact with Islam and no contact at all with Arabic. After a difficult period which I spent as a Japanese prisoner of war, I went back to the Netherlands in 1946 and found a new task at the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam. Here I had the opportunity to take up again my study of Islam, being instructed to write a short guide on Islam in Java.

I started to study the new Islamic State of Pakistan which was culminated in a journey to Pakistan in the winter of 1954/55. Having come to know Islam till now from European writers only, in Lahore I was confronted with quite another aspect of Islam. I asked my Muslim friends to be allowed to take part with them in the Friday prayers in the mosques and from now on I began to discover the great values of Islam.

I have felt myself a Muslim from the moment that I had to address the people in one of the Lahore mosques and had to shake hands with innumerable new friends and brothers. I wrote about this event in an article, published in Pakistan Quarterly, Vol. V. no. 4, 1955, the following lines:

We were now to visit a much smaller mosque, where the sermon was delivered by a scholar who spoke English fluently and had a position of eminence at the University of Punjab. He informed the congregation that he had deliberately interspersed more English words than usual in his sermon, as he thought that their brother who had come from a far country, the Netherlands, would then understand the Urdu discourse more easily. The sermon was followed by the usual recitation of two rak'ahs under the leadership of the Imam. This done a few more rak'ahs were performed in silence by those who felt the need to do so.

I was about to leave when Allamah Sahib, turning to me, observed that the assembly expected me to say a few words. He himself would translate them into Urdu. I went and stood before the microphone and quietly started to speak. I said how I had come from a far away country where only a few Muslims live, whose greetings I conveyed to the brothers present in the Mosque, who for the last seven years were so fortunate as to have their own Muslim State. In these few years the new State had succeeded in consolidating its position. After a difficult beginning they could undoubtedly look forward to a prosperous future. I promised them that, back in my country, I should bear witness to the great kindness and hospitality it had been my privilege to receive from all sections of the Muslim population in Pakistan. These words having been translated into Urdu had a wonderful effect, for, to my intense surprise, without even realizing at first what was happening, I saw hundreds of worshippers hasten forward to press my hands and to congratulate me. Old hands and young clasped mine with the most affectionate cordiality. But what struck

and touched me most was the great warmth all these eyes radiated. At that moment I felt myself taken up in the great Brotherhood of Islam which extends throughout the world, and I was indescribably happy.

So the people of Pakistan made me understand that Islam was more than just acquaintance with many details of the Law, that belief in the moral values of Islam had to come first and that knowledge should be conditional to reaching faith.

What is now for me the beauty of Islam and what in particular has attracted me to this faith!

I will try to give a short answer on these questions in 6 points

1. The acknowledgement of One, Supreme Being, uncomplicated and easy to accept by every reasonable thinking creature: Allah, He on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten and none is like Him. He represents the highest wisdom, the highest strength and the highest beauty. His Charity and Mercy are unboundless.
2. The relation between the Creator of the Universe and His creatures, of whom man has been entrusted with the supreme direction, is a direct one. The believer does not need any mediation; Islam does not need priesthood. In Islam contact with God depends on man himself. Man has to prepare himself in this life for the next. He is responsible for his deeds, which cannot be compensated by a substituting sacrifice of an innocent person. No soul shall be burdened beyond its capacity.
3. The doctrine of tolerance of Islam, so clearly manifested in the well-known words: There is no compulsion in religion. A Muslim is recommended to search for the truth where he may find it; also he is enjoined to estimate the good properties of other religions.

4. The doctrine of brotherhood of Islam, which extends to all human beings, no matter what colour, race or creed. Islam is the only religion which has been able to realise this doctrine in practice. Muslims wherever on the world they are, will recognise each other as brothers. The equality of the whole mankind before God is symbolised significantly in the Ihram-dress during the Haddj.

5. The fact that Islam accepts matter and mind both as existing values. The mental growth of man is connected inseparably with the needs of the body, whereas man has to behave in such a way that mind prevails over matter and matter is controlled by mind.

6. The prohibition of alcoholic drinks and narcotic drugs. This is in particular a point in respect of which it may be said that Islam is far ahead of its time.

Dr. R. L. Mellema is the Head of the Islamic Section of the Tropical Museum, Amsterdam, and is the author of *Wayang Puppets. Grondwet van Pakistan, Een Interpretatie van de Islam*, etc.

Thomas Carlyle has said.....

“.....These Arabs, the man Mahomet and that one century,—is it not as if a spark had fallen, one spark on a world of what seemed black unnoticeable sand, but lo, the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Grenada: I said: the Great Man was always as lightning out of heaven; the rest of the men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would flame”. (Thomas Carlyle in his “On Heroes-worship, And the Heroic in History”, Everyman’s Library, London, 1918; p. 311).

SECTION III
WOMEN AT THE THRESHOLD OF ISLAM

MISS MAS'UDAH STEINMANN

(England)

No other religion professed by a large community have I found so comprehensible and encouraging. There seems no better way towards tranquillity of mind and contentment in life, no greater promise for the future after death.

The human being is part of a whole; man cannot claim more than being just a particle of creation in its magnificent perfection. As such, he can only fulfil his purpose of living by carrying out his function in relating himself to the whole and to other living parts. It is the harmonious relationship between the parts and the whole that makes life purposeful, that can bring it nearest to perfection, that helps a human being to achieve contentment and happiness.

What place does religion occupy in this relationship between Creator and creation? Here are some people's opinions on religion.

"A man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him; the thing a man does practically believe. . . . the thing a man does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this Universe, and his duty and destiny there. . . . that is religion."

(Carlyle *Heroes and Hero-worship*)

"Religion is the sense of ultimate reality of whatever meaning a man finds in his own existence or the existence of anything else."

(G.K. Chesterton *Come To Think Of It*)

“Religion a daughter of hope and fear explaining to ignorance the nature of the Unknowable.”

(Ambrose Bierce *The Devil's Dictionary*)

“The body of all true religion consists to be sure, in obedience to the will of the Sovereign of the world, in a confidence in His declarations, and in imitation of His perfection.”

(Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*)

“All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good.”

(Swedenborg, *Doctrine Of Life*)

“Every man, either to his terror or consolation, has some sense of religion.”

(James Harrington, *Oceana*)

At one time or another every human being is confronted with the Unknown, Incomprehensible, with the purpose of his existence. Questioning himself he creates a belief, a conviction—‘Religion’ in its widest sense.

Why do I consider Islam as the most perfect religion?

First and foremost, it acquaints us with the Whole, the Creator: “In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful; Say: He, God, is one, God is He on Whom all depend; He begets not, nor is He begotten; and none is like Him” (*Al-Qur'an*, CXII: 1-4). “To God is your return and He is Possessor over all things” (*Al-Qur'an*, XI: 4). “I, God, am the best Knower” (*Al-Qur'an*, II: 1). Again and again throughout the Qur'an we are reminded of the Oneness of the Creator, “Indivisible”, “Eternal”, “Infinite”, “Almighty”, “All-Knowing”, the “All Just”, the “Helper”, the “Merciful”, the “Compassionate”. So the Whole becomes a reality; again and again we are asked to establish a satisfactory relationship between Him and us; “Know that God gives life to the earth after its death. We have made messages clear to you that you may understand” (*Al-Qur'an*, LVII: 17). “Say I seek refuge with the Nourisher of mankind” (*Al-Qur'an*, CXIV: 1).

One might argue that in order to recognize and believe

in God and to live happily in a community it is necessary to believe in Divine messages. Does not a father guide his children? Does he not organize his family's life so that it may live together harmoniously?

Islam claims to be the only true religion that rehabilitates the truth of its predecessors. It claims that the guidance provided by the Qur'an is clear, comprehensible and reasonable. By guiding our way towards achievement of a satisfactory relationship between the Creator and the created it brings about a co-operation between physical and spiritual forces enabling us to equalize internal and external forces in order to be at peace within ourselves—the most important factor to establish a harmonious state between one living part and another and an important condition towards our striving for perfection.

Christianity stresses the spiritual side of life; it teaches a love that puts a heavy burden of responsibility upon every Christian. The perfect love is doomed to failure if its achievement does not lie within the reach of human nature and contradicts reason and understanding. Only someone who has a deep knowledge of human conflicts and combines it with sympathy, understanding and a sense of responsibility may come near to the perfection of the Christian principle—and, even, then, he will have to bury his reason with his love. S.T. Coleridge says in his *Aids To Reflection*: "He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth will proceed by loving his own sect or Church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all."

Islam teaches us to respect God, to submit to His laws entitling and encouraging us to use our reason as well as our emotions of love and understanding. The commandments of the Qur'an, the message of God for His creatures, regardless of race, nation or social standard.

"Say: O people, the Truth has indeed come to you from your Lord; so whoever goes aright, goes aright only for the good of his own soul; and whoever errs, errs only against it. And I am not a custodian over

you." (*Al-Qur'an*, X: 108).

No other religion professed by a large community have I found so comprehensible and encouraging. There seems no better way towards tranquillity of mind and contentment in life, no greater promise for the future after death.

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MAVIS B. JOLLY

(England)

I was born in a Christian environment, baptised in the Church of England, and attended a Church school where at a tender age I learned the story of Jesus as contained in the Gospels. It made a great emotional impression on me, as also did frequent visits to the church, the high altar with candles burning, the incense, the robed priests and the mysterious intoning of prayers. I suppose for those few years I was a fervent Christian. Then with the increase of schooling, and being in constant contact with the Bible and everything Christian I had the opportunity to think over what I had read and observed, practised and believed. Soon I began to be dissatisfied with many things.

By the time I left school I was a complete atheist. Then I began to study the other main religions in the world. I began with Buddhism. I studied with interest the eightfold path, and felt that it contained good aims but was lacking in direction and details.

In Hinduism I was faced not with three, but with hundreds of gods, the stories of which were too fantastic and revolting to me to be accepted.

I read a little of Judaism, but I had already seen enough of the Old Testament to realize that it did not stand my tests of what a religion must be. A friend of mine persuaded me to study spiritualism and to sit for the purpose of being controlled by the discarnate spirits. I did not continue this practice very long as I was quite convinced that, in my case anyway, it was purely a matter of self-hypnosis, and would be dangerous to experiment further.

