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the living human faces. They had measured the
ried human bodies also and had delved deep into
e heart of the world nations in order to have a feel
it. Undoubtedly they did not feel the need of creat-
g imaginative pictures or weighing, in modern
alances, the human beings of a million years ago.

Then, one has also to take into account the fact
that history itself is a distinct discipline which has
its own laws and traditions. So whosoever undertakes
research into it has to abide by those laws. He has
no right to frame hypotheses out of pure imagination
and make a fictional species run up and down the
corridors of time. One is perfectly entitled to express
one's views about any ancient race that had been
actually treading this planet which was either seen
by some reliable annalist or about whom some con-
crete evidence was available, whether in the shape
of ruins or traditions. But one is not at all authorised
to re-animate an imaginary race and present it to the
world without concrete evidence. In our view, the
theory of mankind as told by Darwin and other
scientists of his kind does not stand the test of history.
It is a mere fiction when placed by the side of recog-
nised historical evidence. Thus one cannot venture
to reject any incidence of pre-1858 history. The in-
formation which has reached us through scriptures
and in which millions upon millions of men have
believed over the ages and which form an invaluable

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part of man's heritage can in no way be distorted.

(When Darwin trotted out his theory, he had, perhaps, read only that part of the story which has been narrated in the Bible. He had not taken the trouble of casting a glance over the current books of history.) Darwin did not know that the history compiled by the Arab historians, notably by Ibn Sa'd, al-Idrisi, al-Tabari, al-Mas'udi, al-Mada'ini, Abu'l-Fida, al-Khara'iti, Ibn Kathir, Ibn Khaldun is so much coherent that every link of the human race is established and preserved like the branches of a magnificent tree. If Darwin had been an historian and had read the books of the Arab historians as well, he would have known that they, while describing man's advent, had not presented the Theory of Evolution. They believed in his descent. They believed that modern man's height and other measurements have suffered a decrease in comparison with his ancestors. According to them, the four generations nearest to Adam—whom they have named as Ad, Samud, Qahtan and Jurham—were of much heavier build than the present generation. They were taller and lived longer.¹⁰

These historians, unlike Darwin, had propounded their theories on the basis of concrete evidence. They had themselves seen the Yemenite caves which were built in the rocks and had huge entrances,

10. Abu'l-Fida, pp. 57-59; Mas'udi, Vol. II, pp. 141-43.

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obviously corresponding with the heights of the dwellers (They found human skeletons in the caves which indicated that a much taller race must have once dwelt there. If Darwin and his colleagues could base their observations on skeletons, why could not the Arab historians? They have an equal right to place reliance upon and describe what they have themselves witnessed.) Modern archaeologists have not shown as much interest in the relics of Yemen and San'a as they have done in respect of relics discovered elsewhere. If they had looked at these remains like the Arab historians did or had the opportunity of examining them more than a thousand years ago when they were in a much better condition, they would have come to the conclusion that the Ad, Samud, Qahtan and Jurham were a people who were bodily head and shoulders above the modern man. If Darwin or men of his thinking could not go to Yemen or San'a, they could at least find much around the Umayyads' mosque or Joannah's church in Damascus, which belonged to one of the ancient peoples and whose dimensions are the proof of their builder's immense physique. (We admit the Arab historians have not determined the period of time which separated Adam from Ad, Samud, Qahtan or Jurham) They thought it enough to mention that these races were the progeny of Noah's sons. These races were the

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first to lay the foundations of human civilisation and carve their homes out of mountain rocks.¹¹ What Darwin and other scholars of the post-1858 period found by way of human skulls or skeletons was recovered from the caves of a much later date which can claim no precedence over the contents of the caves of the Ad and Samud who were nearer to Adam. The evidence provided by later sources was bound to be of an inferior order in comparison with the earlier information. The Arab historians are certain that the cultural relics of Egypt are of a much later period than those of the Yemen and San'a, because they believed that Yabsir—whose son, Misr, gave the country her name—lived later than Ad, Samud and Qahtan.

Anyhow, if the human skeletons can form the basis of any theory, then those found by Sharif al-Idrisi, Ibn Sa'd and al-Mas'udi in the caves of the Yemen should have a prior right to serve as the basis, because not only do we have some information about the builders of these caves, but their annals form a lasting part of world history. Darwin's caves are as obscure as were their builders. It is true, the skeletons which the Arab prehistorians found during their investigations a thousand years ago are no more available and are not preserved like the mummified bodies of the Pharaohs. None the less,

11. Ibn Sa'd, Vol. I, p. 19.

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they, as historical record, are wholly dependable. Interestingly enough, the major part of this evidence was introduced to the world by German and French historians. So its place in history is indubitably recognised by the historians of the modern world.

KAUSAR NIAZI

Islamabad

31 March 1975

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THE GENESIS OF THE UNIVERSE

تکوین عالم

Who are we? Wherefrom have we come? How did the world begin? And what fate is it going to meet?

These are some of the questions which arise in the minds of all thinking men. Every soul is restless to resolve this puzzle. But the more the wise men pondered over these questions, the more complicated they grew, so much so that whosoever set out to find an answer to this mystery cried out in despair:

“What we have come to know at last
Is that we know nothing.”

Why did God create this universe? What was the idea behind this creation? The great minds of the world have not been able to resolve this mystery. Whoever has thought over the personality and attributes of God and on the splendid diversity in His creation had to declare at last: “Man is finite, God is infinite. How can the finite comprehend the infinite?”

→ A scientist accomplishes astonishing feats. His discoveries marvel the world. But when he muses

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over the beginning and the end of the world, he openly admits: "I feel as if I am gathering pebbles on a sea-beach." Socrates, no doubt, said that real knowledge consisted in knowing what man was and what relationship he bore with the Absolute Truth. All other knowledge, he said, was worthless. Yet he himself had not been able to define what kind of relationship existed between man and the Ultimate Truth or by what method that relationship could be established.

The poet's imagination can build fascinating mansions and attain wonderous heights. But when he, too, tries to peep into the mysteries of life, he has no option but to declare:

"We know not when the world began
And when it will end. ✓

It is a book whose opening and
The final chapters have been lost."

Yet others had to say:

"Nobody knows where lies the destination;
We only hear the jingling of the caravan bells."

The human intellect is a noble endowment indeed. But all admit that it cannot truly comprehend the whole scheme of things. Ibn al-Qayyim was true when he said that a man can weigh anything in the balance, but he would indeed be a fool if he asserts that he can weigh a mountain in it. The intellect undoubtedly is a guide, but if somebody thinks that

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he can fathom the depths of these secrets with this instrument, he is amusingly simple. It is for this reason that God Almighty has, out of His mercy, bestowed upon man an undying light of Divine revelation which has illumined his darkest moments. He has been raising those noble souls among men whom we call Prophets, and to whom were revealed the answers to these questions and to whose gaze were thrown open all the secrets which men longed to know about. "The Prophet tells what he perceives."

The writer of *al-Milal wa'l-Nihal* is correct in saying that the philosophers and men of worldly lores look upon the miracles of the Prophets exactly as the beasts watch men's strange activities. If the philosopher's denial of the prophetic miracles on the basis of his inadequate understanding can be an argument against miracles, why can't a beast's denial of man's achievements be equally an argument against them? In reality, where the human intellect ends, there begins the prophetic consciousness. Whatever the worth of their claim, those who deny the revelational truths can advance no cogent reason against these truths. Commenting on the foolhardiness of those who deny God's signs, the Qur'an says:

بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كَذَّبَتْ ثَوْرٌ بِطِينِهِ لَوَّىٰ بِهَا صِيفِيَّةً وَأَخَذَكَ الرَّحْمَنُ الْعَلِيمُ
بِذُنِّكَ إِذْ كُنْتَ كَاكِبًا ۖ فَاسْمِعْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكَ الْكَافِرِينَ

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كَذَلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَاَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ
كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ ۝

“Nay, they charge with falsehood that whose knowledge they cannot compass, even before the elucidation thereof hath reached them: thus did those before them make charges of falsehood: but see what was the end of those who did wrong!” (x. 40).

In other words, what decisive arguments do you possess against the Prophets' claim that God Almighty, out of His unique benevolence, had revealed unto them the realities which thus far had remained unexperienced? But the completest consummation of this process was attained in the Qur'an, which was revealed to the last of the Prophets—Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Although every verse of the Holy Qur'an reveals a truth—to whatever part I turn my gaze, beauty speaks out “here I lie”—none the less the Qur'an, with unequalled eloquence and brevity, has discussed all these matters in the story of Adam and Satan. It is for this reason that an endeavour has been made to keep this story as the central theme of this work.

ADAM (Peace be upon him)

Adam has been mentioned in nine chapters of the Qur'an: at some places in detail, at others briefly, yet at others only in passing references. But every time a fresh light is shed on the various aspects of his story. Like others, Adam's story has not been told as a piece of history: neither does it observe sequence in time or in epochs. It aims chiefly at revealing certain consequences which, couched in a most eloquent expression, sink into the listener's soul. Every word of the story is a treasure of meanings; it is a world in itself so much so that one can infer an unlimited number of principles and fundamentals from them. The nine chapters in which Adam has been specifically mentioned are: al-Baqarah, Al-i-'Imran, al-Ma'idah, al-A'raf, al-Isra, al-Kahf, Maryam, Ta-Ha and Yasin.

وَاذْ قَالِ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّيْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةً ۗ قَالُوْۤا
 اَجْعَلْ فِىْهَا مَنْ يُّفْسِدُ فِيْهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ ۗ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ
 بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۗ قَالِ رَبِّنٰٓى اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا
 تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝ وَعَلَّمَ اٰدَمَ الْاَسْمَآءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ

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فَقَالَ أَتُنَبِّئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ۝
 قَالُوا سُبْحٰنَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ
 الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ
 بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ لَا قَالَ الْمَ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمٰوٰتِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ ۝ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ۝ وَإِذْ
 قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ
 وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِينَ ۝ وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ
 وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا
 مِنَ الظَّٰلِمِينَ ۝ فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطٰنُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ
 وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ
 وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ۝ فَتَلَقَىٰ آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ
 هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ
 مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝
 وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ
 هُمْ فِيهَا خٰلِدُونَ ۝

"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth.' They said: 'Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?—whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?' He said: 'I know what you know not.'

"And He taught Adam the nature of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said:

Adam

'Tell Me the nature of these if ye are right.' They said: 'Glory to Thee: of knowledge we have none, save what Thou hast taught us: in truth it is Thou Who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom.'

"He said: 'O Adam! tell them their natures.' When he had told them, God said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heavens and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?'

"And behold, We said to the angels, 'Bow down to Adam': and they bowed down: not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty: he was of those who reject Faith.

"We said: 'O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the beautiful things therein as (where and when) ye will, but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression.'

"Then did Satan make them slip from the (Garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. We said: 'Get ye down, all (ye people), with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood for a time.'

"Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord turned towards Him: for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

"We said: 'Get ye down all from here; and if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from Me; whosoever follows My Guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

"'But those who reject Faith and belie Our Signs, they shall be Companions of the Fire; they shall abide therein'" (ii. 30-39).

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➔ Adam—the Meaning of the Word

It is controversial whether Adam is an Arabic word. According to Zamakhshari's *Tafsir Kashshaf*, Adam is a non-Arabic word and has occurred in the Qur'an like Azar in the form of *Fa'al*. Abu Ishaq Tha'labi says: In Hebrew Adam means "the earth" (and since the father of man was moulded out of clay, he was called Adam.) But most commentators say that it is an Arabic name. According to them, Adam having been created out of *Adim-ul-Arz* (the earth skin), he was known as such. Ibn Jarir has quoted a saying of the Prophet on the authority of Abu Musa Ash'ari: "God collected a handful of dust from the entire earth and created Adam out of it. That's why Adam's progeny has divergent colours; some are brown, others are swarthy or white."¹

Ibn Jarir has also quoted another Tradition narrated by Ibn Abbas: "Since Adam was created out of the earth's skin, he was called Adam." Some maintain that he was called Adam owing to his skin being brown. Imam Raghīb, too, is of the same opinion. Among the most famous commentators, Mujahid Tabi'i says: "Ibn Abbas thinks the word is derived from *udmatun*, which means 'wheatish'."

According to some etymologists, the word has been derived from *admatun* on the form *Af'alun*—

1. Ibn Jarir, Vol. I, p. 480.

which means "worthy of emulation". In short, there have been, among the scholars of Islam, elaborate discussions on this word. But none of the scholars has ever maintained that Adam was no particular man and that he, as certain modern quarters say, stood metaphorically for the whole of mankind. Surprisingly enough, these men skip over the Qur'anic verse in which Adam's creation has been likened to Jesus Christ's:

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ
تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ۝

"The similitude of Jesus before God is that of Adam. He created him from dust, then he said unto him: Be and he was" (iii. 59) *Challenge to Christianity*

If Adam had stood for the entire human race—as modern thinkers tend to interpret—then, this verse would have meant "the similitude of Jesus is that of the human race". But the context indicates that the purpose of this verse was to refute the Christian doctrine of Trinity and "sonhood" of Jesus. The Christians were told not to regard Jesus as the son of God merely for the reason that he was born without a human father: Adam, too, before him, had no father. Therefore, despite this distinction, Jesus was just a "favoured slave of Ours".

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The Qur'an at another place says :

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ
عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ۝

“Allah did choose Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of ‘Imran above all people” (iii. 33).

