

# A TURKISH EFFENDI ON CHRISTENDOM AND ISLAM

Originally printed in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, in January 1880, it was reprinted in H. P. Blavatsky's *Theosophist*, March 1880, and again after the start of WW1 in November 1914 in the ULT magazine *Theosophy* (vol3: p53) and January 1923\* (11:112), also in the ULT's *Theosophical Movement* as part of an article "Has Christianity Benefited Mankind?" in December 1960 (31:44).

\* There is a follow up to this article in *Theosophy*, Jan. 1923 (11:106), called "The Woes of Turkey."



We reproduce it 140 years later as the *Effendi's* timeless wisdom on the materialism of the West is most relevant today, not only as we are being forced adopt a more respectful treatment of the natural world (which inexorably but impartially will correct us, her mal-treaters!) but also to better understand the natural spirituality of our fellow citizens in Muslim countries, not overlooking that minority of fanatics, the terrible reverse side of this coin, as H. P. Blavatsky's prediction made clear in her historic article [The Akhund of Swat](#).

A Turkish Effendi of the late 19<sup>th</sup> c.

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In the suburb of one of the most romantically situated towns in Asia Minor there lives the most remarkable oriental whom it has ever been my fortune to meet. Traveling through that interesting country a few months ago, with the view of assisting the British Government to introduce some much-needed reforms, I arrived at \_\_\_\_\_ . I purposely abstain from mentioning the name of the place, as my Eastern friend, to whom I am indebted for the following paper, desires his incognito to be observed, for reasons which the reader will easily understand on its perusal.

I remained there some weeks examining the state of the surrounding country, at that time a good deal disturbed, and giving the local authorities the benefit of a little wholesome counsel and advice, which, I need scarcely say, they wholly disregarded.

My officious interference in their affairs not unnaturally procured me some notoriety; and I received, in consequence, numerous visits from members of all classes of the community detailing their grievances, and anxious to know what chance there might be of a forcible intervention on the part of England by which these should be redressed. In my intercourse with them, I was struck by their constant allusion to an apparently mysterious individual, who evidently enjoyed a reputation for an almost supernatural sagacity, and whose name they never mentioned except in terms of the greatest reverence, and indeed, I might almost say, of awe.

My curiosity at last became excited, and I made special inquiries in regard to this unknown sage. I found that he lived about a mile and a half out of the town, on a farm which he had purchased about five years ago; that no one knew from whence he had come; that he spoke both Turkish and Arabic as his native tongues; but that some supposed him to be a Frank, owing to his entire neglect of all the ceremonial observances of a good Moslem, and to a certain foreign mode of thought; while others maintained that no man who had not been born an oriental could adapt himself so naturally to the domestic life of the East, and acquire its social habits with such ease and perfection.

His erudition was said to be extraordinary, and his life seemed passed in studying the literature of many languages—his agent, for the purchase and forwarding of such books and papers as he needed, being a foreign merchant at the nearest seaport. He seemed possessed of considerable wealth, but his mode of life was simple

in the extreme; and he employed large sums in relieving the distress by which he was surrounded, and in protecting by the necessary bribes those who were unable to protect themselves from oppression.

The result was, that he was adored by the country people for miles round, while he was rather respected and feared than disliked by the Turkish officials—for he was extremely tolerant of their financial necessities, and quite understood that they were compelled to squeeze money out of the peasantry, because, as they received no pay, they would starve themselves unless they did.

To this gentleman I sent my card, with a note in French, stating that I was a traveling Englishman, with a seat in the House of Commons in immediate prospect at the coming election, consumed with a desire to reform Asia Minor, or, at all events, to enlighten my countrymen as to how it should be done. Perhaps I am wrong in saying that I actually put all this in my note, but it was couched in the usual tone of members of Parliament, who are cramming political questions abroad which are likely to come up next session. I know the style, because I have been in the House myself. The note I received in reply was in English, and ran as follows:

DEAR SIR—If you are not otherwise engaged, it will give me great pleasure if you will do me the honor of dining with me tomorrow evening at seven. I trust you will excuse the preliminary formality of a visit, but I have an appointment at some distance in the country, which will detain me until too late an hour to call. Believe me, yours very truly,

—EFFENDI<sup>1</sup>

P.S.—As you may have some difficulty in finding your way, my servant will be with you at half-past six to serve as a guide.

“Dear me,” I thought, as I read this civilized epistle with amazement, “I wonder whether he expects me to dress”; for I need scarcely say I had come utterly unprovided for any such contingency, my wearing apparel, out of regard for my baggage-mule, having been limited to the smallest allowance consistent with cleanliness.

