

HOW A SUFI FOUND HIS LORD

An Autobiography of
THE REV. JOHN A. SUBHAN
of the Henry Martyn School

With an Introduction by Bishop Brenton Thoburn Badley

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FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THIS little book, telling "How a Sufi Found His Lord," has done two things,—it has given India one of the best autobiographies yet published, and it has revealed a new personality, a new soul, to India. Many will now wish to meet Mr. John A. Subhan. He has written a great book because he has had a great experience.

No Christian worker, no student of the Christian movement in modern India, can afford to miss the illuminating and compelling story of this book. Here is the second edition in English. The Urdu and Bengali editions are being prepared. You will render a service to the Christian cause in helping India to know this book.

BRENTON T. BADLEY.

Episcopal Residence,
DELHI.

INTRODUCTION.

THE life-story of the Rev. John A. Subhan, given here with such frankness and wealth of detail, is a human document of very great interest. Its value to the Christian cause in India will be readily appreciated by those who are engaged in the difficult but glorious task of taking and interpreting the Gospel of our Lord to India's sons and daughters who are Muslim by faith. This faithful record of a sincere and earnest Muslim Mystic, recounting every step of the quest whereby he found rest for his soul, by an unexpected pathway and in a strange way, will bring great encouragement to Christian workers among Muslims.

One of the striking characteristics of John A. Subhan's conversion is that—in his own estimate—it was the reading of the Gospel, and not the teaching or preaching of any man, that opened the gateway of life to him. Let those who have grown up with the idea that argument and persuasion, whether of the formal sermon or of personal converse, are the surest way of presenting the crucified Saviour, living Christ, to the Muslim mind, take note of this fact. Let those, also, who believe that the Word of God, the "Sword of the Spirit," is more powerful than all our human explanation and exhortation, whether in dealing with Muslims, Hindus or enquirers of any other faith, take courage. More than that, let them give themselves still more faithfully to the supreme work of placing God's printed word in the hands of India's people, and pray that God's Spirit may make every copy to glorify our Lord.

Another notable feature of this fresh revelation of the quest of a soul is that, though unexpectedly and in a previously unknown quarter, the goal was reached in the early teens. To this unusual circumstance the author himself pointedly refers. Such a thing may not be oft repeated, but it strengthens the convictions of those who feel that the teaching of young people is among the supreme needs of our time, as the neglect of it is one of the most serious of our mistakes.

It was on my insistence that Mr. Subhan put into written form his spiritual experiences. His modesty, as well as a hesitancy in making these revelations of his inner spiritual aspirations and struggles, prevented his putting all this into writing at an earlier date. He consented on being assured that his story has great value in it for a large number of people, not only among those who work to bring to India's heart a personal knowledge of the Redeemer of the world, but also for many who themselves are seekers, whether known to missionaries and Indian pastors and evangelists, or hidden among the thousands who crowd our streets or study in our Christian institutions, or roam the villages of this vast land. This estimate of the value of Mr. Subhan's experience of his seeking and finding the Saviour, has been powerfully confirmed as I have read this moving story of his soul struggles and the deep, inner satisfaction he has known ever since he was transformed by the power of the living Christ.

I may be permitted, as I close this brief Introduction, to make a plea that this little book be made known as widely as possible to those who may find in its pages guidance as to the best "approach" to the Muslim heart, and that other company of men and

women in India and other lands, who are seekers after Christ, yet know not who He is or how He may be found. If others, by reason of this story being faithfully told, can enter into the deep experience of peace and joy that now fill the author's heart and make him a lovely example and a winsome interpreter of Christian graces, he will be well repaid for his labour of love in writing this account of his spiritual quest. Many are thankful to God that John A. Subhan sought so earnestly and found so successfully the Lord, who invites all the world, saying,—*"Come unto Me and I will give you rest!"*

B. T. B.

Episcopal Residence,
DELHI, INDIA,
September 29th, 1942.

HOW A SUFI FOUND HIS LORD.

THE STORY OF MY ANCESTORS.

LONG, long ago in Central Asia there existed a great race known as Mongols, who in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by their conquests swept all before them and under their great leader Ghengiz Khan founded an Empire which extended from one end of Asia to the other. They had no prejudice against Christianity and preferred it at first to Islam. The Church, however, lost a great opportunity of winning them for Christ, for as H. G. Wells tells us that at that time "Christianity was in a phase of moral and intellectual insolvency without any collective faith or energy. When at last the Church was reunited and necessary energy returned with the foundation of the order of Jesuits, the day of opportunity was over. The possibility of a world-wide moral unification had passed away. The Mongols in China and Central Asia turned to Buddhism. In South Russia and Turkestan they embraced Islam."

These Mongols of Turkestan, known also as Moghals, crossed the borders of Afghanistan and founded the great Moghal Empire in India which lasted for over two hundred years. When this great Empire had declined and was breathing its last, the Prince Jehandar Shah, the eldest son of Emperor Shah Alam, was appointed a regent by Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Afghan invader of the country in 1761 A. D., and he administered the remains of the Empire until his

father's restoration in 1771 A.D. Prince Jehandar Shah, in 1784 A.D., on account of the unsettled affairs of his father, made his escape with a number of courtiers and officers of the kingdom from Delhi and repaired to Lucknow, where the British Governor of Bengal, Warren Hastings, had arrived to regulate the concerns between the Nawab Wazir, Asafud-dawlah and the East India Company. Prince Jehandar Shah accompanied Warren Hastings to Benares, which place he chose for his residence. The spot thus selected in the sacred city of the Hindus, by the Prince for himself and for them who had accompanied him from Delhi came to be known as Oudh Mahal, because they had come more recently from Oudh.

It is learnt from our family tradition that my ancestors, who themselves were Moghals by race, held hereditary office in the Court of Moghal Emperors from the very early times of the founding of the Empire, and that during the turbulent days of the Emperor Shah Alam, virtually the last of the Moghal Emperors, they threw in their lot with his heir, the Prince Jehandar Shah, and came to Benares under the circumstances already described. It was thus that Oudh Mahal in Benares came to be my ancestral home. The old graveyard of Oudh Mahal, the last resting place of my ancestors down to that of my grandfather, Ghulam Ghaus, under the changing circumstances and the encroachments on the property which the owners, because of the evil days that had befallen them, could not retain as their own, has almost disappeared. Such are the vicissitudes of time that even the name of the old Moghal residential quarters are now known as Mohalla Shivala, the place of the temple Shiva!

In 1857 A.D. came the great rising in India known as the Mutiny, and then its subsequent suppression by the British when those who had taken part in India's armed struggle to re-establish the National Government in India were hunted up and down the country and were punished. My ancestors, because of their old connection with the Moghal throne and their great loyalty to it, were strongly suspected of being among them who had actively attempted the resuscitation of the Moghal dynasty. Harrowing tales of house searching, summary trials and hangings have come down to us from our grandparents who had the misfortune of going through the terrible experience. Some were hanged while others succeeded in dodging the Government by changing their occupation and their usual mode of life, and by destroying every indication which would show their connection with the Moghal Court. The tokens of favour bestowed upon my ancestors from time to time by the Moghal Court, such as, *sanads*, *khil'at*, etc., which were greatly treasured in the family, were considered as dangerous possessions and were destroyed. My grandfather, Ghulam Ghaus, posed as a tradesman. My father, Hafiz Allah Bakhsh, after going through a religious education and learning the Quran by heart and thus earning the title of Hafiz, under a kind and good workman learnt the art of gold embroidery, and in course of time became so skilled in his art that his workmanship and designs drew the attention of the wealthy citizens and traders. Later, allured by the fame of Calcutta, as a city where arts were valued, he settled there. He gathered round himself other gold embroiderers from Benares, whom he had persuaded to join him in the great metropolis with a promise of better prospects. He opened a

work-shop, almost the first of its kind in the city, and thus became the recognised pioneer of this art, called *karchobi*, in Bengal.

MY EARLY LIFE

Thus it happened that in Calcutta, in a street from which though it retains its old name, Kolootola, even the traces of its old dwelling places and lanes have disappeared, I was born in 1897, and was called by a holy man Fazlur Rahman, the "Grace of the Merciful." My parents gave me another name, besides, "Abdus-Subhan," the Servant of the Holy One, and preferred to call me by the name of their choice.

It was under the tender care of a very affectionate mother, and receiving every attention from a loving father and a good elder brother, that I was brought up. I grew up under the simple, puritanic influence of my parents. Before I had passed the age of childhood, two younger brothers were added to the small circle of the family, and thus it consisted now of four brothers but no sister. The good influence of our mother, who was chiefly responsible for the education of the children, first at home and then in *maktabs*, taught us to hate doing anything or uttering any word which was not regarded as good and honourable. Smoking, chewing betel and using strong and abusive language which were common among the Muslim children in the neighbourhood were regarded as utterly hateful by my brothers and myself. The shocking habits and the filthy language of other children kept us completely aloof from them, my mother taking great care that we did not mix with an outside child. My father, who was liberal in his religious views and

believed in the moral aspect of his religion more than in its legal formalities, was very fond of religious studies. He studied everything on religion and of every faith that he could find. Later I found some pages of his Bible, which he had studied, among his books with his notes written on their margins. A silent man at home, he was accustomed to give long and loud discourses on religious subjects while among his friends.

Thus while my father earned his living and, at his leisure gave religious discourses, my mother, a strict *pardah* woman, ruled the house and managed the household affairs. She inculcated good habits in her children, and directed their education even to the extent of selecting Maulvis and *maktabs* or schools. Besides doing all household duties which included the family sewing, she supplemented the ordinary income by doing gold embroidery. In disciplining the children few were the occasions when she would resort to corporal punishment. One such occasion has left a lasting impression upon my mind, not because the punishment was severe, but because of the lesson it taught me and which I would never like to forget. It must have happened when I was very young, that a gentleman outside the door of our house, giving me a handkerchief and pointing to a betel shop at the end of the lane, asked me to go and give it to the shop-keeper. A simple request, but as I had a horror for betel shops I refused to obey him, and all his entreaties could not prevail upon me to do his bidding. My mother behind the door had listened to the whole conversation and was so exasperated at my obstinacy that she was obliged to punish me; but after the punish-

ment, she, taking me upon her knees, taught me to be always courteous and polite to others.

When I had learnt Urdu sufficiently, she encouraged me to read books on religious subjects, and often it was my practice to read out of such books to her while she worked at her *kārchobi*, the gold embroidery. My admiration for her workmanship roused my interest in the art of gold embroidery, and I often would interrupt my reading to her to try my hand at it, and in course of time I was able to exercise my talent in that direction with some success.

From the religious point of view my mother was a true Muslim. Ever regular in the performance of the obligatory prayers, she never missed offering free prayers, which were mostly directed to God on behalf of her children, which in the case of their illness took the form of earnest entreaties. When after prayers I returned from the Mosque she always made some remarks to encourage me in the habit. After a good long life devoted unselfishly to the good of her children, and after she had looked after them as a widow, (my father having died in 1924), for fifteen years, she died on 19th of May in 1939. I did not have the privilege of being present at her death-bed, but I received a long letter from my younger brother describing the last scene, which told me that her closing thoughts were directed to me, her absent child, and that her last words were those of admonition to her children asking them not to disturb the close fellowship and harmony which she had succeeded in creating during her lifetime in the family. Then, turning to others who were present, she asked their forgiveness for any injury she might have done or any offence

which she might have committed intentionally or unintentionally, and finally, asking God's forgiveness and repeating the creed, "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Apostle," she breathed her last.

EARLY RELIGIOUS TRAINING

The Islamic principles began early to mould my life. The influence at home, in *maktab* and that of the good Maulvis so carefully selected by my mother, made me religiously inclined from my early childhood. My parents noticing my religious tendency, planned to make me a Hafiz and Maulvi. I started early to observe the necessary religious practices, such as prayers and fasting and other Islamic devotions. I was hardly ten years' old when I had finished the whole of the Quran, and under an Arab Hafiz I had begun to memorize it. Under the guidance of a Maulvi I started also studying Arabic and Persian, as well as taking a course of studies in Islamics. Thus provided with the necessary knowledge of Islamic laws. I turned out to be a strict observer of Muslim practices. I could hardly tolerate the Muslims who did not observe the prayers and fastings, or who were not good Muslims, and my indignation against non-Muslims knew no bounds. Indeed I was growing into a fanatic. The knowledge of the early conquests of Islam which I had gained through my readings, inspired me with such a zeal that I would delight in dreaming of another *Jehad*, a holy war, and drawing the sword against all unbelievers, and thus acquiring the much coveted title of a *Ghazi*, a champion of Islam, and then finally dying the death of a *Shahid*, a martyr, in some glorious fight for Islam.

The guiding principle, or the motive behind my religious zeal and the tenacity with which I followed the practice of Islam lay in my blind faith in the truth of Islam. It was my conviction that every other religion was an invention of the devil, and that all non-Muslims as followers of false religions had no right to exist, for their very existence was pollution of God's fair earth, for did not the Quran say, that polytheism is a form of pollution? To me, in fact, there was no greater pollution than that of polytheism and idolatry, and the Hindus as idolators, and Christians as polytheists, were the worst of God's creatures, and hence to kill them because of their infidelity was a deed of merit deserving a reward in the world to come. Such were the ideas that I would expound to my fellow Muslims, many of them much older than I was. One instance of my fanaticism will suffice. My teacher, a Maulvi, who taught me Arabic and Persian, was himself a student in the Arabic department of Calcutta Madarasa, and he lived in the neighbouring Mosque. Desiring to learn English he had purchased some books and had brought them within the precinct of the Mosque. His study of the language of the infidels within the sacred boundary of the house of worship so exasperated me that I tore them to pieces. Other Muslims approved my action and the Maulvi had to change his residence and live in a room outside the Mosque.

It has already been stated that my parents had intended my education to be entirely on religious lines, but my excessive zeal and growing fanaticism in matters of religion, which were not approved by them and especially by my elder brother, obliged them to

modify their plans for my studies. They decided that I should be educated on modern lines and must give up the memorizing of the Quran. Thus in 1910 I was sent first to Woodburne School and later to Calcutta Madarasa to study English. The subsequent change in my life was not, however the result of my English studies. The aspiration for a higher knowledge of God was rooted in something deeper than, and totally different from, any outward circumstances in life. It was, in fact, God's search for His lost child which found a response in the depth of my soul and took the form of a quest for something unknown.

THE BEGINNING OF THE QUEST

The history of my religious quest begins with the study of the Quran itself. It had its germ in the testimony of the Quran to the books of Moses, David and Jesus, which appeared to me to be very striking, and I began to wonder where they could be found. Again and again I would read references to Moses, David and Jesus and to their books and wonder what their teachings could be!

