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SINLESSNESS.

SALVATION AND INTERCESSION.

THE salvation of mankind and the efficiency of intercession in procuring that salvation is a question of unique importance—the cardinal point of all religious doctrines—and a subject most interesting to all serious minds. It is the only unmistakable and infallible test which can determine the truth or falsehood of a religion, the only criterion whose application can finally set at rest the question of the Divine origin of a religion. We have no hesitation in declaring the truth that the religion which has failed to give a true solution of this radical doctrine or which cannot, at any time of its existence, point out with distinction, from among its adherents, the type of persons who have actually tasted of the bliss of salvation promised by it, needs no other argument for the demonstration of its falsehood. In fact, salvation being the goal of religion, if the goal is never reached and actual attainment of salvation by its members is not proved to the satisfaction of all intelligent thinkers, the whole system is certainly based upon an error. If, on the other hand, a religion has not only demonstrated the truth and reality of this vital principle, but has also produced men who have realized its truth, to whom salvation has actually been brought and into whose souls it is constantly pouring its balm, that religion has established its truth and its heavenly origin beyond the shadow of a doubt.

But for the attainment of salvation, the very nature of man calls for a mediator. Everyone feels that he stands in need of the assistance of some strong and mighty hand which can draw him out of the veils of ignorance and remissness, subdue the sensual passions and desires, support him in his weaknesses, prop him in his infirmities, save him from stumbling and falling, abate the force and strength of recurring temptations, dispel the gloom which darkens his way, deliver him from the entanglements and misfor-

tunes of the world, and thus enable him to break loose from sin. This is in accordance with the nature of man, for it has been created weak, and therefore longs for some supporting hand. Man cannot trust to his own weak nature for a moment. His own imperfect endeavours and weak struggles cannot draw him out of darkness. Every one of us knows and feels that he stands in need of an intercessor. The deficiencies and imperfections which cleave to the nature of man point to the mediation of some strengthening hand, and the voice of conscience continually draws our attention to our own sad failings and to the necessity of obtaining assistance from some other and higher source. Reason also points to the same conclusion, for a knowledge of human weaknesses and faults compels a belief in the kind and helping hand of an intercessor.

Almighty God sits high on the throne of sanctity and transcendent purity, while the masses of mankind are drowned deep in the sinks of iniquity and the pits of darkness. On account of the absence of all resemblance between the transcendent Divine purity and human pollution, the generality of mankind does not occupy a position in which, availing itself of the grace of God, it can attain salvation through its own efforts. Divine Wisdom and Mercy have, therefore, ordained that certain perfect individuals whom nature has endowed with excellences far above their fellow-beings, should serve as mediators between Himself and the masses of mankind. Men of this type are granted by nature a proper share of the Divine attributes and the best human qualities. Thus, on account of their fitness for the realization of things Divine, they draw the grace of heaven towards them and call down upon them the blessings of God, and on account of their possessing the human qualities, they transmit the grace and blessings which they have drawn from above to their fellow-creatures below. Upon them the holy spirit descends from above and they infuse a spirit into others. There is not the least exaggeration in the statement that this class of men stands in pre-eminent distinction above all other men, on account of their excellence in Divine attributes and their superiority in the best human qualities. We are justified in classing them as a distinct creation of God, for the sincere zeal which is given to them for declaring the glory and greatness of the Living God, and the sincere

devotion and attachment to Him with which their hearts are filled, coupled with the feeling of true ardour granted to them for sympathy for their fellow-beings, are so much above the capacities of ordinary men that the latter can hardly conceive their true natures. Nature in her profuseness is so liberal to them that, compared with other men, they look like beings of another atmosphere living upon this earth of ours. It might also be remarked, to remove any misunderstanding, that, though above ordinary human beings, men answering to this type are not all upon the same level but that there are also grades of excellence among them, some possessing the two characteristics which distinguish them from other human beings in a higher degree, and others in a lower one.

The doctrine of شفا عت (*shafa'at*) or intercession is not an artificial doctrine, not an ingenuity of the human mind. The Divine system as revealed in the laws of nature and the nature of man, bears unequivocal testimony to it. To explain the true nature of شفا عت (intercession), we shall trace the word to its root. The word شفع (*shaf'a'*) from which it is derived means literally a couple or a pair. This meaning points to the necessary qualifications in the person of a شافع or an intercessor, viz., that he should have a two-fold connection. In the first place he must have a close connection with the Divine Being, a strong union that should render him an image of the Divine Being (a connection resembling that existing in a couple). The other requirement is a deep sympathy with mankind, a predominance of the interests of humanity over every selfish interest. In this respect he should be a part of the body of mankind. In short, intercession is made possible only upon the acquirement of two things, a sharing of the Divine attributes and a possession of all that is lofty and noble in human nature.

This is the secret underlying the creation of Adam. Divine wisdom had ordained it from the beginning that his nature should be endowed with these two qualities. He was, therefore, created in such a manner that the two connections noted above were made the elements of his nature. The connection with God breathed into Adam is thus described by the Holy Quran فاذا سرينته ونفخت فيه من

*روحى نفقروا له ساجدين (العبر) i.e., "When I shall have completely formed him and shall have breathed of my spirit into him, fall ye down to him in worship." From this verse it is manifest that Almighty God had established a connection between Adam and Himself by breathing into him His spirit immediately after his creation. This was done in order that man should naturally have a connection with his Creator. As a counterpart of this Divine connection of man's union with God, a tie of relationship with his fellow-beings was also established in the nature of man, so that, being bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, all men should naturally inherit the spirit which had been breathed into Adam. Being partakers of his nature, the progeny of Adam were entitled to have him as their intercessor, for the righteousness that had been granted to Adam was made to descend according to the laws of nature into his descendants.

*This verse leads to other conclusions of importance and reveals secrets of a deep nature. It contains an allusion to the highest excellence which a man may attain. Man at first is simply an image. The outward shape is that of a man, but it is a body without spirit, a being devoid of true spiritual worth. In this condition the angels of God do not serve him, for it is a crust without any kernel. But the progress of a man whose nature is endowed with excellent gifts is not limited to this stage. He removes all shackles and flies towards his Creator until he attains nearness to Him. Then, when his person comes directly opposite to the light of the God of glory, and every screen that withheld the rays of light from illumining his face ere now, is removed, the light of Divinity or, to use an equivalent expression, the spirit of God enters into that person. It is to signify this condition that the Holy Quran has used the words: "And God breathed His spirit into Adam." When the human soul has reached this stage, when the Divine lights have illumined him, the angels of God are commanded to fall down before him in worship. Falling down in worship indicates only perfect obedience and complete submission on their part. But it should not be imagined that this commandment to the angels is of the nature of commandments given to men to observe certain laws, or that its execution requires an effort on their part. It is the very nature of the angels that, when a person reaches this stage and is completely invested with Divine morals, they all bow down in obedience and service to him. They have not to make any effort: there is no struggle whether they should do it or not. The moment a man becomes a Divine image, the angels feel it naturally that they should bow down in submission to him.

Such incidents related in the holy word of God are not mere stories, but there are important truths of the science of religion underlying them. The story of the creation of Adam as related in the Holy Quran answers to this character. It describes the signs of a perfect man. The first of these, as we learn from it, is a complete formation, free from every deficiency or defect. Physically, as well as spiritually, he should not be wanting in any requisite, and his temperament should naturally be adapted to the mean path.

It is an admitted fact that the young of all animals inherit the qualities of their progenitors. Such is also the true nature of شفا عت (shafa 'at) or intercession, viz., that a person whose nature is analogous to that of another, becomes, for that reason, an heir to him, (whether physically, morally or spiritually). For, as already stated, شفا عت (shafa 'at) comes from شفع (shafa') meaning to couple, and therefore a person whose nature forms an associate of the nature of another person, inherits certain qualities and traits of character of his prototype. The transmission of certain qualities in the natural order of creation is carried on upon the same principles, and the different species of animals inherit the qualities and faculties of their own progenitors. This inheritance is under other, but similar, circumstances termed the benefit derived from intercession. The pivot upon which the doctrine of intercession turns, is the close similarity of the two natures, viz., of the intercessor and the person for whom he intercedes, so that the latter may naturally become heir to the attributes of the former. The connection between two human beings which has thus been established by nature, admits of being strengthened by artificial means. The love and sympathy which nature has instilled, increase in intensity and widen their circle according to the nature and faculties of a person. It is on this account that the transport of love sometimes fills the heart of a person to such an extent that he can find no rest but in the object of his love. He sets his affections and feasts his eyes upon it alone. When carried to this excess, it affects the heart of the object of love. It is also plain that a person who burns with love for another, is also his best sympathiser and true well-wisher.

Intercession, therefore, is born and developed in love based upon natural affinity; for without natural affinity love can never reach

Secondly, the spirit of God must have been breathed into him. The third sign of a perfect man is that the angels should fall down before him in worship. By this it is meant that all the angels who do their work here below or upon the heavens become his servants and do everything in accordance with his wishes. The fact is that, when God is with any of his servants, the host of heaven also bend towards him and become his companions. They assist him in every field and are ever ready to do a thing at his bidding. It is this attitude of service towards him that their prostration before him indicates. For he is the representative of God upon earth and the angels are, as it were, his servants. But men of earthly understandings cannot comprehend these heavenly truths, for to them the spirit of heaven has not been granted.

the limit which it is necessary for it to do to become a mover of intercession. To ensure this affinity in the nature of man, God created Eve not out of a different substance but from Adam's rib. Thus the Holy Quran says (انساء) *وخلق منها زوجها* i.e., "And out of him He created his consort." Thus God established two connections in the nature of man from the very beginning. He breathed His own spirit into Adam to indicate his union with Himself, and then created his partner from him in order to strengthen the tie of relationship by making it a natural connection. This was done in order to make the tie of human sympathy a permanent and enduring one, natural relations being always of a more stable character than artificial ones which are only temporary. In short, both the connections, viz., with God and men, which it was necessary for Adam to have, were established in his nature from the very beginning.

