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THE REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
نحمده ونصلي على رسوله الكريم

The *Salat* or the Muslim Prayers.

(Substance of a speech delivered by the Promised
Messiah on the 18th January, 1898.)

There exists a great misunderstanding with respect to the nature of the prayers enjoined by the Muslim Law. The prayer of a Muslim is a prayer in the truest and highest sense of the term, a devout supplication to Almighty God and a reverential expression of the soul's sincerest desires before its Maker. But on account of the great ignorance that prevails among the Muslims, prayers are looked upon as a burdensome duty. Does Almighty God stand in need of imposing tax upon His creatures? Certainly not; for He is above all needs and able to dispense with all creatures. Almighty God has commanded men to pray to Him and utter His praise, not because He stands in need of it, but for their own good, for only thus can they attain the great object for which man has been created. It grieves me to see that men have no love for piety, righteousness and the worship of God. The true devotion of the heart has degenerated into a lifeless ceremonial. The love of God is on the wane and the heavenly enjoyment in His worship is nowhere felt. There is taste and flavour in everything and most of all in prayers and in the worship of the Divine Being. But as the sweetest thing would excite a bitter taste in the mouth of one whose organs of taste are morbid, similarly prayers and worship do not afford any pleasure or enjoyment to those who are spiritually sick. The object of man's life has been

described in the Holy Quran to be the worship of God, and it is impossible that man should have been so created as to feel a pleasure in everything except in that which was the aim of his life. Nay, it is here that he should experience the highest bliss, and if he does not, he should clearly understand that some morbidity affects his spiritual conditions and he ought to seek for the proper remedy.

We see it in our every-day experience that the things that have been created for the benefit of man possess a certain attraction for him. Are not delicious articles of food and drink pleasant to the taste, beautiful objects and sights and charming scenes pleasing to the eye, and sweet sounds and soft and melodious tones pleasing to the ear? What other argument is needed to show that the observance of religious duties must afford pleasure and enjoyment to a man? Again, man and woman were created as helpmates to each other, and the one was consorted with the other not by compulsion but by means of attraction placed in each for the other. The coupling of the man and the woman with the object of procreation has thus been brought about by the pleasure which each finds in the union, and the purpose could hardly have been accomplished without it. The enjoyment which is found in the sexual connection and which is the incentive to men to propagate their kind, has such a powerful attraction that ignorant men have taken it to be the object of the sexual connection and have lost sight of the real object, *viz.*, procreation. The object with which the close connection between man and woman was brought about was no doubt the propagation of their kind, and the enjoyment found in the connection was only a step to the attainment of that object.

The true and eternal union which affords the highest bliss is the union of man with God. It gives a pleasure which is far above every pleasure of the senses. But the unfortunate man who does not find any pleasure in this union and who regards the worship of God as a tax, has not his spiritual faculties sound and in a regular order, and is like the sick man who finds no pleasant savor in sweet things, or the blind man who finds no charm in beautiful objects, or the impotent man who finds no pleasure in the sexual union. But, alas for the spiritual lethargy which so generally prevails. The sick man who finds no enjoyment in his food consults the doctor and incurs every

expenditure for the cure of his disease, and the impotent man who is deprived of the pleasure of sexual union is ready sometimes to commit suicide, but the hardened heart which finds no pleasure in the worship of God does nothing to heal itself and to open itself for the Divine blessings. Why does not this great grief gnaw his soul? He is mad after the pleasures of this world, but there is no thirst in his soul for eternal bliss, no yearning after heavenly enjoyment. Does he think that temporal pleasures can be restored to him when he has been deprived of them, but that Almighty God has made no provision for spiritual and eternal pleasure? God has certainly made such provision, but for those who seek it and try for it as they try for the remedies of physical diseases.

The Holy Quran has on one occasion compared the faithful to virtuous women and this simile has a deep significance. The close connection which exists between man and woman serves to exemplify the connection between God and His faithful servant. The union of woman with man is blessed and fruitful if it is characterized by love and concord. Discord and disagreement, on the other hand, are not only fatal to the peace of the household, leading to the corruption of both the man and the woman and to diseases which impair the health of the pair permanently, but also render the object of the union a certain failure. Any disturbance in the true union is productive of immense harm and mischief. Such is also the case of the spiritual union of man with God. The person who cuts asunder his connection from his heavenly Master, has his heart cankered and vitiated. His suffering is very great and knows no end. Again, as there is pleasure in the sexual union of man and woman for the production of new life, so there is bliss in the spiritual union of man and God for an immortal life. The bliss that is felt in the spiritual union far transcends all earthly and material enjoyments, and has nothing comparable to it in the pleasures of the senses. If the men of this world who are given to the worldly pleasures taste but once of this heavenly bliss, they would forget all their former pleasures for its sake. But what is to be deplored is the ignorance of most men as regards the source of this heavenly enjoyment. Their genuflections and prostrations are not accompanied with the bowing down of the soul on the Divine threshold and hence their prayers are meaningless movements of the body. They perform their religious exercises with an absent mind, and their prayers have

no other significance than sitting and rising alternately. It grieves me still more when I see people resorting to prayers that they may be seen of men and revered and honored among them; and their insincere prayers make them successful in the attainment of this mean object. Ah, ignorant souls! they never think that if their false prayers can make them honorable in the eyes of men, would not true and sincere prayers make them honorable in the sight of God?

In short, indifference to prayers and remissness in them are due only to an ignorance of the pleasure and enjoyment with which true and sincere prayers are attended. In large cities and in villages, in the mad race for wealth and in the heat of business, people can hardly find time to bow down in submission before their Master, and those that go through the external acts of devotion have their hearts in their business and not in the prayers which they offer. There is hardly any one who can bow down his head in true submission and with his whole heart and soul. What is the cause of this spiritual lethargy and indifference to religion? Nothing but that people are unaware of the heavenly enjoyment of prayers, and have never tasted of their true bliss. There is a vast majority of people who would hate the call to prayer, because at that time they happen to be engaged in some business of theirs. Such men are to be pitied for their ignorance. They should pray to God with true zeal and sincerity that they may be made to taste of the enjoyment of prayers as they have been granted senses with which they feel the physical pleasures. If they drink of this pure fountain but once, they will not forget its sweetness as long as they live. But so long as they are unaware of its beauties, it is hateful in their eyes. To get up early in the morning from a warm bed when sweet slumber is soothing the senses to rest and to wash oneself in the cold season are heavy inconveniences if unattended with any compensatory benefit.

The question then arises, how to obtain this pleasure in prayers without which they are but an inconvenient burden? The drunkard goes on drinking and takes one cup after another until he gets intoxicated. He does not get tired with the first cup and leave drinking because it has not intoxicated him. He sets before himself ^{the} one object of getting the pleasure of intoxication and devotes ^{himself} wholly to it. The man who has a longing for the divine joy ^{which is}

to be found in prayers should have his attention and thoughts engrossed with it and all his faculties applied to its attainment. The desire to get at it should cause an unrest to his soul and inspire it with true zeal and sincerity for its possession. In saying his prayers he should also aim at true holiness which is the necessary consequence of sincere prayers, for the Holy Quran says : *ان الحسنات يذفن السيئات* "Verily good deeds, i.e., prayers, drive away evils." The deep and divine delight which prayers afford and the true holiness which they effect, should be the objects which a man should set before himself in saying his prayers, and he should further pray to God that his prayers may be like those of the true and faithful servants of God and be blessed with like blessings.