The writers of mysticism speak of the two eternal passions of the self, the desire of life and the desire of knowledge: severally representing the hunger of heart, and that of the intellect for ultimate truth. If my desire to get acquainted with the teaching of God's revelation granted to previous prophets corresponded to the hunger of intellect, the desire to know *more about Him*; the hunger of heart for Him, was awakened in me by the study of books on Islamic mysticism. The result of it was a growing dissatisfaction with the form of religion based on legalism.

By observance of the rituals of Islam, so far I had derived the sense of self satisfaction which comes to a man who has fulfilled his obligations which he is expected to do, but in the depth of my soul the real hunger and thirst remained unsatisfied. There existed now an urge for a search for something unknown and unnamed. I had come to realize that the true satisfaction of soul was not to be attained through a legalistic system or formal beliefs but by an inner experience. The study of mysticism had informed me that it was through the esoteric knowledge and practice of mysticism alone that the true knowledge of God could be attained. Nevertheless I stuck to the religious practices with greater tenacity, for thus had the saints of Islam done. Finding regular hours of prescribed prayers inadequate for the satisfaction of my soul, I added extra hours to them. Now I began to spend hours in Mosque and cemetery. There was a restlessness in my heart and I was seeking to have it satisfied.

Mysticism was now to be the goal of my life, and a search for its knowledge now started. My unguided study of mysticism must have been of a strange character. For my early acquaintance with mysticism was through that class of its literature in which it is mixed up so much with magic and incantation, and naturally such a study would prove fascinating to an average boy of my age. From the sources of Islamic literature I had learnt already a good deal about the existence of the invisible beings such as *jinn* and angels, and that these mysterious and subtle beings were capable of influencing human destiny. The study of books on the lives of the Muslim saints showed that they had a wonderful power over these

beings who were at their beck and call. In fact, the saints of Islam in their practice of supernatural deeds were associated so closely with magic and *jinn*, that to be able to write effective charms and to have the invisible beings at one's command to me were the signs of great mystics and saints. The study introduced me to a new world which was of an absorbing interest to me. An eager hunt, therefore, started for such literature; books, manuscripts and pieces of papers containing some magical secrets were added to my collection, and soon it grew to be of such a magnitude that any magician would have been proud to possess it. I was then only a boy of thirteen! The books were not enough to satisfy my desire for such knowledge, and I went about seeking men who knew this hidden and mysterious knowledge. Moreover, the secrets were not fully divulged through printed or even written materials, so I was given to understand, but must be learnt directly from the masters who were adept in them, and so I began to mix freely with people who had any reputation of knowing the art.

In my mad search for magic, one evening I had a strange experience which greatly enhanced my enthusiasm for *jinn* and magic. I was accosted one evening by a stranger who on the pretext of having me read something to him took me to a house. There behind the closed door of a room I was introduced to a man sitting on a *charpoy* with a book opened in front of him. The man directed me to take my seat on the floor in front of an earthen lamp placed on a brick. At his instruction as I fixed my gaze at the steady flame of the lamp I saw in a few minutes things which, looking back now, seem to be an impossibility, yet I

personally experienced them. In that flame I saw an open ground being swept by a number of men. This being reported to the magician, I was told to ask the men sweeping the ground for the favour of the assembling of the tribunal. Soon a table and chairs were fetched and placed in order; next came a number of dignified men in procession who took their seats round the table, and one occupying its head in the manner of a presiding officer. I was asked to convey the salutation of the magician to them, and then they were requested to produce the thief who had stolen the property of so and so, along with the articles stolen by him. The thief was next brought and made to stand facing me, and the stolen articles were displayed on the table. The magician closely questioned me as to the description of the thief and the list of the articles thus exhibited. Next I was asked to request for the name and address of the thief to be written and shown to me. This was done, but the writing was illegible to me, and so at my further request it was exhibited in a clear and bold handwriting which I remember to this day! When finally the thanks and the salutations of the magician were conveyed to them, the entire scene in the flame vanished, and nothing remained but the steady flame of the lamp.*

This experience led me to study and practice charms with greater zest. Neighbours and friends began to look upon me as a magician and would surround me for amulets for all kinds of things; a man

in search of an employment or seeking promotion in his office, a wife to win back the lost affection of her husband, a father for the return of his runaway child, mothers for the recovery of their children suffering from some unknown disease, and many others with diverse needs and wants would come to me with requests for prayers and amulets.

The study and practice of magic, however, proved to be a stepping-stone to something higher and nobler than mere theurgy or a desire to attain to the position of thaumaturge. It indicated the deep conviction within me that there are other planes of being than those which senses report to man. It was an indication of the belief that behind the surface phenomena there is a supernatural world unperceived by sensations but realizable in the soul's experience.

I BECOME A SUFI

Somewhere about the time that I was admitted in the Woodburn School, Calcutta, I had my first experience of a train journey, when I was taken to Benares to my maternal grandfather who was a mystic. He perceiving my interest in charms and magical practices, one day in an affectionate manner gave me the advice to aspire not to be an *Amil* (one who practices charms) but to be a *Kāmil* (perfect). He explained to me that a mystic who is satisfied to remain an *Amil* belongs to a very low degree of mysticism, but a *Kāmil* belongs to that high stage of it where magic and charms count as nothing, for he attains the true knowledge of God and, living in close fellowship with Him, surpasses in dignity all earthly glories, even those of kings and angels.

*Mr. Lane in his book "*The Modern Egypt*" has described a similar seance at which he himself was present, and had himself asked for Lord Nelson and a friend of his to appear through the medium, and has given the charm used on this occasion and the method used for such a seance.

That day was a landmark in the experience of my religious life. Under his guidance I began to study the higher phases of mysticism. I was deeply impressed with the description of the journey of a mystic; a new and unexplored supernatural region lay before me. The perils of the journey thrilled me and the glory of the successive stages inspired me with an intense desire to become a *salik*, a traveller. I realized that the books fail to give a true and adequate knowledge of mysticism, and once again I came to feel that the true knowledge of God was not a matter of book learning but of experience. It comes by illumination and revelation. Only under the discipleship of a *murshid*, a recognised leader of an established religious order, could the journey be undertaken.

With an earnest longing I sought to be initiated into a religious order, but I was refused on account of my young age. I felt particularly attached to the Qadri Order, for as my grandfather was a member of it, I had an opportunity of studying its characteristics more closely, and he had extolled its dignity and privileges in such glorious language as to inspire me with an earnest longing to be its votary. Constant refusal to be initiated in the order only resulted in greater persistency on my part to seek admission into it. Perseverance such as mine was not to go without its reward, for eventually one day I was introduced to a *pir*, by my grandfather, of his fraternity. He was a *Khalifa*, successor to my grandfather's *pir*, Didar Ali Shah of Ghazipur. After he had satisfied himself as to my conduct, motives and my general knowledge of Islam, he consented to initiate me by performing the rite known technically as

tawajjuh, but refused to make me a disciple on account of my young age.

The manner of the performance of this mystical rite is no secret, for it is described in general terms in books, nevertheless, a promise of secrecy is extracted from the candidate before it is performed. A detailed account of it occurs in my book *Sufism* (see pages 87, 88, and 99). It may suffice here, however, to say that it is regarded as a means of "transmitting," spiritual power from a *pir* to another. The degree of its effectiveness depends upon the degree of a *pir*'s own spiritual power. In the exercise of *Tawajjuh* by an accredited *pir* a kind of "experience" is certainly received. In consequence of the fact that the exercise is directed to the heart of the recipient, the heart is the seat of the mystical experience gained by *tawajjuh*. The general nature of the experience must vary with every individual, excepting of course, in its essential features which in every case must remain the same. As to the nature of the personal experience in the exercise of *tawajjuh*, the lips of the disciples are sealed under a solemn oath of secrecy. What happens in that particular moment and what he experiences personally within, are never to be disclosed to another except to his *pir* to whom the experience must be described minutely, so that he judges the progress of his disciple. Some western writers have explained it in the terms of hypnotism, in any case, the essential feature of this experience may be described as a kind of 'illumination.' It at least gave me an assurance of the existence of another reality which lies beyond the senses, and of the presence of inner perception independent

of the organ of sight. It corroborated the statement of a Muslim mystic: "When a gnostic's spiritual eye is opened, his bodily eye is shut." On the other hand this does not produce a moral transformation in the recipient of *tawajjuh*, though as a result of the experience gained by it a moral transformation may follow.

The practice of *Dhikr* forms the most important part of the Sufi life, and I was instructed immediately after *tawajjuh*, in those forms of it which are known as *Pās-anfās* and *Habs-i-dam* and are described in my book *Sufism* (see pages 97 and 99). The rest I was to learn from my grandfather according to the progress of my journey.

After the ceremony of the initiation into the mystic order of the Qadiriya fraternity I became—to speak in Sufi terms—a *Salik*, or traveller, and under the guidance of my preceptor I was to travel along *at-Tariqat*, the Path, and pass from stage to stage meeting in the unseen world Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad and finally to reach and enjoy the Union with Allah. Formerly Allah was to me a terrible King, the neglect of whose commands was to be punished very severely. Consequently I had to take great precautions to prevent my thought from wandering about in prayers, and so to create a sense of fear during prayer I used to imagine a terrible God watching every detail of my prayers, but now this Mighty Avenger was my Beloved, and I a lover. I was not to follow the letter of the law but its spirit. The ritual prayer was not something ceremonial, but its every posture had a meaning, and I was to discover their inner significance

in course of the progress of my journey. The ritual *namaz* must become a privilege and an occasion of *niyaz*, a supplication for the favour of His fellowship. As a mystic I acquired the desire for the purification of my soul, and a thirst after God. The practices of *Dhikr* would often send me in a state of semi-unconsciousness and sometime in a state of ecstasy. It was a glorious privilege to desire nothing but Allah, to know nothing but Allah, to be aware of the existence of nothing but that of Allah.

THE END OF THE QUEST

When a man desires earnestly to know God, it only indicates that he is responding to God's search for him, and such a desire, if sincere, must culminate in God's finding him. My life's pilgrimage reached another milestone which forms one of the most memorable landmarks in the outstanding events of my life. It originated in a simple event. A copy of the gospel was given to me by a Muslim friend who himself had received it from a preacher or a colporteur. On a previous occasion I had torn it into pieces, for when attracted by its title "Injil," a term with which I was familiarized by the study of the Quran, I had taken it to my teacher I was warned in all seriousness not to read it because it was not a true Injil of which the Quran testifies, but a corrupted form of it, and consequently containing blasphemous teachings, the very acts of pronouncing its words pollute the mind and the soul of a believer. My inner longing, however, to read the book revealed to Jesus was very great, and it was intensified by my close acquaintance with Sufism which speaks of previous prophets, and of their books in a manner

as to raise them in one's estimation. On this occasion I was prompted to read it. If it was a corrupted book, so I justified to myself its reading, it must contain at least parts of the original revelation, as for its blasphemous contents surely they can be easily detected and consequently discarded as lies and interpolations introduced into it by wicked Christians. The result of my first reading was startling. In the first place I did not find a single sentence or a clause which in any sense could be interpreted as blasphemous or Satanic, and I had read it with a mind vigilant to detect any expression which implied any such notion directly or indirectly. Secondly my common sense told me that if certain followers of religion were to corrupt their sacred books or introduce interpolations into it, they must have an adequate reason or sufficient motive behind it. An enterprise as such which is not highly impious but also extremely presumptuous would not and could not be undertaken by any class of people unless they were to derive some great advantage or benefit from it.

In the light of this principle I closely examined every passage of the gospel, and I found none which would supply an adequate ground for such an act on the part of the Christians. I was impressed with the high ethical teachings of the gospel. If the Christians were to corrupt their book the standard of its ethical teachings would have been lowered. The narratives of the gospel studied under this light suggested no motive for alteration or corruption in the text. The story of the crucifixion was an outstanding event in all the narratives concerning the life of Jesus,

which completely contradicted the idea of the gospel being corrupted. No follower of religion would intentionally invent a narrative which would attribute to his leader or founder such a shameful treatment at the hands of his enemies. It is no matter of pride to be a follower of one who was shamefully put to death. The appearances of Jesus subsequent to His death were confined to His disciples only and hence they made no redeeming feature of His ignominious death. The enemies remained triumphant over His death. Why? If the Christians were to alter or expurgate anything from the gospel, the account of the crucifixion would have been the first thing to be removed or modified. How plainly it refuted their claim for Jesus to be the Son of God. The incongruity between the claim made by Christians on His behalf and the narrative was obvious. Call this argument childish, but such was the line of thought of a child earnestly trying to arrive at truth.

The second reading of the gospel produced in me the deep conviction that it was *the* true "Injil." It was God's word and His Revelation. The inner urge to know God was to find satisfaction through it. The effect produced on the mind by its reading was so very different from that of the recitation of the Quran. The latter in its original language was something sublime, its recitation was charming, its eloquence fascinating, and sometimes its passage had thrown me into ecstasy, but in the "Injil" I found something which spoke to my soul. The gospel spoke to me in my own mother tongue, whispering to me the secrets of God. Its reading was comforting to my soul, every sentence touched it to its very depth.

and it roused the slumbering faculties of my soul to a new state of consciousness. If the gospel was not true, the sun was not shining, the moon was not bright and the stars did not illuminate the path of heaven. I find it difficult to describe the experience that I had at the reading of the gospel on that memorable day; words are inadequate to express it. It was something like an object finding its missing complement. My spiritual life was incomplete without it, but as it had never known that which was intended to complete it, it never missed it till it came to it. It can be illustrated by a piece from a jig-saw puzzle which will not fit in any other part of it but in the particular corner for which it is intended. The gospel dovetailed my soul, and in the person of Christ that it presented I found the object of my deeper and inner urge, and of the unsatisfied longing of my heart. It was like a stream of fresh water in a desert to a man dying of thirst. The words of the gospel were the words of God for they conveyed to me the message of Him who was my Maker—it was soul speaking unto soul, and deep calling unto deep.

It was sufficient! I decided to become a Christian. Christianity, of which, mind, I had not learnt yet anything beside the reading of a single gospel, was after all to me the only true religion, for it could not be otherwise. It was a great discovery, but not mine. It was God discovering His erring and wandering child. I was His creature with the possibility of becoming His child, and He "has laid eternity" in my heart. For this reason I was seeking Him, but, as expressed truly by a modern writer, in my seeking I was

trying to run from Him. Only a moment ago Christianity was hateful to me, and its followers were pollution to God's creation. It was inconceivable that I would decide to become a Christian. So I repeat that it was not the result of my search, but God in His mercy had been strenuously concerned about me, as He is concerned about others and His world, and my decision to become a Christian was a triumph of His grace over my arrogance and my sinful nature.