From these considerations, it would appear that no one can claim the holy office of an intercessor except the man who has attained to perfection, and in whom the Divine and human connections are completely established. Unless these two relations are manifested in their highest degree, perfection is a mere word of the mouth. Thus was Adam perfected by the Divine hand, and the same law has held good in the case of all prophets that appeared after him as intercessors in the world. The Divine hand perfected them by establishing the same two connections in their persons. In the first place, the Divine Being had such a union with them as if He actually descended into their hearts, and thus the heavenly spirit was breathed into them. In the second place, the tie of human sympathy, which had its origin in the mutual love and sympathy of Adam and Eve, pre-eminently distinguished their noble characters. This was also the reason why they entered into matrimonial relations. The domestic tie is indicative of their vast human sympathies. Such is also the purport of the tradition *خيركم خيركم باهله* "The best among you with regard to the interests of humanity is he who best fulfils the domestic obligations." The person who is wicked and worthless as a husband cannot show any good example in regard to his sympathies with the generality of mankind. The first object of love and sympathy that Adam had was Eve, his wife, and therefore the man who ill-treats his wife or has no wife upon

whom to bestow the warmest feelings of humanity, is far from being a perfect human being or a model or intercessor for others, for he lacks one of the two necessary qualifications for intercession, and mere innocence or harmlessness can avail little where an important factor is wanting. Family life is, on the other hand, the only basis upon which the superstructure of social interests and vast sympathies can be built, for, with the connection of a man and a woman as husband and wife, springs up a vast number of sacred ties of incalculable importance, and thus a field opens for the exercise of a person's love and sympathy which widens gradually and may at last take the whole of mankind within itself. But the people who live like *jogis* (recluses) and observe the rules of monasticism, are quite destitute of the noble quality of sympathy, for they reject the only occasion which, in accordance with the laws of nature, is apt to promote and develop fellow-feeling. They shut themselves from the world and its interests, and the result is, that, as they have no occasion to practise the virtue of self-denial, they become misanthropic, anti-social and hard-hearted.

RELATION BETWEEN SINLESSNESS AND INTERCESSION.

Sinlessness alone cannot lead to intercession, for the sinless person only refrains from the commission of sin which is an intentional disobedience of the commandments of God rendering a person liable to punishment from God.* From this it is clear that there

*From this definition of *sin*, which commends itself to every just and reasonable person, it follows that a deed is not sinful unless it involves an intentional breaking of the commandments of God, whereby the offender incurs a liability to punishment. There must, therefore, be first of all the commandment of God against which a person offends. Secondly, the commandment must have been brought to the knowledge of the offender. Thirdly, the offender must be reasonably held to be responsible for the consequences of his act and therefore liable to punishment. If any one of these three requisites is wanting, there is no sin. If a person lives in a distant land and has not been brought to the knowledge of the Divine Law, he is not a criminal by reason of having done anything contrary to the Law, for not knowing of it he cannot break it. But if a person of sound mind worships idols and does not believe in the unity of God, he is sinful, although the Law might not have been preached to him. For, the Unity of God is impressed upon human nature and is not, like Trinity, a thing foreign to the nature of man. A person of unsound mind or of immature understanding is not culpable for anything he may do against the Law, although it might have been communicated to him, because the absence of reason shakes off the responsibility. Such a person is therefore innocent for aught he may do.

is no natural connection between sinlessness and intercession. The child whose reasoning faculty has not yet been sufficiently developed, and the person of unsound mind who is born such, are both innocent, because they cannot have the intention to break the commandments of God. But does there exist a sane person who would take them for intercessors or deliverers on account of their being quite sinless? There is no doubt then that no reasonable being would assume intercession as a necessary consequence of sinlessness.

What a person needs to be an intercessor is a two-fold relation, and reason attests to the truth of this fact. An extraordinary connection with God and a deep sympathy for human beings, can alone enable a man to intercede for the latter with the former, and such an intercession shall no doubt be accepted. On account of the intercessor's deep and perfect love for God, he attracts the Divine grace and favour, and by reason of his unrivalled sympathy for the human race, he bestows upon them the favour which he has drawn from a higher source. Such is the true nature of intercession, and it is to this two-fold connection that the word شفَع (shafa') the root of the Arabic word شَفَاعَت (shafa'at) points. Of the two essential requisites of intercession, the first is, as we have already seen, a close connection with God. The intercessor so completely resigns himself to the Divine will as if God had descended into his very heart. His self becomes extinct and his personality quite consumed in the fire of God's love, and the Divine glory is manifested in every hair of his body. His soul melts and flows like water unobstructed towards its Divine master, until it has attained the limit of Divine nearness. But along with this perfect union with the Divine Being, the intercessor's kind and compassionate nature possesses the element of human sympathy in the same abundance and completeness. He is so zealous in his solicitude for the person for whom he intercedes that he cannot bear his misfortune. His heart flies with love and sympathy towards the object of intercession. More kind and compassionate than a father, more tender and loving than a mother, and more sympathising than any sympathiser in the world, his soul is out of his own control in his feeling for others. Thus are the two connections established in his nature, a connection with Divinity and a connection with humanity. To describe the extent and intensity of

these connections in words is impossible. Both sides of his nature are equally balanced. He is a perfect manifestation of Divinity and perfect manifestation of humanity. He occupies a middle position between Divinity and humanity, being equally inclined to both. The point of intercession is, therefore, an intermediate point whose position has the same relation to Divinity as to humanity.

THE HOLY QURAN UPON THE PROPHET'S PERFECTION.

It is with reference to this point of intercession that the Holy Quran has remarked of our Holy Prophet دنی فتدلی فکان قاب قوسین *i.e.*, "*The Prophet ascended towards God and approached Him so far as it was possible for man to approach, and, having attained all the excellences of the nearness of God and his full share of the Divine manifestation, he returned, vested with all the Divine morals, to humanity and thus having attained all the excellences and holy attributes of humanity, sympathy and love for mankind, he had the other side of his nature perfected. Thus, having attained to the highest degree of love for God and sympathy with fellow-beings, he acquired a position midway between God and men and became like a chord common to two equal arcs.*" In his holy person were, therefore, combined the two qualifications of an intercessor. To this Almighty God has borne witness in His holy Word which plainly asserts that the nature and qualities of the Prophet were such as entitled him to act as an intercessor between men and God. This is the purport of the verses where he has been described as a chord common to two equal arcs which metaphorically expresses the intermediate position he occupied between men and God,

Another verse of the Holy Quran bears witness to this perfection of the Prophet and his nearness to God in the following words: قل ان صلتی ونسکی ومحیاى ومماتى لله رب العلمین (الانعام) "Say to the people: Verily my condition is such that my own personality has become quite extinct and my devotion is simply for the sake of God." This verse tells us that, until a man attains to perfection, his piety is not pure and perfect but proceeds out of mixed motives. Worship is really a declaration of the glory and greatness of God, and therefore the person who has his own greatness in view, worships, not his God, but his own self, for all greatness and glory is

due to God. Similarly the person who gives to creatures a share of the majesty, greatness, power and glory of the Creator, worships not only his God but also the creatures whose glory and greatness he declares. Unless devotion is exercised exclusively for the sake of God, which is impossible so long as a man does not attain to perfection, the object of a person's worship is not God alone but also the man's desires and other creatures. Nay, more than this. The person who trusts on the means he resorts to for the realization of his objects as having an effect which can nullify the decree of God and act against His will and intention, gives the place of the Deity to the means he employs. For such a person to worship God exclusively is an impossibility, for he assigns the glory and greatness which is due solely to God, either to himself, to other creatures, or to his resources. The true worshipper is the heavenly-minded man, who, freed from the base alliances of earth, lifts up his heart to heaven and attributes every praise, every greatness and every glory, to the Divine Being, excluding every thing else. Such is the absolute unity of God that no other creature should be regarded as being possessed of the attributes which are exclusively God's, and it is upon reaching this stage that a man can be regarded as a true worshipper of God. Such a one not only declares the unity of God with his tongue, but corroborates his words with his own deeds, and thus sets seal to the sincerity of what he asserts. Therefore, in commanding the Prophet to inform the whole world that his devotion is exclusively for the sake of God, Almighty God has called attention to the fact that the Prophet has attained to the stage of perfection in which a person excludes everything else from his worship and worships God only with all his heart and all his soul,

The verse then goes on to say : "And my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for the sake of God, the Lord of Worlds." The word نُسُكٍ (*nusuk*), which occurs in this verse, is the plural of نَسِيكٍ (*nasika*) which means sacrifice as well as worship. The Holy Quran has, therefore, adopted a word containing a reference to both ideas. This word calls our attention to the fact that sincere devotion, not alloyed with any gross element or debased by any impure motive, involves a sacrifice of all one's interests and desires, and that perfect sacrifice is perfect worship. The context itself lends support to this

interpretation, for the word نسكى (*nusuki*) is followed by the words "my life and my death are unto God." Sacrifice does not here indicate an offering of a cow or a goat or a camel to the Deity, but an offering of the soul itself, as is clear from the explanatory words, "my life and my death are for the sake of God." The word قربان (*qurban*) which we have translated into sacrifice, is derived from قرب (*qurb*) meaning nearness, and in this there is an allusion to the fact that the nearness of God cannot be attained until all the desires and passions of the flesh are sacrificed.

In short, this verse is a standing witness to the nearness of the holy Prophet to God. It asserts in plain words "that the holy Prophet was so absorbed in the contemplation of Divine glory that he seemed to have lost every trace of self. He had no consciousness of his distinct personality but his words or deeds were all in resignation to, and in accordance with, the will of God. Every breath of his life, and even his death, as the verse asserts, was for the sake of God and quite free from every mixture of the glory of self or mean resources or other creatures. His soul had bowed itself down before the Divine threshold so completely, and with such sincere devotion, that not the slightest mixture of others than God could be traced in it. He thus fulfilled in a pre-eminent degree the first of the two requirements necessary for an intercessor. In the last portion of the verse quoted above "my life and my death are for the sake of God, the Lord of Worlds," the closing words indicate that the sacrifice of the Prophet was meant for the good of the whole world. This brings us to the second qualification. Hence both qualifications of an intercessor were combined in the person of the Holy Prophet. In the first verse quoted above دنى فدلى we have already shown that the second word تدلى is meant to express the vast sympathies of the Prophet. The root of تدلى (*tadalla*) is دلو (*dalū*) which means to let the bucket into the well so that it may be filled with water. دلو also means to try to enter into relationship with some one and to get him for an intercessor. The word تدلى used in this verse therefore means to be prompted to intercede, with the utmost sympathy and kindness, for people who are lost and farther off from the grace of God and to approach them with the kind intention of giving them the holy water of life and throwing away their dirty water.

