Page or pages missing here.

We hope to supply later.

that the question is constantly asked: Is Religion on the decline?" Some years ago, there was a great outcry in the religious press because of the performances of an oratorio in a cathedral—to-day such performances in churches are by no means infrequent. It is but a short step further for a stage to be erected in a church and a regular play presented to the " worshippers" in the sacred edifice. Derelict chapels are being converted into cinemas; so why not enliven the chapels before they become derelict? It may save them from becoming bankrupt of money as well as bankrupt of Truth, that Truth of which the ministers hold themselves to be the exclusive exponents. In any case it may be the means of filling the buildings with "audiences" instead of " congregations", the numbers of which are on the down grade.

Within a stone's throw of where I am writing, there are two empty disused buildings that were once filled with worshippers every Sunday and on some weekday evenings. A little farther away but within easy walking distance is another building with seating accommodation for 2000 people, once the centre of Christian and philanthropic activity. This has been converted into a cinema because it no longer attracts worshippers. Still a little farther away but within easy walking distance, in one of the busiest main thoroughfares of central London, there were once (only a few years ago) three large places of worship standing practically side by side. The site of one is now occupied by shops with a large block of offices above. The other is a large electrical and radio stores, with flats above. On the other side of the Thames, within a 'bus ride of a very few minutes, is a very large chapel, once the headquarters of a Calvinistic body, with a preacher whose name was well known in many countries. It is still a religious centre—it is a Jewish synagogue. Very near to it is a derelict church, once renowned for its

special form of Prayer Book worship. I have heard of many others in all parts of London but I am here enumerating only instances within my own personal knowledge. These churches and chapels were not killed by the cinema, because they were derelict before cinemas were built, when even the silent films were in their pre-natal stage.

Why this state of things in the religious world? The truth is not admitted although the fact is so glaring. Christianity has lost any power it may once have possessed, as well as its attraction, using that word in its entertainment meaning. When the decline first set in, it was ascribed to the Sunday League, which instituted excursions by rail on Sundays to seaside resorts. Then it shifted to the motor excursions which organized trips to inland country spots. To-day it is a combination of both coupled with the cinemas, the Sunday opening of which the religionists vainly endeavour to prevent. Now, however, competition instead of opposition is proposed in order to prevent open and utter decay.

Yesterday, I had a visit from a dear old friend, an ex-clergyman of the Church of England, who, in conversation, fell to comparing Church life of to-day with that of fifty years or so ago. He told me as he had told me before, that instead of the worship of God, it was now the worship of Jesus. Talking of the preachers of the past, whom he (and I, also) had known, he said: "Ah me! the decay was then beginning: heaven alone knows what the end will be!" He was right. The dry rot, like the death-watch beetle, is doing its silent work: the only possible end is utter collapse, unless and until the leaders realize that they have lost touch with God, whose servants and apostles they claim to be. Is there any chance of their salvation? Assuredly. By study and adoption of the teachings and example of their own prophet, Jesus, who above all else

emphasized the fact that there is but one God, whom we as Muslims know by the name of Allah, who, he said, was alone to be worshipped, whose will alone was and is to be done.

THE WAY OF LIFE

Upon Death

By William Bashyr-Pickard, B.A. (Cantab.)

Can I not hear it said even now: "Upon Death! What has death to do with life or the Way of Life?"

The answer, of course, is: "Everything."

If you cannot attain a right idea of death, you will not attain a right idea of life. If you consider death just a darkness and walk from day to day either in disregard of the idea of death or in the besetting dread of the approach of the dismal day of departure, then, if you are happy, it is but a false, transitory happiness; and, if you are unhappy, it is a false, ununderstanding unhappiness.

If anyone considers life, desires life, he must look to something other than the body. How well known, and yet how often disregarded, is the truth that the body comes into being, develops, decays, perishes! Verily, the body is not life. We lose a hand, a foot, an arm, a leg, our teeth, even our eyes and yet the life in us continues, even contentedly, and says: "No matter! This is not '*me.*' I have not lost a truly essential part of me."

We see, therefore, that, though the body decays, perishes, is lopped, the life spirit continues unharmed thereby. The essential activity of the spirit, which is 'to live', remains calmly untouched.

Let us view this question from a slightly different angle.

Before the body in which we dwell came into being, how many years, thousands of years, yea, even millions

passed by to the dance of the Life Spirit ! After we shall have shaken off the entrammelling body, how many years, thousands of years, yea, even millions will pass in joy to the dance of the Life Spirit !

Let us, then, take a sane, true view and realize the comparative insignificance of the body where life is concerned and the unimportance of physical existence to life itself.

* * *

So, when we take the right and truthful view that the body is not life and that life is not the body, to relinquish what is not life, even to abandon this mortal body in death, will lose its terror, its dread, even its melancholy associations and we shall regard death with equanimity, if not with indifference.

We must realize that the nature of the body is death and that the nature of the spirit is life. If, then, at death we simply resolve our association with what is, by nature, death, how can that harm our spirit ? May not physical death release from a confining prison the spirit of eternal joy for a wider existence ? Confined in a cage, a bird may sing ; but, escaped from the cage, what rapture to realize its true nature and to resume the unfettered freedom of forest, mountain and sky !

Some may view death as the end of all delights ; others as the end of all evils. We cannot subscribe to either of these opposite extremes.

* * *

Let us now turn to the Qur'án. We find the continuity of this present life with the life hereafter consistently upheld. Our actions die not with us. Death does not absolve us from the effects of our actions. It rather reveals them and gives them deeper actuality.

Thus :

And We have made every man's actions to cling to his neck, and We will bring forth to him on the resurrection day a book which

he will find wide open. Read thy book ; thy own self is sufficient as a reckoner against thee this day.[1]

And again :

So whoever shall do of good deeds and he is a believer, there shall be no denying of his exertion, and We write it down for him.[2]

And :

As for those who say, Our Lord is God, then continue in the right way, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not, nor be grieved, and receive good news of the garden which you were promised: We are your friends in this world's life and in the hereafter, and you have therein what your souls desire and you have therein what you ask for : an entertainment by the Forgiving, the Merciful.[3]

* * *

Thus we see that the dislike of death, the fear of death, is occasioned by the obsession with the delights of the body and with the pleasurableness of this present world. Leading an easy life in the body and allowing our thoughts and actions to centre round physical life, we come in time to dread losing what, in the course of nature, we must inevitably lose, namely the body. We fear the menace of the writing on the wall, which proclaims, " Quit the body !" But if truly we regard not the body as our life but rather as a phase or even an impediment to our life, we shall not be disturbed by the thought of one day escaping from this body, this earthly box and wrapping of our finer being. Once assured of the truth that our real life does not depend for its existence upon the continuation of the body, we shall be set free from the darkening and domination of the body. Physical delights will pale as transient, physical pains will no longer deeply discomfit us. We shall know that, rightly viewed,

[1] The Holy Qur'án : XVII, 13-14.
[2] The Holy Qur'án : XLI, 30-32.
[3] The Holy Qur'án : XXI, 94.

they are matters of indifference and affect not the eternal life spirit within us.

How great then will be our calm! Unmoved, unswayed, we shall be centred upon the Eternal: our actions, thoughts and aspirations will be in accordance with the guidance, indwelling and inspiration of the Eternal. Physical death will have become a matter of indifference this way or that. The life within will be at joy with the life without. The life without will invade the life within with the calm rapture of a thousand rays—light upon light—a realization of joy indestructible, unassailable.