I have said above on the authority of the Holy Quran that good deeds, i. e., prayers, drive away evil deeds. To the same effect the Holy Quran says elsewhere: *ان الصلوة تنهى عن الفحشاء والمنكر* "Verily prayers do restrain a man from that which is evil and forbidden." These two verses establish that men who say their prayers as enjoined by God cannot do evil deeds. On the other hand, we see a large majority of men saying their prayers and still involved in evils. The reason of this apparent inconsistency is that the observance of prayers has degenerated into a formal ceremony, while the true spirit, warmth and devotion of prayers have departed. It is a lifeless and vapid ceremony which is gone through with insincerity of heart. It is not these forms without spirit that Almighty God has called virtues. The word used for virtues or prayers in the verse is *حسنات* *hasanat* (meaning beauties) and not *الصلوة* i. e., prayers, although "prayer" is undoubtedly intended here. This use of a peculiar word is meant to draw attention to the beauty and goodness of prayers, and to indicate that only those prayers are a remedy for evils that have in them the soul of truth and sincerity. Prayers proceeding from the heart certainly deliver a man from the bondage of sin, but simply a formal observance of prayers which are devoid of true life is nothing less than an effort to impose upon God. The mere acts of standing, bowing and prostration do not form the prayers enjoined by the Word of God. The gist of prayers is in the humble supplications to God which afford a man true delight and deep joy. The outward postures are really manifestations of the inward humbleness of the soul. In the

first place a man stands up before God respectfully like a humble servant in the awful presence of a mighty monarch. He then bows down to show that his soul bows down in true submission before Him and that it is ready to execute all His orders. After this he prostrates himself on the ground, thus indicating the high respect which he entertains for the Divine Being and his own perfect humility and nothingness before the Divine majesty and awe. The outward movements of the body are, therefore, symbols of the reverence and homage paid by the soul to its great Maker, and they are made part and parcel of prayers in order to give to the body a share in the worship of God and in the reverence shown to Him by the soul. They afford, moreover, a proof of the submission of the soul. Now the postures of the body being only shadows and imitations of the different conditions of the soul, it is clear that the person who goes only through the formal ceremony of prayers and is content with a mock-worship, cannot taste of the true and heavenly delight of prayers. He regards them as a burdensome duty and his observance of them is only a mimicry. This is not the object of God in enjoining prayers upon the Muslims. What prayers can effect, cannot be realized until the soul falls down on the Divine threshold with complete submission, and, absorbed in the contemplation of Divine glory and majesty, becomes fully conscious of its own nothingness. When the soul is thus engrossed, the words of praise or prayer that are uttered by the lips proceed from the heart, and the tongue speaks not a word which is not expressive of the submissiveness and humbleness of the soul. True devotion consists in the ascent of the mind towards God as it realizes His greatness, goodness and providence, and in the humble prostration of the soul as it thinks over its own insignificance and feels how God took care of it in its weakness while it passed through different stages of growth from infancy to old age. In short, the true delight in prayers is not felt until the soul cries out in its weakness for the strength of God and sets His providence against its own dependence. The communication of Divine grace and Divine light is made on a full consciousness of the nothingness of self, for this is a necessary requirement of the providence of God, and the highest degree of happiness and perfect felicity is reached on the attainment of such communication. When the soul of man assumes nothingness in this manner, it then flows to God like a stream of water fed by a spring, and dissevers

its connections from all besides God. The love of God then descends upon him. The junction of the two effusions, *i. e.*, the effusion of the grace of God and the effusion of the spirit of submissiveness, produces a peculiar state called *Salât* صلاة which consumes the evils and furnishes the spiritual wayfarer with a light which illuminating the road before him, guides him in his onward journey and serves as a lamp to warn him of the dangers of the path and as a beacon to save him from ship-wreck on the stormy ocean of life. Such is the *Salât* spoken of in the verse *ان الصلوة تنهى عن الفحشاء والمنكر* "Verily *Salât* restrains a man from evil and forbidden deeds." The man who observes his prayers in this manner has in his hand, nay, in the lantern of his heart, a torch which illuminates his path and saves him from stumbling at the rocks. This condition of the mind is produced on complete submission, full obedience and total surrender to the Will of God. Such a man is inaccessible to sin and impregnable against the attacks of evil. The supreme heavenly delight which he feels cannot be described in words.

It should also be borne in mind that humble supplication to God alone is the way to true prayers. To address one's petitions to others than God is faithlessness to Him, and such an act will be condemned by all who entertain any jealousy for Divine honor, for prayer is the due of God only. No one deserves to be called a true Muslim or truly faithful unless he is sincere in his devotion to God and addresses all prayers and makes all entreaties to Him. The true significance of Islam requires its professor to surrender all his faculties and powers to God without any reservation. The safest engine to move the system of human faculties is the power of God, and the man who does not submit himself to be drawn by that engine is a denier of Godhead. He is not single-hearted and sincere in his faith and the words are false which he utters in the beginning of his prayers: *انى وجهتى وجهى للذى فطر السموات والارض خنيفا* "Verily I turn myself entirely to Him who created heavens and earth, single-hearted." If, as he turns his face, his heart is also turned to God, he is no doubt a true Muslim and sincere in his Islam (*Haneef*). But the man who prays to others than God and leans to any other side from the way of God, is not a true Muslim. He is deprived of the blessings which are granted to the righteous, and the lip-homage which he offers to God will soon degener-

ate into a total desertion of the Divine cause. Inclining to God only partially is also the cause of laxity in and indifference to prayers, for to whatever direction a man turns himself, his soul and heart turn in the same direction, and his heart becomes hardened with regard to the side from which he has diverted his faculties. Thus is the heart hardened gradually against God by leaning at first a little to the other side. To pray to others than God is, therefore, a fatal spiritual disease. The Lord God is a jealous God and He does not like that others should be prayed to or worshipped along with Him and cuts off from Himself the man who gives a share to others in his devotions. But at the same time constancy and regularity in the observance of prayers is the way to perfect righteousness, for prayers incline the heart to God and thus by and by lead to a total severance of all other connections. We confess the Unity of God in words but practically we show it in our prayers. Both our confession and practice are fruitless without a sincere heart and an obedient soul which is conscious of its nothingness and submissiveness to God. It is prayer with these requisites that is accepted by God as stated in the verse ادعوني استجب لكم "Call on me and I will listen to you."

It might be objected that if prayer can effect an object, one need not resort to the means for its attainment. This is a misunderstanding of the scope of prayer. Muslim Law does not forbid men to look for the means. In fact the search for means is a prayer, while prayer is the fountain-head of means, for the attainment of an end. But I should say that it behoves us to seek means by means of prayer itself, for means are not forbidden to us. The life of every prophet sent by God affords an illustration of this. Almighty God had little need of the help of men but there came a time upon every prophet when he had to cry out for help and say, من انصاري الى الله, "Who will be my helper in the cause of God?" But this is not the cry of a helpless and destitute man; it is the cry of a teacher whose object is to teach his people that while they pray to and trust in God, they should not neglect the means for the attainment of an end, for looking for the means is also a kind of prayer to God. Had they not this object in view, they should not have cried for help, for they had a perfect faith in God and an absolute certainty of the fulfilment of His promises. They knew that Almighty God had assured them of His help in this

very life and said to them *إنا لننصر رسلكم والذين آمنوا في الحياة* "Of a certainty will We assist Our apostles and the faithful men in this life." Now the promised help of God comes through men, for it is He who inspires them to help His apostle. The real Helper is only God, who is the most excellent Master, Advocate and Helper. This world and its assistance have no worth in the eyes of the true prophets of God, and their call for assistance is meant only to indicate a plainer way of praying to God. They regard it as a sin to entertain the idea that men can do something for them, for they look upon God as the sole administrator of their affairs and put their whole trust in Him. The charge of their affairs is in the hands of Almighty God, and they are commanded by Him to call others to their assistance. They seek not the assistance of others, but the men through whom Divine assistance will come to them, which they know must surely come. In fact they anticipate the assistance of God, and looking forward to it before its actual arrival they make haste to receive it. A superficial observer would think that they were seeking the assistance of men but the reality is that they are calling men to receive Divine blessings and mercy by becoming the agencies of heavenly assistance. This is the secret of the call for help made by the prophets of God. They do not seek assistance at earthly doors or trust in others than God, for this according to them borders upon unbelief. Their object in calling men to their assistance is to make them the recipients of the gifts of God and to inspire them with Divine majesty and awe. For sacred and righteous men like the prophets it is impossible to cry for help to insignificant mortals, for the Unity of God pervades their hearts, and the essence of Divine Unity is that Almighty God should be recognised as the sole Giver of all gifts to whom alone in time of need men must cry, and as the only Healer of all diseases and the only Remover of all difficulties. This is the true interpretation of *لا اله الا الله* The word *الله* means the true object of desire, love and worship, and unless a man makes God as the true and sole object of his desire, love and worship, he is devoid of the true beauty and grandeur of Islam.