As the love of God and attaining to His nearness are matters relating to the heart which others cannot see and get acquainted with, therefore Almighty God manifested such deeds of the Prophet as led to an undeniable conclusion that he had preferred God to everything else and the idea of Divine greatness solely occupied his mind. He was so permeated with the love and glory of God that his person was really a reflector of all the manifestations of Divine glory. All the signs of a perfect love of God which we can think of shone with brightness in his person.

It is plain that love arises either out of beauty or out of goodness. That goodness is an incentive to love is the universal experience of the ages since man has lived, notwithstanding all the differences of their temperaments. All men agree in this that they feel a certain degree of love varying with the temperament towards the person who does them any good. Even the vilest and most hard-hearted members of society, who are devoid of every manly quality, do not remain unaffected by goodness. A thief, for instance, who has equal chance of breaking into the houses of two persons, one of whom has done him some good and the other is a mere stranger, shall not, in spite of the baseness of his nature, intentionally pass by the house of the stranger to break into that of his benefactor. Even the lower animals display this quality and in some of them, as the dog, it is very marked, and experience has proved that the attachment of a dog to its benefactor is wonderful. The fact of beauty being an incentive to love is still more evident. The sight of beauty gives pleasure, and man is naturally attracted towards what is pleasing. The charms of beauty like the force of goodness cannot be resisted. But by beauty I do not mean simply a grace of form, a symmetry of features, a proportionateness of parts, vivacity of the eyes, or a particular tinge of colour. I take the word as including every conception of beauty, excellence and fineness, qualities belonging to the nature of things which attract an observer and engage his attention on account of their extreme symmetry and fitness and their matchlessness. Every excellence, therefore, which human nature admires is included in beauty and the heart of man is attracted towards it. The strong and mighty man who overthrows every rival in the field of battle and has done exploits of valour, shall attract the heart and win the praise of all

men. No distance of time or place would diminish his glory and his deeds of valour shall be listened to everywhere with rapt attention. Now, if we were to seek the reason which makes him win all hearts, we shall find it only in beauty, as he has not done any good to any person or laid any one under any obligation. Excellent qualities or excellent morals are thus included in beauty, and they are equally attractive with the beauty of appearance. The distinction between beauty and goodness is essentially one of relation. Beauty becomes goodness with respect to a person who is benefitted by the excellent morals or qualities of another. For instance, the charitableness of a person is goodness for those who are benefitted thereby, but, so far as others are concerned, it is only an excellent quality or a moral beauty.

In short, both the natural laws and human nature teach us in plain words that, in order to have a close connection with the Supreme Being, a man must have benefitted in abundance from Divine goodness and beauty. Unless he has seen His beauty and tasted of His goodness, he cannot love the Almighty Being. With respect to a particular person, Divine goodness is witnessed in the Divine morals which he must have seen displayed by the Divine Being in connection with his own person. Instances of Divine goodness so displayed are, for instance, that He Himself became his guardian when he was an orphan, defenceless, weak and poor, that He gave him succour in time of need and provided him with what he wanted, that He stood by him in trials and reverses and consoled him when crushed under sorrows and afflictions; and, lastly, that He Himself became his guide and leader without the intervention of any mortal when he set out in a search after God. Divine beauty is revealed to human sight by means of the same Divine qualities by which Divine goodness is manifested. Instances of this are the general manifestation of God's omnipotence, His kindness, compassion, mercy and Lordship over the universe, His general nourishment and provision of all creatures, His general blessings existing in such abundance for the good of men, the true knowledge of Him which a person acquires through His holy messengers by means of which he is saved from death and destruction, His attribute of listening to the prayers of those who, in the extremity of their sufferings and the urgency of their wants, are restless and without any resources, and His grace that He inclines

towards those who incline to Him. All these attributes of the Divine Being are manifestations of His Beauty. But, when these blessings and favors are specially showered upon a person, the Divine Beauty is specifically termed Divine Goodness in respect to him, although, so far as others are concerned, it is still Beauty and not Goodness.

From this it is clear that the person who has not only seen the Divine Beauty but personally tasted of it by being brought under the influence of Divine Goodness, has his faith in God vastly strengthened. He is drawn towards the Divine Being as iron is drawn towards magnet. His love for God is intensified and his trust in Him increased a hundred-fold. He has not only observed but experienced and tasted the Divine blessings. He sees with the eye of certitude that his good is in God. His hopes in God gain strength and he naturally feels attracted towards Him. He finds himself needful of the support of God in every moment of his life. From the perfection of Divine attributes and morals, he is certain that he shall ultimately succeed, for he has personally been the object of Divine grace, favour and kindness. The prayers which he addresses to the Deity proceed from the strength of his heart, and his supplications flow from assurance. He puts his trust in God who he knows for certain will deliver him, and his enterprise is great and unshaken by adversities. When he has seen and tasted of the favors and blessings of God, and known that the Lord deals bountifully with him, the light of assurance enters into his soul in all its glory and lustre. A death comes over his existence ; his desires are burned like chaff, and on account of his constant contemplation and declaration of the power, greatness and glory of God, his heart becomes the habitation of the Lord. As soul is the companion of every living body, so does the light of assurance which God has granted him, become his constant companion and never part from him. The holy spirit which pervades his being, fills him with emotion. When he speaks he does not speak out of desire, but by the instruction and guidance of the holy spirit that has full control over his words and deeds, and, thus guided, he gives utterance to words of transcendent wisdom and heavenly purity. The Lord of Power and Glory encamps in his heart; the bliss of assurance, sincerity and love constantly embalms his soul like a spring of fragrant water. The healthy influence of this bliss is visible in every limb; the eyes sparkle with the light of love, the forehead shoots the beams of light, the face is

blooming with the Divine beauty, and the tongue is fertile and rich with blessings. In short, a freshness and a moistness are visible over every part, resembling the charming greenness and verdure of trees, herbs and flowers after a salutary rain. These are the distinct signs by which the entrance of the holy spirit is recognised. But the person upon whom that spirit has not descended, and who has not been watered by this sweet and wholesome water of life, is like a dead log. The heart that has not drunk deep at the fountain of true assurance has no animation, and to it is not granted the verdure, the freshness and the bloom which no pen can describe. It does not exhale sweet scent, but, like a rotten carcass, emits foul odour. But the person to whom this light has been granted, and within whose heart a spring of assurance has gushed forth, who has seen the weakness of his nature, the dread of the path and the power and glory of his maker,—such a person does not rest satisfied with his own strength but flies to the protection of the Almighty Being and seeks assistance from Him. His whole delight is in this, that he should fly to that Rock of Strength, and without His shelter he cannot live.

ISTIGHFAR.

The word used to express this thirst of the soul, its ever seeking the assistance of God against the frailties of human nature, is the well-known word *استغفار* (*istighfar*.) This word originally means “supplicating God to save one from yielding to the weakness of the flesh, to strengthen the human nature, and to take one in His refuge and under His shelter.” It is derived from *غفر* (*ghafar*), which means to protect, and hence it comes to mean a prayer to God that He may protect the natural frailty of the supplicant with His own strength. Such is its true and real signification, but the meaning is extended in certain cases, and the word comes to mean then “asking the protection of God from the consequences of faults already committed.” Such extension is, however, allowed where the context requires it. The true and proper meaning of the word remains unchanged. The person who does *istighfar*, prays to God that He may protect him from yielding to the frailties of human nature by His Divine power, strengthen him by His strength, and

lighten him by His celestial light and instruct and guide him by His Divine instruction. For, after Creating man, God has not left him to himself and alone. As He is the creator of his internal faculties and external organs, He is also his supporter. Whatever has been made by the Divine hand, is also supported by it. God being therefore the Supporter as well as the Creator, man needs the support of God to protect his image against corruption, as he needed His creating hand to come into existence. The Divine attribute of creation has placed man under the obligation that he has been created in the image of God. Similarly the Divine attribute of support required that what has been created in His own image, should not be given up to corruption and everlasting destruction. Man is, therefore, instructed to ask the protection and support of the Almighty Being by means of *istighfar*. From this it is clear that even if sin had no existence in the world, *istighfar*, being a requirement of the creation of man, would still have been there. For the truth is, as we have shown with reference to the root-meaning of the word that the proper use of *istighfar* is not to nullify the effect of sin, but to avoid its existence. It exists that the building which God's own hand has erected might not be demolished. But such a thing was not possible in the very nature of things without the supporting hand of God. There was a craving in the very nature of man without whose satisfaction he could not have attained to perfection. To satisfy this he was guided to say *istighfar* and thus make up the deficiency of human nature by imploring the strength of God.

It is to this requirement of human nature that the Holy Quran calls attention in the words **إِلهَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ** "God alone is He Whom we must worship and address our prayers to, for it is He who brings into existence and supports that which He has created." In fact, it cannot be contested that the existence of man needed two things, a Creator and a Supporter, the one to bring him into existence and the other to preserve him from corruption. The attribute of creation was manifested when man was brought into existence, but the quality of support needed a constant manifestation as it was to continue with the life of man. Hence arose the necessity of constant *istighfar*.

In short, God bestows favors of His abundance in consequence of His different attributes, and *istighfar* is needed to call the quality of support into action. It is to this that the following verse of the opening *sura* of the holy Quran refers : *اياك نعبد و اياك نستعين* meaning "O God ! Thee do we worship and of Thee do we ask assistance that Thy support and Lordship may uphold us and protect us from stumbling and falling a prey to the weakness of the flesh."