* * *

Turning to the Qur'án, we find reference to a higher life above the life of the body, thus :

And they shall say: All praise is due to God Who has made grief to depart from us; surely our Lord is Forgiving, Multiplier of reward, Who has made us alight in a house abiding for ever out of His grace; toil shall not touch us therein, nor shall fatigue therein afflict us.[1]

And again thus :

Their light shall run on before them and on their right hands; they shall say : Our Lord! make perfect for us our light and grant us protection, for Thou hast power over all things.[2]

* * *

Now, when we have overcome death by overcoming the fear of death, we shall of necessity live at one and the same time in two worlds, which in our experience will coalesce into one. We shall live in the present life of the world—this is a physical ineluctable necessity—and we shall also have our life firmly rooted in the hereafter. Physical life and the eternal life of the Spirit will consciously become as one in us.

With what confidence then shall we play our part in daily practical existence! How wholeheartedly shall we

[1] The Holy Qur'án: XXXV, 34-35.
[2] The Holy Qur'án: LXVI, 8.

seek out truth and knowledge! and with what ardour shall we embrace Divine virtue! How fair and attractive as the bride of desire will then become for us the face of duty!

* * *

Consider, too, this.

A realization that death does not end all and that, with the perishing of the body, perishes not the soul, must make man take heed to his actions here before death. Knowing that inevitably he must resign all things, how can he continue in covetousness, greed and self-avarice of worldly possession? Let him, therefore, at once strip off from himself the poison shirt of greed of worldly possession. Let him thereby the more strongly lay hold of the life eternal. Knowing that, beyond death, stretches out the unending vista of eternity and that every action is tied fast to its consequence by the hand of God, how carefully then will he consider his actions! for with God the All-Seeing is no injustice at all. An evil action lays up an evil reward and good bringeth forth good.

Consider the Qur'án, where it states:

A warning to mortals, to him among you who wishes to go forward or remain behind. Every soul is held in pledge for what it earns.[1]

And:

He who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it: And he who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it.[2]

And:

Every man is responsible for what he shall have wrought.[3]

* * *

How, then, can a man of understanding fear death? The body is the condition of our life upon earth. But is the earth so completely the whole universe that for ever

[1] The Holy Qur'án: LXXIV, 36-38.
[2] The Holy Qur'án: XCIX, 7-8.
[3] The Holy Qur'án: LII, 21.

we should rest content to remain thereon? Nay, far otherwise! As we know and realize, the earth, seeming so vast, is but a speck in the amplitude of visible creation. Even within the body, beholding the sun and the further stars, we may sigh. Can a life released from the body then seem terrible and a matter for regret? Nay, rather, glorious! To the earth the perishable earth; but the spirit is not tinged with death.

* * *

What, then, is our final consideration and the result of our meditation upon death? Hath not death become in truth a matter of indifference to us? In death we but pay due, restoring to the earth the earth garment. But the Spirit is free. Spirit may be loosed, but cannot be destroyed.

Having a true, clear, uncoloured conception of death ever before our eyes, the desires, the dreads, the delights and the sorrows of mortality will inevitably pass by us as gentle waves beneath the serene boat of the spirit. At all times we must rejoice, set free from the domination of desires, no longer bound by the chains of the senses.

* * *

Ah, would that the whole of humanity these words might comprehend! Then would end selfishness, greed, avarice, love of money, obsession with financial security, attachment to interest upon money. The goads of unfulfilled desires would fall aside blunted, where even the fulfilment of the desire would be matter of indifference to a being dwelling in reality, the fadeless, uncreate, unperishing.

Ah, would that the whole of humanity might hear, might ponder on, might live by the truth of the imperishable Spirit! might live and act and rejoice, viewing rightly the clamorous reports of the temporary senses and dwelling in the calm of the unattached Eternal! Then would

cease wars and violence and the blindness of dark impurity. Then would glimmer the dawning golden age beneath the wings of eternal truth.

* * *

So, having mastered death and the fear of death, the transience of mortal affairs and the impermanence of the perishing changeful world around us will become apparent. We shall not be deceived. On the other hand we shall not be downcast. We shall behold the veil of the manifest and shall know that indeed it is a veil. But the beauty of the veil will remain for us and we can delight the more therein, knowing that behind is the Face of the Belovéd.

* * *

To conclude :

Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares the glory of God, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth ; He gives life and causes death ; and He hath power over all things.

He is the First and the Last and the Ascendant (over all) and the Knower of hidden things ; and He is Cognizant of all things.

He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, and He holds control on throne ; He knows that which goes deep down into the earth and that which comes forth out of it, and that which comes down from the heaven and that which goes up into it, and He is with you wherever you are ; and God sees what you do.

His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth ; and to God are (all) affairs returned.

He causes the night to enter in upon the day, and causes the day to enter in upon the night, and He is Cognizant of what is in the hearts.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

The Second Pillar—Prayer.

By Muhammad Sadiq Dudley Wright, Phil.D., F.Z.S.

The Second Pillar of Islam is Prayer. The Muslim begins and ends the day with Prayer and, between the times of rising and retiring on three occasions, at stated intervals, he steps aside from whatever occupation in which he is engaged, whether work or pleasure, to approach Allah in Prayer. These liturgical prayers, as they may be termed, however, by no means constitute the whole of the Muslim's prayer life.

The Muslim does not look upon his religion as a garment to be worn upon one day of the week or upon high days and holidays as a change or relief from his ordinary work-a-day garment, nor does he limit Prayer to certain times during the day. Islam—in other words, submission to the Will of God—must become the every-day business of life, not a thing of fits and starts. To be a Muslim proper is a whole-time occupation. In this worship of Allah, to which prayer makes an important contribution, the Muslim regards all days in the week as equal in value, although every Friday the members of every local community make a point of assembling in the mosque in order to join in communal worship. This is called in the Qur-ân the "day of congregation":

When the call is heard for the prayer of the day of congregation, hasten unto the remembrance of Allah and leave your trading. That is better for you if you did but know. And when the prayer is ended, disperse in the land and seek of Allah's bounty and remember Allah much that ye may be successful. But when they spy some merchandise or pastime they break away to it and leave thee standing. That which Allah hath is better than pastime

and than merchandise and Allah is the best of providers.[1]

These words, in spirit and meaning, are in accord with those spoken by the prophet Jesus, which are, perhaps more familiar to some :

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.

Some people have imagined that there is a touch of formalism in the public prayers of the mosque : the like charge has been preferred against Catholics by Protestants and by Nonconformists against the Church of England. It is, of course, not true in any of these instances, but here is the opinion of one eminent Nonconformist minister and author as to formalism in the mosque. Dr. Marcus Dods, in *Mohammed, Buddhā and Christ* (p. 31) says :

We could almost excuse a touch of formalism for the sake of securing that absolute stillness and outward decorum in worship which deceives a stranger as he enters a crowded mosque into the belief that it is quite empty.

Dr. Maude Royden Shaw, also, in *The Problem of Palestine*, says (p. 35) :

No devout soul of any religion on earth exceeds the follower of Islam in the depth and intensity of his reverence in worship. The follower of Muhammad has not the honour of the prophets of Israel, who were first in the spiritual education of the world of men; but he has that of taking up the challenge of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Micah and calling all men alike and equally to the worship of the One True God.

Liturgical prayer is but the first step towards the attainment of what has been called " the prayer of absorption. " Al-Ghazali, in *The Revival of Religious Science*, has described this prayer of absorption as, perhaps, no other writer could describe it. He says :

It is the very marrow of prayer when He who is invoked takes possession of the soul of the suppliant and the soul of him who prays is absorbed into God, to Whom he prays and his prayer ceasing, all consciousness of self has departed and to such a degree

[1] The Holy Qur-ān LXII : 8-11.

that all thought whatsoever of the praying is felt as a veil between the soul and God.