Was Adam a Prophet? ✓

The ouster of Adam from the Garden as mentioned in the story has raised a doubt in some minds whether Adam was a Prophet. They say that the error which Adam committed does not go with the sanctity of prophethood. We shall deal with Adam's “guilt” later at an appropriate place. This much may, however, be kept in mind that Adam, at a number of places in the Qur'an and the Traditions, has clearly been mentioned not only as a Prophet but as an Apostle also. We have added the word “Apostle” because prophecy means to be a recipient of inspiration only. An Apostle, on the other hand, is one who is the bearer of a *Shari'ah*. So far as the Divine revelation is concerned, Adam, as testified by the above verse, was a recipient of inspiration. But when the verse is looked into more observantly, it shows that Adam was an Apostle, who had also a *Shari'ah* of his own.

Adam

What constitutes the basis of a *Shari'ah*? It is: (a) ordering the people to do the right, and (b) prohibiting them from doing the wrong.

These verses show that when Adam was ordered to get down to the earth, God Almighty told him:

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا ط فَاِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ
تَّبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝

“Get ye down all from here; and if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from Me; whosoever follows My Guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve” (ii. 38-39).

The portion of the verse “whosoever follows My Guidance” encompasses all exhortations to good deeds. Likewise, a warning against evil deeds is contained in the second part of this verse:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ
هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ۝

“But those who reject Faith and belie Our Signs, they shall be Companions of the Fire; they shall abide therein” (ii. 39).

The writer of *al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah* has, on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Hibban, quoted a Tradition narrated by Abu Zarr Ghifari:

“I asked: O Apostle of Allah, how many Prophets were sent to the world? He replied: One

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hundred and twenty-four thousand. Again I asked: How many *Rasuls* (Apostles)? He replied: Three hundred and thirteen. I asked: Who was the first among them? The Prophet said: Adam. I again said: Was he a messenger with a mission? He replied: Yes, Allah shaped him with His own hands and blew into him part of His soul and then beautified him.²

Ibn Kathir also has quoted the following Tradition by Hazrat Abu Zarr:

“I asked the Messenger of Allah whether Adam was a prophet. He said: Yes, a prophet and a messenger. God also talked to him face to face.”³

In another Tradition the narrator says that he himself had heard Abu Imamah saying that a person asked the Holy Messenger whether Adam was a Prophet, to which he replied: “Yes, he was a Prophet and one with whom God talked.”⁴

Ibn Taimiyyah's View. Here Ibn Taimiyyah's conclusions are worth mentioning. In his famous work *an-Nubuwwat* he has discussed exhaustively the difference between a *Nabi* (Prophet) and a *Rasul* (Apostle). He has also named the earliest Apostles. According to him, a *Nabi* is one who is divinely informed about secrets. So long as he acts upon that knowledge—being under no obligation to diffuse

2. Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah*, Vol. I, p. 97.

3. *Tafsir*, Vol. 1, p. 34.

4. *Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah*, Vol. I, p. 102.

Adam

that knowledge among men—he remains a Prophet. He may follow an earlier *Shari'ah*. But the moment he is charged with the office of disseminating that message among the disbelievers, he becomes an Apostle.

Ibn Taimiyyah says that those Prophets who were raised during the interregnum between Adam and Noah were just *Nabis*, not *Rasuls*. During this whole period their main task was to act upon the prevalent *Shari'ah* and exhort others to do so. By the time Noah arrived, disbelief had struck dangerous roots. He was, therefore, ordered to uproot it. And thus he was the first *Rasul*.

Anyhow, this was a subsidiary discussion. The primary aim was to prove that Adam's Prophethood had always been a settled point. And if an attempt is underway in some quarters to make it a disputable point, it is based on ignorance and lack of capacity to see things in their true perspective. What is strange about this theory is that while, on the one hand, attempts are being made to prove that *Zu'l-Kifl* was Gautama and he, along with Krishna, was a prophet—though no Qur'anic verse upholds this supposition—there is, on the other hand, a calculated attempt to cast doubts on Adam, although the Qur'an mentions him as a *nabi* along with others.

had again

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The Theory of Evolution and Adam's Creation

The Qur'an, while narrating the genesis of the First Man, says in plain words that his heart gleamed with the celestial light of *Tauhid*—unity of God. He was not born as an ignorant brute whose offspring succeeded in arriving at the present concepts of God and religion after centuries of experimentation. The Qur'an asserts that humanity started its journey under the full light of heavenly guidance. It says :

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ
وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيُحْكُمَ
بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ ۗ

“Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings: and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed” (ii. 213).

In other words, the beginning of mankind was not tainted with idolatry. They were a united people. Disunity and fissures among them were the curse of the later days. It was precisely for the obliteration of this curse that God sent the Prophets. Till some time ago, some European scholars thought that religion started as a set of vague beliefs in mythological deities. But now after modern researches

⇒ Answer of other European old religion
and creation of Adam
man.

they have come round to the belief that monotheism was man's earliest religion. A famous British scholar, Sir Charles Marston, in his book *The Bible is True*, says: "The original religion of the early races was actually monotheism or something very like it." Further he says: "The theory of the evolution of religion is contradicted by the evidence of both archaeology and anthropology."

Lingdon writes: "In my opinion the history of the oldest religion of man is a rapid decline from monotheism to extreme polytheism."

While describing the creation of Adam, God Almighty has cut the root of the evolution concept originated by Darwin. The Qur'an has said plainly that human life came into existence as a result of God's blowing His spirit into man's model. The spirit is a Divine power whose true nature we are unable to comprehend. The moment it flees the body, there and then occurs death.

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّیْ خَالِقٌۭۤ اِنۡسًا مِّنۡ صَلۡصَلٍۭ مِّنۡ حَمَیۡۤا مَّسۡنُوۡنٍ ۝۰ فَاِذَا سَوَّیۡتُهٗ وَنَفَخْتُ فِیۡهِ مِنْ رُّوۡحِیۡ نَفَعُوۡا لَهٗ سٰجِدٰتِیۡنَ ۝

"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels, 'I am about to create man from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape; when I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall

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ye down in obeisance unto him” (xv. 28-29).

Unfortunately an inclination is growing in strength among some scholars to twist the Qur’anic verses so as to fit into modern hypotheses, though nobody can predict what transformation these notions themselves would suffer during the next few years.

Surprisingly enough, scholars like Mufti Muhammad Abduh have not remained immune from this tendency. Commenting on the verse the Mufti mentions evolution and says: “Thus the quintessence of clay is that basic material which in the modern language of science is called *Bazurto blasma*” (remember this is the Arabicised *Protoplasm*). This view of life is out and out materialistic. According to this, men’s life and death are not different from the life and death of plants, and thus God—Who is the ultimate cause of all events—has nothing to do with man’s life and death. The Qur’an, too, believes in history’s process of evolution. But, according to it, evolution does not take place in the basic demands of man’s nature: it occurs only in his resources. For instance, food and shelter are man’s fundamental necessities. He cannot outgrow them. So, he would continue to devise new ways and means to multiply and exploit the food resources. Even in the story of Adam and Iblis we notice that the first man had to sew together, for his covering,

Adam

leaves from the Garden. But so far as his creation or beliefs are concerned, no vestige of evolution is discernible anywhere. The father of man, i.e. Adam, was created on the best of models and with the best of beliefs, i.e. monotheism.

⇒ (A Talk with the Angels)

When God Almighty decided to create man, He, according to the Qur'an, mentioned His scheme to the angels. He told them that he wished to appoint a vicegerent upon earth. Why was this scheme divulged to the angels? Obviously, not to elicit their opinion, for God does not stand in need of consulting His creatures on His projects. The Lord did not specifically talk of his plan before creating the heavens and the earth. Scholars think that the mention of this decision was meant to enhance the glory of man. In other words, this was a declaration that "the beloved I was looking for had arrived at last!"

The famous commentator Ibn Hayyan in his work *al-Bahr-ul-Muhit* has drawn precisely the same conclusion. He says that God Almighty never said: "I am going to create the Throne or the Garden or the Angels." But He did say that He was going to create Adam. This is a mark of distinction for Adam. Yet the more important question is:

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“What is Meant by the Angels?”

Many lexicographers think that *mala'ikah* is the plural form of *malak* which is derived from *al-wakah*, meaning the carrying of messages from one place to another. Supporting this view, Ibn Jarir has quoted many instances from Arabic poetry. Adi Zaid al-Ibadi says:

ابلع النعمان عني ملاً گا انه قد طال حبسى وانتظارى

“Despatch a messenger to Nu'man saying the days of my imprisonment and waiting have dragged on.”

Qazi Baizawi, apart from supporting this interpretation, says that the root of the word is *malak* which means “dependence”. Since God manages His creation through the agency of angels and they are a source of contact between the Creator and the created, they are, therefore, called *mala'ikah*.

Imam Raghil Isfahani, in his famous *al-Mufridat*, has drawn a distinction between *malak* and *mala'ikah*. He says: “*Mala'ikah* means the generality of the angels and *malak* is a particular angel who discharges a specific duty. The Qur'an terms the latter category as *mudabbarat*. The angels are formed of light. They neither err nor commit sin. They are constituted so. Their sole occupation is to sing the hymns of Allah. They are free from baser appetites.

Adam

Wrong beliefs about gods and goddesses have stemmed from the distorted notion of God's unshared authority. People believed that God had placed His domains under the authority of various angels who run the administration of their respective provinces under His command. The Qur'an has repeatedly contradicted this theory. It tells that the angels are not God's daughters nor are they benefactors in their own right. They are the beings who flinch not (from executing) the commands they receive from God, but do (precisely) what they are commanded to do.

As to their numbers, the Qur'an declares that "none can know the forces of thy Lord except He".

Their attributes have been reported in the Traditions. And those who want to know details should refer to the chapter on the angels in Ibn Kathir's *al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah*.

→ *The Philosophers' Point of View*

Almost the entire *Ummat* from the beginning agrees on these beliefs. There was hardly anybody in Islam (except a group of philosophers) who indulged in such poetic fancies with respect to the angels as do some of our modern thinkers. The pseudo-philosophers, when their minds were captivated by philosophy and rationalism, advanced not only grotesque interpretations about the Qur'an

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and the nature of revelation, but started theorising about the angels as well. They said the angels are an "outpouring" of the operative reason. Farabi, who is regarded as the leader of Muslim philosophers holds the view that the "angels are intellectual figures whose essence is the Divine knowledge". They are not like tablets on which are engrossed some images. Neither are they like hearts in which are treasured certain sciences. They are, on the contrary, those sciences which exist in their own right. They oversee the higher affairs—the affairs which get imprinted upon their being. None the less they are absolute and single. But the Holy Spirit communicates to them while they are awake and the human spirit enjoys their company, while it is in sleep."⁵

If this piece of writing has led you nowhere, you may take the help of Ibn Taimiyyah's explanatory note. He says: "These people believe that the angels, in reality, are those enlightened thoughts which a soul yearning for prophethood gives birth to in his heart. And God's word is that voice which a Prophet hears in the depth of his heart as does a sleeping person see things in a dream."

In the days of Aurangzeb, a saint was known to be holding a belief somewhat similar to this. Since he was dead by the time the emperor called for the list of his disciples, the person occupying his *gaddi*

5. *Al-Radd ala'l-Mantiqiyyin*, p. 402.

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was summoned to the royal court and commanded to consign every bit of his writings to fire. In the recent past, Syed Ahmad Khan held similar views. In his *Tafsir-i-Ahmadi*, he writes:

“There is no messenger between God and a Prophet except the prophetic faculty which is *Namus-i-Akbar* or Gabriel. The Prophet’s heart itself is that messenger who carries the messages from God Almighty to him and *vice versa*. He himself is that personified identity from which emerges the sound of God’s voice. He himself is the ear which hears the voice God—a voice which is neither couched in words nor is borne away by sound. Revelation gushes forth from his heart like a fountain and descends again upon it. It casts its reflection on his heart and he calls it a revelation. Nobody makes him speak, it is he who speaks.”⁶

Descent of the Angels upon Non-Prophets

There arose another discussion among the learned. Do the angels talk to the people of proven piety also? And if they do, how does their descent upon them differ from the descent upon the Prophets?

The Qur’an says:

“إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ”

“In the case of those who say: ‘Our Lord is God,’ and, further, stand straight and steadfast, the angels descend on them” (xli. 30).

6. *Tafsir-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 31-33.

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In fact, this verse alone is enough to illustrate the point, because the Prophets have not been mentioned as the exclusive personages upon whom the angels descend. Some commentators say that the descent of angels in this context means the conferment of God's mercy and blessing. His invisible forces come to the aid of the pious. Whether this verse lends itself to this interpretation is for the learned to decide. But even if we accept this explanation for a while, we would like to submit that this verse alone was not intended to be the deciding factor.

At another place, the descent of angels on non-Prophets has been explicitly stated:

وَاذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرْيَمُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ
وَاصْطَفٰكِ عَلٰٓى نِسَاءِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝

“Behold! the angels said: ‘O Mary! God hath chosen thee and purified thee—chosen thee above the women of all nations.’” (iii. 42).

This verse from Al-i-‘Imran clearly proves that the angels talked to Mary although she was neither a prophet nor an apostle, for it is settled that no woman could ever be a prophet.⁷

7. See Maulana Thanwi, *Masa'il al-Suluk*.

Handwritten notes:
A large 'X' mark is drawn over the handwritten text.
The text includes the word 'Mawla' and 'Mawla' written in a cursive script.

