

An Address

OF

**The Right Hon'ble Al-Haj Lord Headley
(El-Farooq)**

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MR. PRESIDENT AND BRETHREN IN ISLAM,

Permit me to thank you most sincerely for the kind expressions and references you have made in your Address to me. I am afraid I may not perhaps meet all your expectations but in my zeal for the propagation of our Faith I stand second to none.

You have kindly alluded to my humble quota in the service of Islam. I must confess that I have only done my duty and I wish I could do more. You have also kindly alluded to some of the hardships I had to face since my formal declaration in the Faith in 1913. My hardships may be many and who knows many may be in store, but Allah be glorified who enabled me to bear all this in a humble Muslim spirit. It has been due to my strong faith in Islam which has enabled me to bear these. Every adversity that befell me made my faith in Islam still stronger. In this connection I must mention the moral support I have always received from my dearest brother Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din—the first Missionary of Islam in Europe. His untiring energy, his Muslim sacrificial spirit and his unassuming character coupled with his undaunted courage have been a constant source of strength to me and are among the chief causes of the spread of Islam in the West. In his preachings as a Muslim he has not only stood above sectarian differences but has always proved conclusively that there are no sects in Islam.

As you have rightly remarked, in Islam there are different schools of thought only, and no sects, and I, therefore, in the very beginning wish to disassociate myself from all such so-called sects of Islam. I belong to none of them and especially deprecate the ways of those who denounce other Muslims as being out of the pale of Islam

simply because they differ from them in certain matters. I am a Muslim pure and simple and follow the Quran and the Sunnah (the words and ways of the Holy Prophet). I believe in the finality of the Divine Messengership in the holy person of Muhammad. I believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers (with Muhammad the last of them), the Hereafter, and the Pre-measurement of good and evil by God and the Resurrection after death. I need no more. I am, therefore, glad to realize that in your propagation of Islam you have taken the same attitude and directed your activities above sectarian differences.

Gentlemen, this in fact comprises the Mission and Message of our dear Faith, whose strength lies to a great extent in its simplicity and adaptability, and comparative freedom from dogma. I want to see our Faith presented to the world in its true colours ; I want others to share the happiness which is associated with a profession of that which is reasonable, and above all I want converts to Islam to be attracted by our toleration and regard for the feelings of others who do not think quite as we do ourselves, and I feel we are entitled to represent what we so earnestly believe without any touch of that bitterness which is often aroused by religious differences.

Gentlemen, it gives me real pleasure to hear about all you have said about your activities in the propagation of our dear Faith in different ways and in different places. How happy I feel to find you, Indian Brethren, engaged in a most sacred cause so essential to the very life of Islam, and my personal gratitude to your efforts becomes enhanced when I find a sort of indifference to this sacred cause prevailing in other quarters. The Woking Mission has met a marvellous success and I may say unprecedented in some way, and I hope the day is very near when your efforts

will be crowned with success in other quarters. Your means may be limited but I hope your enthusiasm, sincerity and honesty of purpose, combined with your full trust in God, will compensate all this and you will achieve success.

Gentlemen, as most of your activities are centered in the Christian lands, my remarks will, therefore, be mostly about the dogmatic beliefs obtaining in the West; and I wish to point out that the Western mind is becoming thoroughly weary of efforts to cling to what is hollow and insincere and to dogmatic teaching altogether contrary to reason. As a Westerner I foresee the danger of this loosening of the bonds of restraint which all religions insist on—there may be a general Western debacle in the direction of atheism and anarchy, and I humbly suggest that this may be checked by the spread of Islam which is, as you well know, a Faith closely resembling that which was taught by Jesus Christ--our Prophet Isa, but not having much in common with the fantastic and weird superstructure imposed by the early Fathers of the Church who, in my humble opinion, wandered very far indeed from the precepts of the Founder of Christianity.

