

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
نَحْمَدُكَ وَنُصَلِّيُ عَلَى رَسُولِكَ الْكَرِيمِ

*(In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.)*

THE BIBLICAL  
AND  
THE QURANIC ADAM

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# THE BIBLICAL AND THE QUR-ANIC ADAM

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## THE TWO EXTREMES

THE story of Adam plays an essential part both in Islamic and Christian theology ; nay, it is the very pivot of the two faiths. Adam sins, and Paradise is lost. It is in regaining it that these two faiths seem to diverge.

The episode of Adam, as narrated in the Qur-an, is very instructive. It discloses the two extremes of man's nature—its zenith and its nadir. Adam represents humanity in the Qur-an. He has been created, as the narrative goes, to act as the vicegerent of God on the earth. He is given the knowledge of things that may help his growth. Through this knowledge he gains ascendancy even over the angels, and

receives homage from them. Everything contributing to his happiness and comfort is at his disposal. He is also given the power of discretion, but is warned against things detrimental to his happiness and comfort. Bliss and prosperity reign over his domain. He, however, forgets<sup>1</sup> the warning in his moments of ease and comfort, and lends ear to evil counsel.<sup>2</sup> It leads to an error of judgment and he makes wrong use of his discretion. It brings trouble. It affects his happiness and he loses all that created security against grief. Then comes repentance and forgiveness from the Lord. God, out of His grace, gives Adam a word<sup>3</sup> of guidance so that he may make right use of his faculties, and promises similar revelation<sup>4</sup> to his progeny, assuring them of happi-

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1. "And certainly We gave a commandment to Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find in him any determination (to disobey)" (Qur-an, xx 115).

2. "But the devil made them both fall from it, and caused them to depart from that (state) in which they were; and We said. Get forth, some of you being the enemies of others and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time" (Qur-an ii. 36).

3. "Then Adam received (some) words from His Lord, so He turned to Him (mercifully); surely He is Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful" (Qur-an ii 37).

4. We said, Go forth from this (state) all; so surely there will come to you a guidance from ME, then whoever follows My guidance, no ear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve" (Qur-an, ii. 38).

ness, if they will follow it.

A true description of human nature. It supplies a correct insight into things that bring us success or failure. It also gives us the *rationale* of religion, and it is thus that we have been equipped with capabilities to act as vicegerent of God on the earth. The universe and its various components have been left at our disposal. We need knowledge of things around us, which, when attained, make us “monarchs of all we survey.” We are also given the power of discretion ; error in judgment causes catastrophe. We need direction from the Most High to regulate our choice of things. We need also knowledge to work out our capabilities to their height and avoid the pitfalls that carry many to the depth of degradation. The whole situation has been summed up in the following verses of the Qur-án :

“ And when your Lord said to the angels, I am going to place in the earth one who shall rule (in it), they said, What ! Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood, and we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness ?

He said, Surely I know what you do not know.” “ And He gave Adam knowledge of all the things, then presented him to the angels ; then He said, Tell Me the names of those if you are right. ” “ They said, Glory be to Thee, we have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us ; surely Thou art the Knowing, the Wise.” “ He said, O Adam, inform them of their names. Then when he had informed them of their names, He said, Did I not say to you that I surely know what is unseen in the heavens and the earth and (that) I know what you manifest and what you hide ?” “ And when We said to the angels, make obeisance to Adam, they did obeisance, but Iblis (did it not); he refused and he was proud, and he was one of the unbelievers.” “ And We said, O Adam dwell you and your wife in the garden, and eat from it a plenteous (food) wherever you wish, and do not approach this tree, for then you will be of the unjust. ” “ But the devil made them both to fall from it, and caused them to depart from that (state) in which they were ; and We said, Get forth, some of you being the enemies of others, and there is for you

in the earth an abode and a provision for a time.” “ Then Adam received (some) words from his Lord, so He turned to him (mercifully); surely He is Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.” “ We said, Go forth from this (state) all ; so surely there will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve.” “ And (as to) those who disbelieve in and reject Our commandments, they are the inmates of the fire. in it they shall abide ” (Qur-án, ii, 30-9).

