ISLAM OF THE GLOBAL WEST

THE BRITISH MUSLIM CONVERT LORD HEADLEY, 1855-1935

Jamie Gilham

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The British Muslim Convert Lord Headley, 1855–1935

Islam of the Global West

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For Jyh-Jer Cho and Chiu-Chu Chen

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I wanted to write this book for many years, having first encountered Rowland Allanson-Winn, the fifth Lord Headley, while researching my first book *Loyal Enemies: British Converts to Islam, 1850-1950* (2014). The research for that book took over a decade and, realizing then that Lord Headley was a significant and intriguing but little understood figure in the history of British Islam, I collated much more information about him than I could possibly use in *Loyal Enemies*. I continued to research his life with a view to eventually writing a full biography. Reading Headley's private papers in January 2018, however, transformed my understanding of the man and his life, and made the writing of a biography much more feasible. First and foremost, then, I thank the Honourable Janet Webb for granting me access to Lord Headley's private papers and permission to reproduce his published and unpublished writings, as well as most of the photographs in this book. I am extremely grateful to Janet and her husband David Webb, who welcomed me to their home, showed me family documents, and answered my questions about Headley. I am also indebted to Lord Headley's great-granddaughter, Pat Scott, who shared precious papers and photographs as well as personal memories of Headley in the early 1930s.

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Jamie Gilham
March 2020

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Glossary

al-Fatiha The first *sura* (chapter) of the Qur'an, which is recited during daily prayers.
Amir Title given to a military commander, governor or prince, or a leader.
anjuman Organization; association.
Caliph The successor of the Prophet Muhammad as leader of the *umma*.
doongah A large punt or travelling boat in colonial India.
du'a Prayer of supplication.
fatwa Juridical opinion.
Hajj Pilgrimage to Mecca. The greater of the two pilgrimages to Mecca (see also *'umrah*) undertaken during the last month of the Islamic calendar; the fifth 'pillar' of Islam.
Hajji Prenominal title given to male Muslims who complete the Hajj.
'Id Muslim religious festival.
'Id al-Adha Feast of the sacrifice celebrating the end of the annual Hajj.
'Id al-Fitr Feast that marks the end of Ramadan.
ihram The state or condition of purity Muslims must enter before performing the Hajj; also the term for the two pieces of white cloth worn by male pilgrims during the Hajj.
imam Muslim religious leader.
jama'at Community.
jheel Lake or wetland in India.
jihad Striving or struggling in the path of God.
Khalifa Caliph.
Khan Honorific title to denote a person of status, sometimes meaning ruler.
kiswah The pall that covers the Ka'ba (the cube-shaped structure inside the Sacred Mosque complex at Mecca) during the Hajj.
masjid Mosque.
Maulana Lit. 'master'; title given to a Muslim religious scholar.
mofussil In colonial India, 'the provinces', 'up-country'.
muezzin A Muslim elected to call other Muslims to prayer (anglicized from the Arabic, *mu'adhdhin*).
mufti Legal scholar.
Nizam Title of the ruler of Hyderabad in colonial India.
Ramadan Muslim month of fasting.
sa'i Lit. 'seeking' or 'ritual walking'. An integral rite of the Hajj, which involves walking and running between the hills of Safa and Marwah in Mecca.
salat Worship/ritual prayer; the second 'pillar' of Islam.
salat al-jum'a Friday prayer, congregational prayer.
sawm Fasting/abstinence during Ramadan; the fourth 'pillar' of Islam.

shahada The Islamic testimony of faith and first of the five 'pillars' of Islam: 'I declare that there is no god but God and I declare that Muhammad is His Messenger.'

Sufi A follower of Sufism or Islamic mysticism.

Sultan Ruler, king.

sura A division, or chapter, of the Qur'an.

tabligh Communication of a message or revelation; fulfilment of a mission; to preach.

tarboosh A fez.

tawaf The practice of circumambulating the Ka'ba seven times during the Hajj and *'umrah*.

tonga Light, two-wheeled horse-drawn carriage used in colonial India.

umma The universal Muslim religious community.