In short, it is impossible for a man to find true delight and heavenly enjoyment in prayers if he looks to others than God or cries to them in time of need. The enjoyment of bliss can be obtained

only when impure thoughts, unholy ideas and evil plans are all burned like chaff, vanity and self-esteem being annihilated submissiveness and lowliness take their place, and a man becomes the true servant, the true lover and the true worshipper of God. Prayers in fact are the best and most excellent means to teach true and perfect humility. Let every one who wishes to establish a true connection and a holy association with God bear in mind that he can attain to this state of heavenly union only by regularity in and constancy at his prayers. But I do not mean that he should make only his body assume certain stated postures and his tongue utter some words, but that his soul with all its inclinations and emotions should walk in true submission to God and become wholly devoted to prayers. This is also the secret of the sinlessness of the prophets. They are so lost in the love of God that they have no inclination or passion of their own and are wholly devoted to God. I wonder when I see people who have set up others with God, such as the Hindus who worship all sorts of idols including idols of male and female reproductive organs, and the Christians who worship the dead body of a mortal. They have devised different means which they think would bring salvation to them. The Hindus, for instance, believe that a bath in the Ganges or a pilgrimage to some famous *Tirath* takes away their sins, while the Christians are under the wrong impression that a bath in the blood of Jesus, i. e., a belief in his supposed death upon the cross, is sufficient to cleanse them of all sorts of sins and to save them from falling into evils. But it can be easily seen that both these people are the dupes of fatal errors. So long as the causes of sin are not removed, a mere external purification or the entertaining of a peculiar belief, can give no happiness or satisfaction to the heart. It is the internal purification, a pure transformation of the soul, which strikes at the root of sin and destroys the sinful nature, and thus brings man to true salvation. But there is a lesson in it for one who reflects. As it is necessary to wash away the external impurities to keep the body in a sound and healthy condition, in a like manner spiritual uncleanness which is the result of the impurities of the heart and of unmortified desires and lusts cannot be removed except by the pure and clear water of true repentance. The spiritual system corresponds to the physical system and as there are laws prevailing in the one, so there are also in the other.

I would also point out here the cause which gives rise to sin. When the love of others than God takes possession of the human heart, a kind of rust gathers upon it and its transparency is gradually darkened. Instead of being the habitation of God it becomes the habitation of others and is removed farther off from God. This is the cause of sin and this is the root from which *shirk* (setting up others with God) springs. But when the love of God alone predominates in the heart and has controlling power over it to the exclusion of all other things, it consumes all foreign elements and chooses it as its own seat. This gives rise to uprightness and integrity and restores to the heart its original purity. It may cause a little pain to restore a broken bone to its place, but if this step is not taken at the proper time, it will cause a far greater pain and ultimately the bone itself shall have to be removed. Similarly it may appear a little difficult at the outset to walk in uprightness and mortify the carnal desires, but if these difficulties are once faced, eternal happiness is the result, whereas to eschew them is sure to lead to eternal and immense pain. I have said above that sin arises from the love of others than God. Progress in the love of God and in faith to Him is, therefore, the only true remedy for it, for when the love of God reigns in the heart, the internal lusts and carnal desires are all mortified and sin is consumed.

The feeling of death also helps a man to refrain from sins. If a man keeps in mind the transitoriness of this life and thinks of his end, he would not venture to commit sins or transgress the Divine commandments, and having obtained a new faith in God, he would feel repentance and contrition for his former sins and transgressions. How transitory is this life which passes away in the twinkling of an eye! Why is man regardless of his end then? Why does he waste away his days in blind obedience to his carnal passions and desires? Consider how the Holy Prophet kept his death in constant remembrance that his followers might learn a lesson from him. If he kept his end before him, notwithstanding his perfect purity of mind and holiness of heart on account of which he was made the perfect Guide for the whole world and for all times, how much more should we? In fact whatever the Holy Prophet did was to set an example for us to follow. The life of the Prophet is a practical illustration of the injunctions of the Holy Quran. He was made a Prophet for the whole world, for in

his person was manifested every excellence that man can possess. It is to this that the verse refers: *اَنْتَ لِعَالِي خَلْقٍ عَظِيمٍ* "Verily thou dost possess the highest moral excellences." He was, therefore, made the last of prophets, for in him were terminated the excellences of perfect prophethood. The object with which prophets were sent reached its perfection in the person of the Holy Prophet and this is the true interpretation of the finality of prophethood in him.

It should be borne in mind that *istiqamat* or uprightness is the highest stage in the spiritual development of a man, the goal to which he aspires. The sufis call it *fana* or annihilation of self. The *Sirat-i-Mustaqim*, i.e., the path of uprightness, has also been understood to signify the annihilation of self, i.e., a complete subjection of the soul and its passions and inclinations to God, and a mortification of lusts and carnal desires. Most of those who do not submit their own inclinations and passions to the will of God, leave the world with great grief on account of their failures, and find at last that what they thought to be their gain turned out to be a great loss. Islam teaches us that failure is the result of insincerity. When a man disregards God, the wrath of God descends upon him and makes his undertakings a failure. But those who are blessed of God, keep always in sight the noble principle that this world is not a lasting world, and that we must soon pass away from it as the former generations have passed away. To such men death always seems to be at the doors and old age is particularly a sign of its near approach.

In short, if it is borne in mind that this world and all its pleasures must end soon, the wise man will not resort to unlawful ways of enjoying these pleasures. What the hand of death must take away forcibly from him, he should be ready to forsake before that hour, if it is against the will of God. The world and its comforts are really means to a greater end, i.e., devotion to and the worship of God. Do not think that while you are given to the pleasures of this world, God will be pleased with you. The blind man does not forsake the pleasures of this world nor give any preference over them to the true delight which is granted to the faithful in the worship of God, though the Word of God may say it. The Word of God which is the Holy Quran, promises great blessings and eternal happiness to the faithful, but no heed is paid to its promises. The fool is ready to suffer

all hardships and face every difficulty for the satisfaction of his bodily desires, but the slightest difficulty in the path of God throws him into confusion and fills his mind with doubts. Ah ! that he could see the insignificance of the transitory and impure pleasures of this world when compared with the everlasting bliss and heavenly enjoyment of the next world. What he thinks to be a thorny field is a bed of roses, and that which seems to him pleasure is really pain.

To overcome all these difficulties there is only one way which has been tried thousands of times by the righteous servants of God. It is the *Salat* or prayers. The *Salat* is a prayer (supplication) to God which saves a man from falling into evil and unrighteous deeds and entitles him to walk in virtue and righteousness and be a recipient of the Divine gifts and blessings. It has been said that Allah is the *ism-i-a'zam* (the great name) of God which means that it comprehends all the attributes of God and denotes the perfection of the Divine Being. Consider prayers now. They are preceded by a call which begins with the words *الله أكبر* "Allah is great," and ends with *لا اله الا الله* "Nothing deserves to be worshipped except Allah." So the Muslim prayers both begin and end with the name of Allah, and this is an eminent distinction which no other form of devotion can claim. In the Muslim prayers it is Allah who is sought for in the beginning, and Allah who is sought for in the end. No other religion or form of worship in the world has such a noble object in view. Now Allah as already pointed out is the great name of the Divine Being, *i. e.*, it comprehends all His attributes and is significant of His perfection, and it is with this name that both the call to prayers and the prayers themselves begin and end. *Istiqamat* or uprightness in man corresponds to the great name of Allah. In other words uprightness is the means by which a man can attain to perfection. This is what is indicated in the words *اهدنا الصراط المستقيم* "Guide us in the path of uprightness." On another occasion the Holy Quran says : *ان الذين قالوا ربنا الله ثم استقاموا تتنزل عليهم الملائكة لا تخافوا ولا تحزنوا* "Those who bring themselves under the providence of Allah, (*i. e.*, occupy a place opposite the great name of God), then walk in uprightness, (*i. e.*, manifest qualities which are a requirement of the great name of man), the angels descend on them and they have no fear or sorrow." *Istiqamat* is the one thing

to be desired. There is a position of *istiqamat* for everything and this it is said to acquire when it stands erect in its place. In other words, the true position of everything is a position of *istiqamat* for it. Therefore the man who does not walk in uprightness leaves his true position and cannot attain to human excellence.