There is nothing in our Articles of Faith which cannot be accepted by any true Christian. In my opinion the Principles of Islam are all-comprehensive and all-sufficing. It gives me more pleasure than I can express to be able to say, that there is a marked change in the attitude of the average Christian in the West towards Islam. When I first came out openly as a Muslim there was a good deal of restraint and "coolness" when the very name of Muhammad was mentioned; but now I have no hesitation in talking in the most open manner to mixed audiences about Islam and pointing out

that it provides its followers with a perfect code of ethics by the aid of which all that is noble and good in man may be worked out and the maintenance of peace assured. Statements such as these would not have been listened to or tolerated fifteen years ago, but, to-day I find that so far from resenting, people *welcome* short expositions of the kind and ask questions upon the various points arising in the discussions. On several occasions the following remark has been made:—"Why, if that is Islam, I must be a Muslim."

It is always well to let Western people realise that monks and priests built up what is called "Christianity" two or three hundred years after Christ's time, and that their dogmas had nothing to do with the actual teachings of Christ himself. The complicated system enjoining the necessity of believing in the Divinity, the Trinity, the Sacraments, the Atonement, and the Immaculate Conception, no longer rules with a rod of iron, and I do not speak too strongly when I say that hundreds of thousands of so-called Christians in the British Isles and elsewhere are at this moment longing for a Faith capable of diffusing an atmosphere of Light, Reality, and Truth.

Such a Faith is ISLAM.

Let us, therefore, lose no time in presenting it to our brothers all over the world. Anyone understanding what we have to show will see the beauty and simplicity without the necessity of any pressing on our part. I am myself an Englishman of the English and I hope a true Muslim at heart, but no one ever asked me to become a Muslim.

My very dear friend and brother, the Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, never did more than explain certain points to me when I asked for enlightenment and I

never try to influence anyone else or to bring any pressure to bear. I feel sure, however, that when the time for selection comes to each man, the choice will, because of the beauty and purity of the tenets and absence of improbabilities, be Islam every time.

You will be able to gather from the foregoing that for some 15 years I have had considerable opportunities for the exercise of my observation and you will not be surprised to learn that it is abundantly clear to me that no religion will gain much hold on the mind and heart of Western nations unless it permits a free use of Reason.

The Ten Commandments bear reasoning about because they inculcate principles which are basically sound and obviously make for the well-being of all mankind. Also, the teachings of our Prophet Isa (Jesus), when considered apart from the dogmatic fairy-tales of the monks and priests, are sound, if somewhat idealistic; and, like the teachings of Moses, they were addressed to the Jews. Similarly with the teachings of the blessed Prophet Muhammad; they were on the same lines and inculcated the same doctrines but *were addressed to the whole world.*

This enlightenment of the world took place some six hundred years after the time of the Blessed Prophet of Nazareth. The role of Moses was entirely that of a law-giver; Jesus was the gentle admonisher and upholder of altruistic self-effacement; whilst Muhammad combined the advantages of both. In his teaching we observe a marked toning down or tempering of the harshness of the Judaic commands and what may perhaps be called a stiffening of the rather impracticable precepts of Jesus. I am sure that none of my hearers will for a moment think that there

lurks in my remarks one scintilla of disrespect towards any of the Holy Prophets of God. What I wish to emphasise is that if the beautiful idealistic teachings of Jesus were to be literally obeyed in the present day, there would be a rapid transference of property to all beggars - deserving and undeserving—from all those who had worked for or had acquired property by any fair means. So we find that some six hundred years after Christ's time the Almighty Allah, God of the worlds and King of the Day of Judgment, saw fit to send His Prophet Muhammad, the last of the Blessed line of Prophets, to expound a Faith in no way contrary to what mankind had already received from previous Messengers, but tempered and revised so as to meet the more advanced requirements of the times. As you all know he started by abolishing infanticide and regulated the affairs of Arabia—especially in the matter of temperance and the treatment of women—so that the country could be called “civilized” under his rule. Everything could not be done at once: but a good start was made. Alcohol was forbidden and the disgraceful pagan orgies which prevailed at the time, came to an end as one good result.