Indeed through the knowledge of things we gain ascendancy even over the angels,<sup>1</sup> but through forgetfulness or ignorance we come to the depth of our descent. The history of the present civilization proves the same thing. Through modern science we have brought the lower angels, the movers of the physical world, into subjection, so far as our knowledge goes. The revelations from the Lord come to show us

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1. According to the Qur-an, angles are sentient beings that move the forces of Nature and bring inherent capabilities of things in the universe into operation (see my Towards Islam, chapter “Angels”).

the ways which may bring moral and spiritual forces within our reach. Then we shall be the true vicegerents of God, and higher and lower angels will be at our service, as promised by the Qur-an.

If this is not a true message from the Lord, one is at a loss to appreciate the necessity of Revelation from Him to give man his religion. Man, like every other thing in Nature, is a repository of various faculties which must be worked out to bring the object of Creation to perfection. Everything possesses a tendency to evolve. So does man, but he owns something not possessed by the others. It is his power of discretion. This gives him a superiority over others. But it also may act to his disadvantage, if not properly directed. Hence the need of guidance ; and who could be a better guide than the Creator Himself ? He alone knows the true use of created things and the right way to use them.

The tale of Adam, as given in the Book of Genesis, is more or less of a nursery character.

It, no doubt, appeals to human fancy, but that of an infantile character. But it is neither creditable to man or to his Creator. It does not surprise me, therefore, to find the Modernist Church rejecting it as a piece of fiction. What an anti-climax ! Adam, in the enjoyment of complete felicity, partakes of the Tree of Knowledge and reaches the lowest abyss of degradation. Knowledge—the very thing that brings man to the zenith of his power—so much so, that even the angels prostrate themselves, as the Qur-an says<sup>1</sup> —brings him eternal perdition. Man is punished to eat of “ a tree to be desired to make one wise. ” Are we to believe that our God was interested to keep us unwise ? Could not God forgive our first ancestor for such a trivial error ? But God was afraid of something else. “ Behold, the Lord God said, ‘ the man is become as one of us, ’ to know good and evil, and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat and live for ever ; therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground

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1. Qur-an, ii. 31 and 34.

from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man.”<sup>1</sup>

If the passion of jealousy degrades its owner, in the average human judgment, what should we think of such a Deity ? The Deity becomes angered and Adam and his race are punished for ever. No doubt, the Covenant of Commandment and Obedience is given, through Moses, for human regeneration ; but it was the same Covenant that was first given and tried with no result in the Garden of Eden. Human nature became, as the Church belief goes, tainted, and sin became innate in it. It could not, consequently, keep the Commandment. God, in His Omniscience, must have known that the said Covenant of Commandment and Obedience was a fruitless dispensation. Why, then, another trial for some 4,000 years, up till the Covenant of Grace through Jesus ? If the event of the Crucifixion and belief in it was essential for the regeneration of the human race, it ought to have taken place immediately after the commission of the first sin. Why the Divine procrastination ?

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1. Genesis, iii, 22—4.

They say that Christ appeared in the fullness of time. History hardly shows any peculiarity in the time of Jesus that invited a special Epiphany through him. If sin, according to St. Paul, brought the Grace of Blood, it was not at its fullness when Jesus appeared. History has seen worse days in this respect, before and after Jesus. It is a mystery to know the reason which brought the Grace of the Blood, only some 2,000 years ago. But if it had something to do with sin, it had reached its climax at the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, when evil of the deepest dye was committed in the Houses of God, in every religion, and was passed over as a matter of virtue and great merit in the eyes of the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

There is, however, another feature in the story of Christianity which makes the whole thing anomalous. Death, St. Paul says, came through Adam, as the penalty of a sin; Jesus paid it, and we were given eternal life. On the other hand, the Book of Genesis says that "God

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1. Cf. my Ideal Prophet, chapter "Before Muhammad".

was afraid that Adam might eat of the fruit of the tree of eternal life and become the equal of Him.” To avoid it, He expelled him from the Garden of Eden. If Adam was expelled so that he might not take also of the tree of life and eat and “live for ever,” why to give him the lease of eternal life through the Crucifixion ?