Punctually at the hour named, my dragoman informed me that \_\_\_\_\_ Effendi’s servant was in attendance; and, arrayed in the shooting-coat, knee-breeches, and riding-boots, which formed my only costume, I followed him on foot through the narrow winding streets of the town, until we emerged into its gardens, and following a charming path between orchards of fruit-trees, gradually reached its extreme outskirts, when it turned into a narrow glen, down which foamed a brawling torrent. A steep ascent for about ten minutes brought us to a large gate in a wall. This was immediately opened by a porter who lived in a lodge outside, and I found myself in grounds that were half park, half flower-garden, in the center of which, on a terrace commanding a magnificent view, stood the house of my host—a Turkish mansion with projecting latticed windows, and a courtyard with a colonnade round it and a fountain in the middle. A broad flight of steps led to the principal entrance, and at the top of it stood a tall figure in the flowing Turkish costume of fifty years ago, now, alas! becoming very rare among the upper classes.

I wondered whether this could be the writer of the invitation to dinner; but my doubts were speedily solved by the empresentation with which this turbaned individual, who seemed a man of about fifty years of age, descended the steps, and with the most consummate ease and grace of manner, advanced to shake hands and give me a welcome of unaffected cordiality.

He spoke English with the greatest fluency, though with a slight accent, and in appearance was of the fair type not commonly seen in Turkey; the eyes dark-blue, mild in repose, but, when animated, expanding and flashing with the brilliancy of the intelligence which lay behind them. The beard was silky and slightly auburn. The whole expression of the face was inexpressibly winning and attractive, and I instinctively felt that if it only depended upon me, we should soon become fast friends. Such in fact proved to be the case. We had a perfect little dinner, cooked in Turkish style, but served in European fashion; and afterwards talked so far into the night, that my host would not hear of my returning, and put me in a bedroom as nicely furnished as if it had been in a country-house in England.

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<sup>1</sup> A title of nobility meaning Lord or Master; a title of respect or courtesy, equivalent to the English ‘Sir.’ It was used in the Turkish Ottoman Empire following the personal name, and given to members of the learned professions or high government officials, such as a *bey* or a *pasha*. The etymology of this Ottoman word *افندی* (modern Turkish *efendi*) is from the ancient Greek *authentēs* (αὐθεντής) "master, author, doer" from which we get our word *authentic*.

Next morning I found that my dragoman and baggage had all been transferred from the house of the family with whom I had been lodging in town, and I was politely given to understand that I was forcibly taken possession of during the remainder of my stay at \_\_\_\_\_.

At the expiration of a week I was so much struck by the entirely novel view, as it seemed to me, which my host took of the conflict between Christendom and Islam, and by the philosophic aspect under which he presented the Eastern Question generally, that I asked him whether he would object to putting his ideas in writing, and allowing me to publish them—prefacing his remarks by any explanation in regard to his own personality, which he might feel disposed to give.

He was extremely reluctant to comply with this request, his native modesty and shrinking from notoriety of any sort presenting an almost insurmountable obstacle to his rushing into print, even in the strictest incognito. However, by dint of persistent importunity, I at last succeeded in breaking through his reserve, and he consented to throw into the form of a personal communication addressed to me whatever he had to say, and to allow me to make any use of it I liked.

I confess that when I came to read his letter, I was somewhat taken aback by the uncompromising manner in which the Effendi had stated his case; and I should have asked him to modify the language in which he had couched his view, but I felt convinced that, had I done so, he would have withdrawn it altogether.

I was, moreover, ashamed to admit that I doubted whether I should find a magazine in England with sufficient courage to publish it. I need not say that I differ from it entirely, and, in our numerous conversations, gave my reasons for doing so. But I have thought it well that it should, if possible, be made public in England, for many reasons.

In the first place, the question of reform, especially in Asiatic Turkey, occupies a dominant position in English politics; and it is of great importance that we should know, not only that many intelligent Turks consider a reform of the Government hopeless, but to what causes they attribute the present decrepit and corrupt condition of the empire.

We can gather from the views here expressed, though stated in a most uncomplimentary manner, why many of the most enlightened Moslems, while lamenting the vices which have brought their country to ruin, refuse to cooperate in an attempt, on the part of the Western Powers, which, in their opinion, would only be going from bad to worse.

However much we may differ from those whom we wish to benefit, it would be folly to shut our ears to their opinions in regard to ourselves or our religion, simply because they are distasteful to us. We can best achieve our end by candidly listening to what they may have to say. And this must be my apology, as well as that of the magazine in which it appears, for the publication of a letter so hostile in tone to our cherished convictions and beliefs.