'umrah Lesser pilgrimage to Mecca, which can be made at any time of the year.

zakat Almsgiving; the third 'pillar' of Islam.

Abbreviations

AGU	Anti-German Union
AOS	Anglo-Ottoman Society
BEU	British Empire Union
BMS	British Muslim Society (became the MSGB in 1930)
CIS	Central Islamic Society
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
ICEI	Institution of Civil Engineers of Ireland
ICS	Indian Civil Service
LMI	Liverpool Muslim Institute
MP	Member of Parliament
MSGB	Muslim Society of Great Britain
P&O	Peninsular and Oriental
SS	Steamship
WIA	Western Islamic Association
WMM	Woking Muslim Mission

Note on quotations and spelling

To ensure that the sources retain their authenticity, all quoted material is *verbatim* unless otherwise stated. This accounts for the various spellings of the same word, for example 'Mahommedan', 'Mahomedan', 'Mohammedan', 'Muhammadan', 'Moslem' and 'Mussulman' for Muslim, and 'Quran', 'Qur-an' and 'Koran' for Qur'an. It also explains the inconsistent use of 's' and 'z' in certain words written by the same author, including Lord Headley. Spelling of Muslim names and place names, underlining, italics, capitalization and inconsistent punctuation within quotations is also *verbatim*.

Introduction

> *Lord Headley is a name of world-wide fame and is sure to occupy a prominent place when the future historian sits down to write out his 'History of Conversion of the British Isles to Islam'. Perhaps the British calendar may show 'St. Headley's Day' as a red-letter day and a Bank-holiday.*[1]

This book examines the life and times of the fifth Lord Headley (1855–1935), an Anglo-Irish aristocrat who made international headlines in 1913 when he defied convention by publicly converting to Islam. It narrates why and how Headley chose Islam in 1913, and examines his life as arguably the public face of Islam in Britain between the two world wars. The abovementioned quote, rather optimistically proposing a 'St. Headley's Day', was published in the Indian Muslim newspaper *The Light* in 1926. It underlines Headley's reputation and standing among Muslim communities outside of Britain more than a decade after his conversion to Islam.

Eighty-five years after Headley's death in 1935, Islam is the second largest religion in Britain but, with Muslims constituting 5 per cent of the population of England and Wales, *The Light*'s prediction almost a century ago of the 'Conversion of the British Isles to Islam' is far from being realized.[2] With the resurgence of interest in Muslim heritage in the West since 9/11, there is growing recognition in Britain and further afield that Headley is an important figure in the modern history of British Islam, but he remains a marginal historical figure and there is certainly no 'St. Headley's Day' on the national calendar.

Headley's life and work has not hitherto been documented or analysed in any detail. In fact, he has been largely overlooked by scholars writing about the history of Islam in the West, Christian–Muslim relations and Western engagement with Islam and Muslims, subjects that have grown significantly over the past two decades.[3] This neglect is partly due to the fact that Headley was not, by his own admission, a scholar of Islam nor an intellectual. In Britain, Headley has been overshadowed by two British Muslim convert contemporaries: William

Henry Abdullah Quilliam (1856–1932) and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1875–1936). Quilliam was the first British-born missionary of Islam, founder of the pioneering Liverpool Muslim Institute (*c.*1889–1908), and a prolific public speaker and writer about Islam and Muslim issues. Pickthall was an influential Muslim political activist, as well as a celebrated writer and intellectual, whose English edition of the Qur'an has remained in print since it was first published in 1930.[4] Unlike Headley, both Quilliam and Pickthall have been, and continue to be, the subjects of critical biographies and scholarly analysis.[5]