Many may understand better the meaning of al-Ghazali's words if they are considered in the light of a passage in the New Testament. We read in Luke vi, 12 that Jesus, on one occasion, continued all night in prayer to God. The original language of that text gives a far more forceful meaning and necessitates the substitution only of one preposition for another. According to the original the text should read : "He continued all night in the prayer *of* God," as though Allah was not only listening to the prayer but dictating it.

The Rev. D. M. Ross (a Christian minister) has written a very interesting and informative book upon his travels in the Holy Land, which he has entitled *The Cradle of Christianity*. On page 225 he gives a description of the Muslim at prayer as he witnessed the act. He says :

A peasant was ploughing the field with a couple of small scraggy oxen, by which field-work is done in Palestine. He left his oxen standing among the clods for five or ten minutes. He spread his *abah* (upper cloak) on flowering grass. He stood erect, looking eastward towards Mecca, as if absorbed with his own thoughts. He bowed and put his hands upon his knees. After a few seconds he fell upon his knees and touched the ground with his forehead. With gestures such as these he performed his devotions on the rocky hillside among the flock of black goats. Towards sunset we passed the village of Kifta, about two miles from Jerusalem. The same sight again met our eyes. Two or three of the villagers, whose work for the day was done, were going through their devotional gestures on the hill side near the village.

Many years ago I came across a short poem on the Muslim at prayer, which I included in a little volume on *Prayer* which I published in 1910. I do not know the source or the author's name nor apparently did Dr. Marcus Dods, who also included it in his volume referred to above. He gives no clue to its origin nor as to the

source whence he derived it. The words, however, will, I am sure, be appreciated without this information :

Most honour to the Men of Prayer,
Whose mosque is in them everywhere ;
Who, amid revel's wildest din,
In war's severest discipline,
On rolling deck, in thronged bazaar,
In stranger land, however far,
However different in their reach
Of thought, in manners, dress or speech,
Will quietly their carpet spread,
To Mecca turn the humble head
And, as if blind to all around
And deaf to each distracting sound,
In simple language God adore,
In spirit to His presence soar;
And, 'mid the pauses of the prayer,
Rest, as if rapt in glory there.

Philip Vivian, the Rationalist writer, whose writings are published by the Rationalist Press Association, in his book, *The Churches and Modern Thought* (p. 13). speaking of the shyness of Christians generally in giving expression to their religious beliefs, says that in India:

Hindoos, Mussulmans and Parsees have no qualms on this score. They see no necessity for ' reserve ' in the profession of their faith. They testify to it openly at all times and in all places. It forms, as it ought, an integral part of their everyday life.

Prayer may, at the beginning of its practice, be regarded as a duty, sometimes, it is to be feared, as a somewhat irksome duty, but it is not long before it comes to be regarded as a blessed privilege and, instead of a lurking desire to avoid the call to prayer, there comes a longing to join in a communal or congregational act, whenever the opportunity presents itself, apart from an abiding desire for prayer as an individual. Prayer becomes a habit, a clinging habit. The constant disciple is soon able to realize that not only it is not difficult but it is natural

to live in the habit of praying and thus to " pray without ceasing. " "Pray without ceasing, " writes Stopford A. Brooke :

" Impossible, " we cry. " We cannot always be kneeling. " Prayer, itself, is not the outward form alone. It may be uttered but its deepest work is often voiceless. Do you take your daily path through the world, constantly appealing to God, with the profound and solemn sense of His presence with you, so that in all your difficulty and temptation, on the Exchange, in your room alone at your desk, when receiving friends, when in society, when you do your household work or take your holiday, you ask yourself: " Am I hand in hand with God, ruling all my life in obedience to His Will ? " Then your life is a life of prayer without ceasing.

Writing to a friend on September 22, 1856, Dr. Stopford A. Brooke said :

Is not God there and as much the Ever Near, when you are walking in Princes Street or kneeling at your bedside ? You say you can commune with God. Is not this prayer, the truest prayer ? I commune with my own heart on my bed and *am still !* The voiceless prayer, silent yet vocal in God's ear. Communion with God is the highest form of prayer : mere asking is not.

In another letter to another correspondent on January 17 of the following year, Dr. Brooke said :

Prayer is the act of communion with God, not so much petition. In it God reveals His Love and Peace to us. As I once told you, Prayer is not to change the Will of God, but to change our will into His. It is at our peril we change the prayer : " Not as I will but as Thou wilt " into " Not as *Thou* wilt but as *I* will."

We must, however, beware of and shun emotion, which is purely evanescent in character, merely an agitation of the mind. We want to get on to the firm foundation of faith :

All that which is with you passeth away, but that which is with God abideth.[1]

Paradise shall be brought near to everyone who hath turned in penitence to God and kept His laws.[2]

[1] Qur-án XVI, 98.
[2] Qur-án L, 31.

Brother Lawrence of the Carmelite Order, author of that well-known and inspiring book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, wrote :

By the practice of the Presence of God, by steadfast gaze on Him, the soul comes to a knowledge of God, full and deep, to an unclouded vision ; all its life is passed in unceasing acts of worship, of contrition and of simple trust, of praise and prayer and service ; at times, indeed, life seems to be but one unbroken practice of His Divine Presence.

In his *Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Muhammad*, Syed Ameer Ali quotes the following prayer, which Dr. Marcus Dods recommends to the consideration of all who charge Muslims with formalism in worship :

O Lord, I supplicate Thee for firmness of faith and direction towards rectitude and to assist me in being grateful to Thee and in adoring Thee in every good way ; and I supplicate Thee for an innocent heart which shall not incline to wickedness ; and I supplicate Thee for a true tongue and for that virtue which Thou knowest and for forgiveness of those faults which Thou knowest. O my Defender ! assist me in remembering Thee and being grateful to Thee, in worshipping Thee with the excess of my strength. O Lord, I have injured my own soul and no one can pardon the faults of Thy servants but Thou. Forgive me out of Thy loving-kindness and have mercy on me ; for verily, Thou art the Forgiver of offences and the Bestower of blessings upon Thy servants.

Prayer is an absolute necessity in the time of temptation and it is the greatest solace in the hour of despair. At the time of temptation it acts as a great—indeed, the greatest—preventive of side-stepping, of getting off the right path, as expressed in sura i of the Qur-án :

Guide us to the path that is straight,
The path of those to whom Thy love is great ;
Not of those in whom is hate,
Nor they that deviate.

What is sin ? It is a missing of the mark, a stepping off from the right path as ordained by Allah. Paul was

frequently reminding his converts to " walk in the Spirit " and the expression he used was a military term, only to be expressed by " march, keeping time."

Is there any man or woman on the face of this earth, who has not experienced relief in answer to prayer uttered in the hours of darkness and doubt? Is there any one who, at such time, has had recourse to prayer, who has not seen, in answer, the light breaking through the encircling gloom? It may be that we have been plunged into the depths because we have deviated from the straight path and succumbed to the allurements of a mirage on a by-path, only to find that the anticipated pleasure was unreal and unsatisfying. Then has come the realization that we have made a wreck of our life. We have been tossed about on the shifting sands of impurity, doubt, sometimes even, it may be, of blasphemy; and we have despaired of ever again finding our feet standing firm on the Rock of Faith. In agony we have, perhaps, cried: " Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me." If that is so, the prayer has been answered and you know it, for Allah is Merciful and Compassionate and His Word abideth. The greater the need, the more sincere is the prayer. Wearied, perhaps, with the struggle and overcome with grief and shame we lie panting in our agony of mind and distress, until, presently, a calm begins to steal its way into our soul, accompanied by the realization of the Mercy and Compassion of Allah.