All this goes a long way to prove that in *istighfar* a person does not pray for the restoration of a thing that has been lost, but the object of this prayer is that he may not lose something. For, human nature, seeing its weakness, seeks strength from God as a child seeks milk from its mother. Therefore, as God has graciously granted heart and tongue and eyes and ears to man, so has He impressed the desire of *istighfar* upon his heart from the very beginning. The Divine hand has made him feel that he stands in need of the assistance of God. It is to this state of human nature that the verse *واستغفر لذنبك وللمؤمنين والمؤمنات* refers. The import of these words is: "Pray to God that He may protect Thy nature against the weakness of the flesh and strengthen thee so that thou mayest not yield to that weakness. Pray also by way of intercession for the men and women who believe in thee that they may be saved from the punishment of the faults which they have committed on account of the weakness of their nature, and that their subsequent course of life may be free from sin." This verse reveals the deepest secrets underlying sinlessness. It tells us in plain words that no one can attain the perfection of sinlessness and intercession unless he prays incessantly that the feebleness of his nature may not lead him to an actual commission of sin and prays also for the release of others from the bondage of sin, and until he draws aid and power from God with supplication and with cries and then desires that a portion of the strength and aid which has been granted him, should be given to those who in faith have acquired union with him. The sinless man flies for help and succour to God, for he perceives the feebleness of human nature and the strength of the Divine Being. He knows it for certain that human nature does not merely as such possess perfection but that it receives perfection from God, that it has not

got any strength, but strength is given to it every moment from God, and that it has no infallible light but that such light comes to it from the Almighty.

The secret of it is that a magnetism is granted to a perfect nature by which it is enabled to draw the power from above towards it. But the source of power is the Divine Being and the angels also draw their strength from that source. The perfect man also draws the strength of sinlessness and grace from the same source through the channel of the adoration and worship of God. It follows, therefore, that from among men he only is perfectly sinless who strengthens his soul by drawing the Divine power by means of *istighfar*, and does not cease for a single moment to draw it by his supplications, prayers and cries. Such a heart which ever drinks deep at the fountain of Divine strength, resembles the house which has doors opening to the East and to the West and in every other direction and whose doors are always open for the light of the sun to enter into it. But the person who does not seek Divine assistance and succour is like the narrow and dark closet whose doors are all fast closed so that not a ray of light may creep in. *Istighfar*, if we may liken it to any thing, is the instrument which is the means of drawing power from a higher source. The secret of the absolute unity of the Divine Being is closely connected with the principle that sinlessness should not be looked upon as an independent possession of any mortal being, but as a thing flowing from a higher source, the gift of God to such of His servants as implore for it day and night. To make ourselves clear by an illustration, the Divine Being is like the heart and *istighfar* of the perfect man resembles the arteries and veins which are connected with it. The heart circulates the blood through the veins and the arteries which distribute it to every part of the body that stands in need of it.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ZANB AND JURM.

The word ذنب (*zanb*) occurring in the verse *واستغفر لذنبك* is not the equivalent of sin. Sin, in Arabic, is جرم (*jurm*) and between جرم and ذنب there is an important difference. جرم is sin as defined above, an act in violation of the commandments of God deserving to be punished. But the word ذنب (*zanb*) is applicable also to the weakness of human nature. It is for this reason that since the prophets of God

partake of human nature, and consequently of the weakness of the flesh, the word ذنب (*zanb*) has been applied to them in the Word of God. But that there it has been used only in the sense of human weakness, and not in that of actual commission of sin by them, is apparent from the fact that the word جرم (*jurm*), which is the exact equivalent of sin, has never been applied to any prophet of God. Had it been the intention of the Word of God to describe prophets as sinful men, we cannot understand why it should have avoided in their case the use of a word (جرم) which plainly meant sin, notwithstanding that that word has been made use of by the Holy Book in a hundred places in respect of the opposers of the prophets whom it actually regards sinful. Why it has kept this distinction points to the unmistakable conclusion that the word ذنب (*zanb*), if ever used by the holy Word for the Prophets, means not sin but only the natural weakness of man for which he requires the strength and support of God.

That this signification of the word ذنب (*zanb*) is in accordance with the spirit of the Holy Quran appears from other considerations. For it threatens the مجرم (*mujrim*) i.e., the person who commits a جرم, or sin, with the punishment of hell, but nowhere does it speak of a similar punishment for the مذنب *muznib*, i.e., the person to whom ذنب (*zanb*) or human weakness may be attributed. Thus it says: *ومن يأتى ربه مجرمًا فان له جهنم لا يموت فيها ولا يحيى* “And he who comes to his Lord as a مجرم (*mujrim*), his punishment is hell and he shall neither die nor live therein.” The word مذنب (*muznib*) has not been used here because the word مذنب (*muznib*) is also applicable to a sinless person. The fact is that ذنب (*zanb*) does not but جرم (*jurm*) does contradict sinlessness.

If we were to take ذنب (*zanb*) as synonymous with sin—a fact contradicted by Arabic lexicography—we shall have to face another difficulty. In sura *Al-i-Imran* the following verse occurs *واذ اخذ الله ميثاقا للنبيين لما آتيتكم من كتاب وحكمة ثم جاءكم رسول مصدق لما معكم لتؤمنن به ولتنصرنه قال اقررتم واخذتم على ذاككم اصرى قالوا اقرنا* “Moreover when God entered into covenant with the prophets, saying, Whatever, I give you of the Book and wisdom, ‘then comes to you a Prophet attesting to the truth of what is with you, you shall surely believe on him and you shall surely aid him. Do you promise then

that you will do so, and do you accept my covenant on these terms'? They said, 'we do promise.'" From this verse it is clear that all the prophets, including Jesus Christ, had been commanded to believe in the holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, and they promised that they believed in him. Reading this verse along with the one quoted above, *وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَذَنْبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ*, and taking ذنب (*zamb*) to mean sin or جرم (*jurm*), we shall have to include Jesus also in the list of sinful persons. For the holy word of God includes Jesus along with all the other prophets in the list of those who are believers in the holy Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and therefore Jesus with all of them is مذنّب (*muznib*). To this we specially call the attention of our Christian readers, for if ذنب (*zamb*) is equivalent to sin and means the same as جرم (*jurm*), the Holy Quran places Jesus in the list of sinful persons, and if, as it is true, we take ذنب (*zamb*) only for frailties of human nature, we have no right to attribute sinfulness to other prophets only because the word ذنب (*zamb*) has been used of them.

From what has been said above, it is evident that the word ذنب (*zamb*) as used in the verse *وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَذَنْبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ* does not mean sin but only human weakness existing in the very nature of man for which he cannot be liable. It is necessary for every creature to have this weakness, for he cannot have the perfection of the Creator. This weakness has been termed ذنب (*zamb*) in the Holy Quran, for it is a natural deficiency for which man needs the support of God and on account of which he always seeks His help and succour. To signify it by a word which is also used sometimes in a wider sense is indicative of the fact that weakness of the flesh, if not attended with Divine strength, is apt to lead to transgression. Human weakness, being a thing which could in its nature produce ذنب (*zamb*), has metaphorically been called ذنب (*zamb*). Thus it often happens that certain causes which produce certain diseases are known by the names of those diseases. The weakness of nature is a sort of an infirmity and *istighfar* is a remedy for it. In short the Word of God has used ذنب (*zamb*) to denote the weakness of the flesh and has borne testimony to this weakness in the nature of man. Thus it says *وَالْخَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَعِيفًا*, i.e., man has been created weak. This is the feebleness of nature which without

the helping hand of God is likely to lead a person into various sins and transgressions. It is to make up for this deficiency of human nature that *istighfar* is needed. The wise man perceives the feebleness of human nature and calls to aid, unceasingly, the strength of God to resist the evil tendencies against which human nature itself is powerless. It behoves man, therefore, to supplicate the Almighty Being that He may protect and support and strengthen him to overcome what his weakness will incline him to. The man who constantly recurs to *istighfar* feels his own dependency and turns to God for help and aid, and thus gives evidence that he has overcome the weakness of the flesh and resisted the evil tendency because the strength of God was with him and His light descending upon him suppressed every infirmity of nature which could have led to sin. Being a creature of God, and being therefore dependent upon his maker, man resembles the infant who needs the assistance of its mother in every step that it takes so that she may protect it from falling and stumbling. Such is the wise man who, being sensible of his weakness, does not rely upon his own strength but calls the Lord to his aid that he might not slip or slide and has recourse to *istighfar*.

There is no doubt that a secondary signification has been attached to this word which is somewhat different from its primary meaning. In its more extended sense the word *istighfar* is used in the case of a person who has actually transgressed the commandments of God, and there it amounts to a prayer that God may protect the sinner from the punishment which is to befall him as a consequence of his sin. But in this extended sense the word has never been applied to those whom God terms His associates or His chosen ones, nor have we any right to attach this meaning to it when used of them. For to them God has promised beforehand that no punishment shall touch them and the most delightful place in heaven shall be their abode and they shall be seated in the lap of God's mercy. All these promises of eternal bliss and happiness are made to them over and over again, and they are made to taste of the bliss and enjoyment of the next life in this world and see paradise with their own eyes here. If then we construe their *istighfar* to mean a prayer to be saved from hell-fire and everlasting damnation, we are guilty of the gravest injustice towards them, for then we suppose them to have no faith in the promises of God, and as considering

themselves farthest off from His mercy. How can we imagine the person whom the Lord Almighty addresses as the very embodiment of mercy, saying: وما ارسلناك الا رحمة للعالمين "And we have not sent thee but a mercy unto the whole of mankind," I ask how we can imagine such a man, notwithstanding this exalting address, to be still in doubt as to whether he shall have the mercy of God or not. How could he, being thus addressed, imagine himself to be a mercy to the whole world when he yet had doubts as to his own share in the mercy of God.