At the same time, I cannot disguise from myself that, while many of its statements are prejudiced and highly colored, others are not altogether devoid of some foundation in truth; it never can do us any harm to see ourselves sometimes as others see us. The tendency of mankind, and perhaps especially of Englishmen, is so very much that of the ostrich, which is satisfied to keep its head in the sand and see nothing that is disturbing to its self-complacency, that a little rough handling occasionally does no harm.

These considerations have induced me to do my best to make “the bark of the distant Effendi” be heard, to use the fine imagery of Bon Gaultier;<sup>2</sup> and with these few words of introduction, I will leave him to tell his own tale, and state his opinions on the burning questions of the day.

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<sup>2</sup> “Say, is it the glance of the haughty vizier,  
Or the bark of the distant Effendi, you fear?”

—“Eastern Serenade;” [Bon Gaultier’s](#) *Book of Ballads*.

[A *vizier* is a minister of State or high official in Muslim countries. Ed.]

## MY DEAR FRIEND—

I proceed, in compliance with your request, to put in writing a *résumé* in condensed form of the views which I have expressed in our various conversations together on the Eastern Question, premising only that I have yielded to it under strong pressure, because I fear they may wound the sensibilities or shock the prejudices of your countrymen.

As, however, you assure me that they are sufficiently tolerant to have the question, in which they are so much interested, presented to them from an Oriental point of view, I shall write with perfect frankness, and in the conviction that opinions, however unpalatable they may be, which are only offered to the public in the earnest desire to advance the cause of truth, will meet with some response in the breasts of those who are animated with an equally earnest desire to find it.

In order to explain how I have come to form these opinions, I must, at the cost of seeming egoistic, make a few prefatory remarks about myself. My father was an official of high rank and old Turkish family, resident for some time in Constantinople, and afterwards in an important seaport in the Levant. An unusually enlightened and well educated man, he associated much with Europeans; and from early life I have been familiar with the Greek, French, and Italian languages. He died when I was about twenty years of age; and I determined to make use of the affluence to which I fell heir, by traveling in foreign countries.

I had already read largely the literature of both France and Italy, and had to a certain extent become emancipated from the modes of thought, and I may even say from the religious ideas, prevalent among my countrymen. I went in the first instance to Rome, and, after a year's sojourn there, proceeded to England, where I assumed an Italian name, and devoted myself to the study of the language, institutions, literature, and religion of the country.

I was at all times extremely fond of philosophical speculation, and this led me to a study of German. My pursuits were so engrossing that I saw little of society, and the few friends I made were among a comparatively humble class. I remained in England ten years, traveling occasionally on the Continent, and visiting Turkey twice during that time. I then proceeded to America, where I passed a year, and thence went to India by way of Japan and China. In India I remained two years, resuming during this period an Oriental garb, and living principally among my co-religionists.

I was chiefly occupied, however, in studying the religious movement among the Hindus, known as the Brahmo Samáj. From India I went to Ceylon,<sup>3</sup> where I lived in great retirement, and became deeply immersed in the more occult knowledge of Buddhism. Indeed, these mystical studies so intensely interested me, that it was with difficulty, after a stay of three years, that I succeeded in tearing myself away from them.

I then passed, by way of the Persian Gulf, into Persia, remained a year in Teheran, whence I went to Damascus, where I lived for five years, during which time I performed the Hadj, more out of curiosity than as an act of devotion. Five years ago I arrived here on my way to Constantinople, and was so attracted by the beauty of the spot and the repose which it seemed to offer me, that I was determined to pitch my tent here for the remainder of my days, and to spend them in doing what I could do to improve the lot of those amidst whom Providence had thrown me.

I am aware that this record of my travels will be received with considerable surprise by those acquainted with the habits of life of Turks generally. I have given it, however, to account for the train of thought into which I have been led, and the conclusions at which I have arrived, and to explain the exceptional and isolated position in which I find myself among my own countrymen, who, as a rule have no sympathies with the motives which have actuated me through life, or with their results. I have hitherto observed, therefore, a complete reticence in regard to both.

Should, however, these pages fall under the eye of any member of the Theosophical Society, either in America, Europe, or Asia, they will at once recognize the writer as one of their numbers, and will, I feel sure, respect that reserve as to my personality which I wish to maintain.

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<sup>3</sup> The adepts have a rendezvous on an island in a lake of Ceylon where they reside secure from the inquisitive among us. D. K. Mavlankar speaks of it. The Turkish Effendi may be referring to this locale. [Aquarian Theosophist Eds.]

I have already said that in early life I became thoroughly dissatisfied with the religion in which I was born and brought up; and, determined to discard all early prejudices, I resolved to travel over the world, visiting the various centers of religious thought, with the view of making a comparative study of the value of its religions, and of arriving at some conclusion as to the one I ought myself to adopt.