Polygamy was checked and regulated by limiting the number of wives a man might have. Forgiveness and mercy shone forth in every utterance of the Prophet.

There is hardly to be found in history a more wonderful display of the exercise of mercy than that shown by the Holy Prophet when he entered Mecca as a conquerer with absolute power of punishment and revenge on those who had been his cruel and relentless persecutors for many years. *He forgave them all.*

It must not be forgotten that all the Prophet's early fights were in self-defence; he only took the sword in defence of those who, with himself, were being subjected to repeated and violent attacks. He was practically driven within the walls of Medina for shelter. Later on, when fighting became general, it was impossible to exist without taking the sword, and it is quite untrue to say that Islam took the sword in the first instance.

It was indeed war which carried Islamic advantages and learning into Europe and started that civilization which spread and established itself all through an important portion of the Middle Ages.

Notwithstanding the subsequent reverses related by history we have made great progress until to-day. The Muslim fraternity numbers about 400,000,000 of the human race. Of this vast total may be numbered over 100,000,000 as British subjects.

Whenever I have the good fortune to stand amongst my Muslim Brothers I always feel at ease; why do I experience that happy feeling? It is because Islam is stamped with the sign of reality, the hall-mark of truth, and is blessed by the absence of chicanery, the humbug and the trickery of the conflicting teachings elsewhere prevailing.

In Islam I recognise the substance of a grand and simple Faith, whilst in others I detect the shadows and ghosts of pagan times fitting past and partially obscuring what I believe was the teaching of the Divinely inspired Prophets—Duty to God and neighbour.

How hard it is to break down the false teachings of the pagans of old!

The savage idea of the "dying god," the cruel sacrifices of human victims, without which the ever-gaping maw of the Moloch could not be satisfied—all these relics of past savagery seem to have regerminated in the minds of the monks and priests of the early days of the Christian era, and to have been tacked on to the original Faith as taught by the Founder of Christianity, and, so far as I know, entirely without his authority.

To such an extent did the sacerdotal influence sink into the minds of the easily frightened and ignorant people, that even to this day there are tens of thousands of educated and apparently sane persons who seriously believe that hell is yawning to receive them unless they believe in the dogmas. I have been repeatedly told that salvation is quite impossible for me because I do not believe in the *necessity* for a belief in any of them; and also I have been told that none of my prayers can possibly reach the ears of the Almighty except through the assistance of one of the Prophets! The tenacity of superstitions such as these is marvellous, and the final and clinching recital in the enigmatic guide to heaven reads terribly: "This is the Catholic Faith; which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved." For it leaves no loophole of escape: the miserable sinner who either cannot or will not accept is doomed to everlasting damnation, *i.e.*, to a punishment worse than any that could be inflicted by the harshest human tyrant in his harshest mood!

And yet a few minutes after glibly reciting a creed which consigns many millions of good-living and God-fearing people to utter darkness where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" the self-same congregation humbly kneels and addresses the Almighty in that

very beautiful prayer: "O God, *Merciful Father*, Who despisest not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful; *Mercifully* assist our prayers that we make before Thee in all our troubles and adversities. . . ."

What a contradiction! What hypocrisy! In one breath we give to the world a solemn statement, in the form of a creed, that we believe in a God Who is the acme of injustice and harshness, and in the next we address Him as "Merciful Father." We acknowledge that He will sentence us to "perish everlastingly" for the commission of no crime whatever—thereby killing our love, our respect, and sense of duty; but when we find trouble and adversity worrying us we have the incredible meanness to grovel before Him with lies in our mouths and asking Him to "mercifully assist our prayers"! It seems to me little less than marvellous that all the millions of educated people who have with so much unction sung the Athanasian Creed through the centuries and also prayed in the words of that beautiful prayer have not realized that they were either great hypocrites or great fools --and the further thought comes into my head, How is it that they dared to try to deceive God by first of all proving Him a heartless tyrant and then calling Him "Merciful"? It would seem as though priestcraft must be responsible for this awful blindness of people who call themselves "Christians." What the exact shibboleth used may have been one does not quite know, but it was doubtless connected with the terrors of the unknown, and the spell was cast and the power gained by those who were more educated than the great mass of the people, and could therefore make a bid for unlimited power and try to rule the world.