The bliss of prayers is realized when the great name of man falls opposite the great name of God, *i. e.*, when man shows uprightness and calls upon none but God, not even upon the idol of his own desires. In this state the truth of *ادعوني استجب لكم* "Call upon. Me, I will hearken to you," is fully realized. Every man should therefore, try as hard as he can to walk in uprightness and to attain it with austerity, for his prayers will then be listened to. The acceptance of prayer is now generally denied in the world, but it is to be deplored that people complain of the non-acceptance of prayer though they never make their conditions suitable to its acceptance. Until *istiqamat* is acquired, the pleasure of the acceptance of prayer can never be realized. When a man walks in uprightness, he is blessed in this very world with a calm repose and tranquility of mind. Apparent failures and great difficulties do not then disturb the peace of his mind. But as to those who are ignorant of the nature and reality of prayer, the slightest failure burns their hearts like a flame of fire and taking away their peace of mind leaves them in a hell. It is to this state of burning over failures that the following verse refers : *نازل الله الموقدة التي تطلع على الانفة* "The flame of fire burned by God that ascends over the hearts."

There is another point worth mentioning. The Holy Prophet had to depart and thus a great exemplar, the most excellent agency that showed the path to God, had to be taken away from the companions. So they were told: *قل ان كنتم تحبون الله فالتبعوني يحببكم الله* "Say if you love God, then walk in my footsteps and God will love you." Now no one can be the beloved of God except the upright man. To renew and increase the love of the followers for their Holy Master, they were enjoined to invoke Divine blessings on the Holy Prophet, and this was made a part of their prayers, so that their love for the upright one should ever be on the increase and thus lead them to uprightness. It is admitted by all Muslims that spiritually the Holy Prophet lives for ever. The *Sufis* say that the names of the reformers are manifestations

of the name of the Holy Prophet in some one or other of its aspects. The excellences of prophethood terminated in the perfect Guide, but their manifestations will always continue to appear in the world through the successors of the Holy Prophet till the day of judgment. I say to you truly that even now Almighty God has raised such a one among you. Aye with His hand He has established a dispensation and sent a messenger, and he it is who is speaking to you. The mercy of God has come down upon earth: therefore pray to Him and ask for uprightness, and invoke the blessings of God on the Holy Prophet for this is the only way to uprightness. Remember the beauties and goodness of the Holy Prophet and pray to God that He may raise his dignity still higher and crown his mission with still greater success. Then will you taste the sweet fruit of the acceptance of prayer, for there are only three ways to it; firstly, that indicated in the verse *قل ان كنتم تحبون الله فا تبعونى يحبكم الله* "Say if you love God, then follow me and God will love you"; secondly, that spoken of in the verse *يا ايها الذين آمنوا صلوا عليه وسلموا تسليما* "O ye faithful! pray for peace and the blessings of God on the Holy Prophet;" and thirdly, the grace of God.

The Book of Man.

Some time ago we referred in this journal to the fate which the Bible, once known as the "Book of God," met at the hands of the higher critics and all advanced Christian thinkers. Upon this some of the pious people ran into paroxysms of indignation and boasted of the scientific refutations of the higher critical theories having been made public in England. We are not aware whether the call of Mr. Corfe has been responded to or whether it has fallen only upon dull ears. At any rate it is certain that the supposed scientific refutations have no actual existence but are only creations of the brains of some Bibliolaters. The Bible is daily losing ground and is every day more and more generally being recognised as the book of man. And these new views of the Bible are not limited to Christian countries but are widely disseminated in other lands—in heathen countries to which Missionaries are sent to convert people to the dogmas which are fast

losing their hold in Christendom. It is an open secret now that the Bible is dead. Of course the letters and words have not vanished away but they have lost the sanctity given to them by the Christians for nineteen hundred years. It was formerly looked upon, with all its indecencies and absurdities, as the pure Word of God ; it is now admitted to be full of errors, immoralities and absurdities. It is not wonderful that the Christians have seen these things in the Bible, but the wonder is that their eyes remained so long shut to these glaring faults. Nor should it be imagined that the Bible was actually living up to this moment and it is dead only now. It remained the national fetish of Christianity and none ever approached it to discover its real worth. Thousands of men otherwise educated worshipped it blindly and never questioned what it contained.

In India this position is now generally recognised among the educated classes, and even the ministerial and Missionary circles have largely been disillusioned of the error, though the natives are still kept ignorant of the real state of things. They are never told to take the Bible as it is now generally recognised among the Christians. On the contrary, in religious discussions, the impudent assertions are still made that the Bible is the pure Word of God and that it contains nothing human. It is affected that the Bible is inerrant, though there is hardly any sane Christian who actually believes it to be so. It is a pity that for the mean object of gaining some adherents, false representations are made, and these pass as genuine among ignorant people. Thus has religion been degraded into party opinions. But the spell of the Bible has been disenchanted and the "treasure of truths" has after all been found to be a mass of errors, and whatever pains are taken to conceal these facts, they cannot remain hidden for a long time.

It must be still fresh in the memory of our readers that last year the subject of Higher Criticism was taken up for consideration in the Bengali Christian Conference, upon which we made some remarks which elicited an appeal from Mr. Corfe to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The same subject has been recently taken up in the Lahore Diocesan Conference and a paper on it was read by the Rev. J. W. Papworth on Friday, the 13th November, 1903. The *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore has published parts of this

paper in its issue of 17th November under the heading of "The Higher Criticism of the Bible" with the significant remark that "The subject of Mr. Papworth's paper was the Higher Criticism, in which he gave a review of the conclusions resulting from that criticism which are now *generally accepted by intelligent Christian opinion.*" (Italics are ours). We heartily endorse this remark of the Lahore daily. Only we are sorry to note that Rev. Papworth has not done full justice to the question inasmuch as he has left out of consideration the higher critical views regarding the Divinity and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. These are among the greatest errors in the Bible and the Higher Critics have denied both. We cannot say that Mr. Papworth had not the courage to make these revelations before a Christian audience. He made many other statements equally if not more subversive of the Christian religion. In fact, when it is admitted that "the human element with its finite limitations largely abounds" in the Old and New Testaments, the Divinity of Jesus and his resurrection fall to the ground.

Some of the remarks of Mr. Papworth may be quoted here. The lecturer observed in the course of his paper—

"Fifty years ago there were millions of educated Christians who looking upon the Bible with the eyes of pre-critical dogmatists—regarded it almost as a miraculous fetish,.....Even had this view been as correct, as it is contrary to every phenomenon of the Bible itself, and to all that we learn from history, from science, from criticism, from psychology, from comparative religion, from the plain results of literary and linguistic criticism—results have clearly shown that this imagined stupendous and abnormal miracle has turned out to be purely useless. For, taking this book in hand, millions of Christians who have held the view that it is in every word, syllable and letter, the very and direct utterance of God, have yet proved themselves so unable to ascertain its true meaning that they have drawn from it not only the most antagonistic but in some cases, even the most pestilent and abhorrent conclusions. But in light of the Higher Criticism, this view of the nature of Biblical records is no longer tenable;.....It is found that in matters of history, chronology, science, the Bible in its details is not exempt from the possibilities of error; its revelation is progressive; and in its earliest pages avowedly imperfect; the human element with its finite limitation largely abounds.....This is the change of view which has been accomplished silently, yet certainly, since Essays and Reviews first saw the light, a change which the late Archbishop of York spoke of 'as one of the most remarkable features

in the life of this present generation; and it has been brought about by the Higher Criticism."

As to the authorship of the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua, the lecturer regarded it as "absolutely proven" that "parts of these documents, at least in their present form, cannot be much, if at all, anterior to the epoch of the return from the exile." And he says further on, "If it be asked what then becomes of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, which was implicitly believed so many centuries? The answer is that it must, of course, be given up. The book nowhere lays claim even indirectly, much less directly, to having been written by Moses." All early records are then shown to be traditional or legendary and not historical as has hitherto been supposed, and Mr. Papworth then continues:—"That there is nothing rash or arbitrary in the belief that in these earliest records of revelation, the holy spirit used traditions and legend for the purpose of instruction, is shown by the fact that S. Paul, S. Peter, and S. Jude, incorporated Jewish legend in their own inspired teaching. This New Testament use of legends does not stamp them as authentic history; they remain legends although embodied in holy Writ, but they serve their purpose of illustration and that is enough." Here is a Christian lecturer admitting plainly before a Christian audience that the human element abounds in both the Old and the New Testament—a fact which is often denied by the over zealous supporters of the Divinity of Jesus. The correspondent of the *Epiphany*, whose letter appears in its issue of December 12th, 1903, under the heading of "Islam," will find the answer to his questions in these remarks of Mr. Papworth and as they come from a Christian, we hope they would give him satisfaction.