As a penalty of sin, we have to earn our bread through the sweat of our face, serpents will bite our heels, and the daughters of Eve will bear children with labour and pain. If the Blood was shed to pay the price of the sin, the scheme seems to have failed. The Christians, as well as others, earn their living through toil and moil, the serpent and thousands of other species of the same genus bite our heels, the female sex is still undergoing the period of confinement and labour. Belief in the Blood has not improved the matter ; death, that entered into the world after the first sin, still rules. What assurance have we of our salvation in the next world, through the Blood, if it has not saved its adherents from the said punishment in the present ?

The more one thinks of the Christian story of salvation, the more its absurdity appears. The truth is dawning upon Christian minds in the West. They are rejecting all the dogmas. They have begun to look to Jesus as a man and a teacher from God, who came to reform the Church of Moses from the wrongs of his day and lay down some good principles to evolve humanity. Unfortunately, his ministry was too short for him to give the whole truth, as he himself admits.<sup>1</sup>

The work of perfecting the truth was left to the coming Messenger. The Holy Prophet Muhammad claimed to be the Promised One, but the Christian Church does not admit his claim as such. It declares that the Comforter was the Holy Ghost, that appeared on the Day of Pentecost and filled the Church. The Church, thus filled with the Holy Ghost, is believed to be the Comforter. But has the Church fulfilled the conditions laid down in the promise? Jesus says : “ Nevertheless I tell you the truth ; it is

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1. John xiv, 11.

expedient for you that I go away : for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you..... yet I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truths.”

Has the Church said those many things not told by Jesus ? Has she added to that brought by Jesus and taught that which was not taught by Jesus ? Has she supplied the missing link between us and our goal and bridged the gulf yawning between God and man ? Every branch of the Christian Church claims to be the “ Comforter. ” I need not dwell upon their respective merits. I take the corner-stone of their teachings, which is common to all. I mean, “ Salvation through Blood.” This is the only thing through which the Christian Church can claim to guide humanity into all truths. **B**ut there is nothing new about it. If it was a truth, it became revealed to ancient paganism and is the distinctive feature of the mystery cult. “ The deities of the mystery faith were

essentially Saviour Gods, whose task was to rescue their votaries from the influence of sin.”<sup>1</sup> By the Mysteries, no less than by St. Paul and by the Catechism of the Anglican Church, it was thought of as effecting a “ death unto sin, and a new birth into righteousness.” In the mystery faiths, says Tertullian, “ they are baptized, and they imagine that the result of this baptism is regeneration and the remission of the penalties of their sins.” And Dr. Angus tells us that initiation was considered as a “ death ” from which believers arose through rebirth.

The creed of sacraments is thus a legacy from the ancient world. Again, the teaching of the Church always has been under constant revision. Anything taught under the dictates of the Holy Ghost ought to be a permanent truth. Anything established by one Christian Council has been rejected by the next Council. The truth of yesterday has become the falsehood of to-day. From mediaeval days, up to now,

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1. Modern Churchman, April 1926.

various things were taught and have since been rejected. The space at my disposal in these pages does not permit me to deal fully with the subject. I, however, see one thing, belief in the Blood has outlived eighteen centuries. It may be taken as a permanent truth, but the Modernist Church in our days has exposed its falsity and traced it to pagan origins. The Church cannot be the Comforter.

This Church theory has another defect in it. It possesses, as it were, a merit of demerit. It, in a way, damages the character of Jesus. The Comforter had to descend from the heavens after Jesus. He was not in the world, as the words of the Master show.<sup>1</sup>

If he Holy Ghost was the Comforter, shall we presume that Jesus, throughout his ministry, remained without the Holy Ghost? What a dangerous inference, but it is logical.

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1. Jon xvi . 7

The Holy Spirit, it is said, assumed the form of a dove. Did the Spirit disappear after the Baptism of Jesus through the Baptist? Perhaps these logical inferences never occurred to the builders of the Church. But I am afraid it is too much to expect it ; logic or reason has never characterized dogmatized religion.