There has not been, until now, a biography of Headley and it is only in recent years that he has appeared, usually fleetingly, in some general and academic studies of the history of Islam in Britain and the Global West.[6] This book, then, takes a historical-biographical approach to document, explain and critically assess Lord Headley's life, work and legacy. It is not, strictly, a conventional biography: after outlining Headley's life before his religious conversion, it focuses on his religious beliefs and conversion to Islam, his work as a Muslim leader in Britain and unofficial Muslim ambassador overseas, and the national and international socio-religious and political milieu in which he lived and operated between 1913 and 1935. This book thereby aims to go beyond a standard narration of Headley's life in order to show what it meant to be a Muslim convert – and, in Headley's case, a prominent one – in Britain, and how his life is significant for a broader understanding of the globalization of Islam in the first half of the twentieth century. It addresses the following core questions:

1. Who was Lord Headley and what was his life like before his conversion to Islam in 1913?
2. How did Headley encounter Islam, why and how did he convert to it in 1913, and how did Headley's contemporaries respond?
3. How did Headley negotiate Islamic prohibitions and practise Islam in Britain?
4. What did it mean to be a Muslim in a non-Muslim country like Britain between the two world wars?
5. What was Headley's role in shaping the organization, propagation, institutionalization and indigenization of Islam in early-twentieth-century Britain?
6. How effective was Headley as a Muslim leader?
7. How did Headley negotiate his personal politics and national and religious identities, especially during the First World War when the Muslim Ottoman Empire was at war with Britain and, afterwards, when the Ottoman Empire was dismembered and the office of the Caliph (the leader of Sunni Muslims) abandoned?

8. How did Headley respond to the politics of Muslims and pan-Islam, differences between Muslims, and the globalization of Islam in the 1920s and 1930s?
9. Was Headley an effective ambassador for British Muslims overseas and what kind of relationships did he have with other Muslims in the West, the British Empire and beyond?
10. What is Headley's legacy and relevance today?

Sources and methodology

Aspects of Headley's life are reasonably well documented in his many publications and contemporaneous published sources, notably newspapers, magazines, journals, books and pamphlets. Of particular value are partisan Muslim missionary publications and, especially when examining the reasons for his religious conversion, published personal testimony, both of which raise surmountable methodological issues.

The Muslim missionary publications were written and edited with an ideological bias and partly for propaganda purposes. However, as I have argued elsewhere, as long as the influences and biases of these sources are recognized, the contributions by and about Muslim converts like Headley offer rich and varied insights into the motivations for and process of religious conversion; and they also reveal much about their lives and concerns as Muslims in a non-Muslim country.[7] These sources also provide a wealth of information about the community or communities that the Muslims joined, including their philosophy, activities, the attitudes of outsiders and relationships with other faith groups as well as Muslims in other countries. Frustratingly, however, the Muslim missionary publications of the interwar period (primarily *The Islamic Review* and *The Light*), which have been central to the writing of this book, seldom contain responses or a 'right to reply' to its authors. It would be fascinating to know, for example, what Headley's fellow British Muslims really thought about his oft-repeated call for the 'Westernization' of Islam in Britain and other non-Muslim countries (see Chapter 5). Alas, in the absence of written or oral documentation, we will probably never truly know.

Some scholars of religion have cast doubt on the ability of published (and unpublished) personal conversion testimonies to illuminate the religious conversion process. For example, sociologists Brian Taylor and James Beckford have argued that conversion testimonies are almost exclusively produced

retrospectively, are temporally variable and socially constructed in terms of both ideology and vocabulary.[8] Beckford found that there is a formal, public or even 'official' conception of appropriate features of the conversion experience in testimonies.[9] These arguments have weight because, like all autobiography and biography, religious conversion testimonies are constructions or reconstructions of experiences. John Lofland and Norman Skonovd have usefully shown that problems arising from the 'moulding' or 'structuring' of testimonies can be overcome, arguing that 'the conversion experience *itself* is partly molded by expectations of what conversion is about or "is like"', and consequently there is the probability of finding in testimonies a good fit between 'real' experiences and 'paradigmatic' accounts.[10] Lewis R. Rambo, whose remarkable work on conversion theory has long influenced my own approach to researching conversion and converts to Islam, has also highlighted that the writing of testimonies can be an integral part of the religious conversion experience because testimony (made and remade) serves as an opportunity to demonstrate the converts' language transformation and biographical reconstruction.[11]

In addition to the core published sources already discussed, particular insights about Headley's life and times have been gleaned from a combination of largely unpublished private and public material. I have drawn on Headley's surviving private papers and correspondence, as well as those of his close family. Insights from Headley's contemporaries have been teased out from the private papers of some of his friends and colleagues, as well as public and official papers, especially British Foreign and India Office records.