The New Testament books share the fate of the Old Testament and the Gospels are traced to various sources, to the great discomfiture of those who look upon these contradictory stories as the revelation of God. The Bible is thus shown to be, from beginning to end a code of human writings. The truth of the Bible being thus severely shaken, the lecturer then proceeds to give a certain color to the claim set up for it. He says:—

"In conclusion, if it be asked in what way do these irrefragable critical conclusions affect our estimate of the Bible and modify our traditional views of the dogma of inspiration? the question deserves on every ground a serious answer.

"As regards the Bible, those who love the Bible most, those who have most deeply profited by the Divine teaching which it contains, ought to be more jealously careful than any others that they do not blindly and wilfully adopt for it a claim which it never makes for itself.* They should strive not to mingle their conception of it with things which, as earnest and prayerful consideration ought to convince the most stereotyped intelligence, are wholly incapable of proof, even if they be not, as the vast majority of the ablest Christian scholars and thinkers are now convinced, demonstrable falsities. To worship a book as absolutely Divine throughout, when it abounds in traces of human handiwork and human limitations, is nothing short of idolatry, even if it be disguised under the name of bibliolatry. The extravagant fiction that the sacred writers were 'not only penmen, but pens of the Holy Ghost,' and that all they say is infallibly true and equally Divine, is directly contrary to the teaching of Christ and his Apostles. It is an error which has been fruitful of many of the darkest superstitions and crimes which have tortured and degraded the human race. Monstrous superstructures of priestly tyranny and usurpation have, to the curse of nations, been built like inverted pyramids on the narrow apex of perverted texts. The treatment of partial human documents, which enshrine Divine lessons, as though these documents were themselves, throughout their whole extent, supernatural, has led to the unnatural systems of exegesis which have prevailed for centuries of ignorance. Such a dogma, in many instances, degraded the words of Holy Scripture into meaningless or insoluble enigmas."

Had these remarks proceeded from a Muhammadan, they would have thrown many ignorant Christians into fits of rage. But happily we have a Rev. gentleman speaking in a Christian meeting to a respectable Christian audience, and his views are not only endorsed by a Christian paper, but it is also stated that no intelligent Christian entertains the opposite views. If there is anything surprising in Mr. Papworth's speech, it is his failure to deal fully with the subject of the Divinity and Resurrection of Jesus as expounded by the Higher Critics. It is hoped that we will soon have all these views openly preached from the pulpit and the giant of Christianity being thus minimised, the money that is lavishly squandered for the propagation of error and falsehood, will be turned to a more beneficial use. Having stated this Christian view of the Bible, we are, we hope, absolved of the duty of replying to such cant as regularly appears in the columns of the *Epiphany*, an illustration of

* We have italicised these words to draw the reader's attention to the fact that there is only one book in the world that claims to be the pure Word of God and free from every error, i. e., the Holy Quran.

which is afforded in the letter of an *intelligent* Christian appearing in the issue already referred to, wherein the writer has the impudence to repeat all those foolish assertions which were hitherto generally repeated by his profession. His claim for the "pristine purity" of the Bible, is condemned on Christian evidence, and we need not further trouble ourselves about it.

It now remains for us to see what claim can be set up for the Bible when all these things have been said about it. It is at the most a combination of history and legend, and a mixture of truth and falsehood. The miraculous which forms about three-fourths of the Bible is to be included in the latter class, and thus nothing is left in it except a few moral precepts which are common to all ethical codes. Nay, considering the amount of error in which truth is hidden in the Bible, it may even be questioned whether the truth it contains has any value. Mr. Papworth seems to deny the authority of the Bible even in religious discussions. If this is true, and we do not mean to contradict him on this head, the Bible is quite useless. The evil it can do is far greater than the insignificant benefits which are likely to be drawn from it. At any rate it cannot be trusted as a guide in spiritual matters, nor should it be relied upon for salvation. This is the direct result of Mr. Papworth's paper, although to guard himself against it he says in the beginning that it contains all that is necessary for salvation. But when the miracles are denied, not only is the historicity of Gospels shaken, but the only evidence of the Christian religion is rejected. In fact Christianity is demolished as soon as the erroneousness of the Bible is recognised, and it is simply absurd on the part of these men to call themselves Christians. They do not believe in the Divinity of Jesus or in his rising from the dead, and thus reject both Trinity and Atonement. What is left to them but the name of Christianity, and this, though kept for a time, will have soon to be thrown off.

Since the truth of the Bible has been assailed and the position of the verbal inspiration of the Bible has been shown to be vulnerable, a new authority is claimed for Christianity in what is called

the Christian experience. This is only catching at straws like a drowning man. Christianity exists nowhere outside the Bible and the Christian experience itself is based on the Bible. The belief in the Divinity of Jesus and in his resurrection and ascension form the chief features of Christianity, and no sane man in the world finds them written on the tablet of heart. The Bible is the only authority for them, and its truth in all historical narratives is a matter of grave doubt. But if these doctrines are denied as is done by the Higher Critics, by whom it is plainly avowed that Jesus was nothing more than a mortal, that he was not sinless or perfect, that he did not work any miracles, and that he did not rise from the dead or ascend to heaven, nothing remains of Christianity in their hands. Christianity stands or falls with the Divinity and resurrection of Jesus, and if these are legends, as the Higher Critics hold, there is not a particle of truth in Christianity. In fact the Christian experience is nothing but a delusion, and a creation of the brains of those who, conscious of the erroneousness of the Bible, have not yet the courage to throw off the cloak of Christianity.

A Christian Missionary on Islam.

Under the heading of "Difficulties in educating Moslems," the *Missionary Review of the World* publishes a letter "by one who works among them," and who, we may add, seems to have experienced a dead failure in his attempts at evangelization. He was, therefore, bound to send handsome reasons of his failure, lest he might be called back. To hide the fact that this dead failure is due to the absurdity of the Christian dogmas of Trinity and Atonement as compared with the simple and sensible monotheistic teaching of Islam, the Missionary gentleman has cast scruples to the winds in misrepresenting Islam. He finds the "historic temper" of Islam manifested "in the burning of the great Alexandrian library." What a falsehood! Invented by one Christian, it is carried on by the succeeding generations. Abulpharagius gave this tale to the world in his "Dynasties." He relates that John, surnamed *Philoponus*, request-

ed Amrou, the conqueror of Egypt, to spare the royal library of Alexandria, but the Arabian chief, though himself willing "to gratify the wish of the grammarian," burned the library in obedience to the order of the Caliph Omar, and it is related that "the volumes of paper or parchment were distributed to the four thousand baths of the city and such was their incredible multitude that six months were barely sufficient for the consumption of this precious fuel." A monstrous lie! It is strongly probable that Philoponus was not alive at the date of his alleged conversation with the conqueror. This has been argued in a footnote to Gibbon's history where it is said: "As all writers are silent respecting it (*i. e.*, such longevity of the age of Philoponus as is consistent with the truth of this incident) we may infer that he died long before the time at which he is said by Abulpharagius to have had this extraordinary interview with Amrou." Gibbon says: "For my own part, I am strongly tempted to deny the fact and the consequences. The fact is indeed marvellous. 'Read and wonder' says the historian himself; and the solitary report of a stranger who wrote at the end of six hundred years on the confines of Media, is overbalanced by the silence of two annalists of a more early date, both Christians, both natives of Egypt, and the most anciency of whom, the patriarch Eutychius has amply described the conquest of Alexandria." And he sarcastically adds after noting his reasons for rejecting this incident: "But if the ponderous mass of Arian and Monophysite controversy were indeed consumed in the public baths, a philosopher may allow, with a smile, that it was ultimately devoted to the benefit of mankind." The Christians ought to remember that if Omar were the rigid man he is here described to be, he could not have shown the leniency to Christians which he did at Jerusalem. When requested by the patriarch to perform his devotions in the church, he refused and afterwards gave his reason: "Had I yielded to your request, the Moslems of a future age would have infringed the treaty, under the color of imitating my example."