Muhammad was ever a great believer in the power of Prayer. Before he was the recipient of any revelation he described Prayer as one of the most beautiful things on earth. What was the secret of his strength and power? It was the outcome of his constancy in prayer and the frequency and intensity of his communion with Allah.

Before his call to apostleship it was his habit to spend one month in every year in solitary prayer and meditation in a cave on Mount Hira. Sir William Muir tells us in his *Life of Muhammad* (1923, p. 37) that when

> Muhammad was approaching his fortieth year, always pensive, he had of late become even more thoughtful and retiring. Contemplation and reflection engaged his mind. The debasement of his people pressed heavily on him ; the dim and imperfect shadows of Judaism excited doubts without satisfying them and his soul was perplexed with uncertainty with what was the true religion. Thus burdened he frequently retired to seek relief in meditation amongst the solitary valleys and rocks near Mecca. His favourite spot was a cave in the declivities at the foot of Mount Hira, or Hara, since called *Jebel Nūr* or "Mountain of Light," because Muhammad is said to have received his first revelation there.

Prayer and communion became even more necessary to the Prophet after he received his divine commission. A call of separation from evil and to service to Allah comes at least once to every man during life. When heeded and obeyed it effects a change in conduct and outlook which is sometimes called "conversion" but it is within the free will of any to reject it, though at his peril, or to accept with untold blessing to himself and to others. It is also a call to a life of prayer. "Yearning" is, perhaps, the best word to describe the experience and if stability of character and effectiveness of service are to be the result of the experience they can only be secured by walking along the pathway of prayer and communion with the Eternal.

Prayer is the main force that may be employed in the time of persecution, it provides the strength to guard against insidious suggestions of capitulation, which may come even from those we love and who, we know, love us. Abu Talib was uncle to Muhammad, being the brother of his father, Abdullah ; and it was through his influence that the Prophet entered the service of

Khadijah, who became the first wife of Muhammad. When, after he had received his call to apostleship, the Quraishites sought to restrain him from public propaganda and they appealed to Abu Talib, the chief of the tribe, for support. He endeavoured to persuade his nephew to abstain from preaching, but Muhammad, in the power and strength that had come into his possession replied :

Though the Koreishites should arm against me the sun and the moon (the planetary deities which they worshipped) the one on my right hand and the other on my left, I would not be shaken from my resolution.

Although Abu Talib had not pledged mself to Islam, he, without hesitation, decided to protect Muhammad and, at the same time Ali, his son, came boldly forward and offered his services as vizier.

Muhammad's activities in the spread of the Faith began to increase but he still continued his practice of retiring at intervals to Mount Hira for prayer and meditation. One of his most bitter opponents was 'Umar, later on to play an important part in the redaction of the Qur-án. 'Umar was on his way to visit his sister when he heard that she and her husband had become adherents of the Prophet. He found them listening to the recital of a chapter of the Qur án. He flew into a violent passion and struck both wife and husband, causing blood to flow freely. Repentance followed immediately, forgiveness was sought and 'Umar asked to see the chapter to which they had been listening. His conversion was as sudden as that of the Christian apostle is said to have been and Umar's name has come down in history as one of the most stalwart supporters and striking characters in the propagation of the Faith.

It was not until three years after Muhammad received his first revelation that he received the command to preach the message publicly :

O thou apostle! preach what has been revealed to thee from

thy Lord; if thou do it not thou hast not preached His message and God will not hold thee free from men; for God guides not men who disbelieve.[1]

As We sent down punishments on the separatists (Jews and Christians who are here and elsewhere accused of mutilating and altering the Scriptures) who dismember the Qur-án. But by thy Lord! We will question them one and all about what they may have done. Therefore publish what thou art bidden and turn aside from the idolaters.[2]

To-day many, indeed, most Christian ministers preach and teach not what Jesus preached and taught, but a gospel into which they have introduced doctrines of Pauline and other human manufacture. A favourite innovation has been to introduce a trinity of persons into the Godhead, despite the oft-repeated assertion in the Old Testament, reaffirmed and emphasized by Jesus that "The Lord our God is One." This and other doctrines derogatory to Allah, for which no warrant or authority can be found in the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament, have been widely spread throughout Christendom. Modern Christians are every whit as idolatrous as the heathen, whose practices they profess to abhor and condemn. Paul wrote to Timothy:

I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith.

But that was just what he had not done. He had made many unauthorized additions to the Faith. His teachings are not in agreement with the Truth as revealed by Jesus, which he mutilated, for to add to a divine message is just as great a mutilation as to delete any portion of it. Yet Paul has had and still has myriads of followers and imitators.

Prayer is the initial act of the spiritual life: it is also its sustainer and complement. One Muslim writer has

[1] The Qur-án, V, 71.
[2] *Ibid*, XV. 94.

adapted the words of one verse of Montgomery's well-known hymn to read :

Prayer is the Muslim's vital breath,
The Muslim's native air ;
His watchword at the gates of death,
He enters Heaven with prayer.

Prayer must be offered with the thoughts centred upon Allah, to Whom alone it must be addressed. The words must not be detached from the thoughts. There is no prayer, says the Qur-án, unless the heart is present and a well-known Arabian proverb runs : " His head is towards the Qiblah but his heels are among the weeds," and Shakespeare has written :

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below,
Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

Prayer must not be addressed to any creature, not even to Muhammad, nor to any of the many Islamic saints. It should be accompanied by praise. Take the first sura of the Qur-án as an example. The following is Sir Richard Burton's translation :

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.
Praise be to Allah, Who the three worlds made,
The Merciful, the Compassionate.
The King of the Day of Fate.
Thee *alone* do we worship and of Thee *alone* do we ask aid.
Guide us to the path that is straight,
The path of those to whom Thy love is great,
Not those in whom is hate,
Nor they who deviate.

The mind should be centred on Allah. There may come occasions when words are a hindrance to expression, when it is possible only to be speechless and quiescent in the unexpressed desire to bask in the Presence of the Eternal. Then Prayer rises to its highest pitch—Communion, when words would be an intrusion and a clog. Has your little daughter never climbed on to your

knees and put her arms around your neck? Have you never responded to that approach with the question: Well, now, and what do you want?" and received the reply: "Nothing, only to tell you I love you." There is Communion. When we rise to that height in Prayer, we enjoy Communion with the Eternal, with Allah and we experience that Peace which passeth all *mis*understanding. But that experience cannot be ours until we have reached the point to which Islam is directed—complete resignation, unqualified submission to the Will of Allah.

Are you agitated with evil thoughts, perhaps desires? There is only one way by which they can be overthrown—Prayer.

Observe Prayer at early morning, at the close of day and at the approach of night, for the good deeds drive away the evil desires.[1]

Prayer is not the presentation of a begging petition to Allah, least of all a request for material and temporal needs to be supplied. It should be a continuous aspiration, not necessarily expressed in words, to be brought into constant and conscious submission to the Will of Allah. Its object is to purify the heart and desires, to replace vice by virtue, evil by good; to live in thought and act so completely in union with Allah that the experience of the Psalmist may be repeated in our lives and that with David we may say: "In Thy Presence is fulness of joy and at Thy right hand pleasures for evermore." Prayer puts into action that yearning after holiness which without it would be unrealized. Tennyson said:

Prayer on our part is the highest aspiration of the soul. Prayer is, to take a mundane simile, like opening a great sluice

[1] Qur-án XI, 115.

between a great river and our little channels, when the great sea gathers itself together and flows in at full tide.