As, however, they each claimed to be derived from an inspired source, I very soon became overwhelmed with the presumption of the task which I had undertaken; for I was not conscious of the possession of any verifying faculty which would warrant my deciding between the claims of different revelations, or of judging the merits of rival forms of inspiration. Nor did it seem possible to me that any evidence in favor of a revelation, which was in all instances offered by human beings like myself, could be of such a nature that another human being should dare to assert that it could have none other than a divine origin; the more especially as the author of it was in all instances in external appearance also a human being.

At the same time, I am far from being so daring as to maintain that no divine revelation, claiming to be such is not pervaded with a divine afflatus (inspiration, lighting up). On the contrary, it would seem that to a greater or less extent they must all be so. Their relative values must depend, so far as our own earth is concerned, upon the amount of moral truth of a curative kind, in regard to this world's moral disease, which they contain, and upon their practical influence upon the lives and conduct of men.

I was therefore led to institute a comparison between the objects which were proposed by various religions; and I found that just in the degree in which they had been diverted from their original design of world-regeneration, were the results unsatisfactory, so far as human righteousness was concerned; and that the concentration of the mind of the devotee upon a future state of life, and the salvation of his soul after he left this world, tended to produce an enlightened selfishness in his daily life, which has culminated in its extreme form under the influence of one religion, and finally resulted in what is commonly known as Western Civilization.

For it is only logical, if a man be taught to consider his highest religious duty to be the salvation of his own soul, while the salvation of his neighbor's occupies a secondary place, that he should instinctively feel his highest earthly duty is the welfare of his own human personality and those belonging to it in this world. It matters not whether this future salvation is to be obtained by an act of faith, or by merit through good works—the effort is none the less a selfish one.

The religion to which I am now referring will be at once recognized as the popular form of Christianity. After careful study of the teaching of the founder of this religion, I am amazed at the distorted character it has assumed under the influence of the three great sects into which it has become divided—to wit, the Greek, Catholic, and Protestant Christians.

There is no teaching so thoroughly altruistic in its character, and which, if it could be literally applied, would, I believe, exercise so direct and beneficial an influence on the human race, as the teaching of Christ; but there is none, it seems to me as an impartial student, the spirit of whose revelation has been more perverted and degraded by His followers of all denominations.

The Buddhist, the Hindu, and the Mohammedan, though they have all more or less lost the influence of the afflatus which pervades their sacred writings, have not actually constructed a theology based upon the inversion of the original principles of their religion. Their light has died away till but a faint flicker remains; but Christians have developed their social and political morality out of the very blackness of the shadow thrown by 'The Light of the World.'

Hence it is that wherever modern Christendom—which I will, for the sake of distinguishing it from the Christendom proposed by Christ, style *Anti-Christendom*<sup>4</sup>—comes into contact with the races who live under

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<sup>4</sup> I here remarked to the Effendi that there was something very offensive to Christians in the term *Anti-Christendom*, as it possessed a peculiar signification in their religious belief; and I requested him to substitute for it some other word. This he declined to do most positively; and he pointed to passages in the Koran, in which Mahomet prophesies the coming of Antichrist. As he said it was an article of his faith that the Antichrist alluded to by the Prophet was the culmination of the inverted Christianity professed in these latter days, he could not so far compromise with his conscience as to change the term, and rather than do so he would withdraw the letter. I have therefore been constrained to let it remain.

the dim religious light of their respective revelations, the feeble rays of the latter become extinguished by the gross darkness of this Anti-Christendom, and they lie crushed and mangled under the iron heel of its organized and sanctified selfishness.

The real God of Anti-Christendom, is Mammon; in Catholic Anti-Christendom, tempered by a lust of spiritual and temporal power; in Greek Anti-Christendom, tempered by a lust of race aggrandizement; but in Protestant Anti-Christendom, reigning supreme. The cultivation of the selfish instinct has unnaturally developed the purely intellectual faculties at the expense of the moral; has stimulated competition; and has produced a combination of mechanical inventions, political institutions, and an individual force of character, against which so-called "heathen" nations, whose cupidities and covetous propensities lie comparatively dormant, are utterly unable to prevail.

This overpowering love of "the root of all evil,"—with the mechanical inventions in the shape of railroads, telegraphs, ironclads, and other appliance which it has discovered for the accumulation of wealth and the destruction of those who impede its accumulation,—constitutes what is called "Western Civilization."

Countries in which there are no gigantic swindling corporations, no financial crises by which millions are ruined, or Gatling guns<sup>5</sup> by which they may be slain, are said to be in a state of barbarism.