Really the Christian author of the tale concerning the destruction of the Alexandrian library has imputed the guilt of a Christian to a Muslim. As a matter of fact the library which is alleged to have been burned by the Muslims, was destroyed 250 years before the invasion of Egypt by Amrou, by Bishop Theophilus, and the valua-

ble collections thus destroyed were never afterwards replaced. Gibbon writes: "I shall not recapitulate the disasters of the Alexandrian library, the involuntary flame that was kindled by Caesar in his own defence, or the mischievous bigotry of the Christians who studied to destroy the monuments of idolatry;" and again, "The valuable library of Alexandria was pillaged or destroyed; and near twenty years afterwards, the appearance of the empty shelves excited the regret and indignation of every spectator, whose mind was not totally darkened by religious prejudice." But the tale is industriously circulated by the Christians to this day, notwithstanding that its falsehood has been demonstrated, to conceal the guilt of a Christian and to falsely impute it to a Muhammadan ruler. Will the religion of Christ gain by this falsehood?

The same bigotry is manifested in other objections against Islam. "Would not a Muhammadan living in polar regions question his sacred book on the solar disarrangement of its hours for prayer?" Substitute days for hours, and the "Muhammadan" in the above question may be easily replaced by the "Christian." How will Sunday be kept in the polar regions, which has been appointed "by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages" as the day of Divine worship and which "in Scripture is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath" (Confession of Faith)? How does the Rev. gentleman who objects to the Muslim prayer, solve the difficulty with regard to Sunday which must be kept by *all* men in all ages to the *end* of the world? Coming into the world 600 years before Islam, it was the duty of Christianity to solve the difficulty relating to the polar regions, but if it has failed so solve it, Islam has not. The Christian Missionaries in their impatience to heap up objections against Islam, forget their own faith and teachings, and on account of this, they are often involved in difficulties from which they cannot get out except by taking back their objections. Directions for the regulation of prayers in such cases are plainly contained in traditions, and we are told to judge the times by the length of an ordinary day and night. Similarly in case of fasts. For the Holy Quran says expressly: لا يَكْلِفُ (الله) نفساً (لا وسعها) "God does not burden any soul beyond its power." Since a fast for six months is beyond the power of man, therefore

the case falls under the verse quoted above and the period of an ordinary day may be measured for the purpose. Moreover, it is folly to dispute the wisdom of general commandments in exceptional cases, especially when the case would fall under the general exception provided for beforehand, "God does not burden any soul beyond its power." The provision is thus made even for the polar regions though they are almost uninhabited in comparison with the vastly inhabited regions, where no such difficulty is experienced in the observance of fasts and prayers. But it would appear the Bible fails to afford any explanation of the Sunday difficulty and the Christians will have either to follow the Muslim rule or say farewell to Sunday once for all. If the Rev. gentlemen who are so fond of finding faults with others, kept within bounds and refrained from urging objections to which their own faith is subject, their task would be much reduced. But it is true, that nothing will be left in their hand then. To question general laws on such grounds is the height of absurdity. The Quran states general laws and they may be adapted to particular circumstances. Cannot the hours be so regulated at the polar regions, that during the time which represents an ordinary day a man may say prayers five times! Have they not there their nights and days, *i. e.* hours of rest and hours of work? According to these the hours of prayer may also be regulated.

Another objection against Islam is that it has "an Arabic Quran," and, therefore, it cannot be universal. With due respect to the logical profundity of the gentleman, we are unable to understand the force of the argument. We should be permitted to say that it is nonsensical talk. If the Gospels can be universally preached by being written in Greek on the scanty authority of Hebrew traditions of doubtful accuracy, why cannot the Quran by being revealed in Arabic, and handed down safely to us. Nay, there is something more. The Gospels are preached universally in violation of the orders of Jesus that they should be preached to none but his own tribe, *i. e.*, Jews, while the universality of the Holy Quran is objected to notwithstanding its plain assertion that it has been sent for *all* people. When gentlemen like the correspondent of the Missionary Review of the World are sent out to preach the Gospels, one is led to conclude that there is a great scarcity of

Missionaries, because intelligent men now-a-days take to more sober and serious work.

There is, however, one qualification which recommends the gentleman as specially suited for work among the Muslims. He knows well how his predecessors won controversies by telling lies ; and thus the path has been chalked out for him. The following anecdote for which his authority is a gentleman of the same profession, is related: "An Englishman who had embraced Muhammadanism once challenged the truth of Christianity on the ground of the narrative of the Bethlehem star. He claimed that the Bible stands or falls with the truth of the story of the star of Bethlehem which it contains, that Christianity stands or falls with the Bible, and that the narrative of the star being scientifically impossible, the whole fabric falls together. His challenge was taken up by an evangelical Greek preacher, who adduced the well-known Muhammadan story, how the moon one night descended from the sky and passed up one of the sleeves of the prophet's mantle and out the other. 'To what size,' asked the Christian 'was the moon reduced, or into how many fragments was it divided, when it passed through the sleeves of the prophet's mantle? How long was a time occupied in the transit, and what was the means by which it was effected?' What was the Englishman's answer, is not related. The Rev. gentleman will not blush if he is told that this "well-known Muhammadan story" is not contained in the Quran at all, nay, he will rather feel proud of his ignorance.

Vice, ignorance, hatred of learning, hypocrisy and every other evil is ascribed to Islam, which is described as a system "the aim of which is not to be true, but to seem true." Every good is reserved for the Gospel of Christ which is stated to be the "power of God unto salvation." The impertinence of the sheep of Christ is too revolting and their own assumption of moral superiority too sickening. They have not the least respect for their opponents' feelings, not the least desire to remain within the bounds of accuracy and honest criticism.

A Voice from the Antipodes.

To

The Editor "Review of Religions."

SIR,

I have received a copy of your very unique journal which I have read with much interest because presenting a new field of thought. Allow me to reply somewhat briefly to some of its assertions. I am glad that the orient and the occident are coming into close relations and that we can have a free interchange of thought. I would like to know something of all that is beautiful, good and true in all religions ; each one containing some truth and some falsehood ; yet, all religions of the world are but the radii of a circle whose centre is God.

When I say "*God*," I mean the infinite and eternal Presence, imminent in all things, permeating all life and all matter. This Presence is so imminent that it is self-evident.

In the September Review of 1903, a great deal of prominence is given to a certain "Dr. Dowie" of U. S. A. I do not think he holds the title of D. D. from any respectable institution. He must have assumed that title of Dr. In our country, people of sense, education and culture regard him as a clown or hypnotist of considerable ability. He has his credulous and ignorant followers hypnotized ; yet, no doubt, a hypnotist may do a vast amount of good if he uses his powers rightly. He, Dowie, has done a good thing in banishing dirt, drugs, alcohol and the use of tobacco ; and encouraging thrift, industry and economy among his people ; yet, to call such a man a representative of Jesus Christ, or of being Elijah incarnate would be a burlesque. He uses coarse invectives and epithets to which no Christian minister should ever condescend, which like a boomerang recoil on himself.

His life and his work will be ephemeral. To say that such a man has any private and exclusive relations with God, is preposterously absurd, and the same may be said of all the self-styled "pro-

phets " who have ever lived in the world including those in the Christian Bible.

To my mind the proposed duel of prayer between Dowie and the Prophet of India would be something like a sham battle with blank cartridges, *it would all end in smoke.*

God Almighty governs the universe, now and always, by immutable, unchangeable, inexorable LAW.

Everywhere, in all nature, in our minds and hearts, we see cause, cause, cause, and as a result, we see effect, effect, effect. No prayers can change or abrogate these laws. Obedience to them brings peace and happiness—disobedience brings misery. "God is no respecter of persons." No man can tell anything about the future except as he judges from cause to effect or, perhaps, intuitively.

In this respect no man ever had, or can have, any exclusive rights or power.

The idea, or theory, that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross, but revived and fled to India is too absurd to be discussed by sincere and educated Christians. I would not like to waste very much time and temper in debating such a myth.