Structure

This book is broadly chronological in structure but, given its focus on Headley's life as a Muslim, weight is given to the period from 1913 to 1935. To that end, Chapters 1 to 3 examine Headley's life prior to his conversion to Islam and Chapters 4 to 9 explore his religious conversion and life and work as a Muslim public figure.

Chapter 1 outlines Headley's Anglo-Irish ancestry and conventional early life, from his school and university years to his search in the late 1870s for a profession, which led him to briefly study law before working in journalism and politics. Chapter 2 shows that Headley settled on a career in civil engineering in the early 1890s. It describes Headley's first major project, which happened to be in British India, where he lived in a Muslim-majority community for

the first time and was introduced to the Qur'an. Headley returned to London engaged to be married and with the reputation of an excellent civil engineer. Chapter 3 discusses the highs and lows of Headley's life at the beginning of the twentieth century in Ireland, from an initially happy marriage, fatherhood and continued professional success to a series of personal crises that deeply affected his mental well-being and led to his incarceration in a Dublin lunatic asylum. It reveals that Headley found solace in religion but that he began to question aspects of Christian teaching, lost faith in the church, and moved towards Unitarianism. The latter reintroduced Headley to the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the religion of Islam, which he had first encountered and studied in India.

Chapter 4 details why and how Headley converted to Islam in 1913, the same year that he succeeded to the Baronetcy. It considers the context in which he rediscovered Islam by surveying the history of Muslims, Islam and Islamic missionary activity in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain, then narrates Headley's path to formal conversion, documents private and public reactions and describes how Headley responded to his critics. Chapters 5 and 6 examine Headley's first decade as a Muslim public figure. Chapter 5 considers the period between his religious conversion in 1913 and the end of the First World War. It begins by examining Headley's leadership of British Muslims through the Woking Muslim Mission, his practice of Islam and call for its 'Westernization' in non-Muslim countries like Britain. It then explores how the First World War, specifically the Ottoman–German alliance, affected British Muslim sensibilities and relates how Headley demonstrated his loyalty to Britain, only to suffer a humiliating fall from grace when he was convicted for drunk and disorderly behaviour in 1917. Chapter 6 examines the immediate post-war period, from 1918 to 1923, first looking at Headley's personal life, including his short-lived second marriage in 1921 and bankruptcy in 1922, and then considering Headley's tentative involvement in post-war politics on behalf of British Muslims as Britain and its Allies decided the future of the Ottoman Empire. Chapter 7 focuses on Headley's Hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca, in 1923. It narrates the sequence of Headley's Hajj and considers not only its spiritual impact on Headley as a Muslim but also its political significance, not least because the Hajj of 1923 coincided with the Allies' final deliberations about Ottoman Turkey's post-war fate. Chapter 8 discusses Headley's role as an unofficial ambassador for British Islam in the 1920s. It first maps Headley's domestic and international Muslim networks. The chapter then outlines how disputes among Muslims in Britain and overseas about the Ahmadiyya and the institutionalization of the Qadiani Ahmadi movement in England brought to the fore theological and

practical questions about the nature of Islamic 'brotherhood' for Headley, which he expressed in his speeches and writings, and the attempt to build a new mosque in London. Chapter 9 documents Headley's twilight years, from 1929 through to his death in 1935. It shows that, although Headley opted for semi-retirement in the English countryside, he remained a dedicated Muslim leader and also devoted his final years to defending Muslims in the Middle East and India, and working tirelessly – but ultimately unsuccessfully – to raise funds for a London mosque.