When the civilization of Anti-Christendom comes into contact with barbarism of this sort, instead of lifting it out of its moral error, which would be the case if it were true Christendom, it almost invariably shivers it to pieces. The consequence of the arrival of the so-called Christian in a heathen country is, not to bring immortal life, but physical and moral death. Either the native races die out before him—as in the case of the Red Indian of America and the Australian and New Zealander—or they save themselves from physical decay by worshipping, with all the ardor of perverts to a new religion, at the shrine of Mammon—as in the case of Japan—and fortify themselves against dissolution by such a rapid development of the mental faculties and the avaricious instincts, as may enable them to cope successfully with the formidable invading influence of Anti-Christendom.

The disastrous moral tendencies and disintegrating effects of inverted Christianity upon a race professing a religion which was far inferior in its origin and conception, but which has been practiced by its professors with more fidelity and devotion, has been strikingly illustrated in the history of my own country.

One of the most corrupt forms which Christianity has ever assumed, was to be found organized in the Byzantine empire at the time of its conquest by the Turks. Had the so-called Christian races, which fell under their sway in Europe during their victorious progress westward, been compelled, without exception, to adopt the faith of Islam, it is certain, to my mind, that their moral condition would have been immensely improved.

Indeed, you who have traveled among the Moslem Slavs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who are the descendants of converts to Islam at that epoch, will bear testimony to the fact that they contrast most favorably in true Christian virtues with the descendants of their countrymen who remained Christians; and I fearlessly appeal to the Austrian authorities now governing those provinces to bear me out in this assertion.

Unfortunately, a sufficiently large nominally Christian population was allowed by the Turks to remain in their newly-acquired possessions, to taint the conquering race itself. The vices of Byzantinism speedily made themselves felt in the body politic of Turkey. The subservient races—intensely superstitious in the form of their religious belief, which had been degraded into a passport system, by which the believer in the efficacy of certain dogmas and ceremonials might attain heaven, irrespective of his moral character on earth—were unrestrained by religious principles from giving free reign to their natural propensities, which were dishonest and covetous in the extreme.

They thus revenged themselves on their conquerors, by undermining them financially, politically, and morally; they insidiously plundered those who were too indifferent to wealth to learn how to preserve it, and infected others with the contagion of their own cupidity, until these became as vicious and corrupt in their means of acquiring riches as they were themselves.

This process has been going on for the last five hundred years, until the very fanaticism of the race, which was its best protection against inverted Christianity, has begun to die out, and the governing class of Turks

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<sup>5</sup> Gatling guns were an early type of machine-gun. [Eds]

has with rare exceptions become as dishonest and degraded as the Ghiaours they despise. Still they would have been able, for many years yet to come, to hold their own in Europe, but for the enormously increased facilities for the accumulation of wealth, and therefore for the gratification of covetous propensities, created within the last half-century by the discoveries of steam and electricity.

Not only was Turkey protected formerly from the sordid and contaminating influence of anti-Christendom by the difficulties of communication, but the mania of developing the resources of foreign countries, for the purpose of appropriating the wealth which they might contain, became proportionately augmented with increased facilities of transport—so that now the very habits of thought in regard to countries styled barbarous have become changed.

As an example of this, I would again refer to my own country. I can remember the day when British tourists visited it with a view to the gratification of their aesthetic tastes. They delighted to contrast what they were then pleased to term “oriental civilization” with their own. Our very backwardness in the mechanical arts was an attraction to them. They went home delighted with the picturesqueness and indolence of the East. Its bazaars, its costumes, its primitive old-world cachet, invested it in their eyes with an indescribable charm; and books were written which fascinated the Western reader with pictures of our manners and customs, because they were so different from those with which he was familiar.

Now all this is changed; the modern traveler is in nine cases out of ten a railroad speculator, or a mining engineer, or a member of Parliament like yourself, coming to see how pecuniary or political capital can be made out of us, and how he can best exploit the resources of the country to his own profit.

This he calls “reforming it.” His idea is, not how to make the people morally better, but how best to develop their predatory instincts, and teach them to prey upon each other’s pockets. For he knows that by encouraging a rivalry in the pursuits of wealth amongst a people comparatively unskilled in the art of money-grubbing, his superior talent and experience in that occupation will enable him to turn their efforts to his own advantage.