The war ended. I took work in a London office, but my

mind never strayed far from the religious quest. A letter appeared in the local paper to which I wrote a reply contradicting the divinity of Christ from the Biblical point of view. This brought me in contact with a number of people, one of whom was a Muslim. I started discussing Islam with this new acquaintance. On every point my desire to resist Islam fell down. Though I had thought it impossible, I had to acknowledge that perfect revelation had come through an ordinary human being, since the best of twentieth century governments could not improve upon that revelation, and were themselves continually borrowing from the Islamic system.

At this time I met a number of other Muslims and some of the English girl converts endeavoured to help me, with no little success, since, coming from the same background, they understood better some of my difficulties. I read a number of books, including *The religion of Islam, Muhammad and Christ* and *The sources of Christianity*, the latter showing the amazing similarities between Christianity and the old pagan myths, impressed me greatly. Above all I read the Holy Qur'an. At first it seemed mainly repetition. I was never quite sure if I was taking it in or not, but the Qur'an, I found, works silently on the spirit. Night after night I could not put it down. Yet I often wondered how perfect guidance for man could come through imperfect human channels at all. Muslims made no claim for Muhammad that he was superhuman. I learned that in Islam prophets are men who have remained sinless, and that revelation was no new thing. The Jewish prophets of old received it. Jesus, too, was a prophet. Still it puzzled me why it did not happen any more in the twentieth century. I was asked to look at what the Qur'an said: "Muhammad is the Messenger of God and the last of the Prophets." And of course it was perfectly reasonable, too. How could there be other prophets to come if the Holy Qur'an was the book . . . explaining all things and verifying that which is with you and if it was to remain uncorrupted in the world, as is guaranteed in the Qur'an, and perfectly kept so far? "Surely We have revealed the Reminder (i.e. the Qur'an) and surely We are its Guardian." In that case there could be no need of further prophets or books.

Still I pondered. I read that the Qur'an is a guide to those who ponder (XVI: 65) and that doubters were asked to try and produce a chapter like it (II:23). Surely, I thought, it must be possible to produce a better living plan in 1954, than this which dates back to a man born in the year 570 C.E.? I set to work, but everywhere I failed.

No doubt, influenced by the usual condemnation of Islam from Christian pulpits on the subject, I picked on polygamy. At last I thought I had something; obviously Western monogamy was an improvement on this old system. I talked of it to my Muslim friend. He illustrated with the aid of newspaper articles how much true monogamy there was in England, and convinced me that a limited polygamy was the answer to the secret unions that are becoming so distressingly common in the West. My own common sense could see that, particularly after a war, when women of a certain age group far outnumber men, a percentage of them are destined to remain spinsters. Did God give them life for that? I recollect that on the radio programme known as 'Dear Sir' an unmarried English girl had called for lawful polygamy, saying she would prefer a shared married life rather than the loneliness to which she seemed to be destined. In Islam no one is forced into a polygamous marriage, but in a perfect religion, the opportunity must be there to meet those cases where it is necessary.

Then about ritual prayers I thought I had a point. Surely prayers repeated five times a day must become just a meaningless habit? My friend had a quick and illuminating answer. 'What about your music practice, he asked, where you do scales for half an hour every day whether you feel like it or not? Of course, it is not good if it becomes a dead habit—to be thinking of what is being done will give greater benefit—but even scales done without thinking will be better than not doing them at all, and so it is with prayers.' Any music student will see the point of this, particularly if he bears in mind that in Islam prayers are not said for the benefit of God, Who is above needing them, but for our own benefit. as a spiritual exercise, besides other uses.

Thus gradually I became convinced of the truth in the

teachings of Islam, and formally accepted the faith. I did this with great satisfaction, as I could fully realize that it was no emotional craze of moment, but a long process of reasoning, lasting nearly two years, through which I went despite my emotions that pulled me so strongly the other way.

SOME SAYINGS OF THE HOLY PROPHET

(May Allah's peace and blessings be on him)

KNOWLEDGE

To spend more time in learning is better than spending more time in praying; the support of religion is abstinence. It is better to teach knowledge one hour in the night than to pray the whole night.

One learned man is harder on the devil than a thousand ignorant worshippers.

Acquire knowledge. It enableth the possessor to distinguish right from wrong; it lighteth the way to heaven; it is our friend in the desert, our society in solitude, our companion when friendless; it guideth us to happiness; it sustains us in misery; it is an ornament among friends and armour against enemies.

Seek after knowledge though it be in China.

The learned ones are the heirs of the Prophets—they leave knowledge as their inheritance; he who inheriteth it inheriteth a great fortune.

Learn to know thyself.

Whose honoureth the learned, honoureth me.

LADY EVELYN ZEINAB COBBOLD

(England)

I am often asked when and why I became a Muslim. I can only reply that I do not know the precise moment when the truth of Islam dawned upon me. It seems that I have always been a Muslim. This is not so strange when one remembers that Islam is the natural religion that a child, left to itself, would develop. Indeed as a Western critic once described it. 'Islam is the religion of common sense.'

The more I read and the more I studied, the more convinced I became that Islam was the most practical religion, and the one most calculated to solve the world's many perplexing problems, and to bring to humanity peace and happiness. Since then I have never wavered in my belief that there is but one God; that Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and others before (peace be on all of them) were prophets, divinely inspired, that to every nation God has sent an apostle, that we are not born in sin, and that we do not need any redemption, that we do not need anyone to intercede between us and God, Whom we can approach at all times, and that no one can intercede for us, not even Muhammad or Jesus, and that our salvation depends entirely on ourselves and on our actions.

The word 'Islam' means surrender to God. It also means peace. A Muslim is one who is 'in harmony with the decrees of the author of this world', one who has made his peace with God and His creatures.

Islam is based on two fundamental truths: (a) the Oneness of God and (b) the Brotherhood of Man, and is entirely free from any encumbrances of theological dogma. Above every thing else it is a positive faith.

The influence of the *Hajj* cannot be exaggerated. To be a

member of that huge congregation gathered together from the four corners of the earth, on this sacred occasion and on the sacred spot, and to join with this mass of humanity, in all humility, in the glorification of God, is to have one's consciousness impressed by the full significance of the Islamic ideal, is to be privileged to participate in one of the most soul-inspiring experiences that have ever been granted to human beings. To visit the birthplace of Islam, to tread the sacred ground of the prophet's struggle to call erring humanity back to God, is to re-live those hallowed by the memories of Muhammad's long toil and sufferings in glorious years of sacrifice and martyrdom, is to have one's soul kindled by that celestial fire which lighted up the whole earth. But this is not all. The *Hajj*, above everything else, makes for unity among Moslems. If there is anything that unifies the scattered forces of Islam and imbues them with mutual sympathy it is the pilgrimage. It provides them with a central point to which they rally from all corners of the earth. It creates for them annually an occasion to meet and know one another, to exchange views and compare experiences and unite their various efforts to the common good. Distances are annihilated. Differences of sect are set aside. Divergences of race and colour cease to exist in this fraternity of faith that unites all Moslems in one great brotherhood and makes them conscious of the glorious heritage that is theirs.

SOME SAYINGS OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

(May Allah's peace and blessing be on him)

Women are twin half of men.

God commandeth you to treat women well, for they are your mothers, daughters and aunts.

The rights of women are, sacred. See, therefore, that women are maintained in the rights granted to them.

And the best of you are those who are kindest to their wives.

The widow shall not be married until she is consulted and the virgin shall not be married until her consent is obtained.

MRS. CECILIA MAHMUDA CANNOLLY

(Australia)

Why I embraced Islam?

First and foremost I would say it was because fundamentally I had always been a Muslim without being aware of it.

Very early in my life I had lost faith in Christianity for many reasons, the major one being that whenever I questioned any Christian, whether it was a person belonging to the so-called Holy Orders or a layman, regarding any point that puzzled me in regard to the Church teachings, I invariably received the monotonous answer: 'You must not question the teachings of the Church; you must have faith.' I did not have the courage in those days to say: 'I cannot have faith in something that I do not understand', and, from my experience, neither do most of the people who call themselves Christians. What I did do was to leave the Church (Roman Catholic) and its teaching and to place my faith in the one true god in whom it was much easier to believe, than in the three gods of the Church. By contrast with the mysteries and miracles of the Christian teaching, life took on a new and wider meaning, no longer cramped with dogma and ritual. Everywhere I looked I could see God's work. And although, in common with greater minds than my own, I could not understand the miracles that happened before my eyes, I could stand and marvel at the wonder of it all—the trees, flowers, birds and animals. Even a new born babe became a beautiful miracle, not the same thing that the Church had taught me to believe at all. I remembered how, when a child, I gazed at newborn babies and thought, "It's all covered in black sin", I no longer believed in ugliness; everything became beautiful.

Then one day my daughter brought home a book about Islam. We became so interested in it that we followed it up with many other books on Islam. We soon realized that this was really what we believed. During the time I had believed

in Christianity I had been led to believe that Islam was only something to joke about. Thus all that I then read was a revelation to me. After a while I looked up some Muslims and questioned them on some of the points that were not quite clear to me. Here again there was yet another revelation. My questions were all answered promptly and concisely, so different from the frustration I had experienced when questioning Christianity. After much reading and studying of the religion of Islam both my daughter and myself decided to become Muslims, taking the names of Rashida and Mahmuda respectively.

If I were asked what impressed me most in the religion of Islam, I would probably say the prayers, because prayers in Christianity are used wholly in begging God (through Jesus Christ) to grant worldly favours, whereas in Islam they are used to give praise and thanks to Almighty God for all His blessings since He knows what is necessary for our welfare and grants us what we need without our asking for it.

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MISS FATIMA KAZUE

(JAPAN)

Ever since the Second World War I have been watching with restlessness that our faith in our religion was fast becoming weak. We had begun to accept the American mode of living and I deeply felt as if something was missing. At first I could not understand so to what it was that was missing. It was the cry of my soul to find an answer to this restlessness.

I was fortunate to be acquainted with one Muslim who had been staying in Tokyo for sometime. His behaviour and his way of worship made me curious and I asked many questions. His answers were very gratifying and afforded me much peace of mind and soul. He taught me how one should lead his life as God desires us to live. I had never imagined before that the entire outlook of life can change so suddenly, as did mine by living as a Muslim and feeling a sort of unison with the Creator Himself.