Looking back across the chasm of years which divides the present from that moment when reading the gospel I experienced what I have been trying to describe, I find it difficult to conceive how as a child I could have followed the line of argument that I had taken in accepting the gospel record to be genuine and true contrary to the firm belief of the Muslims, and how my untrained and uneducated mind could have received the impressions which I can recall even to this day so vividly. Yet it should offer no surprise, for it only proves that it is through the operation of the Divine Grace that man can turn to Him and find Him; St Paul himself exclaimed, as he surveyed those whom the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved: "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called!" And our Lord Jesus himself when He saw how the babes and ignorant came and listened to Him gladly while those who considered themselves wise and prudent found an occasion of stumbling in Him, He exclaimed saying: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The decision to become a Christian was not an easy thing to carry out. In deciding on the step that I wanted to take I was not counting the cost that it would entail. There was a complete absence of fear. In fact I was not conscious of any consequences involving physical or mental suffering in the event of my forsaking Islam and accepting Christianity. My one obsession at that moment was how to become a Christian. The obsession was so great as to make me oblivious of all consequences. After this great decision I found that my next step was to find someone who could make me a Christian. Ignorant of the Christian societies engaged in the evangelistic enterprises in my city, I considered it a regular procedure in order to change my religion to approach any one who by his costume and general appearance looked to be a Christian and reveal my intention to him and he would do the rest. So day after day I watched in the streets of Calcutta the passers-by dressed in European clothes, Europeans, Anglo-Indians and even the police sergeants on duty, desiring to ask them how I could become a Christian, but their forbidding appearance, that was how I regarded them in those days, never gave me sufficient courage to go up to them and speak to any of them of my desire. There was one Christian, however, in Calcutta who seemed to attract every one in the city. Men would follow wherever he would go, children would run to greet him as he would appear in the street. He seemed to love all mankind. Street children dirtily clothed, students in their clean garments, men of all types and profession were attracted to him. People told me that he was an *Imam* of the Christians, their *padre*. This information was a matter of great joy to me, and I decided to speak to

him and ask him to make me a Christian. In public he was always surrounded by people, and so it was not easy to have an interview with him in a crowd. One day, determined to speak to him of my desire, I followed him to his residence but at its gate he dismissed the crowd and disappeared inside the huge building. It was the Oxford Mission House at 42, Cornwallis Street, and the padre was the Canon E. F. Brown. Next day I went to his residence but I was told by the gatekeeper that the padres were fasting, observing retreat, and not receiving visitors for a certain number of days. I counted the days and when they were over I called again at the Oxford Mission House and desired an interview with Canon Brown, but when face to face with him, great was my perplexity on finding that he could not understand my language nor could I follow his English. So the interview ended in nothing.

So the search for a Christian to help me to become a follower of Christ continued. Churches were either closed or it was too difficult to find anybody in one who could understand how to talk to a Muslim child. One Sunday evening, finding that a crowd had assembled in a Church in the Bowbazar Street near its crossing with Harrison Road, to worship, I ventured inside expecting to meet somebody who could help me to become a Christian, but I was dazzled by the sight that met my eyes. There were statues along the wall, and right in the front a priest in his rich vestment in a cloud of smoke rising from the burning incense was conducting the worship facing a large picture and a crucifix. The rest of the people in great solemnity were kneeling and saying their prayers. The sight was

impressive, but a person closer to me evidently not pleased with my curious glances asked me to go out, an order which was instantly obeyed.

One day in my customary search for a Christian I came across a preacher at the corner of the crossing of Bow Bazar and Amherst streets. He was an Indian Christian and was preaching in Hindustani to a crowd. I waited for him to finish his message which he concluded, making an earnest appeal to his audience to accept Jesus Christ as the only Saviour for sinners. I went up to him and told him that I wanted to be a Christian. He very kindly invited me to his home which was gratefully accepted and followed by several profitable visits. But finding that he made no move to make me a Christian, and moreover being not satisfied with the method of his instruction I discontinued my study with him. In his instruction he had taken the line of controversy, and was anxious to teach the Muslim objections and how to meet them, a subject in which I was not interested at all. The subject of one absorbing interest to me then was how to become a Christian.

Sometime during this period in an old book shop in Cornwallis Street, I found a copy of the English Bible with references, and secured it for my study. The first few days I spent in picking out of it any book that would attract me by its title, and later I started to make a study of it beginning with the Gospel of St. Matthew. In the reading of this gospel what impressed me most was the fulfilment of the prophecies in Christ. My friend, the Indian preacher, had already acquainted me with the use of references in the Bible, and so I was able to turn to the Old Testament for the

recorded prophecies as indicated in the New Testament. The search for the fulfilled prophecies gave me an exciting time. As a Muslim I was taught to believe that all the previous Scriptures pointed to the coming of Muhammad, the last of the line of the Prophets beginning with Adam, but my study of the Bible proved to me conclusively that Christ was the last of all to come as His final Messenger, and being His Son He could not be superseded by another. Moreover the promise was to Isaac and not to Ishmael, Muhammad's ancestor. By the time that the New Testament was finished I was familiar with the most of the prophetic passages in the Old Testament. The passages in the book of Isaiah Ch. 53 helped me a great deal to understand the nature of the death of Christ: "He was wounded *for our* transgressions. He was bruised *for our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon Him; and with His stripes *we* are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of *us* all." The allusion to the incident in the wilderness when Moses lifted up the serpent for the healing of those who were bitten by the fiery serpents made a deep impression upon my mind and gave a new understanding of the cross. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Such passages were too significant to leave me unimpressed.

It is true that Muslims have peculiar difficulties in accepting Christianity. Islam coming after Christ takes a cognizance of His claims and then categorically denies them. It claims not only to correct but to supersede Christianity. It is for this reason that the objections of a Muslim to Christianity are of a different

nature than those of the followers of other religions. I was aware of these, but since my reading of the gospel I was not troubled by them. The gospel at its very first perusal inspired me with a new sense of confidence in the veracity of the Christian religion! and I was perfectly willing to ignore what others said about it. I have come to believe, for instance, that the term Son for Jesus could never mean what the Muslims have asserted in their objection; and I was quite confident that the Christians who derived their faith from the Injil (Gospel) never held that God needed a wife to beget a son? Similarly I believed that the doctrine of the Trinity could never be interpreted on the basis of the crude and materialistic plurality as was implied by the Muslims in their objections to it. In fact I had come to the conclusion that as the Muslims have proved themselves to be mistaken as to the nature of the current New Testament by calling it corrupted, spurious and Satanic, so in their opinion as to the forms of Christian belief they must also be wrong. If the Maulvis were flagrantly mistaken in their views of the Christian Scriptures, how could they be relied on regarding what they said and taught as to the nature of the Christian beliefs?

God granted me the grace to accept the great truths of Christianity which I had learnt directly from the Holy Scripture. At this stage of my Christian experience they were as follows: There was one God, but His unity somehow consisted of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that Jesus Christ, His eternal Word, existing from all eternity as the Wisdom of God, was His Son. The idea of Jesus being the wisdom of God I had derived from my personal reading of the Book of Proverbs and especially from the passage found in its

eighth chapter: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was" vv. 22, 23. To my mind it compared so well with the opening verses of the Gospel of St. John and especially with the third verse of its first chapter: "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." I further believed that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, and that He died for the sins of the world and for my sin, and that He rose again from the dead and now lives making intercession on my behalf, and that He will come again.

My general idea of Christianity, however, was still legalistic, and consequently I desired to know the form of Christian prayers, corresponding to the Muslim *namaz*. Sometimes I wanted to go to Church and find out how Christians worshipped, but the crowd consisting chiefly of Europeans and Anglo-Indians made me afraid of venturing inside the building lest I be turned out as I was once asked to leave a Church in Bowbazar as already stated. One day, however, in an old book shop I found a copy of the Book of Common Prayer and I secured it gladly, thinking it to be a manual of Christian Prayers, such as Muslims have. I started using it every morning and evening observing the instructions as given in the rubrics. With the exception of the singing of hymns, and repeating the service of the Holy Communion which then puzzled me, I would read the appointed Psalms, the daily portions of the Scriptures from the Old and New Testaments and the usual prayers. Through the Prayer Book I learnt the Confession, Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Catechism.

THE HOLY SPIRIT MY TEACHER

I should be lacking in my sense of gratitude to the greatest of all teachers, the Holy Spirit, if I were to omit mentioning that all through my personal study of the Bible, unaided by a human teacher, He was my guide. It was in a wonderful way that I was guided to His knowledge. I knew of the Blessed Trinity consisting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and by this time I understood about the first person and the second person of the Triune God, but I often wondered who was the Holy Spirit and what were His offices. In my study of the New Testament I had read about Him in St. John's Gospel, but had never pondered over the passages which referred to Him long enough to grasp their significance. It was my first Christian friend, the Indian preacher who one day, telling me about the Muslim claim as to the prophecies concerning Muhammad in the Christian Scripture, drew my attention to the Paraclete and asked me to study carefully the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the Gospel of St. John, and then referred me to the fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost as recorded in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. As I read those passages my mind was filled with a new sense of joy. I came to know of His operation in the hearts of believers in Christ. "He will guide you into all truth," so ran the promise. How could I have been guided to the knowledge of God's truth, if He had not helped me to it! It was He who revealed the glory of Christ to me as depicted in the pages of the sacred Scripture, and it was He who helped me to believe in Jesus as the Son of God and, pointing to heaven, indicated the place of honour which Christ now occupies at the right hand of God,

making intercession for us and from where He will come again to receive those who are His faithful servants. It was the Holy Spirit who taught me the blessed truth that Christ was my Saviour and that He died for me, and who made me experience the efficacy of His precious blood which cleanses us from all sin. I have done nothing to merit such Divine favour as to be an object of His care, it was absolutely unmerited grace that guided me to His knowledge. I can only exclaim with the Psalmist: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visitest him?" Ps. 8:4 and, as for me I was "a brand plucked out of the fire."

In due course of time the Lord planned to grant me the favour of experiencing the joy of Christian fellowship. In the extremity of my failure to find a Christian to help me to join the Church, He guided my steps to the door of the Y. M. C. A. Building at College Street, Calcutta, where stood the gatekeeper that day distributing the handbills for certain public lectures to be delivered in its Hall. A brief conversation with him informed me of the purpose of the lectures which were regularly delivered there. The object of the institution, as he put it to me, was to make people Christian. If there was ever an institution I needed to know about, it was this. Shortly after I had gained this information I dropped a reply post card, to be sure of a word in acknowledgement, addressed to the Secretary, Y. M. C. A., College Street, Calcutta, intimating to him my desire to become a Christian and seeking an interview with him with this object. A reply was received shortly, directing me to see the undersigned on Wednesday at 5 p.m. The letter was signed which my poor knowledge of English did not

help me to decipher; the rest of the letter being written in typewritten form, I was able to read and understand. On the appointed day I found my way to the Y. M. C. A. and I met the writer with the help of his post card which I had carried with me. I was directed to a man who being deprived of his sight could not see me, he was the Rev. F. W. Steinthal, then one of the Secretaries of the Y. M. C. A. After a short conversation he suggested that I should attend the lecture that evening, which was to be the first of the series to be delivered there by Dr. S. M. Zwemer, a missionary from Arabia. The suggestion was readily accepted. It was my first occasion to listen to a lecture delivered in English, and moreover my knowledge of the language being very poor I could not follow it. When, however, the lecture was finished and the crowd was dismissed and I went over to see Mr. Steinthal again, he introduced me to Dr. Zwemer as an inquirer. Dr. Zwemer taking the text from the Quran Chapter first and its fifth verse: Show me the straight paths, explained to me how Christ Himself was that straight path, and how He is an answer to this Muslim prayer which is repeated every day five times in their prayers. For it is He who said, I am the Way, and there is no other way, for He also said "No one cometh unto the Father but by me." The talk left a deep impression upon my mind. Surely, I felt, God has not allowed *that* prayer, which in all my *namaz*, according to the customary practice, I have repeated daily, to go unanswered, for has He not guided me through His Divine mercy to the knowledge of His Son without whom no one can know God?

A weekly appointment was made with the Rev. F. W. Steinthal to read the Bible with him. His inabi-

lity to speak my tongue and mine to understand English easily, did not deter him from undertaking my instruction or from keeping up his appointment faithfully and regularly with me. Till the Lord put me in touch with this new friend I had no idea of Christian prayer, except what I had learnt from the book of the Common Prayer. My only conception of prayer till then was that of its ritual forms. With Mr. Steinthal I had the privilege for the first time to kneel by the side of a Christian, and listen to a prayer offered extemporaneously from his heart and addressed directly to the throne of God. As I looked into his face, out of sheer curiosity, and heard his prayers, it seemed to me as if his inner eye penetrated beyond the material universe and that he actually was transported to the very presence of God before whom even the angels fear and tremble, and I *knew* what prayer meant. I then recalled to my mind how my brother seeing my zeal for the punctuality of appointed prayers in the days when I was a zealous Muslim, had teased me once asking what need the God Almighty, All-sufficient in Himself, had of my prayers which consisted in going through certain postures and repeating things in a language which I did not understand, or why He should grant merits to me for the performance of certain deeds regarded as religious and obligatory, and then reward me with a heaven, the joys of which, in some respects, consisted of an enjoyment of certain carnal pleasures which are not regarded as honourable in this world and which one would be ashamed even to mention before another? No, I knew now, prayer was not a bargain with God. It was a fellowship of a son with his father. It was a taste of one of the real joys of heaven here on earth.

It continued to be Mr. Steinthal's practice never to leave me without prayer, and at every visit I looked forward to the moment when we would kneel together and pray. The value of prayer was one of the most precious lessons that the Lord taught me through him. My desire to become a Christian was now greatly increased, but I was refused baptism on account of my age.