In religious matters people are very prone to blindly follow any leader, and I am inclined to put this down to

laziness. "Give me a nice comfortable religion where my mere acceptance of what has gone before my time will be sufficient to ensure my safety in the next world." But is it not incumbent on everyone to try to understand what he is told? I may have been brought up in a particular faith; but it does not necessarily follow that it is the best, and if I find one that is simpler and more free from glaring mistakes and absurdities, I should adopt it and treat the change as a step nearer the Truth. What do I believe? I believe in that religion which is freest from gross improbabilities and, above all, one leading me to absolute belief and trust in the Goodness, Justice and Mercy of God Almighty and one leading me to never-ceasing efforts to be of use to my fellow-creatures. This, of course, is Islam. It is the Muslim belief; but I am now trying to ascertain what people of all creeds generally do *really* believe. The Atonement means a great deal to many people—it means less than nothing to me. Perhaps I may not have quite the right kind of brain to discriminate, but at present I fail to detect any very great difference between the angry God of the prehistoric savage and the angry God of the educated twentieth century Christian. Both have to be "propitiated" by cruelty and shedding of blood. The orthodox Christian of to-day persists in believing that nothing but the murder of the poor carpenter's son could save mankind from ever-lasting damnation and propitiate the Great Creator of all things in Heaven and on Earth! As a child I always resented the idea of the "Eternal Father, strong to save," requiring any assistance from any quarter whatever or being in need of a sort of propitiatory bribe or "sop to Cerberus," and as a man I am lost in wonder when I contemplate the sad fact that a large proportion of the human race has been induced to nurse the absurd figment for so many centuries. Even now the Christian

God, according to the Christian teaching, is but a copy of the ancient mooloch.

A wide distinction must be drawn in the case of punishment of criminals. For instance, we hang or shoot a criminal or murderer simply as a deterrent and to prevent the recurrence of the crime. The law must be enforced, and it is necessary for the good of the whole community that the guilty should suffer; but it is quite another matter when we kill an innocent person because someone else has done wrong, for in this case we emulate the principle of the "whipping boy" at a school—a manifest injustice and absurdity.

How can it be held that there is any fairness in a Being Who will first of all create mankind in His own image ("In the Image of God created He him") and place the created in situations also of His own making and well aware of all the pitfalls and temptations, and then, in consequence of a few failures in the course of an infinitesimally small period (the span of human life), pass a sentence of everlasting damnation! Such a deity would have to be approached by the suppliant, hat in hand, with some such remarks as the following: "I know that you are cruel and vengeful, and for that reason I cannot respect or love you, but I am told that if I satisfy your lust for blood and sacrifices you may to some extent mitigate the severity of the tortures you have prepared for me in the next stage of my existence." Modern Christianity has failed to keep the churches filled because education and enlightenment have advanced by leaps and bounds during the past century. More inventions useful to mankind have come to the front within that small span of a hundred years than in all the previous ages since the first appearance of man upon the earth. Only think of it; over one

hundred millions of years have passed before men found out the use of steam and electricity, the existence of the atom and the electron, radium and the Hertzian waves, and countless other previously unsuspected phenomena; and all these giant strides have been taken within the narrow compass of the concluding century of the enormous period named! And all these wonderful discoveries carry conviction and are rightly believed in by all intelligent people; they are all helping to turn over the leaves of the great Book of Nature and bringing us nearer the Truth.

It is to the credit of many modern dignitaries of the Church of England that they have openly expressed themselves as not satisfied with the condemnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed. I hear that the reading of this Creed is to be either optional or that it will not be read at all in Church of England churches. It is hardly to be expected that the many branches of Christianity will unite in deprecating the use of this Creed and I should say that it will probably be retained in the Romish Church, though I do not know for certain.