Look at the salutation of a Muslim. You say "*Assalamô-
Alaikum Wa-Rahamatullah Wa-barakatoh*": 'May you have peace from God and be happy ever.' This is very unlike 'good morning' and 'good afternoon' which simply means your morning be good and your afternoon be good. It sounds all materialistic. There is no eternal wish, no prayer to invoke God's blessings.

Through that Muslim friend of mine I have learnt many things which a Muslim believes in and practises. I like the Muslim way of life which is pure, simple and essentially peaceful. I am convinced that Islam alone can bring peace in an individual's life as well as in the collective life of man. Islam alone can give real peace to mankind—peace which humanity is so eager to have. I am happy to have acquired this peace and could like to spread Islam as much as possible for me amongst my people.

MRS. AMINA MOSLER

(Germany)

One day, in the year 1928, my son with tears in his eyes said: 'I do not want to remain a Christian any longer; I want to be a Muslim; and you, too, my mother, should join this new faith with me.' That was the first time I felt that I had to link myself with Islam. Years passed before I came in contact with the Imam of the Berlin Mosque, who introduced me to Islam. I came to recognize that Islam was the true religion for me. Belief in the Trinity of the Christian faith was impossible for me even at my young age of twenty. After studying Islam I also rejected confession, the holiness and recognition of the supreme power of the Pope, baptism, etc., and thus I became a Muslim.

My ancestors were all sincere believers and pious persons. I was brought up in a convent and hence I inherited a religious attitude towards life. This demanded that I should associate myself with one religious system or the other. I was indeed very fortunate and comforted as I decided to join the religion of Islam.

Today I am a very happy grandmother, because I can claim that even my grandchild is a born Muslim.

"God guides whom He pleases to the right path."

Goethe had exclaimed.....

"If this be Islam, do we not all live in Islam". (Quoted by Thomas Carlyle in his "On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History" (Every man's Library, London 1918, p. 291).

SECTION IV
REFORMERS PREACHERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

MUHAMMAD JOHN WEBSTER

(England)

President, The English Muslim Mission

Born in London I was brought up Christian of the Protestant persuasion. In 1930, in my teens, I was confronted with the problems normal to a reasonably intelligent young man, these problems being basically relating to the reconciling of everyday affairs with the claims of religion and here I came across the first weakness of Christianity. Christianity is a dualism which regards the world as sinful and seeks to turn its back on the realities of life, projecting its hopes into a future world. As a result of this there is created a Sunday attitude towards religion which has no place in the rest of the secular week. At this time in England there was a great deal of poverty and social discontent which Christianity made no attempt to resolve. More emotional than knowledgeable, with the enthusiasm of youth I rejected the Church and became a Communist.

Communism has a certain satisfaction at an emotional adolescent level but again it did not take long to realise the hateful nature of Communism based upon class warfare, in itself immortal. Having rejected the materialism of Communism I turned to the study of philosophy and religion. The unity which I observed all around me led me to identify myself with what is known as Pantheism, a natural law religion.

We in the West find it difficult to acquaint ourself with Islam for since the days of the Christian Crusades there has been either a conspiracy of silence or a deliberate perversion of Islamic matters. Anyway at the time living in Australia I

asked for a copy of the Holy Qur'an at the Sydney Public Library, when I was given the Book and was reading the preface by the translator, the bigotry against Islam was so obvious that I closed it up. There was no Qur'an translated by a Muslim available. Some weeks later in Perth, Western Australia, I again asked at the library for a copy of the Qur'an stipulating that the translator must be a Muslim. It is difficult to put into words my immediate response to the first *surah*, the Seven Opening Verses: Then I read something of the life of the Prophet (peace be on him). I spent hours in the library that day, I had found what I wanted, by the mercy of Allah. I was a Muslim. I had not at this time met any Muslim. I came out of the library that day exhausted by the tremendous intellectual and emotional experience I had received. The next experience, I still ask myself: was it true or was it something I had dreamed up, for in cold print it seems impossible to have happened. I came out of the library intending to get myself a cup of coffee. I walked down the street and raising my eyes to a building beyond a high brick wall I saw the words 'Muslim Mosque' I straightway said to my self '*You know the truth, now accept it*'.

'La illaha illallah Muhammad ur Rasul Allah' and so by the mercy of Allah I became a Muslim.

QUOTATION FROM HOLY QURAN

Who has made the earth your couch,
And the heavens your canopy;
And sent down rain from the heavens;
And brought forth therewith
Fruits for your sustenance;
Then set not up rivals unto God
When ye know (the truth).

(Sura 11, Sec. 3, Verse 22)

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

ISMAIL WIESLAW ZEJERSKI

(Poland)

Sociologist, Reformer and Social Worker

I was born in Krakow, Poland, on 8th January, 1900, in a family which belongs to the Polish nobility. My father, although an atheist, was tolerant enough to allow the education of his children in the Roman Catholic religion, which is professed, more or less superficially, by the majority of the Polish people, and which was the religion of my mother. Thus I imbibed in my infancy a true respect for religion, which I looked upon as a factor of cardinal importance in the life of the individual and of the community

Another feature of the home of my parents was its cosmopolitan atmosphere. My father, when a young man, travelled widely in different European countries and often talked about his adventures. This atmosphere gave rise to the fact that racial, national and cultural prejudices were always foreign to my mind. I always felt myself a citizen of the whole world.

The third feature of my home was the spirit of the 'middle path'. My father, although a descendant of an aristocratic family, despised the 'leisured classes' and hated all forms of dictatorship and oppression, but did not approve of revolutionary acts against the public order. He appreciated progress based on the best traditions inherited from the past. He was a model of a 'man of the middle path'. It is not to be wondered at that when I became an independent thinker, interested particularly in social problems, I always sought the middle path leading to the solution of different difficulties of social, political, economic and cultural life. I always felt that extremes are contradictory to the nature of the majority of human beings, and that, consequently, only a compromise can save mankind. I always believed that the organization

of human society must be based on disciplined freedom or, in other words, on an order which respects liberty and tradition and there must be an adaptation of tradition to actual conditions. No wonder that, having been educated in the spirit of the 'middle path', I am a 'man of the middle path' too, and may be called a 'progressive traditionalist'.

As an adolescent sixteen years old, I became decidedly sceptical as regards the different dogmas preached by the 'infallible' Roman Catholic Church. I was unable to believe in the Holy Trinity, transubstantiation, mediatorship of priests between God and man and *vice versa*, the infallibility of the Pope, and the efficacy of magical words and gestures. I was unable to reconcile myself with the worship of Mary, saints, relics, pictures, statues and other objects. Finally, I lost all my faith and became indifferent to matters religious.

The outbreak of the Second World War caused a religious renaissance in me. God opened my eyes and I perceived that humanity wants ideals, and that she cannot spare those ideals if she wishes to avoid extermination. It was clear to me that only religion could give such ideals to the world.

But, on the other hand, it was also clear to me that modern man cannot be satisfied with a religion the dogmas and rites of which offend the rational mind. Besides, I felt that mankind could be guided only by a religion which presented a perfect and complete code of individual and social life.

Seeking for the truth and for the spiritual fatherland of mine, I studied the ideologies of different religions, in particular the history and principles of Quakerism, Unitarianism, Buddhism and Baha'ism but none of these religions satisfied me entirely.

Finally, I 'discovered' Islam. A small pamphlet entitled *Islamo esperantiste regardata*, written in *Esperanto* by an English Muslim, Mr. Ismail Colin Evans, opened my ears to the voice of God in February 1949. Later, I received a small pamphlet entitled *Islamo chies religio* from *Dar al Tabligh al-Islam*, P.O. Box 112 Cairo, and some works of Maulana

Muhammad Ali.

I have found Islam to be congenial to my mind and to the ideology in which I was educated in my infancy. I have found in Islam a perfect and complete code of life, which code is able to guide the individual and community towards the Kingdom of God on earth and which is elastic enough to be adapted to modern conditions. Being a theorist of culture and sociology, I am enchanted by the social institutions of Islam, in particular by the *Zakat*, the law of inheritance, the prohibition of usury including interest, the prohibition of aggressive wars, the injunction of the *Hajj*, and the permission of permitted polygamy, which respectively guarantee a right path between Capitalism and Communism, define the right limits of quarrels between States and give a firm basis to rational pacifism, present an excellent means of educating fraternal solidarity between Muslims, whatever their race, nationality, language, culture and social class may be, and lay solid foundations of marriage, which foundations are irrefutably justified by the biological and social facts and are much sounder than the superficial and insincere monogamy of the Western peoples.

To close those confessions of mine, I thank God for His favour, which He has bestowed upon me by showing me the right path'.

Holy-Quran:—

Thou wilt indeed find them,
Of all people, most greedy,
Of life,—even more
Than the Idolators:
Each one of them wishes
He could be given a life
Of a thousand years:
But the grant of such life
Will not save him
From (due) punishment,
For God sees well
All that they do.

(Sura 11, Sec. 11, verse 96)

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

ABDULLAH BATTERSBY
(England)

Major of the British Army

Many years ago, a quarter of a century at least, it was part of my daily experience to travel along the waterways of Burma by sampan. My *sampan-wallah* was a Muslim—Sheikh Ali from Chittagong (East Pakistan) a splendid sailor, and keenly observant of the rules of his faith. The consistency with which he maintained the hours of prayer and the obvious sincerity of his pious practice not only gained my respect but stimulated my interest in a faith that could hold such a man in pious thrall. Around up were Burmese Buddhists, who also exhibited a great piety, and who were, as far as my experience informed me, probably the most charitable people on earth. But there seemed to be something lacking in their religious practice. I knew they attended the pagodas, because I saw the old folk squatted there, uttering the formula of their creed:

Buddha carana gacchami Dhamma carana gacchami Sangha carana gacchami,

thus proclaiming that they accepted the joint guidance of the Buddha, the law, and the order, for the conduct of their spiritual lives. It was too placid, it lacked vigour, and was totally unlike the practice of Sheikh 'Ali, the *sampan-wallah*. I talked to him as we sailed along the narrow creeks and streams. He was not so good at telling others of the things that inspired him with pious zeal, as he was a splendid example of the inspirational power of Islam.