The acquisition of Truth is secured only by labour and toil—and prayer. Even when this is vocal and expressed in words it is complementary to desire. Knocking and seeking must precede the asking and accompany the desire. And the result? The Truth-seeker becomes the Truth-finder and then the Truth-distributor. But the search continues all the time. Only a small portion of the mine has been explored : that one nugget which is prized so highly is but an infinitesimal part of the riches to be found in the rich veins within the mine and the richer veins are deeper down. All that has so far been discovered has been found at the adit or entrance.

Many Christians look upon prayer as a means of obtaining mundane necessities and comforts and not a few books have been written in support of this view. But such is not the Muslim ideal. The petition should be that the suppliant, the prayer may be brought into full and absolute conformity with the Will of Allah. That was the only petition in what is known as the last prayer of Jesus on earth, which is really and truly " the Lord's prayer : " " Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou willest." There is Prayer indeed. As to our temporal needs, is there not the assurance in Matthew vi, 9 and Luke xix, 29-31 :

Seek not what ye shall eat nor what ye shall drink ; neither be ye of doubtful mind (margin : " live not in careful suspense ") for all these things do the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you.

It is related in the *Life of Cardinal Vaughan* that his mother made it a practice never to ask in prayer for the

supply of material needs.[1]

Stopford A. Brooke tells us in *The Gospel of Joy* (1909, p. 23) that :

There is one Peace : it is to have the will of God as the Master of our will, to have but one desire, to do His Will; one aim only, to live in obedience to God's righteousness. For then, under One Ruler, all our powers, subordinate each to his own place and work, go forward like a disciplined army, to one conquest. That is Peace, the Peace of Harmony.

That is the peace one Muslim wishes another, when on meeting the greeting is *Assalámu'alaikum* : " peace be with you, " and the response is *Wa 'Alaikum-as-salám*, "and to you, peace."

We find that the endeavour to do the will of Allah lightens our burdens instead of adding to them. Prayer subordinates the burdens, by supplying strength which enables us to bear existing burdens with gladness, even to make us happy in carrying them, in fact, makes them so light that we no longer recognize them as burdens. Many sombre-looking religionists, with long-drawn faces, call themselves philosophers. There is, of course, a philosophy of religion and philosophy Dr. Joad assures us (and he certainly ought to know) is a very dry subject. I do not know whether that explains why so many religionists who call themselves philosophers look so miserable and disagreeable. But you would have very great difficulty in finding a miserable-looking Muslim.

[1] This is Prayer in perfection, which is appropriate to those who have risen above all desires and needs. For those, however, who have not attained such a high level of spiritual consciousness, Islam recommends praying for everything, one may feel the need for, because thereby our animal instinct for economic struggles assumes the colour of spirituality. It is obvious that if our economic efforts are not leavened by prayers, they will simply go to swell the ego in us after every achievement and this process must form, whether we are conscious of it or not, an obstacle in the way of our spiritual self-realization. Thus, while aiming at a prayer which will find nothing to pray for, *i.e.*, whose sole object will be a complete offering up of our whole being to the Creator, we should not forget to adjust our prayers to the intervening spiritual states.—*Ed.* I. R.

More than the Christian apparently, the Muslim has found out the way to " be glad in the Lord and rejoice." At any rate, philosophy is unsubstantial. It is in a state of perpetual motion, having no permanent abiding place. There seems to be as great a distance between religion and philosophy as there is between religion and theology. Religion is Life. One may know the details of every religious system the world has ever known and yet be without a spark of personal religion. You may, as a theologian, discourse learnedly, accurately and lengthily upon the tenets of every religious belief, past and present, under the sun and yet be without an ounce of religion. You may be acquainted with all the details of every philosophy yet propounded, but even if your brain could stand the strain, it would be a profitless achievement if you remained unconversant, in a practical manner, with religion. Religion is a matter which concerns living, not merely thought; in fact, it is Life itself and whether you are Hindu, Buddhist, Christian or Muslim, or subscribe to any other faith, the religion you profess must be lived and become the spring of all your acts and thoughts.

In Islam prayer follows belief as the key to conduct ; hence it follows the Creed. It is the Islamic ideal. But, you may say : " Is not that the ideal of all religions ?" Certainly, it is. " Why then exalt Islam over other faiths ?" The answer is simple. The claim made for Islam is that it is destitute of all superstitious features and brings man into contact with the Eternal, with Allah, in a more simple, natural and effective manner than any other religion. The way to Allah is made more clear and simple. Submission to His Will is made more easy and natural. It is the leading tenet of Islam and by being constant in prayer the Muslim endeavours to put it into practice at every step along the path that leads to Allah.

JESUS THE SON OF MARY
HIS BIRTH AND DEATH

By Khwaja Nazir Ahmad

(*Continued from Vol. XXXIV, p. 463*)

The Family of Amran

There is nothing surprising in the fact that the Gospels leave us in ignorance concerning the parents of Jesus and his earthly life. The early Christians must have possessed more accurate information about them; but there were very strong reasons for not transmitting them to the second generation of Christians. Almost immediately after the crucifixion was begun that labour of faith, which resolved in elevating Jesus more and more above humanity, which must necessarily have condemned everything that tended in the opposite direction. Too many details about the earthly family of Jesus, its actual status, which was certainly not too disinguished, could not fail at that time to be very embarrassing. When Paul announced that he was interested only in "the crucified and glorified Christ,"[1] he gave the exact formula for the transformation of the life of Jesus in the minds of the earliest generation of Christians. At the same time he revealed the secret of the rapidity with which authentic recollections concerning the family of Jesus, and his life prior to baptism, were obliterated.

The earliest tradition believed that the name of Jesus' mother was Maryam[2] and the name of his natural father was Joseph. I am alive to the fact that soon after, the

[1] 1 Cor. I: 18, 23-24; II: 2.

[2] *Ency. Brit.*, Art. *Genealogies of Jesus.*

Christian apologists challenged the correctness of Joseph being the *natural* father of Jesus. I have already discussed this question.

Joseph was a carpenter. Jesus learnt his father's trade.[1] He, therefore, came from the rank of the simple classes, from among those who laboured and "*ate bread in the sweat of their faces.*"[2] He experienced their troubles and poverty, as well as their hatred of the rich.[3]

We know very little regarding Mary, and what the Gospels say about her is totally insufficient. In view of the fact that the doctrine of *Christotokus* centered round Mary, their silence about her is all the more remarkable. Her lineage is completely unknown except that she was a cousin of Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, and, was "of the daughters of Aaron."[4] *i.e.* Amran or *'Imran.* Thus we gather that Mary also belonged to the family of *Amran,* or, in other words, was a descendant of *Amran.*

The Apocryphal Gospels, however, furnish us with some material with which we can reconstruct the early life of Jesus, but unfortunately they also contain and end in contradictory fantasies; and, with the growing influence of the Pauline creed, succumbed gradually to the glorification of the Lord; and, therefore, have to be considered very carefully.

The narrative I am about to describe has been collected from verious sources. I will here, very briefly, discuss them first.