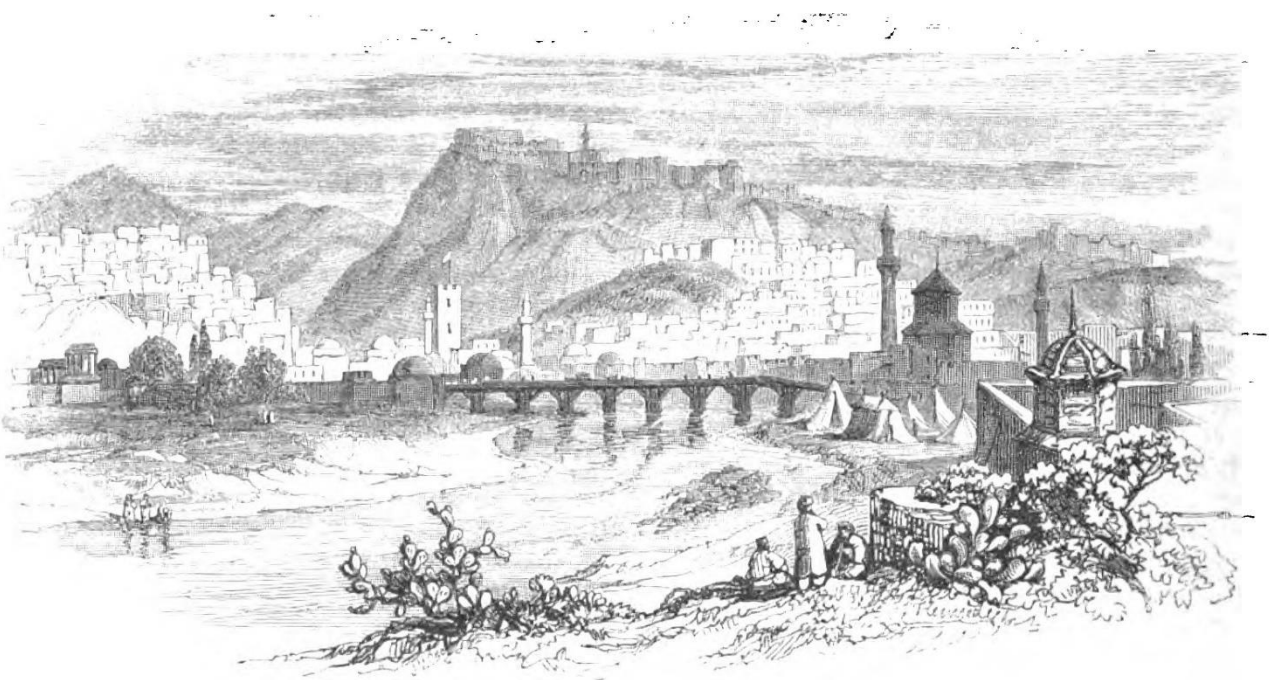
He disguises from himself the immorality of the proceeding by the reflection that the introduction of foreign capital will add to the wealth of the country, and increase the material well-being and happiness of the people. But apart from the fallacy that wealth and happiness are synonymous terms, reform of this kind rests on the assumption that natural temperament and religious tendencies of the race will lend themselves to a keen commercial rivalry of this description; and if it does not, they, like the Australian and the Red Indian, must disappear before it. Already the process has begun in Europe.

The Moslem is rapidly being reformed out of existence altogether. Between the upper and nether milestone of Russian greed for territory and of British greed for money, and behind the mask of a prostituted Christianity, the Moslem in Europe has been ground to powder; hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women, and children have either perished by violence or starvation, or, driven from their homes, are now struggling to keep body and soul together as best they can in misery and desolation, crushed beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut of “Progress,”—their only crime, like that of the poor crossing-sweeper, I think, in one of your own novels, that they did not “move on.” This is called in modern parlance “the civilizing influence of Christianity.” At this moment the Russians are pushing roads through their newly-acquired territory towards Kars. I am informed by an intelligent Moslem gentleman, who has just arrived from that district, that the effect of their “civilizing” influence upon the inhabitants of the villages, through which these roads pass, is to convert the women into prostitutes and the men into drunkards. No wonder the Mohammedan population is flocking in thousands across the frontier into Turkish territory, abandoning their homes and landed possessions in order to escape the contamination of Anti-Christendom.

In these days of steam and electricity, not only has the traveler no eye for the moral virtues of a people, but his aesthetic faculties have become blunted; he regards them only as money-making machines, and he esteems them just in the degree in which they excel in the art of wealth-accumulation. Blinded by selfish utilitarianism, he can now see only barbarism in a country where the landscape is not obscured by the black smoke of factory-chimneys, and the ear not deafened by the scream of the locomotive.

For him a people who cling to the manners and customs of a bygone epoch, with which their own most glorious traditions are associated, have no charm. He sees in a race, which still endeavors to follow the faith





**Kars.**

**Kars, Turkey, 25 years beforehand.** “Pictorial history of the Russian war 1854-5-6.” Courtesy [Wikipedia](#) of their forefathers with simplicity and devotion, nothing but ignorant fanaticism, for he has long since substituted hypocrisy for sincerity in his own belief.