I bought some books about the history and teachings of Islam. I learned of the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and of his great achievements. I sometimes discussed them with some of my Muslim friends. Then the First World War broke out and, like a good many others,

I found myself serving with the Indian Army in Mesopotamia. I was away from the Buddhist lands and among the Arabs, the people from whom the Prophet sprang, and in whose language the Holy Qur'an was recorded. The fact that I was among these people encouraged my further interest in understanding Islam. I studied Arabic and made close contact with the people, admiring the consistency of their worship of God, till I found myself also acknowledging that God was, indeed, a unity; whereas from my childhood I had been reared to accept God was a Trinity. It had now become patent to me that God was not a Trinity but a Unity: *La ilaha illa'l-Lah* - and I was inclined to declare myself a Muslim. In fact, although I ceased entirely attending churches, and also only visited mosques when it was my official duty as a police officer to do so, it was only when in Palestine between the year 1935 and 1942 that I took courage of conviction and made an official declaration of my change of faith to Islam that had been my choice for so many years.

It was grand day when in the *Mahkamat al-Shari'ah* in the city of Jerusalem, known in the Arab lands by the name of *al-Quds*, meaning the Sacred, that I publicly announced myself a Muslim. I was at the time a General Staff Officer, and this action of mine brought about some unpleasant reactions.

Since that time, I have lived and practised the faith of Islam, in Egypt and more recently in Pakistan. Islam is the greatest fraternity—some 5,00,000,000 strong, and to belong to it is to belong to God, and if I have been able, in recent years, to give witness for Islam by my life and writings, purely a credit mark has been inscribed in the register of life for that simple man whose piety brought me back to God, and to Islam, for we are all born Muslims, and I, in human weakness, had gone astray.

I thank God, *Al-hamdu li'l-Lah*, that I am today one of this great brotherhood of Islam, and when I pray, I always offer up a supplication for the soul of the poor boatman, whose personal piety led me to seek for myself the source of his consistent faith.

'Allah? There is none other God but He,
The Living God, the Self-subsistent One;
Weariness cometh not to Him, nor sleep;
And whatso is, belongs to Him alone
In heaven and in earth -
With Him of all things secret are the keys;
None other hath them, but He hath; and sees
Whatever is in land, on air, or water,
Each bloom that blows, each foan-bell on the seas' "

Napoleon Bonaparte States.....

"Moses has revealed the existence of God to his nation, Jesus Christ to the Roman world, Muhammad to the old continent....".

"Arabia was idolatrous when, six centuries after Jesus, Muhammad introduced the worship of the God of Abraham, of Ishmael, of Moses and of Jesus. The Ayrians and some other sects had disturbed the tranquillity of the East by agitating the question of the nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Muhammad declared that there was none but One God Who had no father, no son, and that the Trinity imported the idea of idolatry..."

"I hope the time is not far off when I shall be able to unite all the wise and educated men of all the countries and establish a uniform regime based on the principles of the Qur'an which alone are true and which alone can lead men to happiness.

(*Bonaparte et l'Islam*, by Cherfils, Paris, France, pp. 105-125).

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

HUSSAIN ROFE

(England)

Social Reformer

When people decide to embrace a religion other than that in which the circumstances of their birth had placed them, their motives, usually have an emotional, philosophical or social foundation. My temperament demanded a creed which could meet the demands of the last two of these categories, and I did nothing less than decide to examine minutely the claims, scriptures and results produced by all the world's chief religions.

Born of parents representing the Jewish and Catholic faiths, and brought up in Church of England traditions, of which I obtained a thorough experience through years of attending its services in the daily routine of the English public school, I commenced early to contrast the dogmas and rituals of Judaism and Christianity. Intuition led me to reject the doctrines of Divine incarnation, and vicarious atonement, and the intellect could neither find satisfaction in manifold Biblical propositions nor in the absence of a living faith based on reason which I noted in the conventional approach to God of the average Church of England Christian.

In Judaism, I found a much more dignified conception of God, though even this varied with the books of the Bible. Here was a faith which had retained much of its former purity. I learnt much from it, but rejected much. Following all the rules and prescriptions would have left little time for attending to any secular affairs. The mind would have had to be concentrated on endless forms and rituals. Worst of all, it was for a minority and led implicitly to the creation of a gulf between different social groups.

While I witnessed Church of England services, and those

of the Jewish synagogues, and took part in them both, I never embraced either religion. In Roman Catholicism, I found too much mystification and subjection to human authority, often manifestly displaying frailty inconsistent with the semi-divine status advanced for the Pope and his henchmen. I turned to Hindu philosophy, especially to the later teachings of the *Upanishads*, and *Vedanta*. Again I learnt much, respected much, and rejected much. Social evils were not solved, and the priestly caste was again favoured with innumerable privileges, while none stretched a helping hand to the poor outcast. His fate was his own fault, and if he bore it patiently, a future life might bring him something better, a convenient way of keeping the populace in subjection. Religion seemed to mean the creation of an omnipotent hierarchy with God called in to testify that it was His Will that things should so remain.

Buddhism taught me much about the human mind and its laws. It showed me a method for obtaining cosmic understanding as simple as chemical experiment, provided I made the necessary sacrifices. Here was reaction against the caste system.

But in Buddhism, like Hinduism, I found no moral teaching. I learnt how to obtain superhuman powers, or what the mass considers such, but soon I learnt that these were no evidence of spirituality. Rather they showed the ability to master a science, a pastime at a much higher level than sport ethically, a means of controlling emotions, of disciplining and subjecting all desires, as sought also by the Stoics. But the question of God did not arise at all. There was hardly any reference to the Creator of all this universe. Only a way to be followed for one's own salvation, though the *Bodhisattva* ideal did preach sacrificing one's own salvation, to assist that of others. In this case, there was spirituality, and not only the control of animal, natural forces. Buddhism could theoretically save the world, as could that basic Christianity of Tolstoy, reduced to the words of the Prophet Jesus, shorn of later accretions and misunderstandings.

Yet if much beliefs could save the world in theory, why

did they fail to do so in practice! The answer was that they were not for the mass but for the few. Both Christianity and Buddhism, if understood as the teaching of their founders, evaded social problems, for they had no interest in them. Both Jesus and Buddha taught the ideal of abandoning all possessions, total annihilation of the lower self in search of God. 'Resist not evil' or '*Vairagyam*'; 'Take no thought for the morrow' or the begging-bowl. I have the greatest admiration for the men who can follow this path. I am sure that it can lead them to God. But I am equally sure that it cannot be practised by the masses, that it cannot better the lot of the ignorant peasant, and that for that reason it has little social value. A glorious teaching for a spiritual giant; a total failure for the mass of humanity. An intellectual satisfaction, yet useless as a means of revolutionizing the mass and bettering their conditions spiritually, mentally and materially, within a short space of time.

It was perhaps strange that, having lived in Arab countries, I have never devoted more than a superficial attention to Islam, and had not given it the minute examination I had accorded all the world's other faiths. Yet when I reflect that my former introduction to this faith has been confined to reading Rodwell's translation of the Qur'an it is not so surprising that I was none too enthusiastic. Only later did I come in touch with a well-known Islamic missionary in London. Subsequently I have noticed that little is done in most Arab lands to interest the non-muslims in Islam, and to spread its teachings where they could bear good fruit. Only too often is there such a mistrust of the foreigner that one sees the characteristic Eastern policy of concealment rather than diffusion.

Under intelligent guidance, provided with a Qur'an commented on an translated by a Muslim and with much other informative literature to give me a true picture of Islam, it was not long before I discovered here what I had been searching for during many years.

¹ The reference, of course is to the portrait of Jesus (peace be on him) as it appears from Christian theology—Edison.

An invitation to watch the prayers and participate in the lunch after the 'Id prayers one day in 1945 gave me the opportunity to study an international group of Muslims at close quarters. Here was no group of Arabs, no nationalism, but a representative assortment of the world's races, social classes, hues of skins. Here I met a Turkish prince and also people who might practically have been termed beggars. These people all sat down to lunch together. No ill-concealed condescension was apparent in the attitude of the rich; no smug hypocrisy in the feeling of equality which animated the white men talking to their Negro neighbours; no attempt to draw away, to isolate oneself from other human beings; no ridiculous snobbery with primitive egotism masquerading as virtue.

There is not space here to describe all of the facets of life for which I found in Islamic teachings an answer which had been lacking elsewhere. Suffice it to say that after due reflection, I was led to enter this faith, after having studied every other important religion in the world without having decided to embrace it.

The above explains why I am a Muslim. It does not altogether explain why I am proud to be one. This feeling was only to come through time and experience. I studied Islamic culture at an English university, and learnt for the first time that it was precisely this culture which had brought Europe out of the Dark Ages. I learnt from history how many of the world's greatest empires had been Islamic, how much modern science has to acknowledge as a legacy of Islam. And when people came to me to explain that I had taken a step backwards, I smiled at their ignorance, mingling cause and effect. Is the world only to judge Islam by the fact that quite external factors produced subsequent degeneracy! Is Renaissance art less valid because abortions are being painted universally today! Is Christianity to be labelled blood thirsty barbarism because of the medieval inquisitors and Spanish conquistadores! It is only necessary to remark that the greatest and most advanced minds of all ages have been able to feel respect for Islamic culture, most of the pearls of which are yet hidden from the West.

Having travelled in many countries all over the world, I have had good opportunity to notice how strangers are everywhere received; whether the first reaction is to help them, and where it is to consider first who they are, and what advantages may be reaped from such assistance. The followers of no other religion can equal Muslims for hospitality and disinterested kindness to strangers. Economically it is only in Islamic communities that the gulf between rich and poor is bridged in such a way that the poor will not endeavour to upset the entire structure to produce chaos. Modern Soviet Communism could never have come to birth in a Muslim State.

An extract from Annie Besant's "The Life and Teachings of Muhammad" *Madras June 1932, p. 3.*

"I often think that woman is more free in Islam than in Christianity. Women is more protected by Islam than by the faith which preaches monogamy. In Al Qur'an the law about woman is more just and liberal. It is only in the last twenty years that Christian England has recognized the right of woman to property, while Islam has allowed this right from all times. It is a slander to say that Islam preaches that women have no souls".

THOMAS IRVING

(Canada)

Social Worker

In approaching an account of my conversion to Islam, it would be as well to relate my personal experience, both before and after coming into contact with its ideals. This is not so much to tell a story in itself as to show how the thought of thousands of other young Canadians and Americans is evolving and the opportunity that awaits an effective Islamic propaganda.