The *Protovangelium Jacobi* or the *Gospel Relating to the Birth and Infancy of Jesus,* as known to us, was discovered in the sixteenth century by Postel during his travels in the Middle East. It is also styled as the *Gospel*

[1] *Gospel of Thomas,* C. 3.
[2] Gen. IV: 19.
[3] Matt., XIX: 23-24.
[4] Luke, I: 5.

of James. Zahn and Krüger regard it as a very early document and place it in the first decade of the second century. Origen, writing in the early half of the third century, while referring to this Gospel said :

The author was in early times universally believed to be the Lord's brother, the head of the Church of Jerusalem.

Origen was, of course, referring to James the Just, for this Gospel begins : "I, James, wrote this history...." Clement of Alexandria[1] and Justin Martyr[2] not only referred to it but relied on it. There exist its recensions in Greek and Latin and an Armenian version is also in existence. It was read in several Churches up to the fifth century. I must, however, point out that this Gospel, as it has come down to us, is not in its original form. From time to time many additions and alterations had been made.

This happened, there is ground for believing it, in the 5th century. The abrupt introduction of Joseph in the first person (Ch. 18-20) gives convincing evidence that that and the following sections are not from the hand of the writer of the Gospel.'

To begin with, Origen gives a different ending of the Gospel. Again, certain incidents have been introduced which are in keeping with the later popular mythical belief of the Christians, and it is for this reason, that in its present form, the Catholic Church, in particular, considers it to be "the most edifying Treatise which was read in several Churches."[4] If the form of the Gospel as it existed before the fourth century had been the same as it is to-day it would not have been condemned, as was done, by three successive decrees : The Decrees of the Western Church at Damascus (382 C.E.), of the Innocent I (405 C.E.) and of Gelasius (496 C.E.). On the

[1] Strom atcis, VIII ; 16, 93.
[2] Dial, 78. 100 ; *Apol* : 33.
[3] Hastings, *Dictionary of Church and Gospels,* Vol. I, p. 681.
[4] The *Catholic Ency* Art. *Apocryphal Gospels.*

contrary in its present form, and, no doubt, because of the incidents interpolated by the hagiographers, this Gospel is maintained by the Catholic Church to be the "source of various traditions current among the faithful. They are of value in indicating the veneration paid to Mary at a very early stage."[1]

According to Postel, this Gospel was very popular with the Syrian Nestorians even in the sixteenth century.

The second is the *Evangalium de Nativitate de Maria* or the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary. In this Gospel the history of Mary is narrated and it ends with the birth of Jesus. The observations I have made about *Protovangelium Jacobi* equally apply, perhaps with greater force, to this Gospel.

The third, is the *Gospel of the Ebionites*. The Ebionites were Jewish Christians, and James, the Just, was the head of their Church at Jerusalem. They denounced Paul as a heretic and rejected all his Epistles as unauthoritative. No wonder that in the following centuries they themselves were stigmatized as heretics. They observed the Law themselves and held its observance as absolutely necessary for salvation and binding on all, and refused fellowship with all who did not comply with it. They believed that :

> Jesus is the Messiah ; yet a mere man, born by natural generation to Joseph and Mary.[2]

This Gospel was likewise referred to by Irenaeus,[3] Epiphanius,[4] Hippolytus,[5] Origen[6] and Turtullian.[7] The Tüberigen School held that the primitive Christianity

[1] The Catholic Ency., Art, Apocryphal Gospels.

[2] Hippol. Phil., VII : 22. See also Hastings, *History of Apostolic Church*, 318-332.

[3] Adv. *Hær.*, 1. XXVI.

[4] Epi. *Hær.*, XXIX, 9 ; 4.

[5] Hippol. *Hær.*, X : 18.

[6] *Hær.*, XXXIII.

[7] Turt. Icle. Praesar, *Hær.*, III : 12.

was itself Ebionism. Mosheim says that although the Ebionites believed in the celestial mission of Jesus, yet they regarded him as a man born of Joseph and Mary, according to the ordinary course of nature.[1]

And lastly, *the Gospel according to the Hebrews* is supposed to be the oldest Gospel. It was freely quoted by Ignatius in his *Epistle to the Church at Smyrna.*[2] This Gospel was written in Aramaic, the language which Jesus and the Apostles spoke. Sometimes it is confused with the so-called *Gospel of the Nazarenes* ; and while considering the one as being only another edition of the other, the Tuberigen School held that the teachings and traditions contained therein represented the belief of the primitive Christians. Jerome, who held a very high opinion about this Gospel, regarded it as the original Gospel according to Matthew.

There are other Gospels : The *Gospel of Peter*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and many others but I need not go into their details.

Having thus described in some detail the sources of the narrative I proceed to describe it, of course, without any gloss of the later Christians.

Joachim (Ioachim) a wealthy farmer of Nazareth, and his wife Hanna (Anna) lamented over the fact that they had no children.[3] Joachim is told to his chagrin by Reuben, a Jewish father, who could boast of a numerous family, that his childlessness disqualified him from presenting his offerings to God. Reuben looked Joachim in the face contemptuously and addressed him as a man "who had not given any offspring to Israel." With an aggrieved heart Joachim went to the Temple, and remained there till late at night, and prayed to the Lord to

[1] Mosheim, *An Ecclesiastical History : Ancient and Modern*, Vol. I, 214.
[2] III : 1. [3] *Prot. Jac.*, C. I.

bless him with a child. In the meantime Hanna, his wife, was also reminded of her childlessness as she saw, through a window of her house, a sparrow's nest in a laurel bush. She had also been driven with jeers from the Lord's Temple ; and she also lamented :

Woe in me ! Who begot me and what womb produced me, for I am reproached, and they have driven me with jeers from the Lord's Temple.

Woe in me ! What am I like ?
I am not like the birds in Heaven,
for the birds of Heaven are fruitful before
Thee O Lord.

* * *

Woe in me ! What am I like ?
I am not like this earth,
for even this earth bears its fruit in season
and blesses Thee O Lord.[1]

By these lamentations Hanna profaned the Lord's Day. Judith, her maid, turned on her, and said :

Why should I wish you any evil for not listening to my words, since the Lord Himself has closed thy womb, and not given thee any offspring for Israel ?

Hanna dressed herself, out of respect for the Lord's Day, and, as her husband had not yet returned, she bewailed again :

Bewail must I, my sorrows,
And bewail must I my childlessness.

And Hanna prayed :

O God of Israel ! bless me and harken unto my prayer, as Thou didst bless the womb of Sarah and gave her a son, even Isaac.[2]

At this time an angel appeared and assured her, just as he did to Joachim in the Temple, that the Lord will bless her with a child. Hanna answered with a promise :

As the Lord my God liveth, if I bring forth a child, I will bring it for a gift unto Thee, my God.[3]

[1] *Prot. Jac.*, III : 1.
[2] *Prot. Jac. III : 3.*
[3] *Prot. Jac. IV : 1. ; Evag. de Nat. de Mar.*, C. 3.

Eventually, Mary was born to Hanna on the 15th of Hathor[1] ; 'and although according to the Jewish ideas she had to be sorrowful for the child was not a son, still she thankfully praised the Lord for His gift and sang a song. This song is more appropriate than is usually the case with such songs in the Bible. Hanna thanked the Lord and sang ;

I will sing a song unto the Lord my God,
for He hath visited me, and taken from me the reproach of my enemies ;
The Lord hath given me fruit of righteousness, a single fruit, but manifold in His sight.
Who will tell the sons of Reuben—
that Hanna giveth suck.
Harken ! Harken ! Ye twelve tribes of Israel :
Hanna giveth suck.[2]

Hanna then proceeded to fulfil her vows of consecrating the child. Mary was not allowed to walk on the common ground till she was taken at the age of three to the Synagogue where she was entrusted to the high priest, Zacharias.[3]

A good deal of discussion has taken place as to where Zacharias and John the Baptist lived. Luke says in a city in Juda, but he contradicts himself when he refers to a desert. He does not name the town and the only references by name to the places where John was living are given in John : Bethabara[4] and Æaon near Salim.[5] Bethabara was east of the river and a day's distance from Cana of Galilee.