Some Jew of similar character, some Nazarene, similar in life and disposition, some other Jesus, might have gone to India, lived and died there; but it was not our heroic and fearless Jesus Christ. He would not have been such a coward as to ignominiously fly from his country and friends in abject fear of any man or any set of men. It would have been an abrogation to all he had said, done and taught. It would be a subversion of his whole life—a contradiction of his spirit. No doubt, he courted death, met death fearlessly on the cross in the defence of free speech and the divine rights of conscience.

But the question is not where or how did he die? but how did he live, and what did he do?

It was the life, the teachings, the example of Jesus that saves men, not his death and not his blood.

No thoroughly educated, scientifically trained Christian minister,

in any church, teaches that he was God, or in any sense equal to Deity. He was simply a divine man with profound and original genius or inspiration (these words are synonymous). He was created in the image of God, a part of God, as all good men are, yet, he never claimed to be God, or equal to Him, but always said: "My father is greater than I."

Every man, like Jesus, is endowed with the trinity of attributes of Deity, moral, intellectual and spiritual power in a finite and limited sense. Jesus Christ was not perfect, he was not infallible. He made mistakes, he was not, even, always morally right, if the apostles reported him correctly, which is extremely doubtful. The man who would curse a fig tree for not having any fruit on it, we would consider insane or beside himself. The story about his scourging the money-changers with a lash, evidently manufactured, is a contradiction of his whole life, spirit and practices. We don't believe these and similar stories to be true. He probably lashed them with his tongue. There are a great many myths, legends and fables in the Old and New Testaments that thoroughly, scientifically educated Christians do not take literally or absolutely true. The story about Jonah and the Whale is evidently a fable, likewise the sun standing still, etc. Notwithstanding, the Old Testament contains some of the grandest truths ever known or taught.

The story about the resurrection of the body of Jesus is evidently a myth, concocted, no doubt, long after his death. The resurrection of the human body is a scientific impossibility.

There are so many arguments against the dogma that it is absolutely untenable, and is given up by most Christians. The man who teaches it to-day is considered an ignoramus. Each body, so resurrected, would be by a stupendous miracle. We do not believe in miracles; yet these bodies may be resurrected in flower, fruit and vegetable growth.

But one thing is absolutely certain; the soul or spirit of Jesus Christ was resurrected and appeared in etherealized and materialized form, to his disciples.

There is nothing strange or miraculous about such a resurrection,

The same thing has occurred thousands and millions of times before and since.

Jesus only showed us what all men might be and sometime will be. He is gone, yet his spirit still lives and moves among us.

I will close with a quotation from Renan: "It is Christianity disenthralled from all external forms that has enraptured lofty souls." "All ages shall proclaim among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus."

O. L. HARVEY,
West Lafayette, Ind.,
U. S. AMERICA.

We would have liked to print this letter without any comment but some of Mr. Harvey's mistaken views on important questions necessitate the following brief remarks. In the beginning of his letter he makes the amusing assumption that every religion contains "some truth and some falsehood." We call it an assumption because it is a groundless statement and no attempt has been made to support it by arguments. It is hardly conceivable that Mr. Harvey has studied all religions and that he is in a position to sift the truth from error in all of them. We are ready to admit that he has seen Christianity and found it answering to his description of all religions. He has our esteem for openly rejecting the falsehood he has met with in Christianity, but the generality of his statement is by no means tenable. He ought to have first pointed out some criterion for testing the truth and we would have shown him that Islam is the only religion which not only claims to be free from every error and falsehood, but also offers proof of this freedom from error, no other religion on the face of the earth satisfying either of these requisites. Moreover Mr. Harvey's own assertion necessitates the presence of some error in what he professes, and this, at least, *viz.*, that there is no religion free from falsehood, is a plain error. We hope he would on second thought realize the awkwardness of his position and spend more time and energy upon the enquiry whether there exists any religion whose principles are free from every error. The different religions are not radii but chords one of which and only one pass through

the centre. There is, therefore, one and only one true religion and it is the duty of every seeker after truth to search for it.

Again Mr. Harvey speaks of the uselessness of the prayer duel. On this head we reserve our remarks for the present, pointing out at the same time that the contest would not end "in smoke" but in fire which will consume the impostor and throw light on the truth of the righteous one who has acceptance in the sight of God. The wonderful works of God will be made manifest when that will be brought to pass which no mortal eye could see but which was revealed by Him to His servant.

We are then told of the immutability and inexorability of the laws of nature and of the inefficacy of prayer to change or abrogate them. This is, no doubt, the view of those who have no faith in God. The fact is that the acceptance of prayer by God and its efficacy is the only way to see and know God. Those who do not find Him by this path, are really groping in darkness. They do not know how powerful their God is. Nay, they are not certain of His existence. It was through this door that the prophets of God found Him. Mr. Harvey tells us that "the example, the teaching and the life of Jesus saves men," but he forgets that he set an example of praying to God, and taught it to his followers, and his whole life was a prayer to God. Unless Almighty God is recognised through His mighty powers, disclosed in His acceptance of prayers, and His wonderful knowledge disclosed in the revelation of prophecies, there is only a mock belief in God. There is a curtain drawn over the eye of materialism and it cannot see Him in His full glory and power unless that curtain is raised. But this only way to the recognition of God has long been shut to Christianity and hence the inability of the Christians to see Him. It is open in Islam and there is one in it who offers proof that Almighty God listens to prayers and reveals His wonders to such of His servants as He pleases. It is time to open the ear to his voice, for only thus is the face of God revealed. We would, therefore, ask Mr. Harvey to give a close attention to this all important subject and not to reject it with a few meaningless words. The subject of prayer has already been discussed to some extent in the past issues, and will be taken up again at a proper place and time.

The most amusing part of Mr. Harvey's letter is that relating to the escape of Jesus. Let all the facts established be granted, let it be a Syrian Jew who came to India, let it be a Nazarene, let it be the time of Jesus, let even the name be Jesus, let the fugitive's life and character be similar to those of Jesus, but still Mr. Harvey would take him for another man than the very Jesus represented or perhaps misrepresented in the Gospels. And when we have added, with Mr. Harvey's permission, that let it be the same Jesus who appeared in the disguise of a gardener, let it be the same Jesus whose wounds were seen and touched by the apostles, let it be the same Jesus to whose wounds the Ointment of Jesus, also called the Ointment of Apostles, was applied, let it be the same Jesus (Asaf) who went in search of lost sheep of Israel, let it be the same Jesus who went by the name of prince and prophet, let it be the same Jesus who preached the Gospel (Eushra), our established facts are all exhausted, but we cannot say whether Mr. Harvey is satisfied or not as to the identity of this Jesus with "our heroic Jesus." The reasons advanced by him are supposed by him to be too weighty to be shaken by any evidence however trustworthy. It is at first supposed that Jesus was too fearless to fly away to another country from fear of his enemies, and on this is based the whole reasoning. Now, in the first place, we do not say that it was altogether from fear of the Jews, that Jesus turned his steps eastward. He was aware that it was his duty to preach the Gospel to the ten lost Israelite tribes. He had spoken again and again of the lost sheep and, therefore, his visit to Afghanistan and Kasmere was in accordance with a pre-conceived plan. He had also dropped hints of his flight to some other country on other occasions, as for instance, when he said that a prophet was honored except in his native land. His visit to India was not due to his fear of the Syrian Jews but to his disappointment of their conversion and to Divine injunction. At the same time it cannot be denied that as a mortal he feared the Jews and, therefore, took the necessary precautions. This was not the only occasion on which he showed such fear, but he already used to fly away whenever there was danger to his life from the excited mobs. It is surprising that while Mr. Harvey denies infallibility, perfection, sinlessness, freedom from faults and moral uprightness to Jesus, and looks upon him as a man—a good man, no doubt—in all these respects,

he worships him as a God in respect of his fearlessness. What a strange contradiction ! If Jesus was not perfect and free from faults, if he was not morally? right on all occasions, why was it impossible that he should have given way to fear? It is an arbitrary distinction. Moreover it does not appear from the Gospels that he was so fearless as Mr. Harvey would represent him to be. And after all, Mr. Harvey has not a strong faith in the accuracy of the Gospels and the supposed fearlessness of Jesus, may only be an exaggeration like so many other exaggerations in those books. One thing is certain, *viz.*, that Jesus was a man, and to fear is no doubt human. It is the height of absurdity to reject so many concurrent evidences on the groundless excuse that Jesus was too heroic to have done such a thing.