Note

To avoid confusion with other family members, Headley is referred to as Rowland or Rowland junior throughout Chapters 1 and 2, and in Chapter 3 until the narrative reaches 1913, when he succeeded to the Baronetcy. From Chapter 4 onwards, which examines the period after he became Lord Headley, he is referred to as Headley. To further ensure clarity, Headley's wives are generally referred to throughout the text by their first names: Teresa, Barbara and Catharine.

1

A conventional start

Early years, 1855–92

Rowland George Allanson-Winn, the future fifth Lord Headley, was born in London on 19 January 1855. The British newspapers on that cold and cloudy Friday were full of reports and opinion pieces about the Crimean War, which had begun in October 1853. Britain had been drawn into the conflict with its allies France, the Ottoman Empire and Sardinia against Russia, ostensibly to check further extension of Russian power in the vast but fragile Ottoman territories. Following a series of logistical and tactical failures and mismanagement, by 1855 the war had become unpopular in Britain. Ten days after Rowland's birth, the British Parliament approved a motion for an investigation into the conduct of the war, which led to the resignation of the Conservative prime minister George Hamilton-Gordon, the fourth Earl of Aberdeen (1784–1860). The war continued for another year, but its wider concern, the so-called Eastern Question – the question of what should become of the Ottoman Empire as its subject peoples and their rulers sought autonomy or independence, encouraged and discouraged primarily by Russia, Britain and France – rumbled on for almost the entirety of Rowland Allanson-Winn's long life.[1] As is related in the subsequent chapters of this book, six decades later, after he had converted to Islam, Rowland found himself inexorably caught up in the politics of the Eastern Question and the decline of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, which had, in 1517, declared itself the Caliph (or Khalifa), the successor to the mantle of the Prophet Muhammad and the leader of the universal Muslim community, or *umma*.

This chapter focuses on Rowland's early life. After describing Rowland's ancestry and family, it briefly documents his formative years at school and university to reveal that he led a conventional life, did well academically and excelled at sports. After university, however, Rowland struggled to settle on a career, and the period between the late 1870s and the early 1890s was marked by uncertainty and a lack of direction, compounded by the stirring of religious

doubt. Rowland abandoned legal studies in favour of various professional jobs, including editorship of a newspaper and, in 1892, he attempted to become a Unionist politician in his ancestral homeland, Ireland.

Antecedents

Rowland George Allanson-Winn had a conventional upbringing. He was the eldest child of the Honourable Rowland Allanson-Winn (1816–88) and his wife, Margaretta Stefana (née Walker, 1823–71). The Winn family had risen in society during the late eighteenth century with George Winn (1725–98), who was one of the Barons of the Exchequer (judges of the court of common law) in Scotland from 1761 to 1776. In 1763, George Winn inherited the estate of a cousin in Little Warley, in the English county of Essex, and in 1776 he was created the first Baronet of Little Warley. In 1789, the first year of the French Revolution, George Winn became Tory Member of Parliament (MP) for Ripon in North Yorkshire and was rewarded for his support of William Pitt the Younger (1759–1806), who recommended his elevation to Lord Headley, Baron Allanson and Winn of Aghadoe in County Kerry, south-west Ireland, in 1797. George Winn assumed the surname and arms of Allanson by royal licence in 1777, but he used the double-surname of Allanson-Winn.[2]

The first Baron Headley was succeeded in 1798 by his eldest son, Charles Winn-Allanson (1784–1840; he curiously used the surname of Allanson *after* that of Winn), who also succeeded a distant cousin to become the eighth Baronet of Nostell in Yorkshire in 1833. With no sons to succeed him, Charles' only brother, the Honourable George Mark Arthur Way Allanson-Winn (1785–1827) had issue, but he died aged forty-two in 1827. Therefore, when Charles Winn-Allanson died thirteen years later, the Baronetcy passed to his nephew and George's eldest son, another Charles Allanson-Winn (1810–77), who became the third Lord Headley.