(VICEGERENCY OF ADAM)

The present discussion began with the verse wherein God had unfolded His plan to the angels to create a viceroy in the earth. What does the word *viceroy* mean?

According to Ibn Jarir, "when a man acts on someone else's behalf, he is said to be his viceroy". In support of this Ibn Jarir has quoted the following Qur'anic verse:

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ ۝

"Then We made you heirs in the land after them, to see how ye would behave!" (x. 14).

Imam Raghīb's *Mufrīdat* defines "vicegerency as deputising for someone else, whether this is necessitated by the absence, death or incapacitation of the latter or whether it is meant to enhance the dignity of the deputy".

It is obvious that when God decided to appoint Adam as His viceroy it was not owing to God's non-presence or death or incapacitation. Its purpose could be none else but to glorify Adam. What an elevation! A handful of dust was raised to the high

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office of deputising the Creator Himself: it was vicegerency not only in the affairs of *Shari'ah*, but in the matter of creation also! The people today marvel at man's conquest of Nature. This tiny, little creature is shooting rockets into the space and is thinking of establishing colonies on the planets. But this is hardly a thing to wonder about. When God had appointed Adam as His viceroy in the sphere of creation also, such discoveries were bound to result. We have yet to see many more—far more astonishing, though not unexpected.

Why Was Man Made Vicegerent?

It should be known that before the emergence of man, God's creation comprised the Jinns and the angels. According to some Traditions, it was the Jinns who first held viceroyalty. They were created out of fire, while the angels were formed of light. Thus both the species were rarefied beings. Having being created out of "smokeless fire," the Jinns needed no dwelling places. Neither did they require multifarious devices to defend themselves. In short, though they did enjoy the bounties of Nature, yet they did it in an incomplete and faulty way. Similarly, the angels needed no spouses. They had to procreate none. They are free from the sexual urge and hunger. "They do not eat."¹

1. *Fath al-Bari*, Vol. VI, p. 217.

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The Creator wanted to confer vicegerency on a species which needed all the necessities of life, and since necessity is the mother of invention, that species was bound to exploit the potentialities of the earth.

There is a saying of the Prophet: "I was a sealed treasure. When I wished to be discovered, I brought into being the whole creation."

Man has been created out of four elements : earth, water, air and fire. What is amazing about these elements is that they are mutually hostile. It is Nature's law that all opposing forces strive to neutralise each other. This perpetual hostility among the elements foments unrest and corruption. The angels' fear on the eve of man's creation that he would spill blood on the earth and corrupt it sprang from the gloomy prospect of an interplay of these conflicting forces.

But, in reality, these human powers which are now being made use of as engines of destruction, when harnessed to constructive purposes, can raise man to a position higher than that of the Jinns or the angels. Seen analytically, two potentialities are stridently conspicuous in man's nature : passion and anger. Sex is that urge which instigates an evil man to indulge in acts of loose morality and in the pleasures of the flesh. Similarly, anger leads men and races to wars and even to global conflagrations in which victors persecute and humiliate the vanquish-

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ed. Superficially, these two potentialities seem to be the bane of human race. But on closer examination one finds that, when properly oriented, they constitute the basis of man's glory as the quintessence of God's creation. A true believer, when he harnesses the passion in him and elevates it into love for God believing Him to be the master of all that exists in the heavens and on the earth, attains such spiritual heights which no angel can ever dream of. The angels are deprived of that power from which rises the eternal spring of love. They have been denied the relish of that consuming love which makes a lover wail on lonely nights. The pangs of love have fallen exclusively to man's share. Iqbal says :

“Tell Gabriel ! it is true,
Of no celestial form are we.
But yet look at the fire
Of love we
The creatures of clay
Are burning in.
Those born of light
Have been denied
The delicious pangs of separation.”

The same is the case with anger. When a believer utilises the energy raised by this state of mind in the service of Islam, he fights with the enemies of Allah, and if there arises a need for laying down his life in

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the encounter, he does so unflinchingly.

Now look at this problem from another angle. There is no limit to God's attributes. The ninety-nine attributes mentioned in the Traditions are not an arithmetical sum, exactly "one less than one hundred". It is, in fact, a way of saying "innumerable". Otherwise, how could a finite mind comprehend an infinite personality. These attributes are known to the angels also, for they recite them night and day without intermission. But the truth remains that unless one goes through an experience one cannot have a taste of it. Two of the Divine attributes are *Muhiyy* and *Mumit*, one who gives life and one who takes away life. The way the human beings experience life and death is totally unknown to the angels, for they only watch the sea of mortality from its shores. Similarly, they know that God gives health to the diseased. But unless someone falls ill, how can he have a genuine taste of God's mercy in the shape of recovery? The famous Urdu poet Mir Taqi Mir was true when he said:

"This handful of dust has polished the mirror
of creation,

The mirror was there, no doubt,

But it was not so refined as to be worth looking
into."

The Angels' Enquiry

When God wished to invest Adam with the robes

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of vicegerency, He said to the angels: "I am about to place a viceroy in the earth." They knew that Adam was being invested with the power of taking decisions. So they apprehended that he would "do harm therein and shed blood".

The way the angels behaved was not that of criticism, for criticism is contrary to their nature. In fact, this was a subtle way of advancing their own claim to the high office which was being conferred upon man. They were pleading with the Lord that since they "hymn His praise and sanctify Him" they might prove a better viceroy than the proposed incumbent. After this supplicatory questioning, it became imperative that God Almighty established the superiority of His viceroy over others. He, therefore, replied to this query in two ways: one was authoritative, the other philosophical. Exercising His authority, He said something amounting to this: "Surely I know that which ye know not," i.e. "You cannot fathom the wisdom of My actions. Your job lies only in complete submission. You need not worry about the sagacity of My orders."

→ The Science of Names

Along with this show of authority, God, out of His infinite mercy, showed a glimpse of the heights on which Adam stood. The Qur'an says: "He taught Adam all the names."

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What were those names? There is a difference of opinion among the scholars. Some say the names denoted all the things with which Adam had to deal during his worldly sojourn. Others say that these were the names of the angels.

Abdullah b. Jafar reports from his father and the latter from Rabi'ah that the Qur'anic verse on the subject meant "the names of the angels". Some scholars belonging to the later generation said that these were the names of the Prophets and the Apostles who were to appear among generations yet unborn. This was a device to impress upon the angels that the person whom they belittled so much was going to be the progenitor of a long line of those holy men to whom they would feel honoured to carry God's messages.

The viewpoint that the "names" encompassed all the worldly belongings was, according to some, open to an objection, namely, the Qur'an has used the word *Arzihum*—a pronoun which is used for animate objects. It, therefore, cannot be construed to mean inanimate "objects".

But Ibn Kathir has set aside this objection. He says that where animate and inanimate objects are to be collectively covered, the pronoun for animate objects can be used. Moreover, when Adam was to be sent down to the earth as God's representative he was expected to know the names and the

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nature of things he was to deal with. In the correct knowledge of the things lay his authority as well as glory. If a monarch remains ignorant of his domain, how can he exercise authority effectively?

According to the Qur'an, when these articles were presented to the angels, they were found wanting in the knowledge of their nature. At this stage, Adam was asked to name them, and when he carried out the command as assuredly as he was expected to do, the angels exclaimed:

سُبْحٰنَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا اِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ

“Glory to Thee: of knowledge we have none, save what Thou hast taught us: in truth it is Thou Who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom” (ii. 32)

This part of the story of Adam and Satan yields multifarious conclusions:

First, the creatures who are busy discharging their own duties (such as angels) are not to be worshipped. They are themselves obedient servants of God. In knowledge, they know only what is divulged to them: in action, they cannot go beyond the limits of their assignments.

Secondly, it is utter foolishness to reject the commandments of the *Shari'ah* on the basis of inadequate knowledge. One should believe that there is a profound wisdom behind every order. If we fail to perceive that wisdom, the fault lies with our

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vision.

Thirdly, The precedence which man enjoys over the angels is attributable to his better knowledge.

Iqbal says:

“These celestial beings
Know naught
Except to run on errands;
But how majestic is
This Handful of Dust!
With what ease
He carries all the heavens
Beneath his arms!”

Rumi's praise of man is still more edifying.
Says he:

“The Master of the Science of Names,
Adam: the Father of Man,
In his very veins run
Sciences myriad;
From whose eyes,
Scanning the universe through Divine light,
No secret remained obscure,
Before whom the Angels
In reverence made a bow,
Sensing in his gaze
The Divine glow.”

Prostration

When God had demonstrated His viceroy's in-

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Intellectual superiority over the angels, He ordered them to prostrate themselves before him.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا

“And behold, We said to the angels, ‘Bow down to Adam: and they bowed down’ (ii. 34).”

Whom among the angels was this order addressed to? Did it apply to all the angels or only to those who run the affairs of the earth? The scholars differ over this point? Some say the order was addressed only to those angels who are in charge of the earthly affairs. But the majority believe that it was a universal order. Carefully seen, the latter view seems to be more correct. If the audience had been limited to the angels of the earth alone, the Qur’an would have certainly made the distinction.

Prostration: What It Really Means

What does the word “prostration” mean? What is its true sense? The commentators, for the most part, have presented three views. Some take it literally. Literally, *sajdah* means “to bow down, to be lowly, to do adoration to any object”. The writer of the *Tafsir-i-Mazhari* says: “In fact, it is a posture of humbleness.”

In Imam Raghīb’s opinion, “*sajdah* is to place one’s forehead on the ground in utter humility.”

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According to this class of scholars, the Qur'an has used this word for trees as well as for stones. It does not, therefore, necessarily mean the physical placing of the forehead on the ground.

The Qur'an says :

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ

“Don't you see that all that is in the heavens and on the earth prostrate before Him?”

The order, which the Sons of Israel received on entry into Palestine after victory, was to “enter the Gate with (prostrating) humility”.

وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا

Great commentators like Abdullah b. Abbas and Imam Razi regard *sajdah* as synonymous with humility, submission, humbleness and meekness.

Like *sajdah* the Qur'an has used *Tasbih* (chanting of God's glory) both for the animate and inanimate objects :

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ

“Whatever is in the heavens or on the earth glorifies Him.”

Here, too, *Tasbih* does not necessarily mean the uttering of some formula as the human beings do. What is meant, in fact, is sanctifying God and

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celebrating His praise through their speechless submission to His supreme authority. These and similar other arguments led the doctors to believe that what God commanded the angels to do was not to throw themselves in prostration as we do in prayer. They were ordered only to bow before Adam. The physical touching of the ground with forehead and hands was not meant.

Sajdah-i-Ta'zimi. Some scholars think that it was a physical prostration, no doubt, but was of a different character. It was deferential prostration, which was permissible under earlier *Shari'ahs*. When Jacob, as described in the Qur'an, entered Egypt along with his sons to meet Joseph "they fell down in prostration (all) before him". Commentators are of the view that prostration here meant a "deferential bowing"—an act that was permissible among earlier *Shari'ahs*, but which now, under the present *Shari'ah*, stands abrogated.

In Tirmizi and Abu Dawud, a Tradition has been reported under the title *Nikah* which carries almost the same sense.

Another View. Some commentators hold that, though the angels did bow before Adam, their obeisance in actuality was directed to an higher object. It was done to God Almighty Himself, from Whom the command came: Adam only served as

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qiblah, precisely as the Ka'bah does. Prayer is not addressed to that stony structure: it is addressed to the Master of the House. This interpretation gives rise to the question whether adverbial "lam" in *Li-Adama* can be used in the meaning of *ila* (to) and whether instances are available in the Qur'an or Arabic literature establishing the permissibility of this use. The commentators who think it is permissible have quoted many examples in support of their contention. The author of *Tafsir-i-Mazhari* has quoted Hassan b. Thabit's verse in which he praises Hazrat Abu Bakr by saying: "Is he not the first Muslim who turned his face to the Ka'bah in prayer and is he not better versed in the knowledge of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* than the rest?"

اليس اول من صلى لقبلتكم
واعرف الناس بالقرآن والسنن

In the first stitch, *li* has quite plainly been used in the meaning of *ila*. In the Qur'an itself, "lam" has been used to mean *ind* (عند) as in

اقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ

"Establish regular prayers at the Sun's decline till the darkness of the night."

On the basis of similar instances the scholars have proved that God's order to the angels was not

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intended to confer the title of godhood on Adam and to make him an object of worship. It only gave him the status of the *qiblah* enhancing thereby his dignity.

Whichever argument be the weightiest of the three, there should be no hesitation in accepting that God Almighty directed the angels to co-operate with (rather follow) man in the discharge of his duties as the viceroy of God. ✕

This high office presupposed man's control over Nature. He was supposed to be the master of all the winds, water, Jinns, birds that float in the air and the beasts that roam over the pastures. And since the Prophets are the noblest models to represent God, their actions were expected to reflect fully God's authority. Man has all the capabilities of acting as the lord paramount in the earth provided the angels in charge of various departments render him full service. The Holy Prophet tells us that God has placed the management of the universe under the charge of various angels. The order to do homage to Adam was aimed at establishing his supremacy. The angels were told not to be disloyal to him in any case; whether he fulfilled the demands of vicegerency or he did not, whether he wielded his authority equitably or transgressed his limits, they were not to falter in their allegiance to him. So long as God Almighty was pleased to keep him in that

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office, they were to co-operate with him.

Iblis's Refusal

The Qur'an has also related the story of Iblis's refusal to carry out the Lord's command.

فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ طَأبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۝

“And behold, We said to the angels: ‘Bow down to Adam’: and they bowed down: not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty; he was of those who reject Faith” (ii. 34).

This verse has given rise to a number of questions in many minds:

- (a) What is meant by Iblis?
- (b) Is it a proper name?
- (c) To what species did he belong?
- (d) Was he included among those who were ordered to bow down to Adam?

The verse indicates that it was merely the angels who were ordered to prostrate.

Grammatically, Iblis is a verbal noun in the form of *If'il*. Its root is *Iblas* which means utter want of hope. Abu Jafar Tabari thinks that “Iblis is despaired of good for the shame and grief which he brought upon himself.”

The Qur'an, too, has used this word in the same meaning.

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وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُبْلِسُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ۝

“The day the Balance (of Justice) will be set up, the evil-doers will be utterly devoid of hope.”

The Qur'an, at some places, has used the word *Shaitan* for Iblis. *Shaitan*, literally, means “to be away”. Since Iblis is far removed from God's mercy, he is called ash-Shaitan. Some scholars think that the word is coined in the *Fi'lan* form and its root is *shat*—which means “to burn,” and “to die”. Since Iblis is perpetually burning in the fire of jealousy in this world and will be consigned to eternal flames in the next, he is called *Shaitan*. The difference between the two usages of this word is that, while Iblis denotes the arch-Shaitan, *Shaitan*, ordinarily, is applicable to anyone from amongst the men or the Jinns who, puffed up with pride, defies God's orders. The Holy Qur'an says:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَاطِئِينَ الْإِنْسِ وَالْجِينِ

“And thus have We appointed unto every prophet an adversary—devils of humankind and Jinn.”

In their anxiety to “rationalise” the Qur'anic account of Iblis's wicked activities, some intellectuals have tried to interpret them as the promptings of the soul prone to evil. They do not recognise any external agent like Iblis or *Shaitan*.

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In the chapter "Ibrahim," the Qur'an describes the Shaitan's address to the dwellers of the Hell:

وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعَدَّ الْحَقُّ وَرَدَّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُمْ

"And when the matter ended, Shaitan said: 'God had given you a true promise, but you defied it.'"

وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ
لِي فَلَا تَلُومُونِي وَتُلُومُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ

"I had no authority over you, except to call you, but ye listened to me: then reproach not me but reproach your own souls."

This verse indicates that, apart from man's own reproaching soul, there is an external agency as well upon which man tends to fasten the blame for his waywardness and which, in her own defence, is constantly reminding him that he was free in his actions. That agency proclaims: "You were a responsible creation. You succumbed to my promptings of your own free will. Why are you now blaming me for your sins?"

If "Shaitan" had been only one's own reproaching soul, how could such a dialogue occur? Obviously, there is something other than the power of Evil which incites man to mischief and whose alluring call weans him away from the path of righteousness.

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Who was Iblis?

To which species Iblis belonged? Was he an angel or man or some other creation? Though many amongst the earlier scholars thought that he was one of the angels, none the less, the *Ummat*, in general, believed that he was neither a man nor an angel: he belonged to a separate species whom the Qur'an names as Jinns.

Jinn is a derivative of *Jinnun*—which means “concealed”. Since this creation remains invisible, it is called *Jinn*. The scholars who regard Iblis as an angel base their argument on his “invisibility”. According to them, the angels too, being invisible, could possibly be called Jinns. This line of argument is not acceptable because in that case the angels will prove to be a creation liable to commit evil. This conclusion runs counter to the Qur'anic verse:

لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ۝

“They never disobey God. They do whatever they are directed to do.”

The Reality of the Jinns

Among the earlier scholars this was the only point at difference. Nobody doubted their existence. But the later scholars, swept by a wave of rationalisation, totally rejected the creation of Jinns. Initially, it was Nizam, a Mu'tazilite, who refused to

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believe in the existence of the Jinns. In India, Syed Ahmad Khan and his colleagues discussed the Jinns in their works. One of Syed Ahmad's co-workers, Maulvi Chiragh Ali—a scholar of repute and a modernist—has simply let himself go in his famous book, *Tahqiq-i-Jihad*, while putting an interpretation on the meeting of a deputation of the Jinns with the Holy Prophet. He says the deputationists were just a band of the bedouins who embraced Islam at Nakhlah. But on what authority does this scholar surmise so? He did not even feel obliged to quote any verse or any historical evidence. Next to Syed Ahmad Khan are Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian and the writers of his party who hold similar views. For instance, Maulvi Muhammad Ali in his book *Bayan-ul-Qur'an*, says: "Jinns are the human beings. Since they were the dwellers of the desert, they remained hidden from the gaze of the civilised Arabs." Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud has gone a step further and has propounded the theory that the Jinns in reality were the cavemen. So long as men lived in the caves, they were known as Jinns. When they emerged from the caves, they came to be called "men". Expressing similar views, Mr. G. A. Parvez says: "Jinns were the savage tribesmen who lived in the desert and were physically more powerful than the dwellers of the cities. They

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were a well-built race.”

By now you must have seen how far the people have gone in their zest for something unique. Each of them has theorised on the Jinns according to his own fancy ; and instead of bringing about a unity of thought, he has thrown the people into confusion. Nobody from amongst them seems to have felt the necessity of casting a glance over the Holy Qur'an, the Traditions and the research done by earlier scholars. Actually these interpretations are no less open to that sort of criticism which Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had levelled against Syed Ahmad : “The interpretation which was neither in the mind of God nor His Apostles nor saints or sages, nor was there any implicit or explicit reference to it in the Qur'an, somehow or the other took its birth in Syed Sahib's mind.”

The Qur'an and the Jinns

But the Qur'an says that the human beings and the Jinns are two separate species. For instance, there occurs in the Qur'an: “I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me” (li. 56) ; and

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ ۖ وَخَلَقَ الْجَانَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِّنْ نَّارٍ ۖ

“He created man from sounding clay like unto

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pottery and He created Jinns from fire free of smoke” (lv. 14).

The Qur’an has even said that :

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمِإٍ مَّسْنُونَةٍ
وَالْجَانَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ تَارِ السَّمُومِ

“We created man from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape: and the Jinn race We had created before from the fire of a scorching wind” (xv. 26-27).

The Qur’an says that the Arabs “had made the Jinns co-partners with God” and worshipped them. Were the Arabs so dunse (as Mr. Parvez and Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud maintain) as to elevate the wild folks of the desert and the dwellers of the caves to the status of deities? Is there any instance in history where civilised human beings have sung hymns to savages? Turning the argument the other way round, we may well ask: Is the invisibility of an object a proof of its non-existence? If you believe it is, then mind you, a very noble concept, i.e. faith in the Unseen, would be hit directly. Who has proved empirically the existence of God, angels, Paradise or Hell? But can anybody in his senses assert that he would believe in none of these unless he saw them in a tangible shape? Leave aside the faith in the Unseen, would you reject the force of gravity or the pull of a magnet, simply for the

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reason that you cannot see the pull? We do not believe that any of these celebrities would like to take that ludicrous position. But, strangely enough, they do assume this position with regard to the Jinns and fail to realise that they thereby adopt only a one-sided posture.

Our submission is: How can we assume that the Jinns cannot be seen when sufficient testimony is available to the fact that they have been seen by many? Not only that, many have taken service out of them. One may disagree with Imam Ibn Taimiyyah's theories. But as a man his character was irreproachable. Even his adversaries admit that he was a straightforward scholar who kept his writings clean and pure. In his famous work *an-Nubuwwat*, the Imam writes that whosoever attains mastery over the Jinns is flown on their backs to distant places. It was a common phenomenon, which he had himself witnessed. He says that many Jinns who had succeeded in insinuating themselves into his disciples' company were given a severe beating by him. They took to their heels never to return.

At another place, the Imam writes: "Nobody from amongst the unbelievers or the Muslims has ever doubted the existence of the Jinns, not even the people of the Book."

In some books, one does come across the Jahmite or the Mu'tazalite views which are in conflict with

the Imam's. But these sects, as everybody knows, are totally negligible. Their beliefs could now only be found entombed in moth-eaten books. Nobody bothers to know what dogmas they once preached. The main body of the *Ummat* has reposed its faith in the Traditions and the writings of the doctors of *Fiqh*. A glance over the discussions on this issue astonishes one as to the immensity of their sway. Not only have these doctors proved the existence of the Jinns but have also discussed various relationships that exist or are possible between the two species. The author of *Akam-ul-Marjan*, Allamah Qazi Badruddin, in his famous book *Fi Bayan Munakahat-ul-Jinn*, writes: "In this chapter have been discussed the conjugal ties between men and the Jinns. The problem will be viewed from two angles:

(a) Whether it is possible to have such a relationship; and

(b) What view the *Shari'ah* takes in the matter?

"So far as the first is concerned, it is quite possible that a man took a she-Jinn into matrimony or *vice versa*."

The learned author then proceeds with the refutation of the impossibility of such a relationship. He quotes many instances in support of his arguments. From the point of view of *Fiqh*, he says, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had forbidden to establish such ties. Among the *Tabi'in* many regarded

this as "undesirable".

The matter did not rest at that. Our doctors have also discussed whether the deeds of the Jinns would be duly rewarded or punished. Those who have participated in this discussion include Imam Abu Hanifah, Ibn Abi Laila, Imam Muhammad, Imam Shafi'i, Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal and Ibn Hazm.

The learned among the *Tabi'in* have also discussed whether prayer led by a Jinn is permissible. In the books of *Fiqh*, there are long discussions on the Jinns. A few of the topics mentioned above indicate that our ancestors did not only believe in the Jinns but knew much about their activities. If one adopts the view of the modern writers that Jinns were savage denizens of the desert or brute cavemen, then it would amount to believing that nobody during the intervening fourteen centuries had truly grasped the meanings of the Holy Book and it was for the first time that the true Qur'anic light was illuminating the illustrious hearts of some of the modern commentators. If we accept this supposition, will not the Qur'an, then, be reduced to an "enigma wrapped in a mystery"? And can anybody accept with a reasonable amount of equanimity the beliefs that have been handed down to us from generation to generation since the days of the Prophet?

Of all the references to the Jinns in the Qur'an, one is of particular significance:

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقْوَمُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقْوَمُ الَّذِي
يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ طَهُ

“Those who devour usury will not stand except as stands one whom the Evil One by his touch has driven to madness” (ii. 275).

Some commentators say that since the Arabs believed that insanity was the result of being possessed by a Jinn, so the Qur'an, while describing the mentality of the devourer of usury, has repeated the common belief. The intention was to paint a horrid picture. But we do not, on various grounds, think that the above interpretation is correct.

First, the Qur'an may have kept the pagan belief in view while comparing the condition of the consumer of usury with that of the insane or epileptic. But nowhere has the Qur'an in this context negated this belief. So its restatement by the Qur'an is the most potent proof of its correctness.

Secondly, if this had been only a pagan belief, then the Qur'an would have categorically rejected it, for it was the primary object of the Book of God to overthrow all unfounded assumptions. It was never expected to adopt a notion or use an expression that strengthened superstitious conceptions.

Thirdly, while making this statement, nowhere has the Qur'an hinted that it was repeating a pagan belief.

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Fourthly, the study of the Qur'an reveals that it was not the Arabs alone who believed that the touch of Shaitan brought illness and calamity. Some of the earlier Prophets, too, considered it to be so. Prophet Job (Ayyub) says: "The Evil One has afflicted me with distress and suffering."

Fifthly, prominent commentators, while interpreting this verse, have reaffirmed this belief. Qazi Sanaullah of Panipat in his *Tafsir-Mazhari* says: "The mental ailment is the result of the Shaitan's touch. So is epilepsy. It needs no proof for it is affirmed by the Book and the Tradition."

Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal's son says that once he said to his father that some people believed that no Jinn could possess a human being. The Imam said: "O son, they utter a lie."

Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari, while dealing with the beliefs of the Sunnis, has said that, according to them, a Jinn enters the body of the epileptic as Allah says in the Qur'an: "Those who devour usury." Abu Dawud has narrated a Tradition that a woman brought her child to the Prophet saying that the child had become insane. The Prophet touched the chest of the child and said: "O, you enemy of God, get out. I am Allah's Apostle."

That the Jinns enter the body of human beings, take possession of them and reduce them to a non-plus is so potently true that, apart from arguments,

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it is upheld by experience also. The writings of innumerable doctors of theology are full of narrations how they, with the aid of the Divine word, made the Jinns flee from the bodies of the possessed.

Even in these days a very pious scholar told the present writer that his wife had been ailing for many years. She underwent spasms. No amount of treatment could cure her. At last a person well versed in occult sciences was consulted. He told him that her ailment was a Jinn's mischief. Afterwards whenever she fell into a spasm, he recited the Qur'an. Slowly she began to recover and was finally delivered from the affliction. During moments of convulsion, the Jinn often talked to the pious man. He knew *Qasidah Burdah* by heart and could recite it nonstop, though the woman knew little about the *Qasidah*. Once he asked the Jinn to give a proof of his existence. Suddenly a fresh and fragrant cardamom bough fell into his lap.

This is not the solitary example. One can find many more. How can one withhold one's faith in the reality of Jinns in view of these examples?

As to the question how we can remain safe from the mischief of the Jinns, the Qur'an and the Traditions have suggested many remedies:

(i) One should always seek God's protection, Who is the Listener and the Knower. The Holy Prophet frequently recited: "I seek refuge in the

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Lord against Shaitan—the rejected.”