I have recently perused a large and very interesting volume in which are collected—under the heading “Do We Believe?”—a large number of letters which appeared sometime ago in the columns of the *Daily Telegraph* of London.

It is, I think, a healthy sign that the correspondence, which was started by a letter signed “Oxoniensis” produced no fewer than nine thousand letters, sermons and addresses; indeed, it was estimated that if they had all been printed they would have taken up two thousand and five hundred columns of the newspaper. This spontaneous entering into the arena by all classes and representatives of every shade of religious opinion shows how the

mind craves for more knowledge as to what the future may have in store for us. "Do We Believe?" seems not to go quite far enough. All of us must believe in *something*: we believe that a straight line is the nearest way between any two points; that two and two make four; that the whole is greater than its part, and so forth; and we regard these as absolute facts about which there can be no disputing. We also agree that a blade of grass grows, but disputes commence the moment their arises the question as to *how* it grows or *who causes it to go on growing*. We do believe in the simple mathematical definitions, but *what exactly* do we believe about the origin of life? What do we believe about the Creator and the creation of the world? What do we believe about rewards and punishments? What is our conception of the Supreme Being?

In his opening letter "Oxoniensis" asks some pertinent and baffling questions which will bear repeating: "Do we believe? A definite creed has both its religious and its ethical aspects; it formulates dogmas and teaches morality. On some of the theological postulates and axioms of Christianity I desire to say nothing. It would ill become me to discuss in the columns of a daily newspaper the ultimate mysteries which this Cosmos and its government suggest and involve, or the solutions which the Fathers of the Church have proposed to these ultimate problems. But I will take some issues based on a broader or commoner ground. The religious assumption is that this world is not of value or importance in or for itself, but solely as a preparation, or, as some would phrase it, a state of trial, a probationary sphere, in view of an awful world that is to come. Do we believe that? Faith is not of much use unless it supplies motives for action or settled convictions of thought. Do we act as if we believed that this world was a preparation for the

next? . . . Long ago someone remarked that if people really believe in a Hell they would neither marry nor give in marriage—they could hardly eat their dinners. That, of course, is an extreme and pedantic view; nor is it of much consequence, for I take it that hardly anyone nowadays believes seriously in a Hell of everlasting torments.

“ Well, what is our belief in Heaven? If it means anything, it must be a strange reversal of all our worldly standards - a reversal where goodness is put above fame. It means the triumph of obscure and unrecognized virtue, the equality of all men and women before the Omnipotent, in which the workman is as good as his master, the poor slavey the social equal of her mistress. Or it is a place of piety and rest, where everything that bored us here, like saying prayers and singing hymns, becomes an object of interest and zeal. Do we believe it? Do we act as if we believed it? Would we welcome Heaven on these terms? And if not, what is our faith in this matter? . . . How can we believe what we do not understand? And even if we did, what would our faith be worth? Faith without works is dead. Where are the works which show that we believe in Heaven and Hell—in another world at all? It is no good to dismiss these as old and familiar questions. Have they ever been answered?”

“ Oxoniensis ” concludes his letter with the following:—“ The time has come, surely, when we can dare to look things in the face and eschew all mealy-mouthed falsehoods. The ordinary worldly life is a practical scepticism—when it is not a worship of Baal. I know that there are many quiet and religious people who live simply, who do justice and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God. I know also that there are some rever-

ent and serious Agnostics who have tried to think out problems for themselves, and have conscientiously attained to conclusions mainly negative. But I am not at present concerned with either. I am speaking of the vast majority, the men and women of the world; of ourselves, in short, as an average mass. Do we believe?"