Zacharias belonged to the tribe of Abijah, and he may be a descendant of those who were left behind by Zurobable with the first band of exiles under the leadership of Shashbazzer. It is true that at sometime Zacharias

[1] Forbes Robinson, The *Coptic Apocryphal Gospels*, 1.
[2] *Prot. Jac.* IV : 3.
[3] *Prot. Jac.* VII : 1.
[4] John I : 28.
[5] John III : 23.

must have lived in the priestly towns, but the Talmud tells us of many high priests living away from them. Zacharias must have taken Elizabeth to these places to escape the fury of Herod.

Mary was taken to Zacharias and was placed under his guardianship. She began to live with him. During her stay in the Temple she was visited and fed by angels and honoured by Divine visions.[1]

Mary arrived at womanhood when she was twelve years. She then had an angelic apparition.[2] A slightly different version of this apparition is given by Luke.[3]

In three of the Gospels under discussion the visit of Mary to Elizabeth at this juncture is omitted, for the obvious reason that the apparition took place at a time when Mary was living with Zacharias and consequently with Elizabeth. In the fourth it is a clear later and self-contradictory interpolation.

Mary had to leave the Temple because of her age. "No exception was made on her account to the rule which forbade all full grown women to be seen within the walls of the Holy Temple. The high priest took counsel as to what course they should adopt in order that she should not defile the Lord's Temple."[4]

And the high priest took the vestment with the twelve bells and went in unto the Holy of Holies and prayed concerning her. And lo, an angel of the Lord appeared saying unto him : Zacharias, Zacharias, go forth and assemble them that are bachelors of Israel, and let them bring every man a rod, and to whomsoever the Lord shall show a sign, *his wife shall she be.*[5]

And Zacharias in conformity with the procedure of old[6] summoned the bachelors[7] of Israel who lived around or near the place. Zacharias proclaimed :

Let each bring his rod (some versions say—a reed used for

[1] The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, VI ; *The Coptic Life of Mary*, II A.
[2] *Evang. de Nat. de Mar.*. C 6. [3] Luke 1 : 28.
[4] The *Gospel of Mary*, Yrjö Hiren, the *Sacred Shrine*, 201.
[5] *Prot, Jac.* VIII : 3 ; *Evang. de Native. de Mar.* C. 7.
[6] Isa, XI ; 1.
[7] One of the versions says *widowers.*

writing) and whoever has a sign shown to him by the Lord *his shall the woman be.*[1]

The narrative goes on :

And Joseph cast down his adze and ran to meet the Heralds, and when they were gathered together, they went to the high priest. The rods were thrown in the fountain outside the Temple...when Joseph's rod emerged a dove came down and sat beside it.[2]

Joseph was then married to Mary,[3] and took Mary unto his house (which was Bethlehem Nasoriyyah).[4] The marriage is consummated and Mary conceives.[5] The age of Mary "when these mysteries came to pass" was sixteen years.[6]

Some Gospels state that immediately after his marriage Joseph left Mary and went to another place to attend to his work, and that the apparition to Mary took place during his absence. The place to which Joseph is alleged to have gone is not named and no one mentions the period of his absence. Such vague platitudes cannot be accepted to cover a period of four years. In any case there was nothing to prevent Joseph from returning earlier to his house and resuming his married life, and then returning to his work. I have already given detailed reasons for rejecting this journey.

The *Protovangelium Jacobi* also narrates that some time after Mary had been received into Joseph's house, she, with other women, was charged with the making of the Dividing Veil for the Temple of the Lord, to screen the Holy of the Holies,[7] and that it fell to her lot to spin the true purple and the scarlet. Mary "did not work with the other women but took the material with her to her home,"[8] and Joseph had to take a vow

[1] *Prot. Jac.*, IX : 1. *Evang. de Native. de Mar*, C. 7-8. cf. Nub. XVII : 2-4.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] The details of the event are given in the Armenian Versions, Ch. IV.
[4] *Evang. de Native. de Mar.*, C. 7-8.
[5] *The Gospel of the Ebionites, the Gospel according to the Hebrews*, IV : 3.
[6] *Prot. Jac.* XII : 3. the *Gospel of Mary*, Yrjö Hiren, the *Sacred Shrine*, 206.
[7] *Prot. Jac.* XIII : 1 ; cf Ex. XXVI : 31.
[8] The *Gospel of Mary*, Yrjö Hiren, *The Sacred Shrine*, 205.

of separation as provided for in the Old Testament.[1] During the period of the vow he had to separate himself from all worldly things and particularly from any carnal connection with his wife. Dummelow tells us that "this vow could either be for a limited period or for life."[2] He also says that after the expiry of the period of vow the devotee "returned to ordinary life.'[3] Joseph was made to take this vow to avoid "uncleanness" of Mary while she was engaged in making the veil. This vow was meant for men only. Mary had "secluded herself in her home, to conceal her condition from the children of Israel. Mary went to the Temple to deliver her finished work."[4]

We are then suddenly told that when "the authorities of the Temple discovered Mary's condition, Joseph was charged with incontinence ; and both of them were questioned :

Wherefore hath thou done this, and wherefore hath thou humbled thy souls and forgotten the Lord thy God ?

The narrative goes on :

And Joseph was full of weeping. And the priest said : I will give you to drink of the water of the conviction of the Lord, and it will make manifest your sins before your eyes. And the priest took thereof and made Joseph drink, and sent him to the hill country and he returned whole. He made Mary also drink and sent her into the hill country. And she returned whole. And all the people marvelled because sin appeared not in them.[5]

Joseph and Mary had not, in fact, transgressed any commandments of the Lord, they had only violated, if at all, a ritual set up by the authorities of the Temple, and, therefore, as was to be expected, they passed the test scatheless, for it was laid down that :

If the woman be not defiled but be clean, then she shall be free, and *shall conceive seed.*[6]

[1] Nub. VI. [2] Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 104.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] The *Gospel of Mary*, Yrjö Hiren, *The Sacred Shrine*, 206.
[5] *Prot. Jac.* XVI : 1-2. See Nub. V : 18.
[6] Nub. V : 28.

And consequently the high priest said to Joseph and Mary :

Since the Lord God has not disclosed your sins, neither do I condemn you.[1]

So the high priest sent them away,

and Joseph took Mary and departed unto his house rejoicing and glorifying the Lord of Israel.[2]

Mary was innocent and so was, of course, Joseph, because the conception had taken place during the interval which had elapsed between the time of marriage and the time when Mary was entrusted with the making of the veil and before Joseph had taken the vow. These factsare inherently implied, though not specifically stated in the narrative, because the discovery could not have been made by the authorities of the Temple till after the pregnancy was well advanced. Consequently, the entrustment of the making of the veil could not have covered the same period. Besides, Mary at her marriage was twelve years of age, and at the time of the making of the veil when "these mysteries came to pass" she was sixteen years of age.