He despises a peasantry whose instincts of submission and obedience induce them to suffer rather than rise in revolt against a Government which oppresses them, because the head of it is invested in their eyes with a sacred character.

He can no longer find anything to admire or to interest in the contrast between the East and West, but everything to condemn; and his only sympathy is with that section of the population in Turkey, who, called Christians like himself, like him, devote themselves to the study of how much can be made, by fair means or foul, out of their Moslem neighbours.

While I observe that this change has come over the Western traveler of late years—a change which I attribute to the mechanical appliances of the age—a corresponding effect, owing to the same cause, has, I regret to say, been produced upon my own countrymen. A gradual assimilation has been for some time in progress in the East with the habits and customs of the rest of Europe.

We are abandoning our distinctive costume, and adapting ourselves to a Western mode of life in many ways. We are becoming lax in the observances of our religion; and it is now the fashion for our women to get their high-heeled boots and bonnets from Paris, and for our youths of good family to go to that city of pleasure, or to one of the large capitals of Europe, for their education.

Here they adopt all the vices of Anti-Christendom, for the attractions of a civilization based upon enlightened selfishness are overpoweringly seductive; and they return without religion of any sort—shallow, skeptical, egotistical, and thoroughly demoralized.

It is next to impossible for a Moslem youth, as I myself experienced, to come out of that fire uncontaminated. His religion fits him to live with simple and primitive races, and even to acquire a moral control over them; but he is fascinated and overpowered by the mighty influence of the glamour of the West. He returns to Turkey with his principles thoroughly undermined, and, if he has sufficient ability, adds one to the number of those who misgovern it.

The two dominant vices, which characterize Anti-Christendom, are cupidity and hypocrisy. That which chiefly revolts the Turk in this disguised attack upon the morals of his people, no less than upon the very existence of his empire, is, that it should be made under the pretext of morality, and behind the flimsy veil of



humanitarianism. It is in the nature of the religious idea that just in proportion as it was originally penetrated with a divine truth, which has become perverted, does it engender hypocrisy.

This was so true of Judaism, that when the founder of Christianity came, though himself a Jew, he scorchingly denounced the class which most loudly professed the religion which they profaned. But the Phariseism which has made war upon Turkey is far more intense in degree than that which he attacked, for the religion which it profanes contains the most divine truth which the world ever received.

Mahomet divided the nether world into seven hells, and in the lowest he placed the hypocrites of all religions. I have now carefully examined into many religions, but as none of them demanded so high a standard from its followers as Christianity, there has not been any development of hypocrisy out of them at all corresponding to that which is peculiar to Anti-Christianity. For that reason I am constrained to think that its contributions to the region assigned to hypocrites by the prophet will be out of all proportion to the hypocrites of other religions.

In illustration of this, see how the principles of morality and justice are at this moment being hypocritically outraged in Albania, where, on the moral ground that a nationality has an inherent right to the property of its neighbor, if it can make a claim of similarity of race, a southern district of the country is to be forcibly given to Greece; while, in violation of the same moral principle, a northern district is to be taken from the Albanian nationality, to which by right of race it belongs, and violently and against the will of the people, who are in no way consulted as to their fate, is to be handed over for annexation to the Montenegrins—a race whom the population to be annexed traditionally hate and detest.

When Anti-Christian nations, sitting in solemn congress, can be guilty of such a prostitution of the most sacred principles in the name of morality, and construct an international code of ethics to be applicable to Turkey alone, and which they would one and all refuse to admit or be controlled by, themselves; when we know that the internal corruption, the administrative abuses, and the oppressive misgovernment of the Power which has just made war against us in the name of humanity have driven the population to despair, and the authorities to the most cruel excesses in order to repress them; and when, in the face of all this most transparent humbug, these Anti-Christian nations arrogate to themselves, on the ground of their superior civilization and morality, the right to impose reform upon Turkey—we neither admit their pretensions, covet their civilization, believe in their good faith, nor respect their morality.

Thus it is that, from first to last, the woes of Turkey have been due to its contact with Anti-Christendom. The race is now paying the penalty for the lust of dominion and power, which tempted them in the first instance to cross the Bosphorus. From the day on which the tree of empire was planted in Europe, the canker, in the shape of the opposing religion, began to gnaw at its roots. When the Christians within had thoroughly eaten out its vitals, they called on the Christians without for assistance; and it is morally impossible that the decayed trunk can much longer withstand their combined efforts.