“ But the question is ” says Mr. Harvey further on, “ not where or how did he die, but how did he live and what did he do.” But how in the world are we to know it if there is no accurate history of his life and doings, for the Gospels, Mr. Harvey assures us, are full of legends and untrustworthy. But since they must after all be resorted to as there is no other accurate or inaccurate history, we must, according to Mr. Harvey, cast out devils as Jesus did, walk on the water as Jesus walked, turn water in to wine as Jesus did and do a hundred other things which not only we cannot do but which are looked upon now as absurdities of a dark age. One thing is certain, therefore, that we cannot do, rather ought not to do, the great and peculiar deeds which are described in the Gospels as having been done by Jesus. Perhaps Mr. Harvey would next propose that we must not do what Jesus did but what he said. We ask him in all earnestness if there are Christians upon the face of the earth, and if he is one of them, who when smitten on the right cheek turn the other also, and when compelled to go a mile, go two and when obliged to part with their coats, give away the cloaks also, and when their hands commit a sin, cut them off, and when their eyes offend them, pluck them out. We do not deny their existence but wish to know the exact number of such Christians, and as to their whereabouts only this, whether they are confined in a lunatic asylum or not.

The fact is that while the Christians are beginning to see the absurdity of much that is said of Jesus in the Gospels, their blind

reverence for him, whether from fear of society or some other deep cause, is not totally given up. Jesus, though not now recognised as God, is still the fetish of the Christian people. Not a single word, not a single deed, that was said or done exclusively by Jesus, is believed to be reasonable to-day, but since through two thousand years the absurd belief has sunk into the very blood of the Christians, their imaginations are still overawed by the power of this spell, and notwithstanding their apparent rejection of the dogmas they are given expression to one way or another.

When all resources of magnifying Jesus have failed, there is a loud cry for the heroic example of Jesus in meeting death. Even supposing for the sake of argument that he faced death fearlessly, it cannot be argued that "among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus." Only a few months ago, Maulvi Abdul Latif, one of the most renowned men in Afghanistan and having the highest reputation for his sanctity and learning, met his death heroically for his faith. And what are the circumstances under which Jesus suffered? A carpenter by profession at first and exorciser of evil spirits then, he had collected a few men, some fishermen, round him, though he had not still "Where to lay his head." He had no home, nor had he a wife or children, for whom he should have cared, or who should have cared for him. In this helpless state the presence of a mob about him excited the suspicion of the authorities. But it was difficult to apprehend him for he was an obscure man. One of his favourite disciples however betrayed him for the paltry sum of thirty half crowns, and when he was seized not a single man remained with him. He was, therefore, quite helpless in the hand of the authorities, and the evidence of the Jews brought the extreme punishment of law upon his head. The night previous to his apprehension, he prayed to God the whole night long to be saved. Mr. Harvey will kindly point out what is particularly heroic in this whole story. Maulvi Abdul Latif, the Ahmadia Muslim martyr, showed far greater heroism and fearlessness. He had a great jagir both in Afghanistan and British India, he had his disciples amongst the highest officials of the Amir, he had a home as well as wife and children, he was reputed throughout the country for his sanctity and learning, and what makes his heroism almost unparalleled, he was repeatedly given chances of recantation and promises of being restored to his former honor and

dignity ; nay, the Amir himself had frequently urged him to renounce his belief in the Promised Me-siah and assured him that he would be then treated with due honor and respect, but he preferred his faith with a torturous death to worldly glory and honor with all its ease and comfort. The fact is that the glory of Jesus is not in his facing death but in his undertaking the long and tiresome journey to Afghanistan and Kashmere for the reclamation of his people. The Eastern Jews had so long been separated from their Syrian brethren that unless Jesus had true feeling of patriotism and a high sense of his duty, he would never have suffered the hardship which he bore for their sake. There is nothing in the whole life of Jesus comparable to this one noble act of subjecting himself to all sorts of sufferings for the sake of his people. And this is really the chief characteristic of all prophets. They not only teach the truth but also bear every hardship for the welfare of their people. In this respect too, as in all other respects, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, occupies a unique and eminent position among all the prophets, and hence his excellence above all of them. The sufferings of no prophet were so great as his and non bore them so patiently and perseveringly as he did. For thirteen long years he bore the cruellest persecutions and tortures of the Meccans without murmuring, and all this only because he invited them to the right path. On one occasion, all the Quresh chiefs assembled together and told the Holy Prophet that they were willing to make him their leader and lay their treasures at his feet only if he gave up preaching. To this the holy one replied that this he could not do even if the sun were placed on his right hand and the moon on his left. Does any incident in the life of Jesus present such an example ? Being disappointed the Quresh directed all their efforts to nip the new movement in the bud. The prophet as well as his followers were not spared any cruelty or torture that could be conceived of but all was borne with a patience and perseverance not to be met with in the life of any other prophet and his followers. And yet when the Holy Prophet subsequently vanquished Mecca and his cruel persecutors were all at his mercy, with a magnanimity which is unparalleled in the history of the world, he forgave them all. It is he of whom it can be said with truth that among the sons of men there is none born greater than he. He was great in his suffer-

ing and humility and great in his triumph and prosperity. Who else got an occasion to show such patience, perseverance and forgiveness? He is the great exemplar, and it is his example that, can raise men to the dignity of angels.

Review.

NEW TESTAMENT STORIES COMICALLY ILLUSTRATED.

This book has been published by the Truth Seeker Company, 28 Lafayette Place, New York. Though the comical element pervades it, yet it does not fail to give a serious lesson. There was a time when a dead man was raised to the dignity of God by pious zealots: he is now in the process of being taken down from that eminence and brought back to the level of mortals. This book indicates one of the modes in which that object may be effected. So far as it serves that purpose, it is interesting as well as instructive. The absurdity of the relations of the incidents is brought out before the reader by comical illustrations together with critical and sometimes humorous comments upon them.

The casting out of devils and the raising of the dead were two of Jesus' chief performances as stated in the Gospels, and they find an excellent representation in the book. The belief in demoniac possession belonged to the age in which the writers of the Gospels lived, and accordingly we find the list of Jesus' miracles swelled by some of these wonderful performances. On one occasion Jesus meets two men, "possessed with devils," who however at once recognise him as the Son of God, for such men are indeed in a position to recognise the Son of God. Jesus assails the hidden devils with his staff and the devils being thus tormented leave the men, and ask his permission to go into a herd of swine. One after another the devils fly out of the men and ride on the backs of the swine driving them at the same time "down a steep place into the sea." Such a sight is worth seeing at any cost. The "Son of God" runs after the

devils and they after the swine which are all drowned in the waters.

Another interesting scene is that representing the opening of the graves and the rising of the dead at the crucifixion of Jesus, the rising however not taking place till Sunday morning, the dead having the politeness "to sit in their open graves and wait for Christ to rise first." A ghostly skeleton crawls out of the grave and meets a citizen who shuns him on account of the bad smell. He then meets his wife who being terrified takes to her heels and the risen skeleton runs after her with assurances of being her own dear "Levi," but she would not stay. He comes next to his child but the tiny creature is frightened at the pale and ghostly figure and notwithstanding his demonstrations of love and tenderness for his child, flies away with shrieks at the sight of the death-like figure. The folly of this ghostly adventure culminates in the final scene when the skeleton thinks it is a 'vain world' and goes back like a sensible corpse to his grave." Such is the absurdity of the miracles supposed to have been wrought by Jesus. The book may be had from the publishers for one dollar (Rs. 3-2-0) in board covers and one dollar and fifty cents in cloth.

The Philosophy of Islam by Khaja Khan, B. A., is a beautifully printed book of 114 pages. It is a reprint of essays written by the author in the "Madras Review." For those who are interested in *Tasawuf*, it contains very useful information, giving its cosmological conception, psychological aspect, ethical basis, and historical development, and concluded with an account of the Muslim religious orders in the Deccan. It can be had for Re. 1 from the "Duty" Book Shop, M. A. O. College, Aligarh.

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