(ii) The frequent recitation of the last two chapters of the Qur'an known as *Mauzatain*.

(iii) The recitation of the Throne Verse—*Ayat-ul-Kursi* (ii. 255).

(iv) While enumerating the blessings of the second chapter of the Qur'an—*al-Baqarah* (The Cow), the Prophet (peace be upon him) once said: “Don't turn your homes into graveyards.” The house where *al-Baqarah* is recited remains immune from the touch of Shaitan.

(v) Surah Ha-Mim—beginning with *al-Mumin* up to *ilaih-il-masir* along with the Throne Verse (ii. 255). The Prophet said that whosoever recited these verses at night enjoyed God's protection till the break of the day and whosoever recited them in the morning remained in His sanctuary till evening.

(vi) To repeat the following formula 100 times:

” لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له له الملك
وله الحمد وهو على كل شيء قدير -

“There is no god but Allah, He is one, and there is no partner unto Him. All praise unto Him. His Authority encompasses all.”

(vii) Frequent recital of God's attributes.

(viii) Ablution and prayer. The Shaitan and the Jinns are creatures of fire. Only water can quench their flames.

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The Prophet once said: "The fury and passion are satanic moods and since Satan is a fiery creation, water alone can put it out. So whosoever gets a fit of rage should at once perform the ablution.

These remedies have been summarised by Shaikh-ul-Islam Imam Ibn Taimiyyah in the following words:

"So far as the people of faith are concerned, they can never come under the shadow of these creatures, for the Shaitans and the Jinns run away from the place where *al-Baqarah* is recited. They also take to heels the moment they listen *Ayat-ul-Kursi* and other verses from the Qur'an."

Winding up the discussion, I would like to reiterate that I am not conversant with the art of exorcising the evil spirits. None the less, from the little study of the Holy Book and the Prophet's Traditions I have made, I gather that the only way to avoid this creation is to lead a life in perfect harmony with the dictates of the *Shari'ah*. Thus one should always seek refuge in this haven better than which none can be conceived.

The story of Solomon in the Qur'an is an illustration of how God Almighty had made the Jinns subservient to him. The exalted position which Solomon enjoyed cannot, of course, be everybody's luck. Nevertheless, this much could be vouchsafed that even today if someone tried to shape his life on

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the true Islamic pattern, not only will he be safe from these petty annoyances by the Jinns, but will make the Jinns change their course on seeing him coming. Imam Ibn Taimiyyah is of the same opinion. And here I end the discussion.

The Shaitans who carry other people's tales to their masters admit that they find no access to the counsels of those who believe in the oneness of God and are faithful and sincere. They have to be at safe distance from them.

Prostration Order to Iblis

So far as the prostration order to Iblis is concerned, many people believe that it was the angels who were asked to bow before Adam. They assert that if it was so, why was Iblis condemned for not obeying the order? This objection is usually raised by those who do not keep in mind all the relevant verses. When they do not find the prostration order in *al-Baqarah* all manner of doubts start assailing their minds. But if all the verses pertaining to this story are kept in view, there should remain no confusion. A verse in the chapter "*Sad*" makes it perfectly clear that Iblis, too, was ordered to do homage to Adam.

قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ ط

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“God said, ‘O Iblis! when prevents thee from prostrating thyself to one whom I have created with my hands? Art thou haughty? Or art thou one of the high ‘and mighty ones’?” (xxxviii. 75).

“I am better than he.”

After this clarification, there should be no room for doubt. And even if this explanation had not been offered, the issue was not at all complicated. The angels are superior to Iblis and when a superior creation had been ordered to prostrate before Adam, how could the inferior species like the Jinns claim exemption from the order? When a royal decree is addressed to a minister his subordinate staff is automatically covered by that decree. When questioned by God as to what made him defy His order, Iblis said :

أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ

“I am better than he. Thou created me from fire, and him Thou createst from clay” (vii. 12).

How far this argument is cogent, we shall see later. But for the present it must suffice that some of the Kharijites attach much weight to the stand taken by Iblis. The book *al-Kamil* by Mubarrad says that, according to Bashshar b. Burd, Shaitan did the right thing is not doing homage to Adam. A

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verse attributed to Bashshar b. Burd says :

الارض مظلمة والنار مشرقة والنار معبودة منذ كانت النار

“The clay is dark and the fire luminous;
Fire has been worshipped ever since it has
existed.”

Hafiz Ibn al-Qayyim has critically examined the reasons advanced by Iblis for not obeying the Divine order. He has given a number of arguments rejecting the Iblis's thesis summarily.

First, fire is a destroyer and a killer. To burn is its property. Clay is free from blemish.

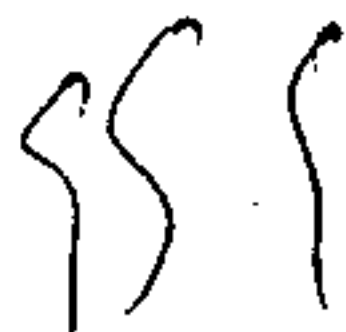
Secondly, fire is a state of anger and heat; the earth, on the contrary, reflects calm and dignity.

Thirdly, it is the earth from where we seek our sustenance and also our clothes and other paraphernalia for embellishment. Fire possesses none of these utilities.

Fourthly, nobody can outgrow his dependence on earth; fire on the contrary, is hardly needed by beasts. Sometimes even man does not need it.

Fifthly, a seed tossed into the fire is reduced to ashes; a grain thrown into the earth blooms into a charming flower or a majestic tree.

Sixthly, the Qur'an repeatedly recounts the utilities of the earth. A man leads his life on it and when he dies his dust mingles with it. Except in a



verse or two, the fire has been mentioned throughout the Qur'an as an instrument of punishment.

Seventhly, innumerable worship-houses (including the Ka'bah) stand on the earth. Fire enjoys no such distinction.

Eighthly, fire is the servant; the earth is its master. When it is needed, it is lighted and when it has served its purpose, it is put out.

You must have found this comparison interesting. But let us see how God Almighty Himself reacted to Iblis's vain pride. He said :

فَاخْرِجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَاجِمٌ

“Then get thee out from here; for thou art Rejected, Accursed.”

What's this, after all? God Almighty did neither contradict Iblis's argument, nor did He offer any of His comments on his assertion and pronounced a decree straightway. Is it, God forbid, that the Lord could not think of an argument in reply to Iblis and asserted His authority? No, that is not the case. Then, what is the underlying wisdom? If you ponder over this a little, you will find that it has a lesson for us. In a way we have been taught not to take note of absurdities. Where there is no will to understand things and there is an endless argumentation instead, one should pay no heed to it. It has also

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been shown that those who, despite God's clear injunctions, rely on their own wisdom and indulge in polemic in contravention to the laws of the *Shari'ah*, their intellect is that of an accursed one which deserves no respect. Maulana Rumi has said well:

“Those who understand the
Secrets of things know
That to Adam belongs
Love and to Iblis intellect.”

The Philosophy of Respite

After the proclamation of the curse, it would have been proper for Iblis to express his regrets over his mistake and proceed to make amends. Instead, his attitude of defiance stiffened and he asked for reprieve till the Day of Judgment so that he could entice people away from the path of righteousness.

قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ۝

“Iblis said: O may Lord! give me then respite till the Day the (dead) are raised.”

But look! once the respite had been granted, what a vainglorious oath he took! He said:

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَا أُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ۝

“By Thy power I will put them all in the wrong.”

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If faith in the unity of God without faith in the prophethood of His Apostles had been enough to qualify for salvation, then Iblis perhaps would have been the first person to enter Paradise, because first he refused to prostrate before anybody else than God and then even after having been turned away from God's presence, he took an oath by His might. But what did actually happen? Once he rejected the prophethood of Adam, his lifelong devotion to God was declared worthless and he was eternally driven away from mercy.

The actual point under discussion was the grant of respite. What deserves to be noted in particular is as to why his request for reprieve was conceded even after his blatant challenge to God.

One aspect of this episode highlights God Almighty's unlimited tolerance and magnanimity. Even we mortals would not just like to throw out a lifelong servant who, after dismissal for gross impudence, asks for some more time to stay on. Such a ruthless attitude would offend against our own sense of decency. Now, keeping this in view, look at the Iblis affair. When we, human beings who are an imperfect creation, have a distaste for acting petty-mindedly, how could He Whose kindness knows no bounds choose to be pusillanimous? He would indeed be ready to meet the last prayer of one who had worshipped Him for ages.

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But if somebody wants to delve deeper, we would submit that this respite in reality is man's trial. It is only darkness which adds lustre to light, it is autumn which lends charm to spring, pleasure is enhanced by misfortunes, contradictions make life delightfully variegated. If there is no sin, virtue would pass unnoticed. With no evil to encounter, it would lose its identity. The obstacles should not sap our will; they should act as spurs.

“There is no better guide than the distance itself that separates me from my beloved.

Our indebtedness to this guide grows at every step.”

The Sufi poet Asghar of Gonda has well said :

“Jubilantly I glide along the furious waves ;
For life without hardships would be hell for the
braves.”

Where there is no challenge to face, man's capabilities mostly remain dormant. They find no expression. This exactly is the philosophy of Iqbal. In his famous poem, “The Secrets of the Self,” he has recalled an episode in Hazrat Ali al-Hujwiri's life. A young man called upon the saint and complained against the excesses of his enemies and sought his advice as to how best he could settle scores with them. The saint replied :

“From your heart banish the fear of your foes
Wake up, you dormant power !

Vicegerency of Adam

What's the use of being angry with your friends,
And of being full of complaints against your foes?
To tell you the truth, even the enemy is your
friend,

For it is he who makes life throb in your veins.
One who is aware of the grandeur of self
Accepts a powerful foe as a blessing from God."

In this anecdote, the great saint has styled the enemy as a Divine blessing. It would not be far wrong if we regard the respite granted to Iblis as God's mercy on men. What is needed of us is that we should follow the Prophet (peace be upon him) in his footprints and subjugate the devil in us. Hazrat Aishah once asked the Prophet: "Apostle of Allah! is every human being shadowed by a Shaitan?" The Prophet replied: "Yes." She then asked: "Does one shadow you also?" He said: "Yes, but God in His grace has helped me gain ascendancy over him and convert him to Islam."

Iqbal was most probably interpreting this Tradition when he said:

"'Tis hard to kill the devil:
He is submerged in the depths of the heart.
Better you convert him to Islam
And kill him with the sword of the Qur'an."

The Theory of Determinism

After having procured reprieve till the Day of

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Judgment, Iblis threw a challenge to God that he would spare no effort to beguile His men to the path of evil and He would find that a majority of them are ungrateful. But what he chose as the ground for this challenge was extremely ludicrous. He said to God: "I am resorting to this because You have misled me."

In other words, he shifted the blame for his defiance and disbelief to God and absolved himself of the guilt by saying that since He wanted him to go astray, he was left with no choice.

The misguided preachers of determinism as a class came into being only a few centuries ago, but actually the doctrine is an antique one. Iblis himself is the author of this theory. Those who blame God for their misfortunes should take a lesson from the lame excuse advanced by the Devil.

Iqbal has rendered the dialogue between God and the Devil into very charming verses. The poet says:

Iblis

O God Almighty, I harbour no rancour against
Adam—

That poor little creature who is a prisoner of
time and space!

Nor could I be so arrogant as to utter a rebel-
lious word in Your presence,

Vicegerency of Adam

Except that You willed that I bow not to Adam.

God

Look at the devil! His low mentality has fashioned this argument for him.

Says he, it was I who willed against his prostration!

He is calling his freedom a compulsion.

What a stupid creature! Himself calls his writhing flame a puff of smoke."

The lesson which this story has for us has been summarised in the earlier pages. A few more observations are attempted here.

Jealousy lay at the root of Iblis's haughtiness. Adam's superiority ignited a fire of hatred in his heart and he, despite an order from God, was not prepared to do homage to Adam. In order to prove Adam's nobility as something sham, he took upon himself the task of beguiling his progeny. According to Maulana Rumi:

"The wretch after having burnt down his own harvest

Seeks to snuff out other people's candles."

Just take jealousy. How ordinary the evil seems. But how ruinous it is in its results! Iblis lost all his spiritual gains in a fit of jealousy. When we keep the moral of this story close to our hearts, the

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following Tradition of the Holy Prophet becomes clearer:

“Save yourself from jealousy, for it consumes good as fire consumes the wood” (Abu Dawud).

By naming Satan the Great as Iblis (the Disappointed), God Almighty has shown man the way to another reality, i.e. one need not ever be given to despair. Even today many people think that spiritual pursuits presuppose monkery—a complete detachment from worldly affairs. In fact, this attitude of despair and aloofness is the greatest victory of Iblis. His strongest argument for not bowing before Adam was that man was not fit for the office of the vicegerent. And if today, instead of carrying the load bravely, we exhibit escapism, it would naturally set the seal of approval on the false contention of Iblis. This escapism does not attack the religious circles directly. It insinuates under the charming colour of contentment. To sit idle is a sign of contentment among the divines; although the Qur’anic concept of trust in God is something totally different from it. So far as the procurement of means is concerned, there is hardly any difference between the believer and the non-believer. The difference lies in that the non-believer places his trust wholly in his worldly gadgets while the believer keeps his gaze fixed on God’s help—something far

Vicegerency of Adam

above the earthly wherewithal.

Ulema's Classification of Disbelief

The Ulema have enumerated five kinds of disbelief.