But as I commenced by saying, had the invading Moslems in the first instance converted the entire population to their creed, Turkey might have even now withstood the assaults of “progress.” Nay, more, it is not impossible that her victorious armies might have overrun Europe, and that the faith of Islam might have extended over the whole of what is now termed the civilized world.

I have often thought how much happier it would have been for Europe, and unquestionably for the rest of the world, had such been the case. That wars and national antagonisms would have continued, is doubtless true; but we should have been saved the violent political and social changes which have resulted from steam and electricity, and have continued to live the simple and primitive life which satisfied the aspirations of our ancestors, and in which they found contentment and happiness, while millions of barbarians would to this day have remained in ignorance of the gigantic vices peculiar to Anti-Christian civilization.

The West would have then been spared the terrible consequences which are even now impending, as the inevitable result of an intellectual progress to which there has been no corresponding moral advance. The persistent violation for eighteen centuries of the great altruistic law, propounded and enjoined by the great founder of the Christian religion, must inevitably produce a corresponding catastrophe; and the day is not far distant when modern civilization will find that in its great scientific discoveries and inventions, devised for the purpose of ministering to its own extravagant necessities it has forged the weapons by which it will itself be destroyed.

No better evidence of the truth of this can be found than in the fact that Anti-Christendom alone is menaced with the danger of a great class revolution; already in every so-called Christian country we hear the mutterings of the coming storm when labor and capital will find themselves arrayed against each other—when rich and poor will meet in deadly antagonism, and the spoilers and the spoiled solve, by means of the most recently invented artillery, the economic problems of modern “progress.”

It is surely a remarkable fact, that this struggle between rich and poor is specially reserved for those whose religion inculcates upon them, as the highest law—the love of their neighbor—and most strongly denounces the love of money. No country, which does not bear the name of Christian, is thus threatened.

Even in Turkey, in spite of its bad government and the many Christians who live in it, socialism, communism, nihilism, internationalism, and all kindred forms of class revolution, are unknown, for the simple reason that Turkey has so far, at least, successfully resisted the influence of “Anti-Christian civilization.”

In the degree in which the State depends for its political, commercial, and social well-being and prosperity, not upon a moral but a mechanical basis, is its foundation perilous. When the life-blood of a nation is its wealth, and the existence of that wealth depends upon the regularity with which railroads and telegraphs perform their functions, it is in the power of a few skilled artisans, by means of a combined operation, to strangle it.

Only the other day the engineers and firemen of a few railroads in the United States struck for a week; nearly a thousand men were killed and wounded before the trains could be set running again; millions of dollars’ worth of property were destroyed. The contagion spread to the mines and factories, and, had the movement been more skillfully organized, the whole country would have been in revolution; and it is impossible to tell what the results might have been.

Combinations among the working classes are now rendered practicable by rail and wire, which formerly were impossible; and the facilities, which exist for secret conspiracy, have turned Europe into a slumbering volcano, an eruption of which is rapidly approaching. Thus it is that the laws of retribution run their course, and that the injuries—that Anti-Christendom has inflicted upon the more primitive and simple races of the world, which, under the pretext of civilizing them, it has exploited for its own profit—will be amply avenged.

Believe me, my dear friend, that it is under no vindictive impulse or spirit of religious intolerance that I write thus: on the contrary, though I consider Mussulmans generally to be far more religious than Christians, inasmuch as they practice more conscientiously the teaching of their prophet, I feel that teaching, from an ethical point of view, to be infinitely inferior to that of Christ.

I have written, therefore, without prejudice, in this attempt philosophically, to analyze the nature and causes of the collision which has at last culminated between the East and the West, between the so-called Christendom and Islam. And I should be only too thankful if it could be proved to me that I had done the form of religion you profess, or the nation to which you belong an injustice.

I am far from wishing to insinuate that among Christians, even as Christianity is at present professed and practiced, there are not as good men as among nations called heathen and barbarous. I am even prepared to admit that there are better—for some struggle to practice the higher virtues of Christianity, not unsuccessfully, considering the manner in which these are conventionally travestied; while others, who reject the popular theology altogether, have risen higher than ordinary modern Christian practice by force of reaction against the hypocrisy and shams by which they are surrounded—but these are in a feeble minority, and unable to affect the popular standard.

Such men existed among the Jews at the time of Christ, but they did not prevent Him from denouncing the moral iniquities of His day, or the Church which countenanced them. At the same time, I must remind you that I shrank from the task which you imposed upon me, and only consented at last to undertake it on your repeated assurances that by some, at all events, of your countrymen, the spirit by which I have been animated in writing thus frankly will not be misconceived.

— Believe me, my dear friend, yours very sincerely,

“A TURKISH EFFENDI”