I MEET BRAHMOS

Some of the members of the Brahmo Samaj learning somehow of my intention to accept Christianity made a friendly approach and tried to persuade me to become a Brahmo Samaji. I was assured that I would get all that I expected to find in Christianity without completely renouncing Islam. I was supplied with a large number of books on Brahmoism, and on the unitarian interpretation of Christianity. I went through them very carefully; and went often personally to see the Brahmo friends, who took great pains to explain to me the tenets of their belief and to refute the doctrines of the Church. They always insisted that what they refused to accept was the teaching of *Churchianity* and not those of Christianity. I was introduced to the venerable and saintly man, the late Pandit Shiva Nath Shastari, and was invited to attend their morning devotion in Devalaya of the Shadharan Brahmo Samaj at Cornwallis Street, which was not far from my house. I attended the services of the Brahmo mandir long before I had the opportunity of attending a Church service. Some of the sermons preached in Devalaya were a source of great inspiration to me. I can still recall to my mind a sermon preached on Good Friday in the temple, it compares favourably with any Christian sermon preached on that occasion. I also

went through the printed lectures of Keshab Chandra Sen and I learnt a good many beautiful things about Christ from them. Nevertheless, the Samaj did not seem to give that satisfaction for which my heart was longing. My heart was ablaze for the love of Christ and nothing would satisfy me, but to become His follower by openly confessing Him and professing His religion which was Christianity. The teaching of the Holy Ghost as found in the New Testament and His manifestation on the day of Pentecost, and the fact that the Christians were in possession of the Bible containing the teachings of Jesus and those of His disciples, all clearly indicated beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Christians were the followers of Jesus and not the Brahmos. My loyalty to Christ and to His Spirit demanded my acceptance of Christianity and not that of Brahmoism. In some respect Brahmoism appeared to me to be a half-way house to Christ, but I was determined, under the Divine grace, to go to all lengths to follow my Saviour.

AN OPEN DECLARATION OF MY FAITH

How God my Father in His mercy was controlling the events of my life becomes evident by the subsequent happenings. The Lord God Almighty "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heavens with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and hills in a balance"; and before Whom "the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold He taketh up the isles as a very little thing." (Isaiah 40: 12, 15.) Even He in His great love stoops to "feed His flock like a shepherd," and to "gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His

bosom." (Isaiah 40:11). Another step nearer to His fellowship, and another experience of His grace was now to follow.

One day at the usual hour of my study of the Bible with Mr. Steinthal, he introduced me to a friend of his, evidently a visitor, for this was the first and the last time when I had the privilege of reading the Scripture with him. He took the first chapter of St. John's Gospel from verse twenty-nine to the end of the chapter, and then pointing out to me how Andrew testified to his brother Simon, and Philip witnessed to Nathaniel saying; "We have found Messiah!", he asked me if I had done the same. And in plain terms he told me that it was the duty of every one who has accepted Christ as his Saviour to go and speak of Him to others and to bring them to Him. It was a precious lesson that I learnt that day. The challenge was readily accepted, and the Lord who never fails to reward a willing heart, obedient to His voice, bestowed His grace to carry out this resolution instantly.

On the following day when I went to Calcutta Madarasah, I began to speak of Christ to my friends. The declaration of my faith in Christ as my Saviour and Master was startling to some and an audacious blasphemy to others. The news of my religious belief soon spread among the students of the school, and I was seriously warned by some of the senior students and was told that in case I did not renounce my religious opinions which I then held, they would be obliged to deal with me in a manner that would knock all Christianity out of me. Before these students, however, had an opportunity to try their method of taking all Christianity out of me, the fact of my being a Christian was reported to my class teacher that very

day during the class period. Boy after boy stood up in the class and pointing to me exclaimed, "A Christian! a Christian!!" When I was interrogated by my teacher as to the truth of the allegation made against me by the students, I found a glad opportunity to tell him of my faith in Christ as my Saviour, and as an object of my adoration, being the Son of God. This my declaration made the boys more clamorous and they all shouted "Blasphemy! blasphemy!" The news had gone, evidently, now round the school, that a boy had apostasised from Islam and accepted Christianity, and a crowd of students were now gathering round the class. The whole school was disorganised at that moment. A conference of teachers was immediately convened and I was placed before them. A series of questions then followed which were answered, confounding their arguments meant to shake my faith in Christ. The discomfiture of the Maulvis was evident by the rage they exhibited by the gnashing of their teeth and the hurling of curses upon me. The teachers unanimously decided that I must be expelled from the school at once, and if it was not for the pleading of the acting Head Master, a Brahmo Samaji, and of the influence of Mr. A. H. Harley, then the Principal of the Calcutta Madrasah, I would have been rusticated from the institution as a punishment for my religious beliefs, and thus perhaps, would have lost the opportunity of getting readmission in another school. Three days' respite, however, was granted to me to secure my transfer certificate which was necessary for further continuance of my study in another institution. That afternoon before the class was finished I left Madrasah bearing on my clothes the visible marks of the indignities offered to me by fellow students, some of whom only a short while ago were intimate friends. They

had spat upon me, and covered my clothes with the juice of the beetle leaf which they had chewed and then spat upon me.

Rejoicing that I was counted worthy to suffer in His name I walked home. On the way I had to pass Mr. Steinthal's residence, and I called on him and had a season of prayer with him, and he reminded me that, that was the Passion Week when the Church throughout the world was reminded of the sufferings and death of our Lord. There was no room in my heart either to think of my insult borne in His name, or of subsequent difficulties that I was to experience.

On the following day my father persuaded me to accompany him to the Calcutta Madrasah in order to investigate the facts leading to my expulsion from it, and also to make me apologise for my rudeness in having the audacity to enter into religious controversy with my teachers. In obedience to my father I went with him willing to offer my apology, if in their opinion I had acted rudely, but determined not to retract a single word as to the profession of my faith in Christ. All the time the words of my Master, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven," (Matt. 10 : 33) were ringing in my ears. The Maulvis, however, refused to see me, and told my father, that I was possessed of an evil spirit, and that they had tried all possible arguments to convince me of my error, but had failed, and that there was no further hope of my returning to Islam. It roused the anger of my father and in a strong language burning with indignation he told them that he was surprised at such religious leaders as they posed themselves to be, who were not able to correct even a child, and who confessed their inability to deal with him

reasonably so as to restore his faith in Islam. He added that if the boy apostatised from Islam it would be solely because of their queer attitude and their lack of a sense of responsibility.

THE NEW FELLOWSHIP IN ST. PAUL'S HIGH SCHOOL

The incident in Madrasah proved to be a happy one, for it was a stepping-stone to lead me into a wider circle of Christian fellowship, and opened the door for me to be known as a follower of Christ. Every Muslim from that day looked upon me and treated me as a renegade from Islam and regarded me as a Christian.

After my expulsion from the Calcutta Madrasah, I managed to secure my admission in C. M. S. (now St. Paul's) High School, Calcutta, through the kindness of the Rev. S. D. Hinde, then the Principal of the School, for no non-Christian boy was then allowed to be taken as a student into it. In this new School for the first time I had the joy of being in close fellowship with sons of the Christian community. It was a real comradeship that I was privileged to enjoy. The School had several Christian activities entirely conducted by the students themselves, which were organised under an association of the Christian students known as St. Paul's Brotherhood. Every Sunday evening after the Church service one band of the senior students used to go for preaching in the streets of Calcutta, and another to visit the patients in Medical College, and to render such help to the patients as they could, for example writing letters for those unable to write, or making purchases for those

who had no friends to buy things for them. At the same time, no opportunity for doing personal evangelism was ever neglected. I have always carried a delightful picture of those Sunday evenings, when with the bands of those students I have gone to preach, either in the streets, sometimes chiefly at the corner of the Harrison Road, near the Sealdah Station, where a large audience of the moving crowd used to gather round the young preachers to listen to the preaching of the Gospel, or at other times, in College Square right opposite to the Senate Hall of the Calcutta University, where a selected and literate class of Bengali gentlemen would form an audience. No less happy is the memory of my visits with my fellow students paid in the general ward of the Medical College Hospital, Calcutta, where the young lads used to go from bed to bed speaking cheerfully to the patients, and always trying to find an opening to present the Great Physician of soul and body to those sufferers. It was marvellous to see how the Holy Spirit guided their thoughts in public preaching and also in personal evangelism. On one occasion when a student speaking to a patient had spoken of the possibility of his dying in his sin, and thus going to hell for eternity, and perhaps that very illness might prove his last chance to repent and accept Jesus as his Saviour, he was sharply criticised by others of the team for speaking to a sick person in that strain, devoid of hope and joy. It was a great lesson that I learnt from my fellow Christian students. In later life how often have I had an occasion of listening to such preachers who emphasise the dark side of human life and fail to present Him who is the source of JOY and HAPPINESS, and who even standing at the grave could proclaim Himself to be the Resurrection and the Life, and who, surrounded by outcastes and sinners earned for Himself

the title of "a friend of publicans and sinners" (Matt. 11: 18).

A CRISIS AND HOW IT LED TO MY BAPTISM

The Principalship of the School, shortly after I had joined it as a student, was taken over by Mr. (now Rev.) John Harvey Hickinbotham, a man of the most saintly character and with greatest zeal to win souls for Christ that I have come across during all these long years of my contacts with the Church. No sacrifice was too great and no suffering too painful for him to bring one individual to the knowledge of his Master. It seems as if he had a share in his Master's burning passion to save souls. One by one he sacrificed everything in the service of his Master, his comfort, his time, his health, his money and even the pride of belonging to the race which ruled the country he served in the name of his Master. He nearly lost his life because of his enthusiasm for the preaching of the Gospel, when he was shot through his chest, the bullet closely missing his heart, bored a hole through this body. The deed was committed by some non-Christian fanatics, whose identity he never disclosed to anybody. It was on his return from furlough which he had taken on his recovery from this wound, that he was appointed Principal of the School. He was an ideal missionary for Muslims, and it was a happy coincidence that I happened to be a student of this School during his Principalship, and thus the Lord brought me in contact with him whose influence helped me so much in life.

It will not be out of place if I digress a little to speak more of him, as it will help the readers to understand better the development of the story of my life. I came to know him more intimately when we were

in Nadia District, where in vacations and in later life I had the opportunity of enjoying his fellowship. In the districts he wore Indian clothes, ate Indian food and led the life of a villager. He spoke Bengali as freely and fluently as he did his English. Later when he took charge of the C. M. S. School at Chapra, in District Nadia, he completely identified himself with the village boys. The School was run for the benefit of the peasant boys of East Bengal, and the total charges on account of tuition and board were only Rupees two per month, and Mr. Hickinbotham bravely shared the simple meal of the boarding with the boys consisting of coarse rice, dal, vegetables, fish and occasionally meat. At meal hours he took his place in the waiting queue formed by his boys, washed his own dish (the meal was served in one dish only) and served himself at meal behaving like any other boy, and addressing the house-father in as respectful a manner as the students were expected to do. When on holidays I had the privilege of visiting him in his school he never allowed me to have my meals with the boys in the boarding with whom he had his own, but insisted on making a different arrangement in order to feed me with better food. So complete was the identification of himself with the people among whom he worked for his Master, that in some respects he proved himself to be a better Bengali than the sons of the land themselves. He yearned, prayed, laboured and did everything that was truly worthy of an ambassador of Christ, to win the Mussalmans of Nadia for his Master. He spent every moment of his life and every pice of his allowances for the one great purpose of saving souls. So great was his enthusiasm for the service of the Kingdom of Jesus that he would not admit non-Christian boys to his School in Nadia, and almost all of these were Muslims, till he

had the consent of their parents, that no objection would be raised if in future their children were to decide to become Christians. On the other hand he would promise that no undue pressure would be brought to bear on them to accept Christianity, except the presentation of the Gospel and its regular teaching, a promise which he kept faithfully. Nevertheless it is amazing to find, that at a low estimate some ninety per cent of these Muslim boys eventually accepted Christ.

More recently I have come across some such missionaries in the American society, to which I have the privilege of belonging now, whose identification with Indians was as complete as that of Mr. J. H. Hickinbotham, but with one difference, which unfortunately has not resulted in bringing souls to Christ in so large a number as he had succeeded in doing, the difference being in the fact, that these friends in their identification with the people of the land have gone to the limit of identifying themselves with Indian aspirations politically as well. Mr. Hickinbotham, on the other hand, left politics alone, the goal of his ministry was the winning souls for Christ.

Now to return to St. Paul's High School. There under the guidance of the new Principal, Mr. J. H. Hickinbotham, the religious and evangelistic programmes received a new inspiration and a vigorous support. The students voluntarily agreed to contribute a part of their long vacations in doing intensive evangelistic work in villages in Bengal. For this purpose, camps were organised in villages in East Bengal. The assistance of the local ministers or preachers, where possible, was sought, which was cheerfully given, and under their leadership a programme used to be drawn

up. In other cases the leadership used to be entirely in the hands of the students. Mr. Hickinbotham always occupied a subordinate position. We would pitch our tents in a village or occupy a mission house, where available, and every day after morning devotions, dividing ourselves into bands of four or five with bundles of tracts, and Gospel portions, we would go in different directions preaching from village to village. Others would take charge of cooking, which was done by turns, and when after from four to five hours' touring and preaching we would return to our camp, hot water for our bath and food for our hungry appetite would be ready. In the evening we would go again either to show pictures of the life of Christ with the help of the magic lantern, or to preach in some markets, or organise a public meeting in our own camping ground. I had the privilege of joining such a camp and taking part in preaching before I was baptised.

It was on a return from one such camp that I earnestly pleaded with Mr. Hickinbotham to have me baptised. He devised a plan in order to accomplish this desire of mine. As a first step he took me along with him to spend my summer vacation in Nadia District, at Ballabhpur, which was a colony of Christians who were mostly converted from Islam, and most of these were his converts. It was one of the happiest holidays that I have ever spent. It gave us an opportunity not only to know each other more intimately, but also to know the Bengal Christian community more closely. It was during the days of such a close companionship with Mr. Hickinbotham that I had free access to everything that was his. By this time I had discarded my Muslim dress and had taken to Bengali costume which was the common uniform of my School

fellows in St. Paul's High School, Calcutta, and which Mr. Hickinbotham used to wear when on tour. The converts of Mr. Hickinbotham were known as his sons, and soon all round the districts I was called Hicky Sahib's son.

On our return from the districts he advised me to become a boarder. I surprised and shocked my mother when I announced my intention to her to live in the boarding house; and, collecting my few things, went over to the School. At night I was surprised to find that my mother, a strict pardah woman, was waiting for me at the door of the School. She, accompanied by my brother, had come to persuade me to go home. When I met her I found her in tears. It was one of the hardest struggles in life that I had to go through. What was I to do, was I to go home with my mother, and give up the idea of becoming a Christian for the present? I knew occasions when I had experienced her boundless love, and now, was it right for me to spurn that love, and turn a deaf ear to her entreaties. Why? even religion would not approve of such a callousness on the part of a son towards his mother. The words of our Lord rang out in my ear more loudly than ever: "He that loveth his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10: 37). Nevertheless I expressed my willingness to go home with her provided she permitted me to call myself a Christian. She agreed to my becoming a Christian provided I kept my Christianity a secret. Once again the words of my Master came to me flooding my heart: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's and of the holy angels" (Lk. 9: 26). Consequently I told my mother

what I felt about it. I said to her that it was impossible, for Christianity was not the religion of cowards and of dissimulators; moreover she would not herself wish to see her son acting in a cowardly way, afraid of people's opinion and behaving as a liar.