First is to harbour doubts about the Prophets. God Almighty, while describing the disbelievers, says:

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا فِي شَكٍّ مُّرِيبٍ ۝

“Verily they were in doubt.”

Secondly, to deny the Apostles and the Prophets:

وَقَالَ الْكٰفِرُونَ هٰذَا سِحْرٌ كَذٰبٌ ۝

“And the disbelievers said he (the Prophet) is a liar and a sorcerer.”

Thirdly, to turn away from the call of the Prophets:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَمَّا اُنذِرُوا مُعْرِضُونَ ۝

“Those who believe, when warned, turn aside.”

Fourthly, hypocrisy:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ
بِءٰمِنِيْنَ ۝

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“Of the people there are some who say: We believe in God and the Last Day, but they do not (really) believe.”

Fifthly, the kind of disbelief of which Iblis was initially guilty:

أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ۝

“He refused and was haughty; he was one of those who reject faith.”

Failure to act on any injunction of the *Shari'ah* out of ignorance or lapse of memory is a sin which does not tantamount to disbelief. What really destroys faith is wilful defiance and haughtiness. And most probably the Holy Prophet was referring to this malady in particular when he said that “no heart with a lingering shadow of arrogance will ever enter Paradise”:

لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ
مِنْ كِبَرٍ -

EVE

Adam's wife Eve has been mentioned in three chapters of the Qur'an—al-Baqarah, al-A'raf and Ta-Ha.

In al-Baqarah, there occurs a verse :

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ
شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۝

“We said : O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will, but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression.”

In A'raf, the same words have been used :

يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ

“O Adam! dwell thou and your wife in the Garden.”

In Ta-Ha, a slightly different wording occurs :

يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوٌّ لَكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ

“Then we said : O Adam! verily this is an enemy to thee and thy wife.”

How was this first lady of the human race born?

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The Qur'an nowhere gives the description. At the most, the verses which allude to this phenomenon can be found in three chapters—Zumar, Nun and A'raf in which men and women have been described as the progeny of "a single soul". Taking the context into account one gathers that the reference does not pertain to Adam and Eve. It applies to mankind in general.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ
وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا.

"O mankind! reverence your Guardian Lord Who created you from a single person, created of like nature his mate."

All commentators agree that this verse is addressed to the whole of mankind and the single soul referred to therein is Adam. The pronoun *ha* points to Eve. What is being impressed upon humanity is that nobody can claim nobility on the basis of his birth. All human beings are equal.

If you turn to the Old Testament, there, of course, you find a description:

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Gen., ii, 21-22).

Eve

It was under the influence of this Biblical similitude that Muslim commentators recorded that Eve was taken out of Adam's rib. For instance, Sidi Abi Salih says that when Eve had been brought into existence the angels asked Adam: "What's her name, O Adam?" He replied: "Hawwa (Eve)." Then they asked: "But, why Hawwa?" Adam said: "Since she has been created out of a living (*Hayy*) thing."¹

The following Tradition recorded in Muslim and Bukhari is proffered in support of this thesis. Abu Huraira is the narator:

"Woman has been created from man's rib. She will not follow a straight path with you. If you want to derive any benefit out of her, try to put up with her crookedness. And if you ever try to straighten her, remember you will break her, i.e. the only way out in that case would be separation."

First of all, there is no mention of Eve in this Tradition. It is the female sex that has been mentioned in general. Another Tradition, however, throws a clearer light on the subject. It says that "woman was created out of a rib (*zila*)," and if we take the liberty of translating the phrase etymologically we may say that "Woman is the creation of crookedness". In this translation we have followed the great linguists who hold that *zila* means "crookedness".

1. *Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah*, Vol. I, p. 74.

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According to Ibn al-Athir,² the sentence "Woman has been created out of crookedness," is like the Qur'anic verse which says that "precipitancy is in man's nature". It seems that the Holy Prophet used the simile of the rib to emphasise that if an attempt was made to force the curve out of her nature, there was every likelihood of her breaking up. Left to herself she would continue with her crookedness. So the advice was to tackle her tactfully and to do kindness to her in all dealings.

In Bukhari, there is another Tradition wherein woman has been likened to a rib. In *Majma-ul-Bahar*, the word *zila* carries the following note: "Creation of the *zila* (rib) is a metaphor to indicate the crookedness of woman's nature."

Zauj (Pair)—Philosophy of the Word

When God granted permission to Adam to reside in the Garden, He told him!

يَا دَارُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ

"O Adam, dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden."
He did not say:

يَا دَامُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَامْرَأَتَكَ الْجَنَّةَ

2. *Kanz-ul-A'mal*, Vol. VIII, *Kitab-ul-Nikah*, p. 260.

Eve

“O Adam dwell thou and thy woman in the Garden.”

The word used in the Qur’anic text in *zauj*, not *imraat*.

Naturally, it strikes one that when *zauj* and *imraat* are used in the same meaning, why was *zauj* preferred? The commentators (particularly Imam Humam and Imam Ibn al-Qayyim) have drawn a fine distinction between the two. They say that wherever the Qur’an means a believer’s wife it uses *zauj* for her. Never has this word been used for the wife of a disbeliever. For instance, where Abu Lahab and his wife are mentioned, the Qur’an says:

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ - إِلَى قَوْلِهِ - وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ

“Perish the hands of the Father of Flame (Abu Lahab)! Perish he! No profit to him from all his wealth; and all his gains! Burnt soon will he be in a Fire of blazing Flame! His wife (*imraat*) shall carry the (crackling) wood—as fuel!—a twisted rope as of palm-tree fibre round her (own) neck” (cxi. 1-5).

And where there was a reference to the believers, the Qur’an said:

وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ

“In what your wives (*azwajukum*) leave your share is a half” (iv. 12).

This distinction has been observed to the finest

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limits and disbelieving wives of some of the great Prophets have been called *imraat*. In chapter al-Tahrim, the Qur'an says:

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا امْرَأَةً زَوْجٍ وَامْرَأَةً لُوطٍ

“Allah set forth, for an example, to the Unbelievers, the wife (*imraat*) of Noah and the wife (*imraat*) of Lut” (lxvi. 10).

On the contrary, the Qur'an uses the word *azwaj* for the wives of the Holy Prophet. In the chapter al-Ahzab (28-32) *azwaj* has also been used for the wives of the Believers. There are only two exceptions where Zakariya's and Abraham's wives have been called *imraat*.

Suhaili says that since the physical characteristics of womanhood, like conception and child-bearing, were under discussion, appropriateness of the occasion demanded that the word *imraat* be used. Suhaili and others maintain that since conjugal ties between an idol-worshipper and a believing woman are null and void and the two will not join in the Hereafter, the Qur'an avoids the use of the word *zauj*. For instance, when the Pharaoh and his wife Asiyah form the subject of a verse, the Qur'an says:

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا امْرَأَةً فِرْعَوْنَ

“And Allah sets forth, as an example to those

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who believe, the wife (*imraat*) of Pharaoh” (lvi. 11).

The earlier doctors have undoubtedly shown an extraordinary taste for precision. Yet to what further etymological subtleties these words lend themselves is not within our power to grasp. Imam Ibn al-Qayyim was right when he said: “The secret of the simple as well as compound words of the Qur’an are beyond men’s comprehension.”

Superiority of Man

The Qur’an is a miraculous book in that it resolves the most momentous problems in a few simple words. For instance, take the following verse:

يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ

“O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden” (ii. 35).

The style adopted in this verse establishes man’s superiority over woman. This also establishes another fact, i.e. woman has been placed under man being inferior to him in physical as well as intellectual potentialities. Here, in this verse, both Adam and Eve were asked to enter the Garden. But it was Adam to whom the order was addressed. In fact, no other way would have been more appropriate than

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the one adopted here. Adam, besides being a Prophet, was also the husband of Eve and, as such, deserved her devotion and loyalty. So where was the need for addressing Eve separately?

THE GARDEN

In the verse, "O Adam, dwell thou and thy wife (*zauj*) in the Garden (*Jannat*)," the other notable word after *zauj* is *Jannat*—The Garden. We will discuss it later whether it meant a paradise on the earth or the Garden of (Eternal) Abode. At present we concern ourselves with the lexicographic meaning of the word and try to disabuse the people's mind of a common misunderstanding about it.

Literally, *Jannat* means "a garden" overshadowed by tall, rich trees whose boughs are densely intertwined.

Imam Raghīb says that *Jannat* is a Garden overgrown with a large number of trees which completely cover the land. Consequently, the Qur'an has, at many places, described the earthly gardens, too, as *Jannat*.

وَجَنَّاتٍ مِّنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُشْتَبِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ط

"And there are gardens of grapes, and olives, and pomegranates, each similar (in kind) yet different (in variety)" (vi. 99).

What kind of garden God Almighty has prepared for the Faithful, we cannot conceive in our mun-

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dane environs. The Qur'an has, nevertheless, revealed a few glimpses of it. There will be palaces with murmuring brooks flowing underneath; beautiful and graceful companions of a special creation, beloved and equal in age; fruits and flesh of fowls — "anything that they may desire".

These things can, of course, be found in this world also. But, according to a saying of the Holy Prophet, the worldly bounties of Nature have absolutely no comparison with their heavenly counterparts. Similarity lies in names only. Hazrat Abdullah b. Abbas says: "There is hardly anything in this world which resembles paradisaical rarities, except in name."

But it is surprising that we find all manner of conjectural descriptions of the Garden alongside this Tradition. A believer will, no doubt, repose his faith in the word of God or of the Prophet, however irrational it may appear on the face of it. But it gives no licence to anybody else to turn Islam into a store-house of fantastic rarities out of his imagination.

In Heaven, all the physical as well as spiritual delights will be procurable. And, to crown all, the faithful will be rewarded with the realisation of the presence of God.

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهُنَّ أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدَّعُونَ ۝

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“Therein shall ye have all that your souls shall desire; therein shall ye have all that ye ask for” (xli. 31).

After this terse but comprehensive assurance there remains no need to indulge in flights of fancy and say that the fruits in Heaven will be as big as earthen pitchers. God bless Ibn Jarir who has gathered all such versions which are the product of our ancestors' fantasy in his valuable exegesis. Intelligence, when confronted with such fantasies, naturally feels offended and grows critical of this intellectual extravagance. To quote an example, here is a version :

“The trees in Heaven will be uniform in girth from the roots to the branches and their fruits will be as big as pitchers. The moment a fruit is plucked from a branch there will appear another in its stead. Water will flow free of channels.”

Such a description can be acceptable only when some authority is quoted. Did the Prophet ever say so? Which of the Books of the Traditions contain this description? And if there is no such authority to rely upon, we would beg our learned doctors not to allow their imagination run unbridled, for *Jannat's* beauty needs no crutches of bewitching phrases to stand on. *Jannat* is the celestial beauty at its sublimest. It does not need the services of a beautician to make it look charming. How can we, the clay

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mortals of this world, comprehend the majesty of the place, the dwellers of which can bring things into being by merely uttering "Be"?

According to a Tradition quoted by Shaikh Ibn al-Arabi in his *Futuhāt*, "an angel will approach the dwellers of the *Jannat* and seek their permission to be admitted to their heavenly abode. He will then hand over a letter to them conveying the blessings of God Almighty. The letter will read: 'It is a message from God—the Living the Self-Subsisting, Eternal, to those who will never die hereafter and have become eternal. You should know that when I command a thing to be, it becomes. Now I invest you with this power. To whatever thing you may say "Be" it shall be.'" The Shaikh says that the Prophet added: "Whosoever, after receiving this letter, will order a thing to be, it will have no option but to be."

The Tree: Its Identity

We have digressed a bit. The situation under discussion was the one in which Adam and his wife were told: "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden." Reverting to the situation we find that simultaneously with this order a condition was laid. They were told: "Approach not this tree or ye run into harm and transgression." Since Adam was being appointed God's viceroy on earth, his stay in

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Heaven was just transitory. The aim perhaps was to make the first human being to have a close look at the Garden before proceeding to the earth and then try to convert his new abode into a heaven of his own. Moreover, this temporary stay in heaven had an element of trial in it. In order to help man assess the potentialities of his most formidable foe—Iblis—he was asked even not to approach a particular tree, what to speak of tasting its fruit, because in that case both he and his wife would be the losers. Which tree was that? And what fruit did it bear? The Qur'an does not elaborate the point. The Old Testament, anyhow, defines it as the tree of knowledge—knowledge of what is good and what is bad:

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis, ii, 16-17).

The commentators have given a long list of trees including that of dates, camphor, grapes, fig, olive and wheat. Some say it was the tree of love, others say it was the tree of desire. Yet in others' opinion it was the tree of knowledge. Some modern commentators have gone many steps further and have pointed out that since *shajarah* is derived from *mushajarat*, i.e. disputation, Adam was ordered to

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eschew the path of polemics, cleavage and partisanship. A glance over all the ancient and modern conjectures will only demonstrate how widespread was the confusion around the tree's identity. Some amusing fellows, after naming it as wheat, have tried to raise a whole crop of similes and metaphors. In short, all that crossed these people's minds was readily committed to pen, although in this frantic race for hair-splitting one should have constantly kept in view that when God and His Apostle had left the tree unnamed, on what ground are we justified in launching upon all manner of speculations? It is, therefore, wise on our part to remain silent. Notable scholars from the beginning have adopted this attitude. Ibn Jarir says:

“We do not know which particular tree it was, because God has not specifically named it in the Qur'an. Nor is any definite clue available in the Prophet's Traditions.”