"A Rationalist" contributes what I consider a very temperate and sensible letter to the series as follows:—

"I was brought up as a Christian, and had a Christian training until my early manhood, when, by a diligent study of Biblical critics, I discovered that the story of the alleged fall of man in the Garden of Eden was a myth, and I asked myself this question: 'If man did not fall in the Garden of Eden, what need was there for Jesus to come down on earth and die, that by His death He might blot out the sins of humanity?' The result of my enquiry led me to conclude that if the first Adam did not fall there was no need for the Atonement by the second Adam, and the whole *raison d'être* of the Christian scheme of salvation was gone for ever. But did that leave me without a creed and without a mission in life? Certainly not. True, I gave up belief in the anthropomorphic conception of God as revealed in the pages of the Bible, and ultimately discovered by a study of the evolution of the God idea that all ideas of God were man-made, and that all the 'Gods' were but figments of the imagination. But still I was not without a creed. Everything that was good and true and beautiful in the Bible still belonged to me, as well as it did to any Christian. If I could only believe that Jesus was a man, noble, enthusiastic religious reformer in His day, I could still practise all the good teachings that He is alleged to have uttered in His Sermon on the Mount. And if I could find any noble

ethical teachings in the Koran, or in the teachings of Budha or Confucius, I could accept them also. The field of practical philosophy was, therefore, widened for me. I could accept the good wheresoever I found it. But if any teachings of Jesus seemed to me out of harmony with the spirit of the age, there was no reason why I should abandon my commonsense and try to practise teachings which would involve me and those near and dear to me in poverty and misery. No. I still had my reason as my guide. Instead of paying homage to the 'Gods,' I turned my attention to the service of man. I found that the only true philosophy was the philosophy of this life—the only life we really know of though many of us still dream of a life to come. Well, there is no harm in believing in a future life, so long as we do not allow the concerns of this life to be interfered with by this consideration. What man really wants is a practical belief—one that will make him a good citizen, a good husband, a good father, and a faithful friend. Man wants a creed, but it must be a creed that is based upon science—that is, upon the latest deductions from the observed order of phenomena, and therefore it can never be a fixed creed, but must be susceptible of modification, by growth, with every addition that man gets to his knowledge. And it must be a creed the sole aim of which is the happiness and progress of the human race. And if there should turn out to be another life, no God of goodness can ever blame a man who has done his best to render the lives of others happy in this. As old Polonius said (in *Hamlet*):—

This above all—to thine own self be true ;
And it must follow, as the night the day ;
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

I must say I am in full sympathy with "Rationalist,"

who uses the reasoning powers with which God has endowed him. Why were such faculties given us if they were not to be used to guide us in the right path? A man uses his eyes to avoid tumbling into holes or walking over precipices, and no one blames him, but directly he brings his intelligence to bear as a protection against the absorption of all kinds of improbabilities or questionable dogmas he is at once dubbed an unbeliever, an atheist or an apostate. My own feeling is that Reason is by far the brightest gem which sparkles in the crown of life, for is it not by the exercise of our highest faculties that Science is advanced and permitted to take us farther along that road which leads to the Truth concerning every relation of life? Of course I know that this is rank heresy in the eyes of the Clerical party, and a few years ago the thumb-screws and rack would have come into play and my vile body would have suffered until such time as I recanted like poor Galileo. Thousands of wonderful things meet us at every turn—things which we cannot understand—and that, to my mind, is one of the chief reasons for encouraging scientific progress by every means in our power. Science is the greatest ally of true religion, for it is mainly to science that we shall owe our ultimate appreciation and understanding of our goodness of the Great Creator and the marvels of His universe.