Although Ireland was part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (UK) until 1922, as Irish peers the Barons Allanson and Winn were not automatically entitled to a seat in the House of Lords. The third Lord Headley, Charles, was, however, appointed a Tory Representative Peer for Ireland in 1868. When Charles died after a long illness in 1877, he was succeeded by his eldest surviving son, Charles Mark Allanson-Winn (1845–1913), who was also appointed a Representative Peer for Ireland. To avoid confusion, the fourth Lord Headley was known in the family as Charlie Allanson-Winn.

In the early 1880s, shortly after Charlie Allanson-Winn succeeded to the Baronetcy, the family estate consisted of 12,769 acres in County Kerry (reduced from around 25,000 acres in the previous decade), valued at a modest £5,600 per year.[3] The family fortune was already in sharp decline when Charlie became the fourth Baron, and the Headleys were cash poor. Nonetheless, the estate included a large late-Georgian villa, Aghadoe House (rebuilt *c*.1860), described when it was built as 'a very fine building, densely shaded with trees', and set on a model farm overlooking Lough Leane (or Loch Lein) near Killarney.[4] Further estate property was located to the west of Aghadoe, at Glenbeigh on the mountainous Iveragh Peninsula. The superficial splendour of the Headley residences in picturesque Aghadoe and Glenbeigh contrasted with the poverty endured by tenants of the estate. Tensions between landlord and tenants increased during the nineteenth century because, as the *Dublin Review* noted in 1836:

> In Ireland, unlike every other country, there scarcely exists any community of interest between landlord and tenant, though in bitter irony they are called 'their benefactors' – assuredly no other relation is recognized between the one and the other than that of buyer and seller, in mercantile language; the proprietor looks upon his land as so much merchandise, from which the highest rate of profit must be extracted, and in order to do so, the tenant is kept in a state of villainage like the vassal of a feudal baron to his superior.[5]

The *Dublin Review* included an extract from a report written several years earlier by a Mr Wiggins, 'an English practical agriculturalist', as illustrative of 'what landlords, who know their own interests, may *effect*, and how easy it is to manage even the rudest and most ignorant boor by adopting kind and conciliatory measures':[6]

> Lord Headly's [*sic*] estate of Glenbeg [*sic*], situated in a wild district of Kerry, at the entrance of the Iveragh Mountains, consisting of 15,000 acres, much of which is rocky, boggy, and mountain ground, was, in 1807, inhabited by a people, to whom the bare idea of labour was offensive, and work was considered as slavery, though a robust, active, enterprising, and hospitable race of peasantry.
>
> Lord Headly resolved to cultivate their good qualities, without being at first very eager to punish their bad ones, and has succeeded in introducing a degree of improvement and cultivation, which without these effects, must have required a century. They are now well clothed, and as orderly and well-conducted as you see in any village in England. Agriculture has improved with very little sacrifice of rent or money.[7]

This English opinion piece would not have found favour among Headley's tenants, for whom the absentee Barons and their land agents were brutal, exploitative men.

In an arrogant act of defiance against his tenants and other critics, during the late 1860s, the third Baron, Charles Allanson-Winn, built Glenbeigh Towers (1867–71), a medieval-style solid stone fortress, complete with a huge three-storey keep raised on a battered platform. In his classic guide to Irish country houses, the historian Mark Bence-Jones described Glenbeigh Towers as 'a grim' building, and noted that 'the complete absence of battlements, machicolations and other pseudo-medieval features served to make the building more formidable'.[8] Charles Allanson-Winn raised funds for the project by dramatically increasing the rents on his estate, which were enforced by a tough land agent. He was not, however, happy with the final result; the cost of construction spiralled out of control and the walls leaked. Charles Allanson-Winn threatened, but probably could not afford to sue, his architect. Glenbeigh Towers was – and is still – referred to locally as 'Winn's Folly'.[9]

Charles Allanson-Winn had a very difficult relationship with his son and heir, Charlie. It was exacerbated by endless concerns about money and not helped when, in 1867, Charlie defied his father's wishes by marrying the 'almost penniless' widow, Elizabeth ('Bessie') Housemayne Blennerhassett (1846–1928), who was the daughter of a lowly Dorset clergyman.[10] When Charlie Allanson-Winn succeeded his father in 1877, the Irish 'Land War', a period of civil unrest in which tenants rebelled against absentee landlords, was gathering momentum. Although Charlie sought to settle debts and duties by selling off land when his father died, the Headley estate remained heavily mortgaged.