Imam Razi is not much at variance with this opinion. “We are not sure which tree it was, so we need not particularise it,” he says.

Now, we have to see what exactly the verse “approach not this tree or ye run into harm and transgression” meant. Adam and Eve were forbidden to approach the tree. Was this an injunction under the *Shari'ah* or was it just a prohibitive order? What do the wrongdoers or transgressors mean?

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And in what sense the Qur'an has used these words ?

The general belief is that it was a sin to approach the tree and Adam and Eve committed a sin when they approached it. It is argued that God had warned them beforehand. Since transgressing is sin, approach to the forbidden tree was palpably a sinful act.

In our opinion, this line of argument is open to many objections. First of all, wrongdoing does not essentially tantamount to committing a sin, though it does carry this sense also. None the less, the word covers a wide spectrum of meaning. The Qur'an uses this word for those people also who (unwittingly) transgress:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ
 فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ
 إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا ۝ (احزاب)

“We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains, but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but Man undertook it; he was indeed unjust and foolish” (xxxiii. 72).

Now consider the word *zaluman*—unjust, tyrant. If you take this word to mean “sinners,” then you will have to provide an answer to the question: What guilt did man commit on the eve of his crea-

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tion in consequence of which he was dubbed a "sinner"? And if it means somebody who tyrannises others, then who was the object of his tyranny?

Obviously, none of these translations is apt. We shall have to interpret the verse as follows: "Verily man was unjust towards himself and was foolish."

Try to understand this interpretation in the light of another verse. In Chapter al-Baqarah where there is a mention of the conferment of *Imamat* (leadership) on Ibrahim, a question was raised by him whether his offspring too would enjoy the honour of leading mankind. To this God Almighty replied:

لَا يَنْتَظِرُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ۝

"My covenant includeth not wrongdoers" (ii. 124).

Undoubtedly *zulum* in this context means "disbelief" (forsaking the path of righteousness), heresy, transgression, rebellion, disobedience. Some leading commentators have offered the same interpretation.

In Ibn Hayyan's commentary is laid down:

قد فسر الظلم ههنا بالكفر وهو قول ابن جبیر وبظلم العاصي غير الكفر وهو قول عطاء السدي

Zulum has been interpreted here as "disbelief". This is Ibn Jubair's opinion. According to Ata Sidi,

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“it was disobedience not amounting to disbelief (*kufir*).”

In other words, it is the Divine decree that *imamat* (leadership), the sublimest form of which is the prophethood, shall not be bestowed upon the sinful. Now, in the light of this word, cast a deeper look at the words “Ye shall become an evil-doer.” If you still insist upon translating the word *zulum* as “sin,” then beware you are in for a predicament. What situation you would logically be led to? You accept the Qur’anic verdict that a sinful man shall never become a prophet and here you insist upon the view that since Adam violated the instructions and ate the forbidden fruit, he turned a sinner. Logically, one is driven to the conclusion that Adam was not a Prophet. And since this conclusion directly contravenes numerous Qur’anic explanations, the word *zulum* at this juncture cannot obviously be construed as to mean that Adam had been guilty of wilful disobedience. The true rendering of it in English would be: “Do not, both of you, approach this tree, otherwise you will be among those who overstep due limits.”

There is yet another confusion in this exposition of ours. You may ask: If to approach this tree was a sin and if this was merely a piece of advice to save Adam and Eve from a loss exclusively their own, why was the imperative form of the verb used?

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The positive and negative commands used here do cause this confusion. But there are many instances in the Qur'an where the positive command has been employed only to grant permission for certain activity. For example, men are permitted to go to their wives during the Ramazan nights. The actual words used are:

فَالْتَنُّ بِأَشْرَاهُنَّ

“So now associate with them.”

Here the verb *bashir* is in the positive mood. And if you take it as a command, then it would mean that if somebody does not hold sexual intercourse with his wife during a Ramazan night he is a sinner. This conclusion, obviously, is not acceptable.

The above example, we hope, has cleared the confusion to a great extent. It is proved that the imperative mood employed in the Qur'an does not necessarily mean that whosoever acts against it is a sinner. It is sometimes an advice which man is expected to follow to his own advantage. The directive given to Adam falls under this category.

Iblis's Whispering Campaign

While Adam and Eve were allowed to reside in Heaven, Iblis, with envy and hatred blazing in his

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heart was out to tarnish their image. When he came to know that the couple has been forbidden to approach a particular tree he devised a stratagem against them to avenge his shame. He assumed the role of a well-wisher and approached them and said suavely: "Let bygones be bygones I seek your pardon for my past behaviour. For the future, I extend my hand of friendship and if you desire to test my change of heart, here is a concrete proof of it. There stands a tree whose fruit if you eat will make you eternal. You will never die. Thereafter you can remain engaged eternally in singing praise to God Almighty."

According to the Qur'an, the Devil said :

هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَىٰ

"Shouldn't I point out a tree of eternity to you and a dominion that would never crumble?"

Adam and his wife were of a simple disposition whose hearts knew no jealousies. Iblis, on the other hand, was highly cunning and expert at weaving words. He was the originator of the slogan "Go on repeating falsehood to the point till it looks like the truth." His artful speech impressed them both. They must have thought that if one could attain eternal life just for asking, why should not one go in for it? It will give them an endless opportunity for the

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adoration of God and for earning His favour. They asked: "Where is that wonderful tree, after all?" Iblis led them to the tree. On seeing it, both shouted simultaneously: "Ah! this is precisely the tree whose fruit we have been forbidden to take."

Satan immediately changed his tactics and said: "You have been doubtless forbidden to approach the tree. But this prohibition is a temporary injunction. This tree, otherwise, bears a fruit which when taken gives eternal life to man. Once you have eaten it you would reside permanently in the Garden with a timeless opportunity to do adoration to the Creator":

مَا نَهَيْكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا
مَلَائِكَةً أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ ۝

This sophistry, though fascinating, left the pair untouched. Their resistance to temptation compelled Satan to adopt a new stratagem. He swore by God and said that he was a well-wisher of the couple. "He, then, took an oath that 'I am a well-wisher of both of you'":

وَقَاتِلْنَا آلِيَّ نَكَمًا لَمِنَ الصَّٰحِحِينَ ۝

This swearing by God immediately changed the character of the matter. Adam and Eve had never suspected that one could utter a lie in the name of

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God. They thought how a creature can indulge in so sinful an act as to cheat others on a covenant made before God.

Anyhow, they succumbed to the Satanic allure-ment and ate the fruit. God Almighty had already warned them that "they would be the losers in case they partook of the fruit." Things finally came to the dreaded pass and Adam and Eve had to say good-bye to their heavenly abode. Now was the time for Adam to discharge the duties of a viceroy on earth:

فَاَزَلَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَاَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ

Two questions arise out of Shaitan's deceitful manoeuvrings and the externment of Adam and Eve from the Garden:

- (a) If Heaven was a celestial abode, how did the Devil find his way into it?
- (b) If Adam was a Prophet, how did he commit a mistake? Are the Prophets prone to slips?

This episode has been narrated by the Old Testament in the following words:

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may

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eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Genesis, iii. 1-7).

Some narrow-minded Orientalists say that the Qur'an is an imitation of the Bible and in the matter of relating ancient events it has no fresh contribution to make. This is a churlish statement against which innumerable instances can be quoted. But since this subject is beyond our discussion, we can ill-afford to devote any time to it.

We only request our readers to compare the two texts and judge for themselves how far the Evangelist's accusations are sound. This great book—the Qur'an—instead of imitating the Biblical narrations, has corrected the corrupted versions. This Book is a tremendous blessing for humanity in that it has sifted the truth from falsehood and righteousness from perversions. Yet some people with boorish

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mentality continue harping on the charge that the Qur'an has borrowed copiously from the Bible.

“You call wisdom madness and madness wisdom; The charm of your beauty can work miracles!”

Take, for instance, the Biblical passage quoted above. Here the woman has exclusively been held responsible for the tragedy. It was she who let herself tricked by the snake. Adam's slip was the result of her foolishness. None the less, the people of the Bible claim that they are the champions of the woman's high status in modern society.

“Look! how bold is the thief!

He carries a candle in his hand!”

The Bible does not end the matter here. It devises some sort of punishment for the woman—though this punishment was precisely the mark of distinction and honour for her. She was told:

“... I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Genesis, iii. 16-17).

But the Qur'an rejects all these deviations. It clears the woman of the guilt and says: “Satan led both of them astray.” The woman alone was not held responsible for this slip. Satan dragged both of them into his snare. The woman was not the first victim who later influenced man.

After this long digression, let us revert to the

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original questions.

The Garden : Its Nature

The first question that if the Garden was in the heavens, how could the Devil effect an entry into it, is in fact not a complete question. It is part of a larger question which ought to be: "Was it a paradise on the earth or was it the Garden of Abode?" Those who insist upon its being the earthly paradise advance, among others, the argument quoted above. It is, therefore, proper if we examine the question in its totality. According to Hafiz Ibn Kathir and Imam Razi, four main lines of argument are followed in this behalf!

First: It refers to *Jannat-ul-Khuld*, i.e. The Garden of Eternity.

Second: It was a separate Garden created especially for the pair.

Third: It was based on earth.

Fourth: Better remain silent over the point.

Two of these four points are anyhow well known, namely, whether it was the Garden of Eternity or a paradise on the earth. The majority, however, believe that the whole episode took place in *Jannat-ul-Khuld*.

Those who supported the second view include scholars who hardly need any introduction. They are Ubayy b. Ka'b, Abdullah b. Abbas, Wahb b.

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Munabbih, Sufyan b. Uyainah Imam Ibn Taimiyyah. Some say Imam Abu Hanifah is also among them.

The scholars who believe that it was a paradise on the earth offer the following objections :

(a) How did Iblis get into Paradise ?

(b) Since life in Paradise is eternal, how can Adam be thrown out of it ?

(c) Nobody can utter falsehood in Paradise. Its atmosphere is free from all chicanery. None the less, Iblis is seen practising this art on Adam and Eve.

(d) Paradise is a place of reward. By declaring a tree as forbidden, it was turned into a place of trial.

The majority of commentators meet these objections by asserting that at the time of this occurrence, Paradise had not yet been declared as the "House of Rewards". So the doors of Paradise must not have been closed upon Iblis. The Qur'an does not say that the moment Satan was declared "Rejected" he was bodily lifted by the angels and thrown out of the Garden. On the contrary, he was not asked to quit until Adam's externment had been ordered. Then, why should it not be believed that he was hovering all the time around Adam and Eve to mislead them ?

If you are hesitant to believe that Iblis could find an entry into Paradise, even then there are

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more possibilities than one of his meetings with the couple. When Adam and Eve were asked to stay in Paradise, obviously they might be living somewhere else. Satan could meet them during their journey to Paradise. Was it not possible for him to find such an opportunity?

And if somebody really thinks it to be impossible, the meeting could take place at the entrance of the Paradise. The couple, while strolling along one of the garden paths, might have come near the entrance where Iblis was lying in wait for them. Hasan Tabi'i says: "He saw them at the entrance of the Garden, as they were coming out of it."

1. The Qur'an at another place uses the word :

فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ

"Satan sneakishly whispered in the hearts of both."

If the Devil's *modus operandi* was whispering evil suggestions into the hearts, then for that purpose no entry into Paradise was needed. Whispering could be carried out even from outside. As a long distance voice could be carried to the farthest end of the world through Radio and TV or even more subtle messages could be flashed across the globe without the assistance of an intermediary agency (as in wireless), why could not Satan's whispering enter into

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man's heart?

2. It is true, man will live eternally in the Heaven and once he gets entry into it he shall never be turned out of it; none the less one should not overlook one fact. This particular phase of life in Paradise will become operative after the Day of Judgment. It has been repeatedly narrated in the Traditions that the Holy Prophet paid a visit to Heaven on the Night of Ascension, and returned to this world.

3. Nobody will tell a lie in Paradise, and also it is an abode of reward: these two qualities are relevant only to the post-Judgment Day period. Such a ban might not be in operation in the days when this incident took place. For instance, it has been repeatedly asserted in the Qur'an (and intelligence has no reason to doubt its veracity) that nobody will ever be able to utter a lie in Allah's presence. Yet Iblis, when asked to do homage to Adam, made a totally false and an untenable claim. He said that he was better than Adam:

اَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ

It proves that the Divine decree "that none shall utter a falsehood before Allah" is exclusively related to the Day of Judgment. Iblis, likewise, must have made a false statement in Paradise also.

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These answers meet some particular objections only. Otherwise more cogent arguments for Heaven being the Garden of Abode are available only if we keep in view all the verses from the beginning of al-Baqarah to the place where the incident of Adam and Eve has been narrated. Only in the four preceding verses the Qur'an had given the tidings of Paradise to the faithful.

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ
تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ (بقرة)

“But glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness that their portion is Garden beneath which rivers flow.”

After this verse begins the narration of the incident. The Garden mentioned in this story has been prefixed with a definite article *al-* emphasising thereby that it is not a common garden: it is the Promised Garden.

Connected with it is the story of the Fall of Adam:

وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدَاوَةٌ فِي
الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

“We said: Get ye down all (ye people) with enmity between yourselves; on earth will be your

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dwelling-place and your means of livelihood for a time" (ii. 36).

These verses show that Adam and Eve, before getting down to the earth, were stationed somewhere else. If they had been living already on the earth, then where was the need to tell them "Get ye down all. . ."?