Turning from this argument, I hope I may be permitted to read what I consider a very beautiful contribution from an old lady who has evidently followed the *Daily Telegraph* correspondence with keen and reverent attention. She writes:

“Though in my ninety-third year, and a sufferer from some of the ills of old age, I have been follow-

ing with great interest the wonderful correspondence that has appeared. When I was a young girl such openly expressed opinions on religious subjects would have been regarded with horror, even if they would have been allowed to be put in print. Many of the letters are excellent, and some of them quite fall in with my way of thinking, for I am a devout worshipper of the Almighty. I thoroughly believe in the efficacy of prayer to Him, and hardly know what I should have done without that blessed resource in a life beset with difficulties which, for the moment, appeared insurmountable. So I thank God for having inspired me with trust in Him and reverence for His blessed name. I also thank Him for having blessed me with loving, dutiful children, and permitting me to see my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. But, judging from a few of the replies, faith in the Creator, with constant prayer to Him for help and guidance, besides good acts, go for nothing unless accompanied by belief in the so-called Son of God. We are, I hope, all sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, but I cannot conscientiously believe, nor is there any evidence that I know of, to show that the "Son of God" was God Himself in the form of man. Until that evidence is forthcoming I shall continue to worship the Father, and endeavour to abide by His precepts, with the hope that He will one day receive me into the Kingdom of Heaven."

This dear old nonagenarian is a devout and truly good woman whose long life has been devoted to the service of God and efforts to help her family and all her fellow-creatures, and yet, according to the Christian teachings, she cannot be saved—the "Merciful" Christian God will see that she shall "perish everlastingly" for not believing in the divinity of Christ.

There are many who will cheerfully believe anything told them by those they have learned to look upon as their "spiritual pastors and masters"; they stifle their common-sense and throw reason to the winds. The bogey of the angry God and the terrors of the unknown have been skilfully used, and the poor dupes swallow any outrageous statements—they would believe the moon to be made of green cheese if that were insisted as being "generally necessary to salvation." After sixteen centuries the absorption of Christian dogmas may be said to have led to a kind of hereditary disease transmitted from father to son and encouraged in every way by the sacerdotal influence. It has been a source of wonder to me from my very early days how highly educated men could be found to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, for it seems impossible to credit them with sincerity, and yet one knows so many good and kindly souls amongst the clergy in all the Churches that it goes against the grain to regard them as insincere!

I am personally acquainted with several Bishops and many of the clergy of the English and Roman Catholic Churches. They are friends, and I am perfectly certain that they do not really, in their inmost hearts, believe that I am doomed to everlasting damnation because I do not believe in any single one of the Christian dogmas as being necessary to salvation and yet, as ordained priests, I imagine that they are compelled to look upon me as a lost soul. Here we may well repeat the well-known question: "What do *they* believe?" I sometimes fear that they deceive themselves and that the "*truth* is not in them."

Mr. R. G. Hopkins, another writer in the series,

contributes a letter which backs up much that I have said on former occasions. He writes :

“I should think that if all the people in this country were asked to give an answer to the question (Do we believe?) the reply of the majority would be in the affirmative. But if, again, these same persons were asked why they believed, I wonder how many would be ready with logical reasons? It is quite natural that believers should predominate when nearly every child that is born has its mind invaded by Christian teaching. Parents teach their little ones to believe and to ask no awkward questions. Consequently, having been allowed no independence of thought on this question in childhood, they grow up firmly convinced of the truth of all they were taught in the nursery. What is this belief worth, obtained as it is in so many cases by bribes of eternal joy and threats of eternal pain? For years every attempt to investigate the teachings of the Bible has been met with the cry, ‘Believe, or be damned.’ It is a pleasure to me to think that each century has produced a few brave men who have not bartered away their reason at the command of popes, priests, and bishops. To-day the Churches scowl at them, and the narrow-minded brand them as polluters of decent society, yet the world is becoming more tolerant, and the name ‘infidel’ is losing some of its former opprobrium. Belief must always be the result of evidence. Christianity thrives in an atmosphere of blind credulity, but withers away in the strong light of evidence. Some people believe the Bible to be an inspired work. If that were the case, one would expect to find no mistakes, no false theories, no unjust or cruel laws, and so forth. It would be the acme of perfection.

Many believers admit that it is only the work of mortal men. Then it must contain many mistakes, and every one who attempts to point them out deserves our thanks. Many of the sayings of Jesus were wise and grand. Still, we must remember that much of His teaching was taught by men living centuries before Him."