As the fourth Lord Headley, Charlie Allanson-Winn did little to improve relations with his tenants. Thoroughly English (born in Brighton, educated at Harrow and Oxford), Charlie spent little time in Ireland until later in life; he served with both the English and German armies, travelled widely and preferred to live at Warley Lodge in Little Warley, Essex.[11] The Lodge was part of the Baron's modest English estate, which in the early 1880s comprised 1,038 acres in Essex and 2,235 acres in Yorkshire. Consequently, in 1883, the total family estate of a little more than 16,000 acres in Ireland and England was valued at £13,388 a year.[12]

Childhood

Charlie Allanson-Winn dropped 'Allanson' from his surname in 1883. By contrast, his uncle, Rowland's father, who was born in 1817 and was a

grandson of the first Lord Headley, used the surname Allanson-Winn without royal licence.[13] Granted the rank of the Baron's younger son, the Honourable Rowland senior was nevertheless heir presumptive if his nephew Charlie did not produce a son (he had one child, a daughter, when he became Lord Headley in 1877); and Rowland junior was next in line. Rowland senior and his wife Margaretta Allanson-Winn had three children after Rowland junior, all daughters: Helen Margaretta (1857–1941), Stephanie (1858–1940) and Margaretta Anne (1860–1951).

Figure 1 The Honourable Rowland George Allanson-Winn with his sisters and mother, Margaretta Stefana Allanson-Winn, Oxford, *c.*1869.

Source: Courtesy of Janet Webb / The Estate of the Fifth Lord Headley.

Rowland junior and his sisters were raised at the family home overlooking the prestigious Chester Square in London's Belgravia. They also had the run of the Glenbeigh estate in Ireland, which was formally transferred to their father in the 1860s. Although Rowland senior complained about lack of money, the family lived well, attended to by several domestic servants.[14] Rowland junior had a happy childhood and, though he later had a fractious relationship with his father, always recalled both of his parents with great fondness. He was educated privately in London except for a brief spell in 1868 at Westminster School, located in the precincts of Westminster Abbey. Two years later, in March 1871, tragedy struck the family when Rowland's mother Margaretta died at the age of forty-seven. Rowland had just turned sixteen. Many years later, he wrote a 'hymn' called 'The Power of God's Love', which recalled his loss:

> When Thou didst take my mother dear
> In early life to dwell with Thee,
> I mourned her loss with many a tear,
> And thought death gained a victory.[15]

Religion was important in the Allanson-Winn household. The family was firmly Protestant and worshipped in Anglican churches in London and Ireland. Late in life, Rowland described his parents as 'good and God-fearing people': they 'were not afraid of Him, but they feared to do anything they felt might be contrary to his wishes'.[16] Rowland was baptized in infancy, but he apparently had doubts about the church from an early age. Seventy years after his baptism, after he had converted to Islam and perhaps with the benefit of retrospective reasoning, Rowland wrote that

> from childhood's earliest days my whole nature had been in revolt against the ruthless cruelty of the Supreme Being as represented by the Christian God, an almighty and omnipotent ruler of the universe who was so like a human tyrant that he required heavy bribes before he would save one from perdition.[17]

When he reached the age of eighteen, not long after his mother's death, Rowland was expected to be Confirmed:

> Here was a definite step to be taken one way or the other. Either I was to back up my [baptism] sponsors and please my father by being 'Confirmed', or I was to obey the dictates of my own conscience and intelligence and refuse to ratify what I felt was but a figment of idolatry and superstition. It was a severe struggle, since on the one hand I had the desire to do what my father wished, and on the other I had to go in a line diametrically opposed to my own knowledge and belief.[18]