At this stage Mr. Hickinbotham walked up to us and desired to have an interview with my mother. It was for the first time in her life that she had spoken to a foreigner face to face. My mother's anxiety was chiefly on account of my living away from home and her personal care and protection. It was my going to live in the midst of the people who were completely strangers to her that she dreaded. Half an hour's conversation with this kind hearted missionary convinced her of Mr. Hickinbotham's affectionate nature. She soon realised that I was going to live under the protection of a man whose love for me was genuine, and consequently, consented not only to my staying in the Boarding house, but also promised that no legal steps would be taken, nor any disturbance be created by any of my relations when I was to be baptized. Some, who are accustomed to look only at the dark side of zenana life, may find it an unusual thing for a woman in Islam to act thus, and for her to feel that she could influence her people sufficiently to overcome their fanaticism and zeal for religion when the question of the apostasy of a Muslim youth was involved. Yet that is what my mother at that moment actually did undertake, and with her good influence over the whole family and her neighbours she was able to accomplish it.

This unexpected decision in favour of my baptism brought to me a great joy, and it taught me an important lesson which was not forgotten, and which has

served as a guiding principle in many critical hours of my life. In crises, similar to what I had just passed, the tears of my mother pleading with me to return to my home as a Muslim, on the one hand, and the demand of my loyalty to my Master not to compromise, on the other, when I have surrendered my own will to Him and have made a decision on His behalf, the Lord has pointed out His way and said: "This is the way walk ye in it," (Is: 30: 21). In obscurity and darkness His light has shined. The test of faith has come when a thing not only seemed to be hopeless but when it actually has become an impossibility, and yet, faith, blind to human calculations, has clung with an absolute tenacity to the Lord's promise, it was then that in an unexpected manner the Lord has opened the way, and that I received the solution of my problem, relief in agonising pain, often not by removing the pain but by giving strength to bear it, health and recovery in times of sickness, and a comfort in time of anxiety. When He seemed too far away, He was so very near to me.

How far I had learnt the lesson of trusting the Lord was soon put to a test. On July 1st, 1912, I was received in the Church as a catechumen, and the 7th July was fixed for my baptism. On Saturday, the day before my baptism, I had the privilege of meeting a Christian worker from Nadia, Babu Gyanandra Nath Biswas, (called Gyan Babu), and a friend of Mr. Hickinbotham. He challenged my faith and trust in my Lord, and pointing out to me, that, as I had not been out to see my friends and relatives and had not witnessed to them nor invited them to come and witness the baptism, I had relied on Mr. Hickinbotham and on the four walls of the School for my protection, rather than on God whom I called Father. With such a little trust in God, what use was there of my baptism?

So deeply did I feel convicted by what had just been said to me that I immediately left School and went straight to my friends and relatives, and testifying to them of my new faith in Christ invited them to come to the Church and witness my baptism. When Mr. Hickinbotham was informed by his friend, Gyan Babu, of my errand on which I had gone he was much perturbed for fear of my safety. But the Lord knew the weakness of His child, and graciously protected me from all possible injuries and harms, which I might have suffered as a result of the fanaticism of my friends. On finishing my round of visits to as many friends and people as was possible within the time limit allowed for boarders to remain out on Saturday, I returned to the boarding house to the great relief of Mr. Hickinbotham and to the great joy of Gyan Babu.

I RECEIVE MY BAPTISM

The School Church was the Holy Trinity Church, where the services were held in Bengali. Near its entrance was the water reservoir in which the adults were generally baptised by immersion. On 7th. July 1912, during the evensong service at 4 p.m. the pastor of the Church, Rev. now Canon Joseph Parān Nath Biswas, in procession led by the choir, marched from the chancel to the baptismal font at the other end of the Church. The Church that evening was overcrowded, though I cannot tell how many of those of whom I had personally invited to come were present. Mr. J. H. Hickinbotham and Babu Hemchandra Bhattacharya, one of my School teachers, stood as my god-fathers. I had chosen the latter for his serene and calm disposition, and his real and good Christian life. After I had recited the Apostle's creed, which was a departure from the Anglican rite, usually the officiating minister recites it

and the candidate signifies his assent to it, I was baptised by immersion. The ceremony over, the usual service was resumed by the pastor, who preached on the text: "When he had eaten meat he was strengthened" (Acts: 9, 19). The message impressed me very deeply and for a long time this remained my golden text. A few days later I surprised a quaker friend of mine, in course of my Bible study with him, by giving this as my favourite text, for it did not, naturally, convey any special meaning to him as it would not have meant anything to me apart from the message preached by my pastor on that evening. The physical experience in Paul's life, who after the vision on the way to Damascus, "neither did eat nor drink," until after he was baptised, and when he had received meat he was strengthened, was symbolic of his spiritual experience. He who was spiritually starved was strengthened after he had received Christ and was baptised in His name. Baptism implied becoming a member of the Body of Christ, and therefore for strength and daily energy it was necessary for members to share His life.

Often it has been noticed that the baptism of a convert is regarded by the Church at the culminating point of his life, and interest in his future progress ceases. It is true that baptism marks a mile-stone in the history of the spiritual life of a convert, yet at the same time, with it begins the critical period of his life. Disillusionment of much of his preconceived ideas as to the ideal state of the Christian community starts as he comes closer in contact with it. At the same time after baptism the convert himself is in danger of losing his former zeal and fervour for his Master, and for his own spiritual progress. He soon finds out that

some who call themselves Christians are no better than non-Christians. He meets persons in the Church who maintain that it does not matter what you believe provided you lead a good life. He, moreover, notices the unhappy divisions within the Church, and as he finds one denomination condemns another, he wonders whether he has accepted the true form of Christianity after all. When he finds the same sins existing within the Christian community which are found outside of it, he begins to suspect whether Jesus really saves His people from their sin. Persecution from outside and the cold-heartedness of the people inside the Church begin to tell upon his spiritual health.

The Lord graciously preserved me from many such temptations. I was protected against these by the good Christian fellowship of the students and teachers of the School. I was spiritually nurtured in a congenial atmosphere that then existed in St. Paul's High School, Calcutta. In the midst of the evangelistic and other Christian activities of St. Paul's Brotherhood my own zeal and fervour continued unabated. Moreover, Rev. J. P. N. Biswas continued to instruct me in Christian principles, and though at this time my friend, Mr. F. W. Steinthal, was away in Denmark on furlough, I was helped by other friends in Y.M.C.A. in my Bible studies. My pastor, Mr. Biswas, further prepared me for full membership in the Church, and finally I received the rite of confirmation, as is customary in the Church of England, by the then Metropolitan of Calcutta, Bishop Copleston, in St. Bernard's Church.

I GO FROM ST. PAUL'S IN CALCUTTA TO ST. JOHN'S IN AGRA.

In St. Paul's High School, Calcutta, there was no provision for the teaching of Urdu and Persian, which

I had taken for my Matriculation examination, and also as I was in poor health in Calcutta, it was arranged for me to go to Agra to study in St. John's High School. Mr. B. W. Bean, a new member of the staff, and a young man fresh from Oxford, who later became the Principal of St. Paul's High School, was to take me to Agra. This is my first opportunity to mention this great friend of mine, and it will not be out of place if I add that it reminds me of the invaluable service that a young missionary can render to the country he is serving. A young man fresh from a Christian country with a life dedicated to the service of the Lord and freshly entered into active service, though having little or no knowledge of the people of the land, can be of immense value in the mission field. The freshness of his vision, the active interest that he can take in the people, and the enterprising spirit which is ready to defy all obstacles in the way, are qualities often lacking in the older missionaries, who because of their long labour which often becomes tedious to them for want of encouraging results, have grown cold and consequently their daily ministry becomes a matter of routine. Mr. B. W. Bean possessed all the good qualities of a young missionary *par excellence*. He brought a new enthusiasm among the students for evangelistic work. Our preaching camps by his presence received a fresh impetus, and a new inspiration. Long preaching tours which were always made on foot in his company were turned into joyous excursions. By his humorous and jovial talks he never allowed us to feel the tediousness of the long marches which were made from village to village. He had hardly been with us a couple of months when he was able to sing Bengali songs in Indian tunes, and even join our *kirtan* procession in village markets, and sing like a good Bengali

with all the emotions that it required. He was a good friend to me and gave me the real fellowship that I needed at that time. I was not, however, saintly and good in my behaviour always, and especially to this friend of mine. With all my Christian experience I was often inclined to be saucy to him. I tried his patience chiefly in the playground, as a games superintendent he failed to persuade me to hold a hockey stick or kick a football. In my early education I had no opportunity of playing any game, and hence in the latter days of my career as a student the playground was my 'bogey.' It was with this Mr. Bean that I was to travel to Agra and this added to the joy of travelling. We left Calcutta by a passenger train on October 5th, 1913, and with a break at Allahabad, where he showed me the places of historical interest, we reached Agra on 8th October.

It was with a feeling of loneliness and of 'home sickness' not so much for my own home, as for the boarding house in Calcutta that I began my life in St. John's Hostel. The one thing which I chiefly missed was St. Paul's Brotherhood of my School in Calcutta. To conform to the School uniform I had to go through a change of my costume for the second time: the first change made in St. Paul's, when discarding my achkan and trousers I had taken to Dhoti and shirt, the national costume of the Bengalis. Now from the loose Bengali garments I was to be transformed into semi-European clothes, coat and trousers with a pink puggree for my headgear. I was to study in a big School, which was at a distance of a little less than two miles from the Hostel. Christians and non-Christians numbering several hundred students, all studied together. The Christian boys lived in a newly erected magnifi-

cent Hostel which had its own spacious playground and a swimming pool. Every day in the week, dressed in our uniform and after a strict inspection of our dress, which we were expected to wear in a particular way, with due regard to its neatness, marching like soldiers, our steps being closely watched and commanded by the chief monitor, we were taken to School, and on Sundays to the Church. The Christian Hostel had a beautiful chapel for our worship, and a strict discipline to ensure good behaviour. The morning Quiet Time was compulsory, and was to be observed in strict silence. The monitors during the period were expected to go about sneaking to find out if any one was whispering or neglecting his prayers and Bible reading, and woe betide the boy caught infringing any of the strict rules! In spite of the due solemnity enjoined in the house of worship, and the strict observance of the Quiet Hour, I felt that the Christian boys in St. John's Hostel lacked that fire which I had seen in the boys of St. Paul's High School in Calcutta, and which had kindled my own zeal for the service of the Lord. The religious duties were something which seemed to be imposed upon the boys; the Quiet Hours were observed under the terror of the monitors' watching eyes. There existed a form of religion, but the spirit was lacking. Providentially the chief warden of the Hostel, Mr. Shoren S. Singha, was a man who had the spiritual interest of the boys very close to his heart. The Hostel had other friends besides him who were closely watching and praying for the spiritual progress of the Christian boys, especially Mr. George S. Ingram, who often visited the Hostel and prayed with some of the boys whenever he found an opportunity for it. I was not long in the Hostel before I shared my feeling in the matter with Mr. S. S. Singha, and told him of my

experience in St. Paul's Brotherhood at Calcutta. As a result of this talk and of subsequent prayers with him and with Mr. G. S. Ingram on the subject, we decided to start a Christian Union in the Hostel. A few of the boys were taken into the secret, and the Lord laid on our hearts the burden of the souls perishing without the knowledge of Christ, and we began to pray and look for an opportunity of evangelistic services. Soon an opportunity came when a hockey team on October 28th, 1913, was to go to Muttra from our Christian Hostel to play a match against a certain School at Muttra! The very name conjured up to us a famous Hindu city with hundreds of idols and thousands and thousands of worshippers of those idols, and it fired our imagination and we decided to accompany the team and preach in Muttra. Thus we went to Muttra and at the entrance of the big bazar three of us, who made up the preaching team, announced the message of the great Redeemer and Saviour to a huge crowd of Hindus, and distributed the gospels to them, while the Hockey team went to play the match. The entire expenses of this trip were met by the preaching band itself from their own pocket money. On the following day, on the 29th October, 1913, some twenty-nine days after my arrival in Agra, the St. John's Christian Union was organised and its first official meeting was held in the warden's drawing room. Those who joined it signed the pledge cards, chiefly promising to pledge a certain number of days for doing evangelistic service in some form. Devotional meetings with voluntary attendance under the Union were organised and, preaching campaigns every Sunday after the Church service were started. The Christian boys were inspired with new enthusiasm for Christian life and service. The running of Sunday School classes was placed in charge

of the Union. The activities continued in the Hostel till I passed my Matriculation Examination and joined St. John's College, Agra.

WHAT CHRISTIANITY HAS MEANT TO ME

In the narration of my story I have arrived at a point where it may be suitable to pause a little and to give a few outstanding facts of my spiritual experience gained during this period. Later in life some good Christians, because of their peculiar view as to the nature of the new birth and the manner of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, have tried to create doubt in my mind as to the validity of my early Christian experience, suggesting that I still lacked the fullness of the Holy Spirit which must be accompanied with a certain visible sign. Such suggestions sometimes are disturbing to the new found peace and joy of a convert. When believing the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and accepting Him as my Saviour I received my baptism, the Spirit bore "witness with my Spirit," and gave the assurance that I had become a child of God, and that I was born of the Spirit. I was no longer under the "spirit of bondage" which formerly made me go through religious duties with fear and trembling, and in a state of uncertainty as to my being worthy of God's mercy, and with no hope as to my future. I knew that the Spirit of truth was guiding me to the knowledge of God. It was an experience such as the prodigal son had on his return to his father's home. I could with St. Paul exultantly shout and exclaim: "What things were gain to me," my prayers, fastings and the practices of mysticism "I count loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." I wished that with St. Paul I could also add "for whom I

have suffered the loss of all things." The Lord in His all-protecting care, aware of my weakness has not allowed His child to have the privilege of suffering and going through the loss of all things. In spite of my leaving home, He so favoured me that I continued to retain the love of my parents and brothers. My people, though grieved and pained because of my decision to become a Christian, nevertheless continued to love me in greater measure than they had done when I was with them. I began to receive abundant tokens of their affection, indicating that I was still an object of their care. It was only the attitude of the Muslim neighbours which made it difficult for me to be allowed to live with them and share their life, and necessitated my living away from home. Moreover, the Lord had rewarded me by giving me a kindly and an affectionate godfather in Mr. Hickinbotham, and a loving friend and brother in Mr. Steinthal, and good companionship with my fellow students, whose fellowship brought an immense joy and pleasure to me. Thus, visible and invisible tokens of God's grace and favour, the wealth of spiritual experience and the abundance of material comfort, all indicated, that, because of my frailty I was an object of His special care.

