

into the closest touch with all that is Western. An era of unprecedented financial prosperity in the Nile valley filled the pockets of many a Moslem, and so he took his family to summer on the continent or even to England. Being intelligent he has learned much of European customs, dress, manner of life—much which Islam could never have given him. So he becomes dissatisfied with his religious forms and formulas, but finds them inelastic as they have been always understood. He then sets about interpreting them for himself. Where a literal interpretation will not suit him, he makes it figurative, and spiritualizes it. So the Koran and the Hadith take on a new meaning. This method gives an easy way to reconcile contradictions, and gives a reasonable gloss to absurdities in theological standards.

It is hard to measure the influence of changes of this character. Some institutions and teachers will be more influenced than others, and some will influence more than others. The leaven is working. It may be a question whether it is strengthening or whether it be rather undermining Islam. As far as it goes, it is a re-forming of the religion, whether it be a reformation, a change for the better or not. It seems to be a sort of spiritualizing, sublimizing of old forms; not an actual reform; but a reaching out after something better than Islam itself gives. It is a loosening from the old, a feeling for the new. May we not say that it is an opening of the door to admit that which only the Gospel can supply.

Another evidence that reform is in the air is the chaotic state of purely Mohammedan schools in Egypt. What is true of Egypt is probably true of these schools in other parts of the Levant. I can only refer to two notable examples to illustrate my meaning.

The great school at the Mosque Al Azhar in Cairo has long been considered the great centre of Islamic learning.