I can remember thrilling, as a very small child, to the Christian interpretation of Jesus's life, but yet I cannot say that I was ever truly Christian of my own conviction. Instead of absorbing the pretty Biblical tales, I began wondering why so many in the world were 'heathen', why Jews and Christians differed on the same Bible, why the unbelievers were damned when the fault was not theirs, and also why they could practice goodness as well as the self-called "higher" nations.

I remember especially a missionary returned from India stating how the 'Mohometans' were so obdurate in adhering to their religion; that was my first encounter with Islam, and it roused an unconscious admiration in me for their steadfastness to their faith and a desire to know more about these "wicked" people.

In my first year course in Oriental literature, I had learned of the progression of human thought in its attempt to perfect its conception of God. Jesus had culminated the teaching of a Loving God. This idea had been lost in a cloud of liturgical doggerel and atavistic paganism; a beneficent, merciful deity had been obscured by an implacable overlord who could only be reached through an intercessor. Someone was needed to lead men back to the fountain of truth with its limpid main-

stream of the One God..

Europe was still in the semi-barbarism induced by the folk-wanderings and the extinction of classic culture by a narrow ecclesiasticism. The East was the logical centre of inspiration, and here Muhammad (God's blessings be on him) arose seven centuries after Jesus, when Christo paganism was firmly entrenched in Europe and rational study, let alone inspiration, still nine centuries distant.

At last I was able to accept Muhammad as an apostle of God; firstly, he was needed; secondly, my own conclusions had been independent and still coincided; and thirdly, apart from both the former, the realization of the divine quality of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's teachings flooded upon me clearly.

At the same time, I received and bought more and more literature upon Islam. An Indian philanthropist of Bombay, the late Mr. Q.A. Jairazbhoy, had sent me *What is Islam!* by H.W. Lovegrove (this is perhaps the most practical exposition that I have read, and merits wide distribution). Later he sent Maulvi Muhammad Ali's excellent annotated edition of the Holy Qur'an, and various other books and tracts. At Montreal, I was able to procure considerable French literature on Islam, both for and against, and this helped broaden my vision.

George Bernard Shaw says . . .

"I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today."

(A collection of Writings of some of the "Eminent Scholars" published by the Woking Muslim Mission, England, 1935 edition, p.77).

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

FAUZUDDIN AHMAD OVERING

(Holland)

Preacher and Social Worker

It is difficult to say how my first interest in the Eastern world was aroused. It was purely linguistic at first. I started learning Arabic when still at the primary school, when I was about twelve or thirteen, some thirty years ago. But as I had no one to help me, I did not make much headway at first.

It goes without saying that by the study of Arabic I came into contact with Islam. I bought several books about it; though all were written by Western authors and, therefore, not always unbiased. I became convinced of the truth of the Prophet's mission (the peace and the blessings of God be on him). But my knowledge about Islam was rather restricted, and I had no one to guide me.

The book that influenced me most was E.G. Browne's *History of Persian Literature in Modern Times*. This brilliant work contains parts of two poems that were decisive for my conversion: the *Tarji-Band* by Hatif of Isfahan, and the *Haft-Band* by Mohtashim Kashan.

At first Hatif's poem appealed to me most. It gives a beautiful visionary picture of a soul in turmoil, in a struggle for a higher conception of life, in which I discovered - on a lower level, of course - my own struggle for Truth. Although I cannot agree with some of its couplets, it taught me at least one great Truth:

There He is One, and there is naught but He,
That there is no god save Him alone.

According to the wish of my mother, and in accordance with my own inclination, I went to a special school for religious

instruction, not because I adhered to its religious principles (which admitted broadmindedness), but some knowledge of Christianity was thought necessary for a general education. I think the Principal of the school was rather surprised when at the end of the curriculum I handed in a composition in which I confessed my adherence to the Islamic faith.

My faith in those early days was, however, irrational. It was a conviction, which, though genuine, was not yet armed by reason against the first onslaught of the rational materialism of the West.

It is then that the question arises: Why should one choose Islam! And why not maintain the religion in which one happens to be born (if any)! The answer is contained in the question itself: Islam means being at peace with oneself, the world and the God that is, it consists in submission to the will of God. Though the beauty and majestic terseness of the Qur'an is lost in translation, I will quote God's own words:

"O soul that art at rest. Return to thy Lord, well-pleased with Him, well-pleasing Him. So enter among my servants. Enter my Garden- the Paradise." (Al-Qur'an LXXXIX: 27-30)

Islam, therefore, is the only pure religion not a religion marred by mythology, like Christianity and other religions.

Compare the Christian doctrine that an infant is responsible for the sins of its forbears, with God's consoling words:

"And no soul earns evil but against itself, and no bearer of a burden shall bear the burden of another". (Al-Qur'an VI: 165).

"We do not impose on any soul a duty except to the extent of its ability." (Al-Qur'an VII:42).

UMAR MITA

(Japan)

Economist, Social Worker and Preacher

By the Grace of Allah I am leading a happy Muslim life for the last 3 years. The righteous way of life as taught by Islam, was shown to me by our Pakistani *Tablighi* brethren (Missionaries), who visited my country and to whom I am deeply grateful.

The majority of our people are Buddhists, but they are Buddhists in name only. They are not practising Buddhists and actually they are almost unmindful of their religious knowledge. The main reason for this apathetic attitude may be due to the fact that Buddhism presents a high sounding and complicated philosophy and gives nothing practical. It is thus beyond the reach of an average person who remains busy with the problems of this worldly life. He cannot understand it nor can he implement it. It is not so with Islam. The teachings of Islam are simple, straight-forward and quite practical. It governs all the departments of human life. It moulds the thinking of man and when once the thinking becomes pure, pure actions will follow spontaneously. The teachings of Islam are so simple, easy and practical that every one can understand it. It is not the monopoly of the priests as is the case in other religions.

There is great future for Islam in Japan. Some difficulties may be there but the same are not insurmountable.

Firstly, an organised steady and vigorous effort should be made to acquaint people with the teachings of Islam. Our people are becoming materialistic day by day but they are unhappy. They have to be told that the real peace and contentment lie in Islam which is complete code for life and gives guidance for all walks of life.

Secondly such people are required to do this work whose own lives set an example before others.

Unfortunately the type of Muslim students who come to Japan from different Muslim countries are no example for us to follow and we cannot gain any advice or guidance from them. Most of them have adopted the Western way of life and they know nothing about Islam due to their being educated in the European established institutions, mostly convents.

If Islam is to succeed in Japan, as I am quite sure that one day it will, all Islam-loving people should think over the problem and make sincere and concentrated efforts in this behalf. Such of the Muslims who are true believers and whose lives can be an example to others, should visit Japan and teach the people here. Our people are thirsty for peace, truth, honesty, sincerity, virtue and all that is good in life, and I am confident that Islam and Islam alone can quench their thirst.

We need absolute Faith in Him to do the job and we pray to Him to grant Faith to us.

Islam means 'peace' and no other people than the Japanese require peace more. Real peace can come to us by accepting the religion of peace. Peace with all men and peace with God. The brotherhood in Islam is a unique principle and in it truly lies salvation for the mankind.

QUOTATION FROM THE HOLY QURAN

Let there be no compulsion
In religion: Truth stands out
Clear from Error: whoever
Rejects Evil and believes
In God hath grasped
The Most trustworthy
Hand-hold, that never breaks,
And God heareth
And knoweth all things.

(*Sura, 11 Sec. 34, verse, 256*)

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

ALI MUHAMMAD MORI
(Japan)

Social Worker and Preacher

About 18 years ago I was in Manchuria where Japan was still wielding power. It was in a desert near Pieching that I first came across a group of Muslims. They were leading a pious life and I was deeply impressed by their way of living and by their attitude on life. This impression became deeper and deeper as I travelled into the interior of Manchuria.

I returned to Japan—a defeated country—in the Summer of 1946 and I found that the situation in Japan had changed altogether. There was tremendous change in the realm of thinking of the people. Buddhism which was the faith of the majority of Japanese, was thoroughly corrupted and instead of providing salvation it was exerting an evil influence upon society.

Christianity, after the war had made rapid strides in Japan although it existed there for the last 90 years but it had remained as a formal religion only. At first Christianity seemed to be accepted by the innocent, pure and simple young people who in a way had 'killed' their love for Buddhism, but to their great disappointment they soon found out that behind the cover of Christianity there existed the network of British and American capitalist interest. Christianity which has been given up in Christian countries is now being used for export, to serve their capitalistic interest.

Japan is geographically located between Russia on the one hand and America on the other and both wish to exert their influence on the Japanese people. None can offer a lasting and happy solution to the spiritually disturbed Japanese people.

To my mind it will be the doctrine of Islam and none other that undoubtedly offers the much sought solution. Particularly I am appreciative of the fraternity in Islam. All Muslims are brethren unto one another and God has enjoined that they should live in peace and harmony with each other. I believe that it is this type of 'Brotherhood' which is so vital and needed most by the world today.

Last summer three Muslims visited Tokushima. They had come from Pakistan and it was from them that I learnt a great deal about Islam and what it stands for. Mr. Motiwala in Kobe and Mr. Mita in Tokyo came to my help and I embraced Islam.

Last but not the least, I eagerly hope that one day the bonds of Islam will infuse new spirit amongst Muslims from every nook and corner of the world and this great message of God will resound once again with full glory from every land, so that the Earth becomes a Heaven to live in and God's creatures be really happy—both materially and spiritually elevated as God does intend.

QUOTATION FROM THE HOLY QURAN

Say ye: "We believe
In God, and the revelation
Given to us, and to Abraham,
Ismail, Issac, Jacob,
And the Tribes, and that given
To Moses and Jesus, and that given
To (all) Prophets from their Lord:
We make no difference
Between one and another of them:
And we bow to God (in Islam)."

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

(Sura 11, Sec 16, verse 136)

Prof. ABDUL AHAD DAWUD B.D.

(Iran)

Formerly the Reverend David Bengamni Keldani, B.D.

“My conversion to Islam cannot be attributed to any cause other than the gracious direction of Almighty God. Without this Divine guidance, all learning, searching and other efforts to find the truth may even lead one astray. The moment I believed in the Absolute Unity of God, His Holy Apostle Muhammad became the pattern of my conduct and behaviour.”

QUOTATION FROM THE HOLY QURAN

O ye who believe:
Ye are forbidden to inherit
Women against their will.
Nor should ye treat them
With harshness, that ye may
Take away part of the dower
Ye have given them,—except
Where they have been guilty
Of open lewdness;
On the contrary live with them
On a footing of kindness and equity.
If ye take a dislike to them .
It may be that ye dislike
A thing, and God brings about
Through it a great deal of good.