Let it not be understood that God did not permit any sorrow or sadness to darken my life, and that I had no sin to separate me from His own presence. There were many dark valleys spiritually, and sometimes physically as well, that I had to pass through; there were many lonely and miserable hours in life's experience, many griefs to bear and many pains to suffer, many disappointments to meet and many temptations to fight, but they, excepting sin, never marred the peace which reigned in my heart, it

was the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Once a dear relative of mine in his attempt to prove that I had lost that spiritual power which I possessed as a Muslim, said to me: "You can no more write such effective and powerful *tawiz*, charms, as you were able to do when you were a Muslim." My answer was: "I do not need charms now, for my God is not one who needs coaxing to attend to my wants; my God is my father, and the Lord of the Universe, and all that it contains is His, and I am His child. I have now free access to Him for everything that I desire."

This new experience did not mean freedom from capacity to sin. God did not deprive me of the free use of my faculties and powers which He has given me. In other words, He did not turn me into a machine of which He was the driving power. In fact, some of the bitterest temptations came after I had received Christ. The period which followed my baptism coincided with the time when morally and physically I was growing into manhood, and was getting susceptible to surrounding temptations. The Lord allowed me to retain freedom of choice, and in the hour of temptation I had the full liberty of either saying "No" to it, or yielding to it. The Lord did not incapacitate me so as to make me unable to turn against Him and sin, for I now see that this would have meant that by making me His child He turned me into something lower than man, a machine, a mere tool with no freedom of choice or will. But He did the thing which was of far higher value than making me merely mechanically virtuous. At every temptation He gave me His grace to resist it *if I decided to do so*. He would not allow even His grace to interfere with the freedom of my will. When

choice was made in favour of sin the grace was withdrawn. On God's part, the withdrawal of grace however, did not mean the forsaking of His sinning and rebellious child, but bestowing of another grace, the grace of repentance, provided a decision was made to repent and accept the forgiveness of God through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. Let not a reader presume from what has just been said, that because God does not forsake His sinning child but bestows His grace upon him to repent, therefore it implies that sin may be allowed to be committed by a regenerate man. Far from it,—a man born of God cannot commit sin wilfully and impudently. For of such the Scripture rightly says: "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it happened unto them according to the proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to the wallowing in the mire. (2 Pet. 2: 21, 22)." When I accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour I learnt what sin is in the sight of God. This new conception of sin was very different from what I had been taught in Islam. When I was a Muslim, sin meant to me merely an external act to which God had attached a painful result, which, as a consequence of it, I was to suffer in hell. In other words, sin was not essentially evil, but only evil by God's decree. He has pronounced certain things to be good and they are good, and certain other things to be evil and they are evil, and such an act of pronouncing certain things good and certain other things as evil, was regarded by me to be for governmental purposes, and thus of an administrative nature only. I had no real understanding of holiness or

of sin as an orthodox Muslim, though my idea of ethical morality was improved when I became a mystic. Nevertheless, the moral teachings of Islam were regarded by me as matters only of regulations, and hence, I believed, that God could legitimize actions that once He had pronounced to be illegal, and illegitimize things that He had decreed to be legal.

On accepting Christ as my Saviour, I came to know the true nature of sin, and that it was something essentially evil, and a rebellion against God, and that it carried its consequences with it which were inherent in it. Its chief consequences lay in separation from God and death to the soul and destruction of all that is pure, holy and good. I learnt all this by going into the garden of Gethsemane and witnessing the agony of the Lord, and by standing at the foot of the cross. I was led to this experience after the Lord had bestowed upon me the grace of repentance, and receiving forgiveness through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ which cleanseth us from all sin.

As a Christian I was led by God into another experience, by which I came to know, that if I required God's grace to be forgiven of my sin, I also needed, every day of my life, His grace to be kept from sinning. If it was His wonderful grace which saved me from the eternal destruction of sin, I needed His more wonderful grace to save me from the powerful temptations of life; the one I needed to be saved from the guilt of sin, and the other from the power of sin. It was through such experiences that I came to understand the true significance of the angel's announcement "Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sin." Thus the Lord led me to the twofold experience of His grace, the grace of

repentance, and through repentance the joy of receiving His forgiveness, and realizing in life that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin; and secondly the grace of God which protected me from the power of sin; "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." I John 3:9. Later, when I grew more in the new relationship which existed between Christ and me, the more I came to realize the nature of holiness, and at the same time the fearful nature of sin, the more God granted me of His grace to make me sensitive to the approach and the presence of sin. I know now how terrible are the consequences which sin carries in itself. I know now what the writer of the Hebrews meant by what he expresses so strongly: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." The same writer speaks again: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Hebrews, 6: 4-6; 10: 26-29.

After such a declaration of the nature of sin in God's sacred Scripture, how a Christian can wilfully commit a sin, is staggering to human understanding.

MY LIFE IN ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

Going to College meant for me entering into a bigger world and a wider circle of the Christian community. I was afraid to enter this new world, in fact I had expressed my desire to go straight to some seminary after my matriculation, but the good friends like the Rev. N. H. Tubbs, (later Bishop) the principal of the School, and Canon A. W. Davies (now the Dean of Worcester in England) very kindly insisted on my going to college. In the Rev. N. H. Tubbs I had found a great friend and one who loved me very dearly, and who did his best for my spiritual and physical progress. He introduced me to good books, sought every means to widen the sphere of my knowledge, and watched as keenly my moral progress as he did my physical improvement. On the slightest suspicion of my weak lung he sent me to the hills and kept me there for nine months, and not till I had gained many pounds in weight was I allowed to return. It was through him that I had my first opportunity of getting in touch with mass movement work, and attending the Sialkot convention. This was during my first year in the College when, during a vacation, he took me along with other senior boys of the School Hostel to Aligarh, where I had the opportunity of going round the villages visiting the Christian community. I returned from Aligarh with a mixed feeling of disappointment and of hope. I rejoiced to see such a large community of new Christians, but was grieved to find on closer acquaintance that a majority of them have little or no knowledge of the Saviour whom they were supposed to have accepted.

I, however, saw a great possibility in future of real conversions in that crowd. Subsequent to this visit to the mass movement area in Aligarh, I had a great many opportunities of seeing more of this great work in certain cities of North India

In College new contacts were made and new friends were gained. In Dean Davies I found another good friend who took keen interest in my future. Silently and lovingly he watched my progress and sought my good. I, however, had now the opportunity of getting in touch with the Christian community; the protected life in the Boys' Hostel had come to an end. The closer knowledge of the community, and of older students born of Christian parents, in many respects brought many joys, but there were several who gave occasions for disappointment. Shortly after I had joined the College its Christian Union received a great spiritual revival under the inspiring leadership of Professor R. C. Das (now of Pilgrims' Mission in Benares) with whom, as its president, I was elected its secretary and soon mission study circles and evangelistic meetings in Mohallas were organised. Leaflets and tracts containing pleas for active Christian services were printed and published. The principal of the College, Dean A. W. Davies, who was not then in the station, wrote as follows on hearing of this new enterprise in the college: "I have just read your note with very great joy and thankfulness and will gladly pray for the success of this undertaking. I am so glad that you have found a field for your work in the Christian Hostel and I hope that this circle will be the means of leading many boys to devote their lives to active service for Christ. It is a very good plan through these leaflets to try to extend this influence still further."

AN EXPERIMENT IN APPROACH TO MUSLIMS

It was during the days that I was in College that I planned to publish a book, in two parts, on the presentation of Christianity to Muslims. The title of Dr. J. N. Farquhar's book "Crown of the Hinduism" had suggested to me to make a friendly approach to Muslims, by presenting Christianity as the religion which stands independent of the truth of other non-Christian religions. In the first part of it I tried to wipe out the old controversy completely and to make a fresh beginning admitting as many truths in Islam as could be allowed. The first part was to be known as "*Sadaqat-i-Islam*," the Truth of Islam, and the second part as "*Iklilu-i-Islam*, the Crown of Islam. The idea behind the project was that, granted that Muhammad was a good man, and a great reformer who in some way was an instrument in God's hand to reform Arabia, and granted that his teachings were also good and in some respects comparable to those of the Old Testament, there is still no comparison between Muhammad and Christ, or between the doctrine of Islam and that of Christianity. For it was my belief that the uniqueness of the Christian religion lay in the fact that it is a good message of God, for it announces His search for sinners, and because it presents Jesus Christ as the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, and as the one true revelation of God Himself. It is also unique as it reveals the true nature of sin, and proclaims God's way of victory over it. When I communicated to my friend, Mr. Steinthal, the project of such a publication, he wrote to me what has proved since then invaluable advice on the subject. In his letter dated December 5, 1918, he wrote as follows:

"It was well that in your last letter you again reminded me of the thought, that occupies you so

much, how best to reach the Muslims so as to gain their confidence and get a hearing from the gospel presented from a sympathetic view point. I quite agree with you in your supposition that harsh criticism and groundless accusations are sure to block the way, but as you know yourself, the Muslims by their opposition are often themselves the cause of it. There is no doubt either that a convert from Islam like yourself has many qualifications for the task, knowing their arguments and thoughts from inside, their weak points as well as the most accessible attacking ground, while on the other side the converts are especially objects of their hatred and suspicion. Your strategy as you call it, to give them what is due to them openly and honestly both showing the groundlessness of some accusations and the faults of Christian controversialists and of the Christian church in general is, I think, all right, but a very difficult proposition, demanding a thorough knowledge of both the earlier controversies and of Church history. But it is a task well worth trying, and even if you only think of doing it briefly, I do not think it is the work of a month or two; but well begun is half finished, go ahead and lay a good foundation." Then objecting to the title he goes on to write: "The Crown of Islam"; it is misleading as it is also in the case of Dr. Farquhar's *Crown of Hinduism*, he does not prove and cannot prove that Christianity is the fulfilment of Hinduism for truth can never be the fulfilment of error. Christianity is the fulfilment of the longings of the desires of the Indian mind which have been unsuccessfully expressed in Hinduism. Datta's book: '*The Desire of India*' hits the point much better and is not open to the complaints which have rightly been made against Farquhar's name. You will find the same; not by continuing in Islam, but by giving up Islam and finding a better solution of the great problems in Islam

as in all religions, is Christianity reached as the true fulfilment of the desire of all human hearts for which they have been made. Long after when I had found out the mistake of my project, he wrote to me: "Surely the only way to conquer the darkness is by letting in the light, nothing short of that will succeed. Therefore I did not think so much of the attempts to show that Christianity is the fulfilment of Hinduism or of Islam, however true it may be and well worth considering and proving. Only that it be done in the light of the Cross without compromising."

The first part, however, was published, unfortunately in a separate volume, and was warmly welcomed by the Muslim Press. The second part was borrowed by an Indian Christian from the Punjab with the promise of its publication, and I regret to add that I never saw that man nor the manuscript again.

Since then I have changed my views as to the approach to Muslims and am converted to the view as expressed by Mr. Steinthal in his letter: "Truth can never be the fulfilment of error"; and that "the only way to conquer the darkness is by letting in the light, nothing short of that will succeed."

In these very days, I made, however, another experiment of reaching Muslims, but this time on a very different line, which now I proceed to describe.

While in College I often looked back to my days I had spent in villages of Bengal, preaching the gospel, and I longed for an opportunity to visit the people again. The opportunity came after my Intermediate Examination when I got a long vacation for three months during summer, and I planned to spend a good part of it in Nadia district. I journeyed to Chapra, a village in East Bengal, where my godfather, Mr.

Hickinbotham was then stationed as the Principal of the School. There I changed my ordinary clothes for a Sadhu's garb and accompanied by a young Muslim convert, Stephen Sheikh, a godson and student of Mr. Hickinbotham, I started for the preaching tour. My friend Stephen Sheikh acted as my guide and looked after the cooking. Finding the heat of the summer during the day too intense for walking bare-foot, we decided to spend the day in villages in preaching and to do the most of our walking during the early part of the morning. It was a wonderful experiment to follow literally what our Lord commanded the twelve when He sent them to heal and preach. I carried no money, no purse, and had only one garment in which I was dressed as a Sadhu, and wore no shoes and carried no staff. Night after night we travelled unhurt through the cobra infested regions, and slept in open fields. In the blazing sun we took shelter under a tree and found opportunity to preach to the passing crowd. In villages we attracted a large crowd of listeners. I found a ready response among the Muslims, and was warmly welcomed in some places. We covered roughly some seventy miles on foot, and then we returned to Chapra, our headquarters, after spending about a fortnight in continuous moving from village to village. Later, on my return to Agra I had the joy of hearing that a Muslim village, which was already open to the gospel and which was visited on a special request from Mr. Hickinbotham during my tour as a Sadhu, had accepted Christ. Who says that there cannot be a mass movement among Muslims?

A VISION OF THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

It was during the year that I was a student of the Intermediate class in St. John's College, Agra, that

Rev. N. H. Tubbs, the Principal of the School, with a party of his students sent me to the Sialkot Convention. It was a season of great blessing and of great experience. It was my first opportunity to attend a convention and see such a large gathering of the Christians. Among the speakers were Bishop B. T. Badley, Sadhu Sundar Singh, and Rev. B. B. Roy. The preachings in the tent were of highly inspired nature. I felt as if I was privileged to taste some of the joys of fellowship which the saints will have in heaven. I often wondered how the visitors in such an atmosphere as that which literally seemed to me charged with the power of the Holy Spirit, could possibly think of or discuss earthly matters.

The cross has always been my attraction, and any reference in preaching to the theme of the cross always held my attention. I loved to sit under its shadow, dwell on its beauty, meditate on its glory and draw my strength from its power. Bishop Badley, as he concluded one of his sermons in his beautiful Hindustani, led the audience to the foot of the cross. He presented the nail-pierced feet of Jesus before the gaze of the audience, and invited them to receive the benediction from the nail-torn hands of Jesus. The presentation of the crucified Christ in the last few sentences of the speaker gripped me so strongly that it has always lingered in my mind. The tent, the audience, the very seat that I then occupied in the midst of the great gathering, the speaker and above all the uplifted hands of Jesus with marks of his sacred wounds are still vivid in my memory.

It was my first visit in the Punjab. On our way to Agra, we visited Lahore, spending a couple of days in Mahan Singh, which years after was to be my home

for some nine or ten years in connection with the Henry Martyn School of Islamics. I had the opportunity of meeting several good Christians in Lahore. Spending a couple of days in Amritsar, and passing through Delhi I came back to my College, with the vision of the Crucified Saviour more deeply engraved upon my heart. From that time I began to feel a greater fervour for my Crucified Saviour.