INNOCENCE OF THE PROPHETS

Now take the second question. Are Prophets prone to sins? On the face of it, Adam appears to be guilty of a sin.

Whatever has been said explicitly on this subject by the Qur'an and the Traditions goes to prove that the Prophets are sinless. Commission of a sin on their part is completely ruled out. Not that they are a constrained creation devoid of all sinful capabilities. They are innocent because God Almighty, despite their being free in their actions, has taken special care to keep their lives uncontaminated.

Shah Ismail Shahid writes:

“The innocence of the Prophets means that God Almighty, through His unlimited authority, keeps an eye on the activities of the Prophets—their words and deeds, their behaviour and worship, their manners and experiences—and keeps them immune from the lapses of memory and morality and appoints angels as guardians to ensure that they remain fortified against the promptings of the unregenerate human soul. These angels also see that no worldly dust soils the prophetic mantle.”

That is why the Qur'an, while listing the functions of an Apostle, includes the purification of the

soul among them.

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ

“It is He Who has sent amongst the Unlettered an apostle from among themselves, to rehearse to them His signs, to sanctify them” (Ixxii. 2).

Just look at this verse a little more closely. What is being notified is that here is a Prophet who is not only himself pure and innocent but purifies his followers too. If the Prophets are not themselves above sin, how can they sanctify others? Will you not in that case beg leave of such a prophet, saying, “The one who himself has lost the way, how can he guide others?” Or, when disbelief starts surging out of the Ka‘bah itself, where else would Islam find a springhead?

Shaikh-ul-Hind Maulana Mahmudul Hasan has put it very nicely. He says: Before a duty is assigned to someone, two things are particularly taken note of:

(a) Is the proposed functionary capable of understanding and implementing the government policy; and

(b) How far can he be expected to keep the people loyal to the government?

No king or parliament will ever appoint a viceroy who can be suspected of fomenting disaffection. A government consisting of erring human beings is, of

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course, liable to misjudge the qualities (or even the loyalty) of its representatives. But there is absolutely no doubt that God will judge His creatures correctly. If He thinks that so and so would never violate His dictates, and he does, the Divine knowledge will in that case prove deficient. This explains the doctrine of the innocence of Prophets.

The majority of the *Ummat*, therefore, believe that the Prophets are fortified against all erosions of faith and morality. In their day-to-day conduct, anyhow, they may, as God wills, commit a lapse in a state of forgetfulness. But even that lapse is designed to serve as a lesson for the people. Actually, their forgetfulness is an act of mercy for the *Ummat*. Imam Malik in his famous work, *Muwatta*, quotes the following Tradition :

“The Prophet offered the Asr prayer and finished it with two raka‘ats only. So Zul-Yadain got up and said: Apostle of Allah! has the prayer been shortened or have you forgotten? The Prophet said none of the things had happened. Zul-Yadain said: Apostle of God! something indeed has happened. Thereupon the Prophet turned to his Companions and asked: Is Zul-Yadain correct? They said: Yes. The Apostle stood up and offered the remaining two raka‘ats and performed two prostrations while he kept sitting.”

Similarly, according to Bukhari and Muslim, the

1. *Fawa'id Muzih-ul-Furqan*, p. 77.

Innocence of the Prophets

Prophet once offered five raka'ats of Zuhr. When asked whether the raka'ats had increased, he replied: I am a human being like you. I, too, sometimes forget things as you do. And if I forget, you please remind me.

On the face of it, this slight forgetfulness does not seem to be in harmony with the eminence of a Prophet. But suppose, after him somebody from amongst his followers had made a similar mistake, how could he be taught to expiate the lapse. The occasion was to be used to teach the method of *Sahw*. It was precisely for this reason that acts of forgetfulness on the part of the Prophet were divinely designed—for the larger good of the *Ummat*.

Imam Malik has quoted another Tradition on the authority of Hazrat Abu Sa'id al-Khudri as the Holy Prophet saying: "I witnessed Laila-tul-Qadr, but was later made to forget it."

Now consider the words "was made to forget it". The Prophet did not simply say: "I forgot it." He was "made to forget it," i.e. God Almighty in His Supreme sagacity erased the exact date of the Blessed Night from his memory. Commentators say that the Divine wisdom which caused this forgetfulness aimed at keeping alive people's zest for worship throughout the last week of Ramazan. This was a device to keep them on the watch: any night

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could be the Blessed Night. Similarly, if the Prophet had not missed a prayer on Laila-tul-Ta'ris, the *Ummat* had remained uninformed about the way the missed prayers are atoned for. Whether Adam's action amounted to sin or *Sahw*, too, is worth considering. First of all, it should be borne in mind that sin involves wilful defiance of a righteous command. And if the act is just a lapse of memory, the Qur'an does not regard it censurable:

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَكِنْ مِمَّا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ

If we keep this concept of guilt in view and cast a glance over the episode in which Adam and Iblis were involved in the Garden we find that Adam never intended to defy God's instructions. He did not wilfully commit disobedience. The Qur'an absolves him of harbouring such intentions:

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا ۝

“We had already, beforehand, taken the covenant of Adam, but he forgot: and We found on his part no firm resolve” (xx. 115).

Some people quote these verses of chapter Ta-Ha as an argument in support of Adam's innocence:

وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ ۝ ثُمَّ اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ
وَهَدَاهُ ۝

Innocence of the Prophets

According to them, the words *Asa* and *Ghawa* bear testimony to the fact that Adam did commit a sin. But we do not share their view. *Ma'siyat*, in general, does carry the meaning which the common run of translators have adopted. But, according to *Lisan-ul-Arab* (a famous work of Arabic lexicography), *Ma'siyat* adoptively means just a slip.

Ma'siyat is infinitive and it applies to a mere slip.

So far as *Ghawa* is concerned, it, too, generally means "waywardness," but is often used to mean "unsuccess". Imam Raghīb in his *Mufrīdat* has supported this interpretation. He has, in support of this view, quoted the following line from a poet:

وَمَنْ يَعْوَلَا يَعْذَرُ عَلَى النَّاسِ لَا يَمِينًا

"One who does not meet success, does meet a fault-finder."

There is a famous saying in Arabic that "the virtues of the good are faults among the most pious". The pious themselves having attained eminence in the spiritual order regard the earlier stages far beneath their station and for that they continue seeking their Lord's pardon. God Almighty Himself warns them sternly on such matters. According to Shah Abdul Aziz of Delhi, this mode of warning is an exclusive privilege of the Almighty. It is not permissible for the ordinary folk to adopt

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and propagate this from door to door.

Shah Abdul Aziz writes:

“God Almighty has used angry words on occasions which demand such a treatment. But the *Ummat* is not permitted to use those words for the Prophets. For instance, to call Adam a sinner or a wayward is unbelief. Likewise, to term Jonah a fugitive or a transgressor or one ‘worthy of blame’ is not permissible.”

To err is human. Even the angels had feared that man would spill blood and do mischief on the earth. He was to do good as well as foul deeds. And when God Almighty had Himself assumed the responsibility of guiding man to the right path, it was considered necessary to teach him the way to expiate his sins in order that no sinner, once despaired of God’s mercy, was irretrievably lost to humanity. Since a long line of Prophets was to be commissioned to guide the human race, Allah in His supreme wisdom thought it necessary that Adam’s children be taught the method of repentance through the example set by their ancestor.

The Prophet said:

“Whosoever calls men to the right path shall be entitled to the reward equal to that of him who responds to the call, although nothing will be detracted from the reward of the latter.”

Adam was the first to initiate the tradition of

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repentance. According to the Prophet's saying, whoever from amongst the human race offers repentance, Adam gets a credit for it. Who can reckon the immense reward that has been credited to Adam's account ever since his fall—and will continue to be credited to him till the Day of Reckoning!

How can an act so fruitful in results be termed as a "sin"? Some mystics, therefore, do not look upon Adam's fall as a punishment.

Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki says:

"Adam had undoubtedly knowledge of God's personality while he was in the Garden. But this awareness was not complete. It became so when he was sent down to the earth. Because being the direct recipient of God's favours he only knew—of course with the surety of vision—His Attributes as the Giver, the Beneficent. But the Attributes of mercy, forgiveness and the capacity to award penal punishment had not yet been fully revealed. The eating of the forbidden fruit and expulsion from the Garden brought these Attributes to his view in their full glory. As is said: 'If a sin had not been taken note of, how could You be known as the forgiver?'"

It means that Adam's fall was none of his loss, though it undoubtedly was our gain.

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim puts it beautifully when he imagines what God Almighty must have told Adam:

"O Adam! do not feel dejected over My order, for the Garden has been brought into being only for your

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benefit. For the present you would indeed get down to the earth which is a place of struggle and strife for you. Go and sow the seed of piety in its soil; water it with your raining eyes and when the seed sprouts and grows into a sapling, erect on its stalk—put your sickle to it and gather the harvest. O Adam! I have not asked you to quit the Garden except that this expulsion should, ultimately, prove a means to higher stages. You have been asked to go away only to return.”

ADAM'S REPENTANCE

Despite the fact that Adam had committed no sin, he, being totally dedicated to the will of God, felt utterly grieved over the slip and repented his action, till God's own mercy came to his rescue; he was taught a prayer that could wipe out the blot:

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ۝

“Our Lord! we have wronged ourselves. If Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy mercy, we shall certainly be lost” (vii. 23).

فَمَّا اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَاهُ ۝

“In response to this prayer . . . his Lord chose him for His grace. He returned to him and gave him guidance.”

Some people have misunderstood Adam's penitence. But, as we have said earlier, it was the outcome of his act of total surrender. In fact, this was a device to remind Adam's children that when their ancestor, after having committed a mistake, had no option but to offer his sincerest apologies, they should be more regretfully penitent. Just imagine the Prophet's spiritual elevation and study his sayings and his con-

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duct. One is drawn to the conclusion that the more one rises spiritually, the more one becomes humble before God Almighty. The Prophet says: "I seek God's forgiveness and express repentance more than seventy times a day."

Why did he repent so frequently? Did he commit any sin? No, certainly not. But to be unmindful of God even for a moment necessitated the seeking of His pardon. He said: "Sometimes I feel a sort of cloud casting its shadow over my heart, so I beg Aillah's pardon hundred times a day'."

Nobody can pronounce the shadow of a fleeting cloud over a heart as a cognizable offence in the *Shari'ah*. Man's psyche is always experiencing changing moods; his heart is like an ocean, perpetually in a state of ebb and flow. The *Shari'ah* has, therefore, imposed no penalty—neither in this world nor in the next—on evil thoughts that sneakishly find their way into one's heart. But a Prophet's conscience is far more crystalline than that of ordinary human beings. It is highly sensitive to all kinds of obliquities. He haes no breath which is devoid of God's remembrance. I have tried to express this truth in one of my verses:

"O my beloved! the moments I remained neglectful of you,

Were, in fact, spent in *kufr* (disbelief)."

According to a Tradition in Muslim, the Prophet

Adam's Repentance

said: "O ye people, beg pardon of your Creator, for I do so hundred times a day."

This brief exposition should convince one that Adam's repentance was not occasioned by any commission of sin. It was the wail of a grieved heart. It was intended to relieve Adam's conscience of a weight and also to serve as a source of instruction for his children.

The Decree of Fall

Adam's ejection from the Garden has been interpreted by small-minded people as a sort of punishment. The poets, in particular, have laboured hard to spread this impression. They maintain that if Adam had not partaken of the wheat seed, his children would have been spared the misery of groping in the dark now. But the Qur'an firmly rejects this false belief.

After the announcement that God Almighty had forgiven Adam, he said to him:

اَهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا ۗ فَمَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ
هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝

"Get ye down all from here ; and if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me ; whosoever follow My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (ii. 38).

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But the order ("get ye down") was repeated after pardon had been granted, in order to dispel the notion that the Fall resulted from a sinful act. If the eating of the fruit had been a sin, there was no question of punishing the pardoned souls. If this order was an evidence of God's wrath, it should have been set aside the moment it lost its ground. But we find the order is re-issued. The reason for this course of action was that God Almighty wanted to show that Adam's expulsion from the Garden was not a punishment. It was to meet the needs of the Providence's supreme plan. I wonder why people insist on calling Adam's coming down to the earth as punishment while they forget that Adam was created as God's viceroy. The eating of the forbidden fruit or eschewing it would have made no difference. He had to have come down to this world to manage it. The famous Sufi Ibn al-Arabi says that the order to get down did not amount to demotion; it was just a transfer from one place to another.

This order has another notable aspect. If the order had been addressed to Adam and Eve alone, the verb, according to the Arabic grammar, should have indicated the dual number. There would never have been the need to use the plural number. To think that the order was confined to the two souls, raises innumerable difficulties. Adam was a Prophet

Adam's Repentance

indeed. There was hardly any necessity of assuring him that if he obeyed God's dictates, he would never come to grief. This assurance in the case of a Prophet, who is a chosen being and whose status was to suffer no change, carries little meaning. Iblis, the third character in the drama, had been irretrievably rejected. It was not expected that he, at any subsequent date, would ever rehabilitate himself and be the recipient of the comfort assured in this verse. Then to whom was the Divine word addressed? The scholars think that, though the immediate audience was limited to two, it was to apply to the entire human race, for they (Adam and Eve) carried the unborn generations "on their backs like a loaded ark". It was they who were being told that if they followed God's guidance, they would be welcome back to the lost Paradise. And if they turned aside in arrogance, they would be condemned to be the fuel of the Fire.

"Here is a piece of advice for the people who can perceive."

THE END

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