These circumstances are enough to convince every unprejudiced mind that to attach to *istighfar* the secondary meaning of that word in the case of the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, is nothing short of a mischievous perversion, or at least a blunder. The first sign of a sinless person is, that he should be constantly praying to God for His strength and support, and unceasingly asking His assistance and succour to protect him against the operation of the inclinations which proceed from a weakness of the flesh. In other words, he should be continuously recurring to *istighfar*. The child that does not trust to its own infirm legs for a moment, but walks with the support of its mother, shall never experience a fall. But the child which is not led by its mother, but walks independently of her support and presumptuously ascends or descends a rude and narrow stairway, shall soon receive some serious hurt. The righteous servants of God may be likened to the child which feels its dependency upon its mother and never parts from her or leaves her bosom, being conscious of the danger it will thus expose itself to. Feeling the weakness of human nature, they fly for refuge to their Divine Master and humble themselves under His mighty hand, being solicitous of His assistance. They find their happiness and rest in God as a child does in the bosom of its mother. Again, just as a child, when apprehensive of danger, or afraid of stumbling by treading upon slippery ground, cries to its mother for aid, so that she may hasten to its assistance and deliver it from the difficulty, so do the righteous ones of God, with supplication and prayer, and with earnestness and devotion, cry for assistance and protection to their Lord. Spiritually they consider themselves the children of God and look upon Him as a kind and affectionate mother, the source of all their

strength. They do not pass an instant of their lives without imploring His assistance. As milk flows out when a hungry suckling applies its tender lips to the breast of its mother, in the same manner spiritual nourishment is supplied by God to the righteous ones who seek it, they being spiritually in the same position as little children.

NEED FOR INTERCESSION.

We may take occasion here to deal with another question which may possibly arise in the discussion of the subject in hand, *viz.*, why do men need شفا (intercession) at all, and why is it not allowable that every one should seek deliverance for himself by directly repenting before God and asking His protection and support for himself? In answer to this question, we may appeal to the laws of nature. No one can deny that in the case of men and even animals the law of the propagation of kind is dependent upon شفاعة. As already suggested شفا is a derivative of شفع, which means to couple. Multiplication by continuous generation is, doubtless, the result of شفع (*shafa'*) or coupling together. External appearance, faculties and inner qualities descend from one man to another through this channel, *i.e.*, they are the result of a union. In all the species of animals, the qualities and faculties of the progenitors are transmitted to the offspring, and this is the result of a connection. This connection taken in a different light produces شفا (intercession). It is the spiritual connection of an imperfect being with a perfect man, by which the former gets a remedy for the weakness of his soul and a deliverance from the passions of the flesh. As the moon borrows light from the sun by being brought opposite to it and thus having a certain connection with it, so does the righteousness of the perfect man affect those who unite themselves with him and thus bring themselves opposite to his light. Since the spiritual relation thus established between affectionate hearts and the heart of the prophet, the type of the perfect man, resembles the relationship of blood existing between a father and a son, therefore, those who bring themselves under the influence of the perfect man and avail themselves of his light, are spiritually regarded as his children. Of these such as undergo a perfect regeneration acquire all the blessings and morals of the intercessor and become his perfect images. This

is the true nature of شفاعت or intercession. The spiritual union runs parallel to the physical union, and as in the latter case the descendants are images of the progenitors, so are they also in the former.

In short, both the physical and the spiritual laws testify that all blessings result either from شفيع (*shafa'*) or from (*shafa'at*), two relations which, with a difference of name, have the same reality underlying them. As man needs شفيع (*shafa'*) or coupling for the preservation of procreation, so does he need شفاعت (*shafa'at*) or intercession for the maintenance of spiritual laws and relations. The Word of God has noticed both. Thus it says in one place that along with Adam, God created his consort also, and from that couple created other men and women. In another place, it says that God created Adam as His own representation upon earth and breathed into him His own spirit. This light of the spirit of God was then transmitted to the other Prophets, and Abraham, Isaac, Ishmal, Jacob, Moses, David, Jesus, and others, were made heirs to it. This same spirit, last of all, descended upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him. All these Holy Prophets as they received the physical traits from their ancestor, similarly they became heirs to the spirit of God as substitutes of Adam, and through their intercession other people were also made heirs to that spirit from time to time.

THE HOLY QURAN UPON THE INTERCESSION OF THE PROPHET.

The intercession of the Prophet has been spoken of in various places in the Holy Quran. Thus it says in one place: قل ان كنتم تحبون الله فاطيعوني يحبكم الله ويغفر لكم ذنوبكم (آل عمران). Say: If ye love God, then follow me, that God may love you and forgive you your sins." This verse asserts in distinct terms that the person who treads in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet, or in other words, shows love, reverence and obedience towards him, becomes the beloved one of God, and is granted protection from sins or their evil consequences. If he has taken the poison of sin, the elixir of love, obedience and imitation will remove the effect of poison. As a person can be healed

of his disease by the application of the proper remedy, so can he be cleansed of sin; as light dispels darkness and theriac counteracts the effect of poison and fire burns, in like manner true love and obedience have a positive effect. Pure and perfect virtue, which proceeds solely from the sincere desire of declaring the glory of God, has the effect of fire in burning away the chaff and rubbish of sin. In short, the light which descended upon the Holy Prophet (the Spirit of God) descends in like manner upon the person who unites himself in close connection with the Prophet, who not only believes with true sincerity in the heavenly mission of our Holy Prophet, but with full consciousness of his super-eminence and majesty, takes model after him with sincere zeal, love and submission, so much so that on account of his complete resignation to the Prophet, his own self is annihilated. When the rays of this celestial light begin to penetrate into his heart, the darkness of sin which was within, begins to vanish, for light and darkness cannot exist together in one and the same place. Darkness, therefore, gradually diminishes until all is light within and the heart which was once pervaded by gloom is all illumined. Being thus strengthened by light, he is able to perform virtue of the highest and most excellent type. Divine glory sparkles from his face and the love of God shines out in every limb and feature. Darkness is utterly dispelled, and there is light within and light without. There is light in the principles he acts upon and light in his practice, light in thought and light in words and deeds. With the combination of these lights, every trace of the darkness of sin is blotted out. As in material nature we find light dispelling darkness, so in the spiritual world the light of faith dispels the darkness of sin and doubt. It is possible that such a person may never have had an occasion for transgression prior to his transformation, but the benefits he gets by following in the wake of the Prophet is of a permanent and enduring nature. The power of evil is completely destroyed and a disposition to virtue is created. This is in accordance with what Almighty God has said in the Holy Quran: **جَبَّ لَكُمْ** (لاَ إِيمَانَ وَزِينَةً فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرِهَ لَكُمْ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ) (الحجرات)

“By making the Holy Spirit descend upon you, God has endeared the faith (virtue) to you and given it favor in your hearts, and has rendered infidelity and iniquity and disobedience hateful to you.”

LIGHT GRANTED TO THE FOLLOWERS OF THE PROPHET.

Before proceeding further, we must first discuss a question which would naturally arise here, *viz.*, what is the nature of the light which is granted to the followers of the Prophet through his intercession and which subdues the passion of sin? In answer to this question, I must inform the reader that it is a perfect *knowledge* unattended with any darkness of doubt or scepticism, and it is a pure *love* unalloyed with any base mixture of carnal desire or selfish interest, and it is a heavenly *enjoyment* not mixed with any gross element, and it is a mighty *magnetism* more powerful than every other attraction, and it is an effective *antidote* which counteracts the effect of every poison. These are the five things, the blessings which descend with the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the true follower. Such a heart not only shuns evil, but hates it. To enter into details about the properties of these five things, would require an amount of time and space, which I have not at my disposal at present. I shall, however, say something about a perfect knowledge and show how it brings about a victory over sin.

It is a plain matter of fact that men and even animals shrink from what they know with a sure and certain knowledge to be harmful and dangerous. The thief can never dare to approach a house with the intention of breaking into it, where he knows of a number of men lying in wait to lay their hands on him. A bird would never approach the grains near which it has the keen sight to discover a hidden snare. The most delicious food would never tempt even a g'utton, did he know that it had been secretly poisoned. All these instances show too clearly that occasions of danger and peril are avoided by every sensible person, provided the danger is certain. We may, therefore, conclude without any presumption, that if men knew for certain that sin was a fatal poison, they would never even do so much as dare to approach it. This being settled, the next question to be considered is as to the means by which such a knowledge can be attained. Is human reason a sufficient guide in this respect? Experience answers this question in the negative. Reason is not perfect, and, therefore, cannot alone be a safe means of acquiring

such a perfect knowledge, unless heaven comes to its assistance. A certainty about the punishment of sin is dependent upon a certainty about the existence of God and unless the latter is established conclusively, the former cannot exist. The philosopher who is not guided by the heavenly light, cannot have any certain knowledge as to the existence of God, for his ears are not cognizant of His sweet voice and his eyes have not beheld the light of His shining face. His knowledge of God, even if he arrives at a true conclusion after a deep reflection on all that he sees in earth and in heaven, does not go beyond the limits of probability. His arguments do not and cannot establish the desired conclusion. He tells us not that there is a God but that there may be a God. He states only his opinion and not his knowledge. The person whose investigation ends with a probability of the existence of God and to whom all beyond is darkness and doubt, has made but little progress in acquiring the true knowledge of God. His conjectures cannot give any satisfaction to his own heart. But the person who not only thinks that there is a God, but actually feels His existence by the heavenly light which is granted to him, stands on a much higher position and a firmer basis. The heavenly light which descends upon him not only enables him to see God, but it also sharpens his intellect and refines his understanding, so that his logical inferences are characterized by correctness and accuracy. He has thus a double assurance as to the existence of God, for two different channels lead him to the same certain conclusion.

The heavenly light spoken of here descends upon the person whom Almighty God favors with His gracious word, as well as upon him who has a close connection with the favored one. By the word of God, I do not mean the doubtful words for which the dignity of inspiration is ordinarily claimed. These are what we may term fragmentary or imperfect revelations received by certain men as to the origin of which they themselves have no perfect assurance. The Word of God is, on the other hand, a sure, clear and perfect revelation unattended with any doubt. It is, moreover, necessarily accompanied with heavenly signs, and this is its chief distinction from doubtful inspiratory fragments. There is majesty and grandeur in every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, and it strikes the heart with

wonderful awe and sublimity. It takes an entire possession of the heart and enters into it with the force of a nail of iron. The brilliant heavenly signs and supernatural wonders with which it is attended, set a seal to its truth.