The Lord continued to favour me with the abundance of His grace. After my return from the Sialkot convention I felt a deeper and greater longing for closer fellowship with God. The beautiful little chapel in the College which was in a crypt, became my sanctuary, where unnoticed and undisturbed by my friends I could spend hours in prayer and meditation. I fasted and observed different forms of austerities, and self-imposed hardships. Some five miles from Agra is a village called Sikandara which contains the mausoleum of the Emperor Akbar, and some of its surrounding buildings lying in ruins were hardly visited by the people. On holidays I would often go there to spend the day in solitary meditation. It was on one such occasion when I was there, and I was meditating and praying on the roof of the mausoleum that the Lord favoured me with a vision. As I raised my eyes to the afternoon sky I saw clearly marked the figure of Christ stretched upon the cross. I do not know how long the vision lasted, but it produced a great change in my heart, which I felt as if it was burning with fire. It gave me a strange feeling of pain mixed with joy. I was in a state of ecstasy, but so different from the one that I had experienced as a Muslim mystic. Ecstatic thoughts began to bubble up in my mind. It was an experience which led to a fresh and deeper consecration of my life. Some of the experiences during the

vision were recorded immediately, and I quote some of the things from this record. The date of the vision is recorded Tuesday 4 p. m., 23rd September, 1919. The first page of the record has the following sentences:

"He stooped to meet thee"

"This day shall be unto you for a memorial."

Exo. 12: 14.

Then follows confession, consecration and a long meditation on the cross. Some of these are as follows:

"Lord Jesus my blessed Saviour, I have sinned against Thee again and again, and have broken my promise and vow many times which I had often made with tears and hearty repentance. O Lord I am sorry for my misdoings and breaking promises and vows, and hereby O Lord by Thy strength I promise to be absolutely Thine, and hence I consecrate myself--- my soul and body, my intellect and knowledge, my feet and hands, my lips and my tongue, my eyes and ears, all and all I dedicate to Thy service till my life's end.--- Amen."

Henceforth thou shalt have no right to use thy body and thy mind for any selfish purpose or for thy own glory, but for the glory of Him and His Father who said: "When they see your good works, they may glorify your Father who is in heaven."

The Commandments:

1. Thou shalt freely confess Him whenever and wherever an opportunity is offered unto thee.
2. Thou shalt feed thyself daily on Him.
3. Thou shalt wait on thy knees to hear Him.

4. Thou shalt retire to solitude to meet Him.
5. Thou shalt look into His face when the tempter comes to thee.
6. Thou shalt not do what thou wouldst not like Him to see.
7. Thou shalt not go where thou cannot take Him with thee.
8. Thou shalt not allow any selfish thought, ambition, pleasure, affection, love of anything which ends in thee and not in Him to enter thy mind.
9. Thou shalt not allow thy eyes and thy mind to wander about unrestrained—they are sealed by Him and are to be preserved for His use—take heed that seal be not broken in any way.
10. Thou shalt not put thyself in any place, company, sport, or amusement or read or write any books or papers, which even for a moment would drive Him from the centre of thy consciousness or interrupt the light which proceeds from Him and reaches thy heart.

Whatever be the nature of my vision of Christ on the cross, the important point is the experience in which it resulted; but every religious experience brings with it a solemn responsibility, and in its neglect lies a great danger of retrogression in life. For example, when, as a result of such an experience, the devotee takes the vow of dedicating his mind and thought among his other things, and promises to listen to the Master, there is a subtle danger of carrying

the idea of this dedication of his intellect to such an extent as to refuse to listen to common sense arguments and reasons, and to mistake his own inner voice for that of his Lord.

My own experience was not an exception to these dangers. It was not long before I became more and more self-centred in my spiritual activities. The burning passion for the preaching of the Gospel drifted in the background, and a burning desire for more time to be alone and with God and to dwell upon what is called the 'intellectual vision' of Christ came into the foreground. The 'dedicated ego' to God and Christ became an object of greater concern than the souls perishing without Christ. Thus it was that I found myself slowly drifting towards the Roman Church.

I JOIN THE ROMAN CHURCH

My first acquaintance with the Church of Rome was through the study of Fr. Chiniqy's book "Fifty Years in the Church of Rome." I could not believe that any section of the Church of Christ which He has purchased with His precious blood could be so corrupted as that described by the author. I became anxious to find out the truth. The opportunity came when in St. John's Boys Christian Hostel in Agra we had a new warden in the person of Rev. J. Kingdom, an Anglo-Catholic in his views, and a man of prayer and given to much devotion and meditation and of an exemplary character. Under his guidance, worship in the Hostel Chapel became ritualistic, and some of the canonical hours of the breviary were also observed. All these roused my interest in the Roman Church. Later on, when I joined the college, I had a better opportunity to study its doctrines. Nor far

from St. John's College was situated St. Peter's College, with its imposing cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and the palace of the Archbishop of the Roman Church. In my anxiety to acquire first-hand information about the teachings of the Church of Rome I began a systematic study of its doctrines under the guidance of the Fr. H. Norman, the then Rector of St. Peter's College, Agra.

The Church appealed to me as the most ancient of all existing churches, which can point to a long line of heroes who have kept with perfect accord and unwavering trust the faith which was committed to her, and which has produced a succession of confessors and martyrs who in all ages through suffering and death have proclaimed a sound theology and condemned all errors and heresies which have sought to destroy the true teachings of Christianity. It has endeavoured by impressive ceremonies, and eloquent preaching and immortal chants and hymns to exalt Christ, and purify the moral and religious life of her people. She counts by thousands such illustrious saints who have worshipped at her altars, noted theologians who have confuted heresies, a long line of martyrs who for the good confession of their faith were thrown before wild beasts or were condemned to die at the stake. In fact, in whose life all the sufferings which the writer of the Hebrews ascribes to saints of old were repeated, for they also had trial of cruel mockings, scourgings, and they were also stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword, and who also were destitute, afflicted, tormented, they wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. Moreover, among her faithful sons she counts many missionaries by whose efforts heathen nations have been christianized. Such were my sentiments regarding the Roman Church.

Further, she appealed to me also on account of her being a historic Church, counting the line of Popes reaching to St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles. The Anglican Church had taught me that a necessary qualification for a Church to be a Church of Christ and its ministers validly ordained was that it must be Apostolic in the sense that its heads must be in direct succession of the Apostles. Who but the Church of Rome at the present time could make a better claim to this Apostolic Succession? Further, my own disposition from early childhood was to regard with reverence the life of renunciation and the monks and the religious priests of the Roman Church, with their threefold vow of obedience, chastity and poverty which their priests belonging to Religious Orders have to take, impressed me very greatly.

The central thing, however, which in the teachings and practices of the Roman Church led me to become an adherent of it was its emphasis on the death of Jesus Christ. In the centre of the religious life of the Church of Rome stands the suffering of Christ. All through my own religious experience I have been greatly influenced by this aspect of the Gospel of Christ—His death. This was the main attraction in my first reading of the Gospel as a Muslim, and which eventually led to my acceptance of Christianity. In the early days of my conversion in my own English Bible I marked the word 'blood' with red ink from one end to the other. I wanted to worship at the altar where the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, in a mystical way, was perpetuated by the priests every day in the Mass.

Finally, I made known my decision to join the Church of Rome to my friends who had supported me

materially from the time I became helpless, and to whom I owed much of my spiritual progress in life. I was at that time a student of my final year in the B.A. class of the College and the continuance of my education depended entirely upon the support which I was receiving from its funds, and yet they put no obstacle in my way and offered no difficulty in carrying out my decision. Canon T. D. Sully, later Principal of the College, then an acting Principal, was the only one who on behalf of the Christian staff of the College had a talk with me, but he showed no resentment and did not even argue the point. What he said, and how he prayed with me, left a deep impression upon my mind and, along with some of the letters which I received then from my Protestant friends, were really the factors which ultimately proved to be the cause of my return from the Roman Church. It is true that in my enthusiasm what Canon Sully had said, and the contents of those letters were ignored, yet through these was planted a seed in my heart which did not fail to bear fruit and which finally guided me to the truth of the evangelical church. These letters are good samples of the expressions of a Christian heart. Here is one from my friend Mr. F. W. Steintal and I take the liberty of quoting a good part of it:

"MY DEAR JOHN:—I am afraid you are wondering why I am delaying so long in answering your letter of 13th Nov. Do not believe, anyhow, that it is because your letter offended me or in any way alienated my heart from you. It did not, and I hope D. V. nothing shall. The letter did not reach me until the 22nd as we were at Asansol at an Indian Christian Convention where I wish you had been too. I met there with a dear old Christian of 83 years,

who 26 years ago left the Roman Church, because he did not find the life of God in it, and until now is rejoicing in the realisation of God's love in Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit as he has found it in the Protestant Church. He might have taught you a little more of what the Roman Church is, in reality, not in books and not in your dreams. He would first of all have taught you: Do not join a church you do not know. The Roman Church is not a doctrine, not only a system either, it is a practical reality, which the man who joins it makes himself co-responsible for.

"You say that you have changed your faith. Please God you have not. I trust you have not. Your faith has been till now in the living God and Father, in His Son, Jesus Christ, your Saviour, and in His Holy quickening and sanctifying Spirit. If you change that faith, then you put yourself outside the fellowship of the Saints, and then indeed you will break asunder the tie that binds us together. But because you change your doctrine and your church communion, do not say, you change your faith. Though this is what your new teacher will teach you, not openly to begin with, but nevertheless it is the real doctrine of the Roman Church and the inevitable consequence of the system: *nulla salus extra ecclesiam*, i.e., there is no salvation outside their Church. And this you have to consider, that in joining Rome you put all the Christians with whom you have spiritual fellowship in Christ, outside the pale of salvation. Are you really ready to do this?

"You say, that hitherto you have only had a strong belief; not till now have you found the Christian life! how can you say that? Have you forgotten

all the blessed experiences of God and His fellowship you have had during these years? Was it the Blessed Virgin, that gave you that? Was it the apostolic succession that inspired you and quickened you, when you were discontented? Was it the priest's absolution, that gave you Peace, when you knelt at the cross? My poor friend, do you not see how you worship the creature instead of the Creator, how you bow down before men instead of resting in God and Him alone. And you are not true to yourself in denying your previous experience? Do you believe, that what you now in your imagination take to be the only true experience will fare any better in the critical light of another mood next month? That is what makes me sad, your lack of faithfulness to Christ. Is His grace not sufficient for you?

"And the dream of your youth! The call with which you have been called to give your life to lead your own people to Christ—do you think that Roman ceremonies and idolatry and apostolic succession will make the gospel of the crucified one more attractive or palatable to them? May God be merciful to you, lest you should fail to be obedient to the heavenly vision."

The letter contains sufficient argument to prevent a man from joining the Roman Church but I was so obsessed with the idea of the truth of the Roman position that no argument was of any use. The letter warns as to the position of the Roman doctrine concerning the churches outside its communion: *Nulla salus extra ecclesiam*, and asks if I am ready for this. Ready? I had already done that! I had gone so far already in my enthusiasm for the Roman Church that I had written to my friends who had helped me

hitherto in my Christian life in a strain that implied that they were outside the pales of salvation and in danger of eternal damnation, and this of all friends to my dear godfather, Mr. J. H. Hickinbotham, and what he wrote to me now makes me blush with shame for my audacity, and I read in his acknowledgment of my impudent letter the heart of a true Christian, yearning for the spiritual welfare of his son whom he had begotten in Christ. He writes:

MY DEAREST GODSON:—When I got your letter yesterday I could not help saying 'Laus Deo.' You have never disappointed me and I always praise God for your steadfast love and faith in Jesus Christ. I know that you want to give Him your life, time, abilities and have been seeking to serve Him in the way most to His glory—all of Thee and none of self.

"It was such happiness to hear of your love. You know that you wrote me a letter just before your Baptism. I still read that letter and look on it as one of my most valuable possessions. You speak of some of your friends and relations in God as being according to the Catholic belief outside the Church and salvation and these were the people 'who taught me the truth of Christianity.' Surely there must be a mistake somewhere? Keep on praying, God who loves us will show us the way in which to walk."

All the entreaties of my good god-father and sound arguments of my friends were of no avail. I had formed an exaggerated idea of the dedication of my intellect to God and Christ, as already stated, and I refused to listen to what others had to say on the decision that I had made to join the Roman Church.

I had come to the conclusion that I must submit myself to the living oracle of God on earth, the Holy Catholic Church, without any quibbling or reservation. Therefore on the day following the great procession of Corpus Christi in 1921 I was received in the Roman Church by receiving what is called conditional baptism followed by my first communion, and subsequently by receiving the sacrament of Confirmation by the laying on of the hands of the Archbishop Angelo Poli of Agra, taking the name of Aloysius.

After serving for sometime as a teacher in St. Peter's College, Agra, an institute run chiefly for Roman Catholic boys of the European and Anglo-Indian community, and after helping the fathers in missionary work, I was accepted by the Archbishop of Agra as a candidate for priesthood. Arrangements were made with Fr. Norman, who was then stationed in Muttra, for me to go through preliminary teachings and to acquire sufficient Latin to be able to go through a training for the priesthood in a Seminary in Kandy or Rome. In Muttra I practised austerities voluntarily, for none were imposed upon me. I swept the Church, dusted the statues, took diligent care that the sanctuary lamp never went out, assisted the priest at Mass every morning and tried to learn my Latin.

MY RETURN FROM THE ROMAN CHURCH

The thing that brought me back to the Protestant faith was not chiefly the controversy between the two great divisions of the Church of Christ, for, by disposition I was never interested in intellectual debates on religious subjects. The thing that really troubled me was the dividing line drawn by the Roman Church between herself and the Protestant

Church. The strict line of demarcation drawn between the two churches, of which my friends had warned me in the beginning, was so hard and fast that it relegated the members of the Protestant Churches to a position of worse than that of unbelievers. Strictly speaking, they were not even recognised as Christians—no religious fellowship being permitted with a member of a non-Roman Church. Any such offence, as entering a Protestant Church for prayer or worship, the use of the Bible published by a Protestant society, the reading of any Protestant literature, joining in prayer with a Protestant, in short any religious or semi-religious fellowship with any non-Roman, not excepting the High Anglo-Catholics, was a sin which should be confessed before the offender can receive the Communion without incurring the guilt of a sacrilegious act.