There are very many more quotations I should like to make from this valuable collation of opinions on such an all-important subject but we have not the time. I think that every act of every human being in this world is the outcome or resultant of an incalculable number of impulses dependent on various causes of which we know but little as well as of our environment for which we cannot be held responsible. Most of these factors in our individuality are beyond our ken and control. But I think that most of us really do believe in the voice of conscience which tells us what is *right* and what is *wrong, according to our lights*; and I further think that there is a loss of self-respect which comes to those who deliberately go against the warnings of that voice, as well as a sensation of elation following an obedience to that voice.

It is the "still, small voice" which Elijah heard; it is the Heavenly Influence which all of us Muslims believe to be "nearer to us than our jugular veins"; it is the Spirit of the Almighty which appeals to our most inmost selves, and it is this in which we really believe, and it is this which guides us, though we may not be aware of the fact, in our earnest search for the Truth.

I am enlarging upon these points because they are of vital importance to the great subject we all have at

heart. I have no wish to make any attack on any religion as there is so much good in all, but I do think that it is allowable to present Islam to the world as the most free from improbabilities and, as they appear to my poor vision, absurdities.

To tell me, a fairly intelligent and thinking man, in the 20th century, that I cannot be saved unless I subscribe to certain gross improbabilities, *unconnected with ethics or mode of life or morals* is going too far. And further, when it is shown that these said improbabilities have not even the merit of originality but have been copied from pagan tricks and superstitions centuries before Christ's time, commonsense and gratitude both tell me to thank God that, in His infinite mercy and love, he called forth the Holy Prophet of Arabia and charged him to give to mankind those glorious messages which swept away the idolatry and superstitions of the monks and substituted Islam.

Where is there a prayer — amongst all the beautiful addresses which good men have been inspired to say — which is so beautiful and so intensely human and simple as the *Fatihah*:—

“ *Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Raheem.*
Al Hamd-u-lillah i-Rabbil alameen
Ar-Rahman Ir-Raheem
Malik-i yaumid-deen
Iyyaka nabudu wa Iyyaka nasta-een
Ihd i-nassirat-al mustaqueem
Sirat-al lazeena a'namt alaihim
Ghair-il magzoobe alaihim wa lazzaalteen.”

We want people to do good for its own sake and that alone, without any thought of reward or punishment. Why do we do kindly acts? Why does a man jump into the sea to save another man's life? He does it simply and solely in order to gratify his love of doing good—of doing to his neighbour just what he would like another man to do for him.

There is no thought of future reward—he has succeeded in saving a life, he does not wait for reward because a little bit of Heaven—but such a priceless portion—has already passed into his possession and become part of his very self.

That is the kind of religion which I really believe inspires most people in the world; the spirit of Brotherhood, beloved of all true Muslims, is abroad in the world but is hampered by the evil one who perpetually interferes with the angels of light. The grand conception of ALLAH, the ONE and ONLY GOD; The Almighty, Alone, All-Seeing. Omnipotent Being—always approachable by the most miserable and unhappy, without any human aid, who is nearer to us than our jugular veins, is what bears us up. A true belief in that Being does bring comfort to the sad and weary for it brings a sense of real support due to the actual presence of God our Cherisher and Protector. It was earnest thoughts on these great questions, extending over a period of over forty years which caused me to say (about 14 years ago when I openly embraced Islam) that I felt like a man emerging from a dark tunnel into the light of day. Gone were then the unrealities which had hung round me and gone was the last vestige of belief in the fables attached to my early training.

Now, my dear Bretheren in Islam, I feel I have not sufficiently thanked you for all the kind things you have said about me, nor expressed my gratitude. I thank you for the honour you have done, me; my words may be inadequate but I do thank you from my heart.

I now close with a prayer that the Almighty God out of His Divine Mercy may guide us on the right way and help us in our efforts to propagate our dear Faith.

AMEEN !