The first thing which a man needs to gain a perfect assurance as to the existence of a Divine Being, is such a revelation of which he is personally a recipient, or at least a close connection with the receptacle of revelation who attracts the hearts of men with a spiritual force. Revelation is the sole criterion that can decide between truth and falsehood. The religion which fails when judged by this standard, which points only to stories of the past as the inspired Word of God, but cannot claim any fresh revelation attended with living signs, is dead and a heap of rotten bones reduced to dust. It has no signs of life and, therefore, no living principles. It cannot bring about a pure transformation or a regeneration of the soul. Those men only take an interest in such principles who are fond not of religious truths, but of religious stories and do not with earnestness inquire into truth, but blindly follow the beaten tracks of their forefathers. They are brought up in errors and prejudice and thus having their very natures vitiated, they are unable to grasp the truth. They never give a single minute's consideration to the weightiest religious questions, viz., by what means can they attain to certainty in religious questions, what should be the attributes of a God in whom we can have certain belief, what are the circumstances which can bring about assurance relating to the existence of the Divine Being, and what are the signs by which the man of perfect faith can be distinctly recognised as such. We have no reason to deny the presence, to a certain extent, of reason in almost every religious system, nor can we deny that almost all religious systems have been productive of some improvement and some outward decorum, but the question is, if that is the highest aim and the goal of religion. The faint light of truth here hid under heaps of error and there seen by glimpses, or the partial improvement in certain quarters with the vast amount of mischief a religion may work, do not entitle us to conclude that such a religion can make us realize the certainty of the existence of God and His attributes. All religions are dead and lifeless and all religious principles worthless and absurd if they do

not take an enquirer to the fountain of assurance and make him drink of its pure and life-giving water.

Most people do not know, and the pity is that they do not even care to know, what a certain belief in the existence of God, His power and majesty and all other attributes, means. If any one were to tell them merely out of sympathy for their degraded state, that they have no access to the pure fountain of assurance and are, therefore, utterly devoid of true righteousness which is the fruit of a true and sincere faith in God, they get exasperated, because they would not have their lip-belief questioned. But the fact is that they are far from being certain about the existence of God. They do not thrust their hand into a hole which, they know for certain, contains a poisonous snake, because they know that death shall be the certain result, but they hesitate not to tread upon sacred ground and transgress the Divine limits. They do not swallow poison, because they know its fatal consequence, but they commit the most deadly crimes with audacity. In the physical world, it is not only certitude of danger or evil which dissuades them from approaching the object of terror, but even a high degree of probability keeps them back. They never like to pass a night under a roof whose beam has cracked and which is in danger of falling down. They would fly from a town where severe cholera or plague has broken out. But in religious matters they are far from showing this fright. They assert that they have a certain belief in God, but violate His commandments openly and boldly. Is this astonishing difference between the two cases ascribable to no cause? Can there be the same certainty in the one case as in the other with the results so widely different? The fact is, that they do not know with certainty, not even with a high degree of probability, that there is over them an All-powerful Being who can destroy them in the twinkling of an eye.

THE CHRISTIAN DEITY.

The disease of unbelief is not peculiar to any particular sect, but prevails universally. It extends to Muhammadans as well as to Christians, and with a slight difference, it has affected the East equally with the West. The Muhammadans, however, are only careless about the existence of the true and living God, although He has always been graciously revealing Himself and

vouchsafing His light to them, and has in every age been attracting them towards Himself and placing many of them on the eminence of perfection. The Christians, on the other hand, have lost the true and living God, a certain belief in whom ennobles the soul and works a pure transformation, and a contemplation of whose majesty and glory generates true hatred for sin. Instead of the Living and Supporting God, the Christian nations look upon and revere a weak man, a Jew, the son of Mary, a carpenter by profession, named Yasu' (Jesus), as their God. And they stick to this blasphemy in spite of the fact that he, poor man, dead long since, can neither answer their prayers, nor even speak to any one, nor manifest his supposed power and glory. How could faith in such a poor creature avail the worshippers? How could it draw them out of impurity and sinfulness and seal them on thrones of righteousness? The power this Christian God manifested in the days when he lived, is well described in the pages of his four admirers. Out of the numberless years of eternity during which he is said to have lived, he had to face his creatures for three and-a-half years. But during this short period, he met with all sorts of trials and sufferings, in return for which, instead of displaying any power, he only abused the leaders of the people in a vulgar style. When suffering became unbearable, he prayed to God the whole night long, but was not listened to. The basest crime was laid to the charge of his mother but he was unable to refute it by any display of Divine power. His miracles, admitting, for the sake of argument, the truth of the incredible narratives in which they are contained, do not show the least improvement on the miracles of the Israelite Prophets who preceded him. On the other hand, the mighty deeds and wondrous works recorded of Elijah and Elisha, their restoring the dead to life and their astonishing display of power, eclipse the Gospel records. The prophet Isaiah also worked such powerful miracles as throw those of Jesus into the background. Light is, however, thrown upon the nature of his miracles by his vague and sometimes meaningless utterings termed prophecies, which are sufficient to excite the most serious mind to laughter. Look at the solemnity of the expression and the absurdity of the idea: "For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in

divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles," as if the world knew nothing of these things, and any generation of it had ever passed away without having heard of these predicted events.

These are the idle tales—and no one can tell what amount of falsehood has been mixed in them—upon which the Divinity of Jesus is founded. But the lapse of time has only added to the difficulties in the way of Jesus' Divinity. To recognise this new God, who was never thought of by the Israelite Prophets, and of whom we do not find the least trace in the Jewish writings, the present age has to grapple with still greater difficulties. They have not seen the dead restored to life, nor the evil spirits turned out of sick men; and to add to their disappointment, the promises made regarding the following generations of Christians have not been fulfilled. They were told that poison shall not have its fatal effect upon them, and that mountains shall remove themselves at their bidding and that they shall handle serpents and they shall not bite them. If any one likes to see how far these promises are fulfilled, he may only refer to the death-returns of a Christian country and look therein how many good Christians, including those who have received the Holy Order and the Holy Spirit, daily commit suicide and die of poison, and how many there are who die from the bite of snakes and other poisonous animals. As for the removal of mountains, we are still more surprised, for not a single Christian to-day can do even so much as turn a shoe at his mere word. If we are told to take these verses metaphorically and not literally, to take the swallowing of poison for subduing violence and snakes for mischievous persons, for instance, then without losing our right of objecting to this foolish straining of the meaning of plain words, we may ask why the miracles which are ascribed to Jesus should not be read in the same light as the signs which he said his followers will show. Jesus repeatedly said that his followers shall show the same signs, and even greater than those, which he showed. But if the promised signs of the followers are only to be taken as metaphors and not realities, moral qualities not actually supernatural signs, what reason does there exist to suppose the miracles of Jesus as being of a different nature, and why should we read words used of the master in a different light from that in which those regarding the followers are to be read. If there is any truth

in the statement that the signs promised to be shown by the followers are only metaphorical descriptions of excellent moral qualities, the conclusion cannot be avoided that the miracles of the master must have had the same reality. This is, in short, a hard nut to crack for the apologists of Christianity and the position presents an unsurmountable difficulty to those who care to defend their faith on intellectual grounds. A Christian has in fact to cope not with one difficulty but with three difficulties in connection with this point. Firstly, the words of Jesus that miracles equal to, and even greater than, those which he wrought shall be wrought by his followers, turned out to be plainly false. Secondly, the non-fulfilment of the promise, regarding the wondrous works to be done by the followers, conclusively demonstrates the inability of Jesus himself to work any miracle, for if the master had shown any sign, the followers should also have shown some. Thirdly, admitting, for the sake of argument, that Jesus wrought any miracles—though his own words reported in Matthew : “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it,” refute the idea, these are only imitations, much inferior to the original works of wonder done by the Israelite prophets in abundance, and cannot establish the Divinity with any show of plausibility.

The Divinity of Jesus remaining thus doubtful and unproved, no sane person can take it for a certainty, and hence it cannot be a barrier against sin. As we have already shown by an appeal to the laws of nature, nothing can keep back a man from a sin but the certainty of belief in God’s existence, the assurance that there is a God who knows and punishes every sin. But such assurance cannot be had with respect to Jesus, for his Divinity itself is at the most a matter of doubt. Does there exist any distinction between Jesus and other men who are dead, if there must be some distinction between God and His creatures? We must answer that question in the negative; for in Jesus we do not observe even the distinction which we generally observe between the living and the dead. If, instead of making all this clamour and noise to establish the Divinity of Jesus, the Christian missionaries had only taken the trouble to prove him a living man, they could have given satisfaction to many enquirers, and we would have never hesitated to accept him as such.

We have no hatred for any religion simply on account of its difference with us. If the son of Mary is God, we are willing to accept him as such. If he is the intercessor, we shall like to be foremost in accepting him. But how can we have our faith in a falsehood, an absurdity and an abomination. If God is such a weak and frail being as Jesus, the son of Mary, was, we are better alone. We can do without him. We cannot accept him as God and have no need to submit ourselves to him. If Jesus is the Divine Being who can make Himself known to us as He has been revealing Himself in every age through the prophets and independently, and as he has also made His existence apparent to those who have not received the heavenly books, we are ready to accept his Divinity. We bear no hatred or ill-will to his Divinity; only we need the requisite proof. Is there any gentleman who, himself being certain on this matter, can point to any distinctive feature by which we may be able to recognise his Divinity, who can inform us, for instance, that we can hear the voice of God Jesus or see any other clear sign of his Deity? Without certainty no good can result from the acceptance of his Divinity; for, as already pointed out, doubtful knowledge, even of the true God, cannot be of any use. To break away from the bondage of sin, the first and only requirement is a perfect assurance as to the existence of the Divine Being; and any doubt on this point keeps a man back from true righteousness and perfection. Such being the requirement of human nature in regard to the belief in the Supreme Being, it is quite incomprehensible how mere conjectures regarding the Divinity of a dead man who passed his life in disgrace, being at the mercy of a few Jews, could be of any advantage in effecting a release from the slavery of sin.