In one of the narratives, it is true, it is recorded that Joseph had left Mary soon after the marriage, and that on his return he was distressed to find the condition of Mary and charged her before the authorities of the Temple. She had, therefore, to go through the ordeal of drinking the bitter waters and was subsequently declared to be innocent. This version is false and was introduced to support the supernatural birth of Jesus. I repeat that this version is false, because Joseph also was made to go through the ordeal. The law did not provide for the man to go through the ordeal if he had charged his wife with adultery. If this version was correct Mary, and Mary alone, should have been made to drink the bitter waters. The fact that Joseph had also to take the bitter waters is conclusive evidence of the

[1] *Prot. Jac.* XVI : 3. [2] *Ibid.*

fact that the real charge was against him, and Mary was made to drink the bitter waters because, in such circumstances, the Divine wrath could only demonstratively affect a woman. Mary, therefore, was made to do this so as to furnish evidence against Joseph and not because she had been charged with, or suspected of, adultery. Had the contrary been the case, i.e., Mary had been charged with adultery she would have been stoned to death.[1]

The narrative continues, that in keeping with the traditions, then obtaining, and may I add even to-day obtaining in the East, Mary went to her parents' house at Nazareth to give birth to her first-born. Thus Jesus was born at Nazareth as any other child would heve been in wedlock, and in support of this assertion it is mentioned that "the child took the breast from his mother."[2]

From this stage Mary is relegated to the position of a forlorn mother, though she now and again appears, according to the Gospels, in the story. Twelve years after she is made to accompany Joseph and Jesus to the Temple at Jerusalem and then she appears at the scene of Calvary.

The abridged review in which I have striven as far as possible to employ the original expressions of the narratives is based upon the oldest MSS, and translations of the various Gospels.

The Canonical Gospels also tell us that there were other children of Joseph and Mary besides Jesus. But those who raised Jesus to godhead, who created belief in the virgin birth, could not tolerate the idea of Joseph having ever had consummated his marriage with Mary. The peculiar view of incarnation, having been linked with the contemporary view of the baseness of matter, led the Christians, who started the worship of the virgin mother,

[1] Jer. VIII : 5.
[2] Gospel according to the Hebrews

to discover, or invent, the probability that the *brothers* and *sisters* of Jesus referred to in the New Testament were either half brothers and half sisters, being children of Joseph from a previous marriage, or cousins only.[1]

I have used the words "the children of Joseph and Mary" because the Synoptics have no hesitation in giving Jesus brothers and sisters. In the Gospels they are referred to in the most natural way. We read:

And there came his mother and his brethren, and standing without, they sent unto him, to call him, and the multitude was sitting about him, and they said unto him: Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without, ask for thee.[2]

Again, people of Nazareth are represented as saying:

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses and Juda, and Simon? And are not his sisters also with us?[3]

Paul is even more clear, when he says:

But others of the Apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord's brother.[4]

With this must be read the tradition that James the Just, a brother of Jesus, was the head of the Church at Jerusalem.[5]

I will not embark on any lengthy discussion of the arbitrary theories based as they are on mere assertions. They are threefold. The first, the *Helvidian* mentioned by Heloidius, in the time of Jerome, which held that the brothers and sisters were the children of Joseph and Mary born after Jesus. They relied on the reference to Jesus as the first-born.[6]

The second, the *Epiphanian*, was sponsored by St. Epiphanius, which declared that the brothers and sisters were the issues of a previous marriage of Joseph. The third, the *Hieronymium*, was of St. Jerome himself, by

[1] Lightfoot, *Brethren of the Lord* : 75.

[2] Mark, III : 31.

[3] Mark, VI : 3 ; See also Matt. XII : 46-47, 55 : XII, 55-56 ; Luke VIII : 19 ; John II : 12 ; VII : 3 ; 1 Cor., IX : 5 ; Acts, I : 14.

[4] Gal., I : 19.

[5] Eseb., H.E. 2. 1.
Matt., I : 25 ; Luke, I : 17.

which the brothers and sisters of Jesus were relegated to the status of mere cousins of the Lord, the children of Clopas, a brother of Joseph, and "the other Mary."

It was the last mentioned theory which found favour with the later Christians, though it is totally devoid of any historical foundation. While commenting on this last theory Glover says :

> That cousins in some parts of the world are confused in common speech with brothers may be admitted, but to the ordinary Greek reader *brothers* meant *brothers* and not cousins, which was something different.[1]

But we need not go by conjectures. We know the names of the brothers of Jesus[2] and also the sons of "the other Mary ; "[3] and they are different.

As a last resort, it has been suggested that the "brothers and sisters" of Jesus were no other than the groups of his followers united to each other by the bonds of faith ; and reliance is placed on the fact that early Christians spoke of themselves as brethren and that Jesus styled them as brethren in his direction to them for proceeding to Galilee.[4]

I have already referred to the incident that the mother and brothers of Jesus went to get hold of Jesus. He was then with his disciples and they mentioned to Jesus that his mother and brothers had come. This, I think, fully disposes of this special plea.

No one can ever dream the episode of the critical neighbours of Nazareth, who would not accept a prophet because they knew the family, that although Jesus had no blood brothers, yet their rejection was based because of his half-brothers or cousins only. When History gives us brothers and sisters and the apologetics cousins only, in any other case the decision of an historian would be quite clear.

[1] Glover, *The History of Jesus*, 23.
[2] Matt., XIII : 55 ; Mark, VI : 3.
[3] Mark, XV : 40.
[4] Matt., XXVIII : 10 : *Cf.* John, XX : 17.

It is not a matter for wonder why the evangelic texts or the common-sense traditions could not prevail for any length of time. The explanation is very simple. The early Christians, very shortly after the crucifixion, could not reconcile themselves to the idea that the mother of Jesus, once her mission was accomplished, had been relegated to the level of an ordinary woman. The doctrine of the virginity of the *Christotokus*, that is to say, *the mother of Christ*, was gradually substituted by the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, and finally Joseph himself was made a saint. It was the asceticism of the fourth and fifth centuries which finally established the beliefs, which subsequently became one of the Articles of Faith, concerning the perfect and perpetual virginity of Mary.

But the fact remains that the first Christians in the first century, and some, like the Ebionites for a much longer period, continued to believe that Jesus was the *first born* of Joseph and Mary. They at that time were not interested in Mary on her own account, and it was a matter of indifference to them that she continued to live as Joseph's wife and gave birth to other children.

In conclusion, I can but observe that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary and belonged to a humble family which consisted of half a dozen or more children besides himself. (*To be continued*)

[Prof. Arthur Nilam of Bahwalnagar, while drawing attention of the Editor of a Christian weekly of Calcutta to my articles in the *Islamic Review*, asked him to refute from his " ocean of learning " the arguments put forward by me.

With a Macbethean curse, the Reverend Editor printed Prof. Niam's letter under the caption " Desperate arguments," which in fact very aptly describe his own reply. He says : " The birth of Christ was from a pure virgin, Mary, who remained a virgin after His birth.....The Story of the birth of Jesus from a virgin has, on the other hand, been universally acknowledged to have had a steady influence in raising the moral standard wherever it has been accepted." The Reverend Editor has perhaps conveniently forgotten the thousands of skulls of the babies which were removed from the Vatican fountain in the time of Pope Gregory, the Great. Being in India he has also, perhaps intentionally, ignored the "moral standards " obtaining in America and Europe. He ought to read *Uncle Sham* and *Sweet Sixteen* and then tell us how belief in the virginity of Mary has raised the moral standards of those Christian countries. But he himself has very properly styled the birth of Jesus from a virgin as a *story* : and a story indeed it is—only the characters have been changed in the pagan stories. Perhaps Prof. Nilam may be good enough to read this instalment more carefully and then read the *Sources of Christianity* by the late Al-Hajj Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. If he has still any doubts left, I will be only too glad to discuss the matter personally, even at Bahawalnagar.—K. N. A.]

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