(Sura IV, Sec 1, verse 12)

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

SECTION V
OTHER SEEKERS AFTER TRUTH

H.F. FELLOWES
(England)

I have spent most of my life in the Royal Navy which includes service at sea in both the 1914 and 1939 wars.

At sea you cannot escape from the immense forces of nature even with powerful and efficient twentieth century machinery and apparatus. Simple examples are fog and gales. In war-time there are additional hazards.

There is a book in constant use called "Queens' Regulations and Admiralty Instructions". This book defines the duties of every officer and man. It specifies the rewards in the form of promotion, awards for good conduct, pay and pensions. It details the maximum punishments for offences against Naval Discipline and it covers every other aspect of life within the service. By obeying the instructions contained in this book a large number of men have been united to form a happy, efficient and disciplined service.

If I may say so without disrespect or irreverence the Holy Qur'an is a similar book but on an immeasurably higher plane. It is the instructions of Almighty God to every man, woman and child on this earth.

For the past eleven years I have been a flower-grower. This happens to be another occupation which demonstrates man's dependence on God. If you work in accordance with God's orders He helps you and your plants prosper. If you disregard His Laws, plant failures are the reward. Trained men issue weather forecasts but not infrequently they prove incorrect.

I am convinced that the Holy Qur'an is the word of God and that He chose the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to repeat His Word to the whole world.

Islam harmonises with the life in this world. It is simple and straightforward, free from elaborations which cannot be believed. Its forms of worship reflect honest sincerity.

Even so, born and bred a Christian in a Christian country the Christian tradition becomes so firmly embedded that to forsake it requires considerable persuasion. In this connection I must make it clear that the persuasion came from within myself. Although my questions were answered, nobody ever even suggested that I should become a Muslim.

The fundamental beliefs of both Islam and Christianity are the same. A further examination is therefore necessary.

Because he believed that the Christian Church had retained many pagan rites and beliefs, Martin Luther started a revolt which led to the Reformation and the foundation of the Protestant Church.

Queen Elizabeth I, when her country was threatened by Roman Catholic Spain and, at the same time, Central Europe was threatened by the advancing Ottoman Empire, identified the cause of Islam with that of Protestantism on the ground of their common hostility to idolatry.

Martin Luther, however, appears to have been unaware or to have ignored the fact that some nine centuries earlier, under Divine Guidance, Prophet Muhammed had reformed, purified and perfected not only the Christian religion but also all other revealed religions.

Yet the Reformation by no means eliminated all the pagan beliefs and ceremonies from Christianity. What it did was to inaugurate a period of cruelty and intolerance which to some extent endures to the present day.

It is noteworthy that at a time when the Spanish Inquisi-

tion was most vicious Islam, demonstrated its tolerance. The Turks gave asylum to persecuted Jews in Spain.

Jesus said that we were to obey the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The First Commandment "I am the Lord, thy God, thou shalt have none other gods but Me" is compromised by the Doctrine of Atonement. Loyalty to Christ is prized more highly than loyalty to God because Christ can intercede for us on the day of Resurrection. Yet Christians believe that Christ is God Incarnate. My conception of God has always been that He directs forgiving, merciful and just. Man can therefore be absolutely sure that he will be fairly judged and that all extenuating circumstances will be considered.

In this life you accept to be held responsible for your own behaviour. If you are an accountant and falsify your employer's accounts you will be sent to prison. If you drive a motor car too fast on a twisting slippery road you will have an accident and so on. To blame somebody else for your own misdeeds is considered to be cowardly. I do not believe that we were born miserable sinners. To sentimentalise about innocent children contradicts. It is my experience that normal people like to please others unless the another is an unpleasant individual. Children value the opinion of their parents and school teachers. Adults that of those in authority over them, and they take pleasure in helping their neighbours. There are times when for some reason or another we are seized by a mutinous impulse and inflict damage on somebody or something. The frequency and degree of these outbreaks varies. When we do this we sin. Organised games are another example. If a player breaks a rule the referee penalises him.

Bearing these considerations in mind the Doctrine of Atonement becomes confusing and incomprehensible.

The Second Commandment starts "Thou shalt not make for thyself any graven image" and later it says "thou shalt not bow down nor worship them." There are churches and cathedrals littered with images before which some people actually do bow down.

I have often wondered why the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus made no immediate impression at the time on the residents of Palestine whether Jews, Roman or others. As far as secular history is concerned Jesus's life seems to have escaped notice. At school I was only taught the Bible version. It also took, against strong opposition, several centuries before Christianity spread and became established.

The History of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the triumph and the amazing speed with which Islam was spread was taught at school. No reference was made to the spiritual side of Islam.

Between 1919 and 1923 I served in ships employed in Turkish waters. This stimulated an interest in Islam. The elemental declaration "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger" compels attention. I bought books about Islam. Most of them were prejudiced against it. The behaviour of the Caliphs during the previous three centuries and the corruption of Turkish politicians and government officials cast an unfavourable light on Islam. Gradually I let the matter drop. I retained a profound faith in God but it was entirely passive.

A year or so ago I began investigating the subject again. I wrote to the Muslim Mission and I was supplied with books by Muslim authors. These books exposed Western misconceptions, distortions and inventions and explained why and how they had arisen. They showed that Islam is reawakening and that there are constructive movements actively restoring Islam to its original purity in the light of present day progress and scientific knowledge with which Islam is in complete harmony.

Recently newspapers have been reporting statements by philosophers and authors to the effect that present religions are obsolete. This reflects the scepticism of the mass of Western people in the complexities and ambiguities of the Christian religion. These would-be-reformers are again making the same mistake as Martin Luther made. Islam, the complete answer, is still here.

MUHAMMAD SULEIMAN TAKEUCHI

(Japan)

Associate, Japanese Society of Ethnology

By the grace of Allah I have embraced Islam.

Islam attracted me because:-

- (1) I found a dynamic brotherhood in Islam.
- (2) Islam has practical solutions for the problems of human life. It does not separate religious worship from human living in society. Instead, the Muslims pray in congregations and perform social services to the community in the way of Allah.
- (3) Islam is a combination of the material and the spiritual in human life.

Islamic brotherhood recognises no national, tribal or ethnological barriers. It unites all Muslims in the world as brothers. And, moreover, Islam is not for only a chosen few. It is the religion of the common man. It is for all men whether they are Pakistanis or Indians, Arabs or Afghans, Chinese or Japanese; in short it is an international religion.

Islam thrives in the humdrum of life. It is the only Religion of Allah which has survived the onslaughts of time. Islamic teachings are here intact as they were revealed to the Prophet fourteen hundred years ago. And, as Islam is the natural religion, it has got the necessary flexibility for adjustment to the needs of different people in different ages. Thus during its comparatively shorter history, it has played a magnificent role in the development of human civilisation.

In Islam, the road to salvation goes through society; it does not by-pass our corporate living. I know something

about Buddhism and also Christianity. Both teach us renunciation of worldly ties and put premium on escape from human society. Some Buddhist sects build temples on the slopes of mountains, where man can reach only with great difficulty. Thus there are many examples in Japanese religious life where God is made to live not within the reach of the common man. And Christians also have their monasteries in far away lonely places. They all separate religious life from the ordinary human life. But, on the other hand, our Islam provides Masjid in the heart of village or town or in business centres of the city. It enjoins prayer with Jama'at and service of society as a form of religion.

Human living is a combination of spirit and matter. Allah has given us soul and body. Therefore, for a full human living we must knit our body and soul together and should not draw a line between the material and the spiritual. Islam accepts both the spirit and the matter and by putting them in their right places, it builds its philosophy to cover all the aspects of human living.

I am a new Muslim. I embraced Islam two years ago. And, as I have understood it Islam is a brotherhood with faith and practice.

Today, Japan is the most advanced industrial country in Asia. Our Japanese society has totally changed due to the modern technological revolution and its by-product i.e. the material way of life. With the utter lack of natural resources in Japan, our only asset is hard work. We have to work hard every day and night just to maintain ourselves and keep up our trade and industry. We are busy in a materialistic world where there is no sign of any spiritual life. We struggle only for our worldly gains. Japanese people have no time to think over transcendental problems. They have no religion and no spiritual concepts whatsoever and they are just following the footsteps of materialistic Europe. That is why spiritually they are becoming poorer and poorer and their well-fed and well-clad bodies contain wretched and unhappy souls.

I am confident that the present moment is most oppor-

S. A. BOARD

(U.S.A.)

It was sometime during 1920, while in a doctor's office I saw an issue of the African Times and Orient Review, London. It contained an article on Islam. In this article there was an expression which caught my eye, and I shall never forget it as it has become a part of me. The expression read, *La ilaha illa' llah!*—There is but one God. This was a priceless possession which Muslims carry in their breasts.

Soon after I became a Muslim and received the name of Salah-ud-din. I believe Islam is the right faith, for it joins no partners with God and teaches us that no one else can answer for our sins. Also, it harmonizes with nature, which show us there can't be two bosses on a job, whether in the barnyard, pasture, city, state, nation or the universe. Another fact that convinced me of the truth of the message of Islam was that it aroused the Arabs, and out of the mystic deserts surged the sturdy followers of Islam, who welded the world into a new empire and sang songs of love and victory in the vales of *Andalusia*.

The Muslim Moors found Spain a jungle, and turned it into a 'Garden of Roses'. I thank God for a man like John W. Draper, who in his *The Intellectual Development of Europe*, gives the world the truth about the great part Islam played in originating modern civilization. He, as a matter of fact deplores the way Christian historians try to put out of sight Europe's debt to Islam.

Here is his description of the natives of Europe as the Moors found them:

"From the barbarism of the native people 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 amark of wealth if there were bulrushes on the floor and straw mats against the wall; miserably fed on beans, vetches, roots and even the bark of trees; clad in garments of untanned skin, or at the best of leather, perennial in durability but not conducive to personal purity."

To the Saracen, Europe is indebted for many of its personal comforts. Religiously clean, it was not possible for them to clothe themselves according to the fashion of the natives of Europe, in a garment unchanged till it dropped to pieces, a loathsome mass of vermin, stench and rags.