To set up a man as God and produce no sure proof of it, is a shameful business, especially when we consider that an imperfect notion mixed with doubt regarding even the existence of Him who really is the Lord of the Universe, cannot lead a man to a life of righteousness. The people who indulge in these disgraceful whims, are the enemies to truth. We are unable to understand what considerations led them to adopt this blasphemous dogma, and what deficiency they experienced in believing in the eternal God of Glory and Majesty, to make up for which they fashioned a new God for

themselves. I bear witness that the God who revealed Himself to Adam, Seth, Noah, Abraham, Moses and all other prophets, and last of all to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, is an ever-living God who brings into life and supports the whole creation; that as He spoke by the mouths of those prophets to declare His existence, so does He speak now; that as they listened to His awful voice and saw His wondrous signs, so do we listen and see now; that as He listened to the prayers and supplications of His servants and answered them in the former ages, so does He listen and answer even now; and that as the earlier sages attained to true righteousness of heart and purity of soul by His love and the revelation of His shining face, so do we attain to righteousness and perfection by the same means even to-day. The blind man who deserts such a powerful God to bow his head before frail creatures is quite undone. We are sure that all persons falsely set up as gods, such as Jesus, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, &c., have been deified without the least reason. There is more reason in ascribing humanity to a goat than in attributing divinity to a man. For, although a goat possesses none of the characteristics of men, for instance, it does not walk or speak like them, it has not the appearance or reason of a human being, yet in many things man partakes of the nature of animals, but no one can tell us of what attributes of the Divine Being does Jesus or Rama partake.

It would not be out of place to say a few words as to the reasons which induce certain men with particular inclinations and particular turns of mind to deify men whom they have reason to admire. With regard to certain men two contending parties take two extreme positions; there are those who deny every goodness in the man and represent him as the vilest creature, and in opposition to these there are his enthusiastic admirers who cannot see their way out of the difficulty but by extolling him beyond due limits. Rama, for instance, suffered disgrace at the hands of Ravna, who kidnapped the former's wife, and thus gave a heavy shock to the feelings of Rama's followers. The admirers of Rama thought of wiping off this disgrace from the face of their revered leader by attributing to him the dignity of Godhead and declaring his enemy as a monster; and the following generations were so

firmly persuaded of his Divinity, that they used his name instead of the name of God and also in greeting each other. The Hindus in fact are much in advance of the Christians in the matter of deification. On account of their constant use of the word Rama for the name of God, they have forgotten the true name of the Deity and apply Rama in place of it. The same causes which brought about the deification of Rama have been at work in the deification of the son of Mary. The first attack upon Jesus' honor was that in connection with his birth which the wicked Jews declared to be illegitimate, and thus, in the first instance, attacked his mother's chastity. Other objections of a serious nature they advanced against the conduct of the reformer. Learned Jewish writers have depicted his character as horribly black. Some of the charges imputed to him are so obscene that they cannot be mentioned in a decent writing. His mother is made the object of a grave indecent charge. Three of his great grandmothers, Tamar, Rahab and Bint Saba, are also put in the same black list, and the Christian missionaries admit their harlotry. The life of Jesus himself has afforded them no less scope for the exercise of their critical faculty. His character has been depicted as that of a criminal; he is represented as practising deceit in his doings, and God at last, they say, justly punished him with the death of a culprit. The Jewish writings teem with such contemptuous terms and base charges that a Muhammadan cannot go through a page of them without being enraged at their vilifications. The enemies of Jesus were so hard upon him that their excess became quite unbearable. The followers of Jesus, therefore, being unable to answer every objection on reasonable grounds, thought it expedient to declare the person whom the Jews had depicted as the basest character, as a God in flesh. Erring zealots who already loved idolatry were pleased with having a new God similar to those they had deserted. The original idea in setting up the Divinity of Jesus was, therefore, only to retaliate the Jewish contempt of Jesus.

What is surprising enough is that the Gospels on whose basis Jesus is proclaimed to be the Divine Being by his admirers, furnish-

ed material to learned Jews for adverse criticism. Thus the author of the "Deicides" admitting the historical accuracy of the Christian scriptures and basing his objections on the four evangelists only, proceeds to show that Jesus was in fact a pretender who had selfish interests in view, and who was not able to prove his Divine Mission by a single sign. He wrought no miracles, and as for his prophecies, they all proved false without a single exception. The Gospel statement that Jesus showed many signs to the Jews, is contradicted, says the Jewish author, by the gospels themselves; for in all controversies between Jesus and the Jews when a sign was demanded of him in support of his Messiahship, he attacked the elders of the people with severity unbecoming an ordinary man, addressing them as "a race of vipers," "accursed in the present and the future," an "evil and adulterous generation" to whom no sign shall be given. Every fresh demand was met with fresh reproaches from the *soi-distant* God, and not once in the whole course of his preaching did he give them the slightest proof of his divine mission. Even admitting the truth of the few incidents in which he is said to have healed a few sick persons, the claim to Divinity still remained unproved, for his adversaries also did the same thing. Far greater and more wondrous works had been done by the earlier prophets; how was it possible then that Jesus with his inferior imitations of earlier original miracles could be regarded by any reasonable or even sane Jew as the Divine Being?

In short, since Jesus was subjected to the greatest possible disgrace at the hands of the Jews, it was necessary that as his actual merits were detracted from by one party, they should have been extolled to an excessive and preposterous degree by the other. With the commencement of this exaggeration, the foundation of Jesus' Divinity was laid and he became, what he never was, a God. The truth of this can only be realized by comparing the aspersions and vilifications of the Jews with the too highly exaggerated statements of the early Christians resorted to, to meet the Jewish attacks. Every earnest seeker who desires to arrive at a true conclusion, must consult the Jewish and Christian writings, and he will then

realize the truth of the statement made here. The truth of this statement becomes all the more apparent when we consider that the Jewish nation with all the sectarian differences, has ever been devoted to the simple Unitarian faith. All Jewish sects, differ in whatever else they may, agree in this that since the Law was granted to the great Israelite Legislator on Mount Sinai, the noble Mission of every Israelite prophet was to recall the people to the fundamental doctrine of the unity of God whenever they showed the slightest tendency to deviate from the true path, and not one of those heavenly Messengers ever gave them a hint that there was something like Trinity in the person of the one and Invisible God. Further, the Jews allege that if there was any truth in the doctrine of God in flesh, why were they taught from the beginning that God was invisible and that He could not be seen in material form. Why did the Almighty say to Moses when he besought God to make Himself visible to him, "No, thou canst not see my face" ? Why did He not then reveal to Moses the face of Jesus as being the Divine face that would appear in flesh ? In short, the Jews have conclusively proved that Christianity is an innovation that strikes at the very root of all noble doctrines taught most enthusiastically by all prophets for thousands of years, and that its founder pretends to aspire to a position, in which he aims at the destruction of Unity, the corner-stone of revealed religion.

With the new notion of a three-cornered God in flesh, the Christians stand forth as the publishers of an abominable innovation and as the followers of a God whose teachings regarding the attributes and essence of the Divine Being, are at utter variance with the systematic teachings of the Hebrew prophets and the Holy Quran. Not only is it contradicted by the revealed word of God but reason also rejects this monstrously absurd dogma, but its upholders have as little regard for the one as for the other. They do not wish it to be put to the test of reasoning, for reason, according to them, has no concern with religious principles. Reason cannot raise its voice against the monstrosity of three being equal to one, nor has it the right to uphold the simple and reasonable doctrine of unity. They are clever indeed in picking out the

faults of others, but have never given a single minute's consideration to their own absurd dogma. It was the primary duty of all professing Christians, whether belonging to the clerical or missionary orders, to offer incontrovertible evidence of the Deity of Jesus, which is utterly rejected by the *Taurat*, the Holy Quran and reason. After giving its proof, they should have been entitled to offer the doctrines of atonement and salvation, which are based upon the Divinity of Jesus. But they have not paid due attention to this important matter, or have, perhaps, felt their inability to establish its truth, and like, therefore, to divert the attention of enquirers to minor and less important points.

Beneath this error of the Christian deification of Jesus, however, lies hidden an important truth, whose shining face has been so disfigured and blackened by monstrous whims, that its lovely image is changed into a ghastly and hideous picture. But the truth itself shines from beneath this dark veil, as a flash of lightning in a dark cloudy night. The germ of this truth is contained in Genesis where we are told that God created man in His own image, illuminated him with His own light, and breathed into him His own spirit. The Holy Quran says the same. Thus, it is in the nature and within the capacity of man that God makes His glory so descend within the pure heart of His servant that it becomes the habitation of Divine Majesty. The man whom Divine glory illumines in this manner, acquires an incomprehensible but very close connection with the Divine Master. To take a homely illustration, the man who has reached this stage may be compared to the iron which has become red-hot under an excessive heat, being in appearance like fire, but in essence still the same iron. Such is the close union of the true lovers of God with the Divine Being. They actually feel that God has descended in their hearts. Words used to express this connection are often taken by ignorant men in a material sense who are thus misled to regard such a person as being actually God. The use of such expressions is unavoidable to signify the true relation, and all revealed books contain such expressions which are then turned to the use of deifying men who never meant their words to be taken in a superficial sense.

DIVINE SOURCE OF THE WORDS AND DEEDS OF OUR HOLY PROPHET.

It is with the metaphorical meaning in view that the Holy Quran has described the words and deeds of our Holy Prophet as the words and deeds of God, from which a man of the Christian turn of mind could easily conclude that the Prophet was really the Divine Being. Thus regarding the words of the Prophet, the Holy Quran says وما ينطق عن الهوى ان هو الا وحي يوحى (النجم) which means that the Prophet does not speak out of impulse or his own desire, but every word of him is the word of God which is revealed to him. Now this verse positively asserts that when the Prophet speaks, it is not he that speaks but God Himself. Another verse states that the deeds of the Prophet are all the deeds of God. Thus we have: وما رميت اذ رميت ولكن الله رمى (الانفال) "Whatever thou didst cast, *thou* didst not cast it but it was *God* who did it;" in other words, the deeds of the Prophet were really the doings of God. Thus both the words and deeds of the Holy Prophet are spoken of in plain terms as the words and deeds of God. The only conclusion that can follow from this, is that the Holy Prophet was a perfect manifestation of the Divine Being. But in spite of these and such other statements, no reasonable member of the Muhammadan community takes the Prophet to be actually God, nor, like Christians, does he regard him a person of Godhead, and this, notwithstanding the fact that practical proof favors the idea which may be deduced from a too literal interpretation of the words of the Holy Quran.