For four long years I observed these rules very strictly. When received as a guest by any of my Protestant friends I refrained from joining in grace at meal hours, and at the hours of family worship which I had enjoyed before the spiritual fellowship I absented myself or pushed my chair back to a safe distance so as not to be counted among those who were engaged in prayer. At the house of my Methodist friend, Dr. E. Millicans Khan, Civil Surgeon in the U. P., whose hospitality I was privileged to enjoy for a number of years, and whose friendship I continued to retain even after I had ceased to be a member of the Protestant community, and where I had enjoyed spiritual fellowship with his family, I shocked my friends by such behaviour and they refused to believe the fact that I was acting on a religious principle of the Roman Church. They at last requested me to write to the

priest and get special dispensation to lead the family worship. I wrote accordingly to my priest requesting to be dispensed from observing abstinence on Fridays as to the eating of meat and asking his views as to taking part in family worship at a Protestant home. Here is the relevant part from the letter received from the priest in reply:

"Regarding prayers and Friday at Dr. Khan's, I dispense you from the Friday abstinence while you are with him, but wish you to say a rosary instead on those days (Fridays). But as regards prayers, I would ask you neither to join in nor to lead them in prayers, but to remain out altogether, asking them to kindly excuse you, as it is not allowed by the Church. They will respect you for acting on principle. If however they insist on joining you in your Catholic prayers, you may allow them, and may then recite the Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed, Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity, the 'I Confess,' Act of Contrition and a prayer to the Sacred Heart."

The content of the letter explains itself for no good evangelical Christian could join in such prayers which are so extremely Roman. With such a mentality, I found myself gradually drifting into that state of mind when I began to regard my former Protestant friends no better than non-Christians. It was during the period of my study preparatory to joining the Catholic Seminary that I began seriously to think over this mental attitude which was the result of the Roman Catholic teachings. How far such an attitude of mind was justified on the basis of my previous experience of fellowship with my former friends. Was I right in regarding my saintly godfather, Mr. J. H. Hickinbotham, every moment of whose life was consecrated

to His Master Christ, as living without Christ? Could it be possible that my dear friend, Mr. F. W. Steinthal, with a perfect Christian life was not a Christian, and that my good Methodist friend, Dr. Millicans Khan, whom I have known so intimately, and hence had the opportunity of knowing his blameless life and his love for Christ was beyond the pale of salvation? A host of other good Christians, my former friends, one by one came to my mind, and to think that all these with their Christian experience, as evident from their lives, must be considered as deprived of the means of grace and of salvation, meant nothing less than closing my eyes to obvious facts. Was I justified in the face of such evidences in holding such an attitude to these my friends as was the result of my Roman training? A tree is known by its fruits and if these are the fruits of the Protestant faith, how could they be the result of such a false faith as that claimed by the Roman Church?

Besides, I knew my Bible better than I was taught in the Church, and on the basis of its teachings I could not justify this attitude to my former friends. The signs of a true follower are found in the Holy Scriptures, and the Protestant Christians do possess those marks of a good Christian in abundant measure. Further, has not God blessed the ministry of the Protestant Churches, then who was I to denounce them, as required by the Roman Church, as without Christ and without His Holy Spirit? "Surely" as my godfather had warned me on the eve of my joining the Roman Church "there must be a mistake somewhere." The Lord opened my eyes to see where it lay.

I have already stated that it was chiefly on the ground of personal experience that I decided to leave

the Roman Church, but in such a decision the doctrinal questions are inseparable and cannot be overlooked. I had enough opportunity to study the doctrinal position of the Roman Church before and after I had joined it. I devoted a good deal of my time to going over the claims of the Roman Church before taking the definite step of severing my connection with it.

It is amazing that the Roman Church discourages and forbids the reading of the Bible. For four years that I was in communion with the Roman Church I never read the Bible, for I never felt its necessity, except such portions as were found quoted in devotional books.

It was the reading of the gospel that had guided me to the knowledge of my Saviour, and it was on the Holy Bible that I was spiritually nourished from the day that I accepted Christ as my Lord till the day of my joining the Roman Church, and now how could I be without it? Thus the Bible which had first showed me my Saviour, now once again proved itself to be my guide in bringing me back to the evangelical faith of the Protestant Church.

I shall be guilty of ingratitude if I fail to add to what I have said, as to my experimental and doctrinal grounds for leaving the Church of Rome, the good that I saw and found within it. In the words of the Bishop of Durham, the Right Rev. H. C. G. Moule, I hasten to say that the Church of Rome "confesses the name of Jesus Christ, and within her fold, beyond question, have dwelt and dwell many of God's saints." I have seen and known them, and have known some of them very intimately, especially among the Capuchin fathers of North India. I have enjoyed their fellowship and

am grateful for their hospitality. Many of them have been good 'fathers' to me, who in all sincerity and truth for the love of Jesus they bore they helped me in my spiritual progress, taught me to hate not only sin but also the occasion of sins, and guided me in my youth through the great temptations which beset a young man's life, and did their best to help me to keep my "garment washed in the blood of the Lamb"; unspotted and unsoiled from the surrounding filth of the time and place. I know some of them even now who are angelic in their character, and fatherly to their people. There are some whose confidence and friendship I still retain.

Thus it was that I decided to come back to the communion of the Protestant Church. Not because I believed it to be holy, infallible and perfect, but because it is, as defined by Maldwyn Hughes: "The Church to be, the fellowship of the redeemed, informed and sustained by the indwelling Spirit of God"; and also because it corresponds to the definition of St. Ignatius: "Wherever Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church." The Protestant Church which is the communion of those who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, has many defects and faults but she is not prevented, like the Roman Church by arrogating to herself the claim to infallibility, from confessing her faults, and seeking to reform herself, and from denouncing her errors as errors.

When I left the Roman Church I was, for some time, without any home, and any place within the Protestant Church. My father by this time was dead, but my mother and brothers welcomed me warmly in the home, and for a year or so I enjoyed their hospitality. They did not interfere with my religious convic-

tions and practices in any way. In the Roman Church I had acquired the habit of going to Church every morning, and so I continued to go to the Roman Catholic Church every morning during the week days when unfortunately the Protestant churches are closed, but on Sundays I went to the Anglican Church.

It is awkward for a Christian convert to live in a Muslim home. However warmly a convert is welcomed among his people the situation is not a happy one. At least it is unhappy for those whose hospitality he enjoys, for they have to bear the tauntings and jeerings of their neighbours for entertaining a renegade, a Christian. Muslims when situated thus, either have to face the jeerings and sometimes even persecutions by their neighbours, or surreptitiously have to tell some such story to their friends as that the renegade is now secretly a believer—a Muslim.

The Lord opened the way for me soon to get out of this awkward situation. Through the kindness of my old friend Mr. B. W. Bean, I was introduced to Mr. W. Paton, then of the National Christian Council in India, who put me in touch with my friend, the Rev. Dr. M. T. Titus. After he had examined my knowledge in Islamics he recommended me to the Bareilly Theological Seminary, in Bareilly for the position of the head of its newly founded department of the Islamic Studies. It was a venture of faith on the part of the members of the board of governors of the Seminary to accept me for a responsible post, for I was a total stranger to them and was known to be an ex-Romanist and had no knowledge of Methodism.

On August 1st in 1925 I came to Bareilly to take up my new work. It was my first opportunity in life

strictly speaking, to hold a responsible position. It is true that while in the Church of Rome I had worked as a teacher in St. Peter's College, Agra, but that was never meant to be a permanent work, and I had taken it as a temporary measure till such time as I was to be accepted by the Archbishop as a candidate for priesthood. In Bareilly, as one in charge of the Islamic studies, I was at last at the work which was my life's ambition—the evangelisation of Muslims, though after being for seventeen years at it, I am still far from realising that vision in the way that I desire. I am conscious of my limitations to realise the vision which God Himself had granted me, but I am confident that He who has begun the good work in me will finish it too.

It was a different life that I began in Bareilly from what I had been accustomed to so long. For thirteen long years since I became a Christian, I had hitherto led the life of a boarder, with no responsibility of spending money or of earning a salary. My necessities were met by the people among whom I lived, which was often supplemented by the funds supplied by my mother. Here was my first opportunity to come in close contact with the Christian community.

Shortly after I had taken up my work in the Seminary I decided to enter the state of 'holy matrimony,' and on October 21 in 1926 I married the lady who is now my wife. Miss Dorothy Day, the daughter of one Mr. John Sinclair Day, of a family that had been Christian for some generations, and who had served on the staff of the High School of the Presbyterian Mission in Allahabad. Mr. Sinclair Day's father was from Calcutta and his mother a lady from Scotland, who was married in the days when such unions of an

Indian with a European were rare. Mr. John Sinclair Day was already dead when I proposed to his daughter. The proposal was made at the house of her uncle, Mr. Walter Sinclair Day, High Court Advocate, who lived and practised in Agra. The marriage, however, for some reason was solemnised not in Agra but in Bareilly by Rev. J. N. West and Rev. A. Gulab in the Methodist Church.

I JOIN THE METHODIST CHURCH

When I came to Bareilly I had no Church affiliation. I was simply an ex-Romanist. My sentiments regarding the Church were as already stated. It was natural that after leaving the Roman Church I should seek readmission to the Anglican, my original home after leaving Islam. I found this readmission rather a difficult proposition as it was tied down with my seeking an appointment at the same time. My offer of service to the Anglican Church was not accepted by them.

In Bareilly I came in close contact with Methodism. My only knowledge of it was through the fellowship that I had enjoyed with Dr. Millicans Khan, who lived out and out as a good Methodist. In the Seminary I had personal and close contact with some who were its representatives. Rev. J. Devadasan's life was such a contrast to what I had found in others holding a similar position in their Churches. His meekness, gentleness and good nature bore witness to his real Christian life. He was an evangelist at heart, a man of prayer and a student of the Bible. He administered the office of the Principalship not only in a democratic spirit but in a Christian way as well. He was truly *primus inter pares* among his colleagues. Then there

was Rev. H. J. Sheets, a true Methodist indeed, a man of great intellect, but all unconscious of his greatness. I found him always a good friend, and ever accessible in such times when his advice was necessary. There was the Rev. P. S. Hyde equally zealous in the service of His Lord, and a good friend to me. The pastor, Rev. A. Gulab, was ever active for the spiritual good of his congregation, and he took a keen interest in me. He was such a help in my study of Methodism, guiding me at every step by his helpful and frank advice in this great decision as to my joining the Methodist Church. From the step of joining the Church as an ordinary member till the day of my ordination as an Elder, he guided me as a friend and an adviser. In such a fellowship, and with an opportunity provided in the Seminary, I experienced no difficulty in making my decision in the matter of choosing my dwelling in "a definite part of the Church," and I chose Methodism.

THE MEANING OF ALL THIS

I was on a journey to Calcutta, after having decided to sever my connection with the Church of Rome, and was going to my people to live with them till such time as the Lord would show me an opening for His service. Seated by a window in a crowded compartment, I was disinterestedly watching the way-side scenery which had become familiar to me, because of the many journeys that in course of some twelve years I had made between Calcutta and Agra. The train roaring at the crossings was speeding towards its destination, and at the moment it passed Fatehpur, I decided to indulge in smoking, a habit which I had acquired during the years that I was a member of the Church of Rome, and to which I was introduced by a priest, as an 'innocent luxury,' I pulled out a cigarette

and drew a match-box from my pocket, but instantly there arose before me the picture of the puritanic life of my people at home in Calcutta—my brothers, all non-smokers, and my mother who regarded the habit as pernicious. Could I, a follower of Christ, afford to be less than they in this matter? From the unlit cigarette I lifted up my gaze and looking at my Master I caught sight of His holy Lips, and instantly the cigarette tin and the match-box were thrown out of the window. Smokers often speak of the difficulty that is experienced in the efforts to get free from the grip of nicotine, but the Lord spared me from such difficulty in overcoming the habit. A three-years' habit was broken in a moment, and one look at the Master did it.

The incident illustrates the life that I have found in Christ. In accepting Christianity I have accepted the leadership of One who is able to change life, and give strength in weakness. He enables me to overcome things which mar and destroy life, and gives peace in my heart and grace to live victoriously, and grants the right of citizenship in Heaven. I find that Christianity is Christ, and that to be a Christian means to live in His fellowship, so that when faced with temptation and assailed on every side by the rising tide of doubts and despair or grief, it is enough to look into His face and yield all to His safe keeping, and He does the rest. My manifold needs are met by His manifold grace. When in life's journey I am led into a path which like a long tunnel is dark and dreary, a tighter grip of His hand gives the assurance that all is well, and my soul cries out: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." When tempted

to bad temper I can draw on His patience, when to harsh judgment on His gentleness, and when to impurity I can make His dazzling purity my shield and shelter. When despised by men and rejected by friends, I find Him to be the one precious gift of God on Whom I can rely and to whom I can fly.

When I look back at the path already traversed in life, I find it strewn with many failures and faults and shortcomings, but it is marvellous how He has sufficed, and how He made me rise when I fell and gave me strength when I proved to be too weak to walk. "Yes, through life, death, through sorrow and through sinning, He has sufficed, and shall suffice." And thus it is that

"By all hell's hosts withstood,
We all hell's hosts o'erthrow;
And conquering still by Jesus blood,
We on to victory go."

So the experience shows that Christianity is not a mere acceptance of certain beliefs and dogmas, though they are necessary, but essentially it is living in close fellowship with Christ. It is not only a religion to be practised, but also a life to be lived. Before I accepted Christ as my Lord and Saviour my conception of goodness and virtues was in the form of negation—truth, for example, was merely the absence of falsehood, purity only the absence of impurity, righteousness was merely a negation of unrighteous deeds and so on, but in Christ I see them in their full splendour, positively existing, and far too sublime to be comprehended in their fullness by any mortal mind. It is something like the way I got an idea of whiteness in its greater purity than I had known before when I gazed at the sun-kissed snow which lies perpetually

on the Himalayan peaks, or when I stood looking at the snow-flakes on the surface of the Frozen lake beyond Gulmarg in Kashmir. He is not only righteous but righteousness Himself, He is not only loving, but inasmuch as God is Love He is love incarnate. So the only way to know these virtues or goodness is to allow Him to dwell within one's heart. He who has lived in the fellowship of a great artist knows the true joy that art brings to the aesthetic sense of man; similarly the fellowship of an athlete enamours one with the charm of living in full physical strength of one's life, and likewise the constant companionship of a good musician attunes one's soul and trains one's ear to the sound of music and to its appreciation. No amount of reading about mountains can give that feeling of joy which a mountaineer experiences in actually climbing the steep peaks and living surrounded by mountain scenery. These and other qualities of life cannot be acquired by mere reading about them, but by living in personal contact with persons who embody these qualities in their own life. Thus it is that the more we live with Him the more we know of the Divine qualities as He reveals them to the extent that our feeble soul is able to comprehend them. God is infinite and so there is no limit to His love, goodness, purity and all other Divine attributes. One mountain peak of His experience leads to another, and thus we go higher and still higher. At every peak I find myself exclaiming: "O unsearchable riches of Christ!"