The Arabs, being able to inspire a people to emerge from the slough of despondency, darkness, ignorance and superstition and cause their descendants to sit on top of the world, must have had God with them. God, Muhammad and the Qur'an changed the history of the world, and without them the great wonders of present day science would not exist.

"Seek knowledge even if you have to go to China" said Muhammad.

*"Ashhadu an la illaha illa'l-lah;
"Ashhadu anna Muhammad-ur-Rasul Allah!"*

QUOTATION FROM THE HOLY QURAN

It is We Who have
Placed you with authority
On Earth, and provided
You therein with means
For the fulfilment of your life:
Small are the thanks
That ye give!

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

(Sura VII, Sec 1, verse 10)

B. DAVIS

(England)

I was born in 1931 and at the age of six went to a boarding school. I stayed there for seven years, when I left to go to the local County School. I was brought up a Methodist, then an Anglican and finally an Anglo-Catholic. All the time, however, I noticed that religion was detached from ordinary life like the best suit—only to be displayed on Sundays. I noticed, too that Christianity was losing its grip, especially over the rising generations. Christianity seemed to be unable to deal with the present crisis. It tried to drug its adherents by means of incense, lights, coloured vestments, long litanies to the "Saints" and all the other trappings of Romanism. It did not try to concern itself with what went on outside the Church.

It was on account of this that I turned to these two penaeas of the present day: Communism and Fascism.

As a Communist, I tried to think of the joys of a classless society, etc., but the constant stories of those who had 'escaped' (how can one escape from a free land?) from the 'new democracies' made me see that Communism was just the tool of would-be world rulers, the Russians. I then swung to the other extreme, Fascism. This doctrine promised everything to everybody and I tried to make myself hate people for their race or colour. It was only after some months as one of Mosley's supporters that I thought of the last war and all the beatings, etc., done by the Nazis and I tried to push them out of my mind. I was never happy as a Fascist but it seemed to me the only solution to our difficulties.

It was whilst in this frame of mind that I saw a copy of "The Islamic Review" on a bookstall. I don't know what made me pay two shillings and six pence for a magazine which expressed doctrines that I had been told by Christians, Com-

munists and Fascists were only believed by cut-throats and bandits and were not worth tuppence. I did buy it, however, and I read and re-read it. In Islam I found all that was good in Christianity, Communism and all the other; "isms" with a bit more as well.

I instantly took out a year's subscription and a few months later I became a Muslim. Since that day I have been very happy in my new faith.

I hope to learn Arabic if and when I get to the university. At the present moment, however, I am studying Latin French and Spanish.

THE HOLY QURAN....

Christ the son of Mary
Was no more than
An Apostle; many were
The apostles that passed away
Before him. His mother
Was a woman of truth.
They had both to eat
Their (daily food).
See how God doth make
His Signs clear to them;
Yet see in what ways
They are deluded
Away from the truth:

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

(Sura V, Sec 10, verse 78)

THOMAS MUHAMMAD CLAYTON
(U.S.A.)

The sun had just passed the meridian. As we walked along the hot, dusty road, we heard or rather felt a monotonous but strangely beautiful chant fill the air about us. Passing through a group of trees, a strange and wondrous sight befell our unbelieving eyes. There, on a recently improvised high wooden tower, a blind Arab, clad in spotless raiments and white turban, seemed to harangue the very heavens with his fascinating intonation. We sat down with no conscious effort, hypnotized by his weird, spirit-like refrain. The words we did not understand feel fascinatingly upon our ears, *Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar: La Ilaha Illa'l-Lah;*—God is the Greatest; God is the Greatest; there is no god but God.

Before that we had been aware of nothing going on about us, but now we noticed that a great number of people were beginning to assemble. People of all ages, of all manners of dress, of all walks of life, were approaching with a taciturnity which betokened reverence. They spread long mats upon the ground which produced an interesting colour contrast between the green of the grass and, the, tan of the mats. More and more people came, and indeed, we had begun to wonder whether the assembly would ever be complete. The people took off their shoes and sandals and formed long lines, one line falling in behind the other. We were amazed, even on our silent passive observation, that no distinctions of any kind were to be found in this congregation. Here were white men, yellow men, black men, poor men, wealthy men, beggars, and merchants, all standing side by side with no thought of race or social station in life. Not one single person in that whole gathering looked away from the mat immediately in front of him.

The fraternal spirit displayed by that heterogenous group is an impression which was indelible. Almost three years

have now passed since that event, two of which I have been a Muslim and I find myself even now awakening in the middle of the night to hear once more that beautiful and plaintive chant, and to see again those men who displayed the true attributes of men who sincerely seek their God.

PROPHECY IN THE PARSI SCRIPTURE

ORIGINAL PAHLAVI

چم مېم کاجام کند بزوار جيام ورتاه جيتال جوذ بوئزار شامام بو مېزاک
 و نيزاک و سيراک و اميراک اسرويم ارند ❀ و بوذ هرور کتام بودام ❀
 بېرن فزشای نيمار و سيار کوار آبادلی جوار دهه نوستا ❀
 و قدر اهنده شای سيارام مديرو انورام هام و نينود و نيزاک و شایام اشناد ❀

(Dasatir No. 14)

TRANSLATION

“When the Persians should sink so low in morality, a man will be born in Arabia whose followers will upset their throne, religion and everything. The mighty stiff-necked ones of Persia will be overpowered. The house which was built (referring to Abraham building the Ka'ba) and in which many idols have been placed will be purged of idols, and people will say their prayers facing towards it. His followers will capture the towns of the Parsis and Taus and Balkh and other big places round about. People will embroil with one another. The wise men of Persia and others will join his followers.”

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

J.W. LOVEGROVE

(England)

These few lines are a humble attempt on my part to meet inquiries which I receive from various quarters as to the reasons for my embracing Islam. I have not to make a case for the Faith. There is something unique about it. It is the religion of history and its teacher a personality in history. We know very little of other religions as to their original teachings; some scattered accounts consisting of a few moral precepts have been handed down to us; their genuineness, being admittedly impeachable. The lives of almost all other teachers are enveloped in myth and mystery, and do not help us to read their own teachings in the light of their actions. On the other hand, in the case of Islam, no one has ever doubted the authenticity of its record. The Book of Islam, the Qur'an is the same today as it was in the days of the Holy Prophet. His deeds and his sayings in which he translates the various precepts of the Book, have come to us in their original purity. I found in them a consolation, which in vain I had searched for elsewhere. I wanted a simple, practical religion free from dogma and tenets, which I could not accept without killing my reason. To do my duty to God, and my neighbour, undoubtedly is and ought to be the main object of every religious system, but Islam came to give the maxim a practical shape. We want precept as well as example to meet all the contingencies and exigencies of life and directions to guide us in our difficult callings. This I found in Islam.

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

T.H. MCBARKLIE

(Ireland)

I was brought up in the Protestant faith, and at a very early age I began to find the teachings of Christianity unsatisfactory. By the time I had left school and gone to the university this suspicion had become a certainty; the Christian Church, as I had been shown it, meant little or nothing to me. I almost despaired of finding an established creed which would include all ideas I had formulated, and for a long time I tried to satisfy myself with vague beliefs of my own. One day I chanced on a copy of the book: "Islam and Civilization". As I read it I realized that nearly all my beliefs were included in the doctrine the little volume expounded.

The broad outlook of Islam as opposed to the intolerance of the Christian sects, the learning and culture of the Islamic countries in the Middle Ages compared with the ignorance and superstition of other lands at that time, the logical theory of compensation as against the Christian idea of atonement, were a few of the points that first struck me. Later I came to realize that here was a faith broad as humanity itself, ready for the guidance of rich and poor alike and able to break down all barriers of creed and colour.

THE HOLY QURAN

They say: "Become Jews
or Christians if ye would be guided
(To salvation)." Say thou:
"Nay: (I would rather) the Religion
Of Abraham the True,
And he joined not gods with God.

(Sura 11, Sec 16, verse 135)

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

DEVIS WARRINGTON-FRY

(Australia)

Islam came to me as the spring comes to the cold earth after dark winter. It has warmed my soul and clothed me in beautiful teachings. How clear and fresh are the teachings of Islam and how logical! "There is but One God and Muhammed is His Prophet". Can there be anything more sublime than this? None of the mysterious 'The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost' ritual, which, I suppose, is quite awe-inspiring but is hardly satisfactory to a keen mind. Islam is so modern, so applicable to the world today. Take, for instance, the teachings of the Equality of Man which is taught also in the Christian churches but which, with, them has no meaning with their Pope and Archbishops and bishops, and so on, all striving for power and using God's name as an excuse. How different is Islam from this! How much more sincere are the teachings of Muhammad (peace be upon him) as revealed to him by God!

O ye who believe:
Give the good things
Which ye have (honourably) earned,
And of the fruits of the Earth
Which We have produced
For you, and do not even aim
At getting anything
Which is bad, in order that
Out of it ye may give away
Something, when ye yourselves
Would not receive it
Except with closed eyes.
And know that God
Is Free of all wants,
And Worthy of all praise.

(Sura 11, Sec 37, verse 267)

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

FAROUK B KARAI

(Zanzibar)

The reason of my becoming a Muslim was an inward feeling and my great love and devotion to the holy prophet of Islam— Muhammad (May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). I had cherished these feelings in my heart since long quite spontaneously. Furthermore I was living in Zanzibar where many Muslim friends gave me an opportunity to study and understand Islam thoroughly. I used to read the Islamic literature secretly for fear of my relatives. However, in December, 1940, I found myself ready to face the world and I announced about my acceptance of Islam and then began the story of my 'persecution' at the hands of my family members and others of the Parsee community to which I had formerly belonged. It is a long story of hardships that I have undergone. My family strongly disapproved of my becoming a Muslim and they employed all conceivable methods to harass me. Since 'Truth' had dawned upon me, nothing could deter me from following my chosen path of accepting One God and prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) as His last Messenger.

I stood like the rock of Gibraltar against the innumerable miseries, misfortunes and calamities wrought upon me by my family members, one after the other. However, the thought that "Allah knows His ways best" sustained me through all this.

The Holy Qur'an which I studied in Gujrati, helped me a lot and I can say without any fear of contradiction that no other religious book can stand equal to it. This is the only 'Book' which is complete in itself teaching simplicity, love, brotherhood, equality and humanity. It is a wonderful Book indeed and guided by its sublime precepts, the Muslims will live for ever.