The practical proof alluded to here consists in the jealousy of God for His Holy Prophet as for His own Divine Person. The Prophet did not die until he had seen with his own eyes that those who had persecuted him relentlessly and given excruciating tortures to and shed the innocent blood of his followers, were punished in their turn by the mighty hand of heaven. On the other hand, those who bore persecutions with him and accompanied him in the hour of trial were seated on thrones in this world. What a striking contrast when with this glorious career of the Prophet—a career made glorious not by human efforts but with the will and intention of God, we compare the sad events of Jesus' life, who, according to the Gospels did not receive the slightest Divine assistance—the Divine hand,

seeming rather to favor the cause of his opponents—up to the last moment when he was nailed to the cross. Khosru Parvez, the ill-fated Monarch of Persia, entertained the idea of the Prophet's murder, but himself was put to sword in the very night when his messengers communicated his evil design to the Prophet. What an utter failure was Jesus who was seized by one constable or two of the Roman Empire, and before long was put into custody and executed. Where was the Divine Glory when a whole night's vigil and lamentations could not save him from a Magistrate's warrant? Here again we have a good contrast with the circumstances of the Prophet's contemplated arrest and murder. The conspirators had assembled in large numbers about the Prophet's house and besieged it on all four sides. A strict watch was kept, but all to no purpose. Almighty God saved the Prophet and conducted him safely through all the assembled hosts who were bent upon his murder. This shows the regard in which God held His servant, because without causing him a night's cries and lamentations, like Jesus, He protected him as if by drawing a veil over the eyes of the watching antagonistic hosts. We are sorry to say that the heart-rending cries of Jesus "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani" were of no effect according to Christian admission, a point which has given occasion for ridicule to those inveterate enemies of Christianity, the Jews. Such was the regard in which Jesus was held by Almighty God so far as his own personality was concerned. The apostles found themselves in no better position. He had promised to them his own return in their lifetime, in plain words, but the prophecy remains unfulfilled to this day. Two thousand years have passed away and still there is no trace of the son of man. What sad despair must death have brought to the credulous people who took the promise seriously. The Jews always asked them tauntingly, what had caught hold of the master that he did not come back according to his promise? Again, the master had promised twelve thrones to the twelve apostles, but the number of thrones had soon to be reduced to ten, because one of the apostles deserted the master and another denied and cursed. The prophecy was thus proved to be false in the lifetime of the master. But the prophecy of our Prophet regarding his companions was fulfilled to the very letter, for, as promised, they were actually seated on the thrones of vast empires in their life, a fact known to all hostile critics.

As regards the application of certain words regarding Jesus, on whose strength the deification is supported, the argument is equally worthless. As in the case of miracles, so in this case there is no originality, no improvement upon the Old Testament expressions. The title given to Jesus is borrowed from the earlier Prophets. Adam and Israel have also been called the sons of God and in one place it is said that "ye are" all "gods." But such words were never meant to be taken in a material sense. Jesus himself made use of the same argument when the Jews began to stone him. "For which of" my "works do ye stone me?" asked he. The Jews replied that they did not stone him for his good works, but for the blasphemy he uttered in saying that he was the son of God. Jesus then answered that it was written in the law "ye are gods," how, then, he could have been said to have blasphemed by calling himself the son of God (John X, 31—36).

THE APPEARANCE OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH.

The deification of Jesus is the result only of a stretch of imagination and a straw has been made into a mountain. **I also am inspired by God**, and it is more than twenty years now that God speaks to me and reveals His word to me. I have shown more than 150 supernatural signs. I swear by the sacred name of God that I have restored the dead to life in the manner in which Divine Law has allowed it. I also swear by the same sacred name that more than ten thousand of my prayers have been accepted. The words of honour in which Almighty God has addressed me, are far more powerful and dignified than the words used of Jesus from which the Christians jump to the conclusion of his Divinity. Almighty God has called me by the names of all the prophets; He addressed me as Adam, addressed me as Abraham, and addressed me as the **Promised Messiah**. He told me that I am the **promised one** of whom the Prophets had foretold, and whom all had been anxiously waiting for. But notwithstanding all this, I do not assert myself to be the Divine Being or the son of the Most High, though the Word of God revealed to me contains expressions on whose strength I could establish, much more easily than Jesus, my claim to Divinity. But I know that such an assertion is the most abominable

blasphemy. I wonder more than all the world what peculiarities there are in the son of Mary which make him a God. Do these consist in his miracles? But mine are greater than his. Were his prophecies very clear and true? But I shall be guilty of concealing a truth if I do not assert that the prophecies which Almighty God has granted me are of a far better quality in clearness, force and truth than the ambiguous predictions of Jesus. Can we conclude his Divinity from the words used of him in the Gospels? But I swear by the Lord, a false oath in whose name brings curse in this world and the next, that the words expressing my dignity revealed from God, (which I again swear by His sacred name, are the pure words of God, not altered or tampered with like the Gospels), are far more weighty and glorious than the words of Gospels relating to Jesus. But notwithstanding all this superiority, I cannot assert Divinity or sonship of God. What is true of me is also true of Jesus, that he too was not God or the son of God. My superiority lies in being the Messiah of Muhammad, as Jesus was the Messiah of Moses, the Israelite Law-giver.

God had ordained it from the beginning that in the line of Israel, the foundation of whose law was laid by Moses, the Messiah should be the last link in the chain of their prophets. Likewise had the Almighty Being pre-arranged that the line of Ishmael should afford a parallel to the line of Israel, and thus laying the foundation of its Law with the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and the blessings of God be upon him, He raised a Messiah at the end. Moses, the servant of God, gave the Law to his people. But the Omniscient Being knew that after about fourteen centuries from Moses, the Israelite people shall give up the realities of law, being only content with customs and formalities, and shall be morally degenerated. Therefore He raised a Messiah after the lapse of about fourteen centuries from the Law-giver to bring back the people to truth and righteousness, and raised him in a country where the Israelites lived in a temporal subjection to a foreign Government. According to Deuteronomy XVIII: 18, a prophet was raised "like unto" Moses from among the "brethren" of the Israelites in the person of the great Law-giver Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him. To keep up the parallelism in the two lines, a Messiah was raised "like unto" the Mosaic

Messiah in the fourteenth century after the Prophet. **I am that Messiah** and as the like of Moses excels Moses himself in many respects, so does the like of Messiah excel the first Messiah in many respects, and this is partial excellence which God grants to whomsoever of His servants He chooses.

FINAL SOLUTION OF THE QUESTION OF SINLESSNESS.

Now the doctrine of sinlessness and intercession, which is repeatedly brought forward by the Christian controversialists is, so far as they are concerned, an error into which they have fallen. *If the sinlessness of a person is to be inferred from the faultlessness of his conduct as admitted by his hostile critics, we would refer them to the Jewish writings which seriously attack Jesus' and his mother's conduct; and if it is to be inferred from the assertion of the person himself, we would refer them to the Gospel text where Jesus confesses that he is not good or sinless.* The question of the sinlessness of the son of Mary cannot, therefore, be set at rest in a reasonable manner. Add to it the circumstance that *the Gospels themselves relate incidents of Jesus' life which throw discredit upon the pretended sinlessness.* For instance, he drank wine, broke the permanent commandments of the law relating to circumcision and the prohibition of swine, intentionally caused wrongful loss to an innocent person by destroying his property, violently abused the Scribes, the Pharisees and the elders of the people, had too familiar connections with women of dubious character, allowed a harlot to anoint him with ointment which was part of her earnings of adultery, allowed his disciples to pluck ears of corn from another's field, &c. Now, there is no one who in his right senses could declare all these deeds to be deeds of righteousness. If drinking was really a deed of piety, why did John the Baptist hate it? Why did Daniel say that the doors of heaven are shut against the drunkard? Why did Jesus put a stop to circumcision, notwithstanding that recent investigation has proved its utility upon health. The flesh of swine had been prohibited for ever, but Jesus declared its legality. He himself declared that he did not come to abolish law and then himself abolished the commandments of law.

In short, to prove the sinlessness of Jesus from the Gospels is as difficult a task as to demonstrate that a person who was in the last

stage of consumption and reduced to a mere skeleton, was in full health and strength. Is it not the duty of the Christian critics of Islam to offer proof of the sinlessness of Jesus before raising the question of the innocence of other prophets? *Is it honest on their part to object to istighfar as evidence of sinfulness and to swallow away the plain confession of the Jesus of Gospels that he was not good?* Like the blind guides of the Jews, are not these the "blind guides" of Christianity "which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel?" Add to all these considerations one more, viz., that we cannot take every claimant of an intercession to be really so, unless we have instances in which he has, in this life, done good by means of his intercession. With this criterion before us we recognise in Moses a great intercessor, for when people were being smitten with sore punishment from heaven, Moses' entreatment and intercession with the Lord averted the punishment, and his own people were quite safe in all the disasters that befell Egypt. The intercession of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, is still more evident from instances in his life. It was the effect of the Prophet's intercession that his poor companions were made the rulers of vast empires. It was also a result of the Prophet's intercession that the Arabs who had been brought up in idolatry and polytheism, became zealous advocates of the Unity of God and showed an unparalleled devotion to the cause of Unity. *The Prophet's intercession has moreover conferred an everlasting benefit upon his followers, viz., that God speaks to them and reveals His Holy Word to them.* Where are we to seek for all these proofs in the person of Jesus? For the intercession of our Holy Prophet what plainer and more conclusive evidence is required than that our opponents are utterly devoid of the blessings which are poured upon us in full abundance through his gracious intercession. *If our opponents are really in earnest to come to a true conclusion, they should judge the comparative merits of the two religions by this criterion and a decision will soon be arrived at.* But they have not a mind to come to a decision. They like to live in mist and thence level their attacks at the pure principles of other religions, hiding their own at the same time. *They call us to a God who neither speaks nor sees, nor has he the power to inform us of future events. But our God has power for all these things.* Blessed is he who seeks such a God.

To be continued.

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Qadian.