MUMIN ABDUR RAZZAQUE SELLIAH

(Ceylon)

At one time I really held Islam in abhorrence. I had no Muslim friends, for Islam was so repulsive to me that I did not want even to associate with its adherents. Little did I dream that a study of books on Islam would make a new man of me. I began to love Islam because of its straight and non-mysterious path. It is clean and simple, yet so full of deep studies that I soon felt the inevitable was drawing near.

The Holy Qur'an, some passages of which I read, simply struck me with wonder, for I had the idea that there was nothing to rival the Bible. I found, however, that I was hopelessly mistaken in this. Indeed, the Holy Qur'an is so full of truths, and its teachings so practical and free from dogmatic tenets and mysteries, that I daily drifted into the religion of 'Peace and Love' which Islam certainly is.

The Muslim brotherhood, also did not pass me unnoticed. If one wants to see the true realization of "love thy neighbour as ye love thyself" it can only be found in the Muslim brotherhood, the greatest and truest union of people the world has ever seen.

What convinced me further was that Islam was not dogmatic. It is ideal and practical, rational and modern. It is also ideal in its conception of the One God and in its spirituality. Practical in its tenets, modern and rational in outlook, it is the one religion for all humanity.

ABDULLAH UEMURA

(Japan)

Islam lays great emphasis on the Oneness of God, on Life-after-death, on the Day of Judgment, on Love, on Righteousness, on Virtue, on Truthfulness, on Integrity of character and all that is good in life. Seek the pleasure of Allah—that in truth is the essence of the teachings of Islam. And in my search for truth, I found it in Islam.

Christianity or for the matter the Gospels, as they exist today, are not the same pure revelation as had come from God. Time and again changes have been made therein and its originality is thus distorted. Whereas the Holy Qur'an is a revelation from God and it has remained the same, without slightest change, or alteration.

Christianity as it has been brought down to us is not in a true sense, revelation from God but only the words and conduct of Jesus Christ concerning it, corresponding to the *Hadith* of Islam. Therefore God's revelation is not direct as is in Islam.

The most confusing point about Christianity is the issue of 'Trinity'. It is to be merely believed without being understood, for there is no rational explanation to it. Moreover it is shocking to hear that the punishment of sinners and therefore non-Christians too (as sinner for non-belief in Christian preachings) is eternal death. If sinners were told that they would die for ever, their natural reaction would be to indulge in all luxury and vice more deeply to satisfy themselves because when death comes, it would mean an end for ever.

The Japanese Mahayana Buddhism is a product of the orthodox and primitive Buddhism. It resembles Brahmanism. It appears from its preachings that Buddha was an

atheist, for he denies the immortality of the soul. However Brahmanism is distinct on this point. But unfortunately Brahmans are not clear about Brahma. They try to philosophise him and in their search to find him through their sense of sight and hearing, they begin to worship God's creation rather than God himself. Islam alone guides us to the Living God, Who is Omnipotent, Omnipresent; Who is neither begotten nor He begoteth anyone and all that is in the heavens and in the earth belongs to Him. To none should one bow except to Him. None should one fear and submit but to Him.

The Japanese Shintoism is deprived of virtues, as it is not strictly moralistic. It is polytheistic and like the pagans allows worship of many gods.

Islam alone is the answer to the cry and search of the soul to find the path of Rationality and Truth.

Thomas Carlyle has said . . .

" These Arabs, the man Mahomet and that one century,—is it not as if a spark had fallen, one spark on a world of what seemed black unnoticeable sand, but lo, the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Grenada: I said: the Great Man was always as lightening out of heaven; the rest of the men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would flame." (Thomas Carlyle in his "On Heroes, Hero-worship, And the Heroic in History," Everyman's Library, London, 1918; p. 311)

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

IBRAHIM VOO

(Malaya)

I was a Roman Catholic before accepting Islam, but I lost faith in those rites such as the Trinity, Holy Communion, Consecration of the host, mysteries, etc. I did not lose faith in God. No Catholic priest could help me by explaining these problems rationally, and the only reply was "Mysteries will remain mysteries; Jesus is the last prophet and Muhammad is an imposter" (God forbid).

My faith dwindled in that religion until I happened to mix with lots of Muslims in Malaya. I used to talk about religion with them and we sometimes had heated arguments. Gradually I became convinced that Islam is rational and that Islam is what I know as truth. There is nothing to adore but God. No images, statues or paintings are found in a mosque. It is prayer in a mosque or anywhere that has won me over...

Bertrand Russell says . . .

"Our use of the phrase 'The Dark Ages' to cover the period from 699 to 1,000 marks our undue concentration on Western Europe. . . . From India to Spain, the brilliant civilization of Islam flourished. What was lost to Christendom at this time was not lost to civilization, but quite the contrary. . . . To us it seems that West-European civilization is civilization, but this is a narrow view." "History of Western Philosophy", London, 1948, p. 419).

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

MAUHMUD GUNNAR ERIKSON

(Sweden)

I praise God and pray for His noble Prophet. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah. He has no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger.

It was about five years ago when I first came in contact with Islam. A very good friend of mine wanted to read the Holy Qur'an for some reason. I did not want to be ignorant of that book if he knew something about it, and so I also tried to get hold of Swedish translation. I managed to find one before he did, and started to read it. As I had borrowed it from a library, I could not have it for more than fortnight, but I borrowed it again and again. The more I read of it the more I became convinced that this was the Truth. So one day in November 1950 I made up my mind to become a muslim.

One or two years passed by. I maintained that I was a 'Mohammedan', but it was nothing more. I did not enquire further into Islam till one day I visited the main library in Stockholm. Remembering that I was a 'Mohammedan', I made up my mind to see if the library had got some literature on the 'Mohammedan' religion, and to my astonishment, found some books. I borrowed a few of them and read them carefully, together with Muhammad Ali's translation of the Holy Qur'an. Now I became more convinced than ever of the truth of Islam, and I also began to practise it.

Just by chance, I happened to come in touch with a Muslim association in Sweden, and I attended 'Id-prayer in Stockholm for the first time in 1952.

This was my position when I went to England just a few

weeks before 'Id-ul-Fitr 1372 A.H. The first day I was in England I went to Woking Mosque where it was suggested that I should publicly declare my faith in Islam on 'Id-day, which I consequently did.

What especially appealed to me in Islam was, and is, its rationalism. You are not asked to believe anything without reason. The Holy Qur'an gives us proofs of the existence of God that leave nothing further to be wished for.

Another appeal of Islam is its universality. The Qur'an does not talk about God as the Lord of the Arabs or of any special people, nay, not even as the Lord of the World, but as *the Lord of the worlds*, while earlier revealed books talk about "the Lord of God of Israel" etc.

Furthermore, we are asked to believe in all the prophets, whether mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or not.

Finally, in previous revelations we find several prophecies which without the shadow of a doubt prophesy about the Prophet Muhammad (on whom be peace and the blessings of God) and in the Qur'an God says: "Surely, this day We have completed Our favour on you, and chosen for you Islam as a religion" and "Surely, the religion with God is Islam".

QUOTATION FROM THE HOLY QURAN

If it were His Will,
He could destroy you,
O mankind, and create
Another race: for He
Hath power this to do.

(Sura IV, Sec 19, verse 133)

tune for spreading Islam in Japan. Blind pursuit of material pleasures has now made the so-called progressive nations the victims of spiritual hollowness. Islam and Islam alone can fill this vacuum in their souls. If proper steps are now taken for the preaching of Islam in Japan, I feel that within two or three generations the entire country can be brought within the folds of Islam. By this conversion, I foresee, a great glory for Islam in the Far East and also greater blessing for humanity in that part of the world.

"MUHAMMAD (P.B.U.H.) IN THE GOSPEL"

"Then said the Priest," How shall the Messiah be called, and what sign shall reveal his coming?"

Jesus Answered: The name of the Messiah is Admirable for God himself gave him the name when he had created his soul, and placed it in Celestial splendour. God said; wait Muhammad, for thy sake I will create paradise, the world, and a great multitude of creatures, whereof I make thee a present, in so much that who so shall bless thee, shall be blessed, and who so shall curse thee, shall be accursed. When I shall send thee into the world, I shall send thee as my messenger of salvation, and thy world shall be ture, insomuch that heaven and earth shall fail, but thy faith shall never fail."

Muhammad is his blessed name.

Then the crowd lifted up their voices saying: O God, send us thy messenger. O Muhammad, come quickly for the salvation of the world:

From

"THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS"

Edited and translated from the Italian Manuscript in the Imperial Library at Vienna, by LONSDALE AND LAURA RAGG

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

THE LAST WORD

Islam consists of God's Guidance to humanity. It is not the religion of any particular people.- It does not belong to any specific land. All prophets of God, in all ages and at all places, preached this very religion. The last, latest and revised edition of this religion was revealed to Muhammad of Arabia (peace be upon him). He performed his mission in the best possible manner and established a civilization on the foundations of Islam. Arabs became the standard-bearers of this ideology, and they rose from oblivion to become, by its grace, a world power to be reckoned with. From Arabia this religion was disseminated to other peoples and other lands. When Arabs became disregardful of their duty towards the Lord, other peoples stepped ahead to uphold the banner of Islam. Egyptians, Spaniards, Saljuks, Kurds, Berbers, Turks, Indians, Mangols, etc. entered the fold of Islam, upheld its banner and served its cause. All of them made a name for themselves, in their own times. Islam is not the monopoly of a certain people. It belongs to the whole of humanity. Who knows what other people of the East and the West will embrace it and become the spear-head of Islamic revival and the pioneers of a twentieth century world-renaissance.

*Come new generations,
Proclaim the fight for truth
Raise up the banners of invincible faith
Build bridges with your life across
The gaping earth blasted with hatred
And march forward*

ISLAM-OUR CHOICE

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The readers are requested to note the change of address on pages 19, 26, 29, 31 45, and 48 (1), which will be read as follows:—

**Geneva Cornavin 253,
Geneva (Switzerland)**

The offices of Islamic Literature trust, International Islamic Publications Ltd., and Muslimnews International are now situated at the above address in Geneva (Switzerland.)



الاسلام اختيارنا

باللغة الانجليزية



المكاتب التعاونية للدعوة والإرشاد بالبدعة والصناعية الجديدة

تحت إشراف وزارة الشؤون الإسلامية والأوقاف والدعوة والإرشاد

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