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# Friday Sermons

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
نصحه و صلى

FRIDAY SERMONS

I

THE BOOK

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
الْمَرَّةِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent and the Merciful

This book. There is no doubt in it It is a guide to the God-fearing

Those who believe in the unseen, and who are constant and sincere in prayer, and who spend of that we have bestowed on them

Those who believe in that which is revealed to thee, and that which was revealed before thee, and are certain of the after-life

These are on a course directed by their Lord These are the successful

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ؛

هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ۝

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ

الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ۝

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مِمَّا آتَاكُم مِّنَّا

أُزْلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ وَيَالَاخِزُّهُمْ يُؤْتُونَ

أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ

هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ۝

EVERY other revelation, however clear originally, has been transcribed in different forms and tampered with, perhaps in some cases well-meaningly, by foolish men, who thought they could improve it, or who wished to give to it the colour of their own opinions and beliefs in order that it might be quoted in support of them To the Jewish Scripture an enormous mass of rabbinical tradition was added, which in time obscured the books of Moses, David, Solomon, and other Prophets, and was more considered than the word of God. In Arabia, in Muhammad's time, a certain legend of the Prophet Ezra, nowhere to be found in Holy Writ, obtained such prominence among the Jews that many of them seemed to exalt Ezra to the very height to which the Christians have exalted Jesus. The superstition of the Eastern Jews even to-day is inconceivable by any one who has not been in contact with them. The chief part of their time seems to be spent in the propitiation or the warding-off of evil spirits by charms and incantations and

all kinds of magic rites, their lives from babyhood are shrouded up and shackled in a dark tradition which shuts out the light. The Christian Scriptures, also, have been altered, so the Qur-án informed us thirteen hundred years ago, and the Higher Critics found out many centuries later ; and even without that, are full of doubt. How many of what have come to be considered the essential Christian doctrines—the Divinity of Christ, for instance, or Original Sin, or the doctrine of the Three in One and One in Three, could be clearly deduced by an intelligent reader from the text of the four Gospels? There is doubt of the date of the said Gospels, doubt of their authorship, doubt everywhere concerning those important documents on which a vast religious fabric has been based.

“ This book. There is no doubt in it. It is a guide to the God-fearing.”

Was not a clear guide needed? The words of Moses, Jesus, and those older Prophets whom God had sent at different times to different nations—“ There is not a people but a warner has gone among them,” the Qur-án informs us—the words of those Prophets, who all were charged with the same message from on high, were lost to sight amid the fanciful inventions of their followers. Then came Muhammad, and through Muhammad the Qur-án—the last of the Prophets with the final revelation. And the marvel is that of this Prophet, and this book, there is no doubt. Muhammad alone, of all the great religious teachers who have influenced mankind, is a clear historical character, the minutest details of whose prophetic career have been recorded for us by his own contemporaries. The Qur-án has been preserved to us exactly in the form in which it was delivered. And if the Holy Prophet were to come into this room to-day, while we are praying, he would recognize our form of service as the very same which he himself, our great Imam, so often led in the little mosque at El Medinah. Go into the great Suleymaniyeh mosque or the mosque of Aya Sophia at Constantinople, go into the Sultan Hasan mosque at Cairo or the Mosque El Aksa at Jerusalem—any of the great cathedrals of Islam—or go into some little mud-built village mosque in Central Africa, everywhere it is the same service ; there has been no alteration, no elaboration since the Prophet’s day. Islam alone, of all religions in the world, has thus preserved its first simplicity. This is the pure religion, as it came from God. Of the existence of this Prophet and the nature of his teaching, of the authenticity of this Qur-án, there is no doubt. It is a clear guide—the only clear guide in existence—for the God-fearing.

“ Those who believe in the unseen ”—that is to say, who are not blind materialists, for revelation can contain

no guidance, have no meaning, for those who believe that nothing exists but what our eyes perceive.

“And who are constant and sincere in prayer.” The word *Ikama* means to “keep up” a thing in the sense of not allowing it to deteriorate; so, in the case of prayer, I think I may render it “who are constant and sincere in prayer”—that is, who do not neglect this duty nor allow it to become a spiritless performance.

“And who spend of that we have bestowed on them.” You will notice, all through the Qur-án, how great a stress is laid on the necessity of spending. Avarice is used on more than one occasion almost as a synonym for unbelief. The Muslim does not hoard up any of the gifts which Allah has bestowed on him; for this command does not apply to money only; it probably applies to money last of all. Whatever you possess that is of good to men, do not keep it to yourself, but spend it freely. If you have learning, any skill in science, however independent you may be, do not keep it for your own amusement and instruction merely, spend it, apply it to the welfare, the instruction, the amusement of your fellow-men. A Muslim cannot say, as Christians say. This or that, of the gifts of God—it may be riches, or high influence, or eloquence, or learning—is mine, and I can do what I like with it, can hoard it or can use it as I please. Everything a Muslim has is held in trust for God, and God has ordered him to spend it freely for the good of the community, aye, even the most precious gift of all—his life—if need arises. It is all a part of his Jihad, that effort after goodness which alone of earthly things has heavenly value. If every one did this, there would be no social grievances, no labour troubles, no bloody risings of down-trodden, hopeless peoples. The idea of property as absolutely vested in the individual, or a group of individuals, or in the State, is anti-social. The idea of property as a trust from God held for the benefit of those around us, alone produces unity and brotherhood. But that idea involves belief in Allah and an after-life which no man can evolve from his own consciousness.

“Those who believe in that which is revealed to thee, and that which was revealed before thee, and are certain of the after-life.”

If it had not been for the revelations vouchsafed to us through the Prophets, there would be no belief in the unseen, no prayer, no spending of men's wealth and energy for a disinterested purpose, no distinction between good and evil save a man's own appetites. We should be worse than the beasts because of our superior cunning. There would be no such thought on earth as human progress, no such

virtues as charity, benevolence, self-sacrifice. Even the materialism of the most relentlessly commercial minds today is tempered by some knowledge of another standard, a more lofty aim; and that knowledge comes entirely from revealed religion. But, some one is sure to think, the revelations are all different. When you say we should believe in that which was revealed to Muhammad and what was revealed before him to all those former Prophets, you are talking nonsense. You are telling us to be Muslims, and at the same time Jews and Christians; not only that, but Buddhists and Hindus and Zoroastrians and believers in the religion of the ancient Greeks and the Egyptians. Nothing of the kind. "That which was revealed" to the last of the Prophets, and "that which was revealed before him" is all one. The will of God, His message to mankind, has never varied. It is men who have forgotten it and gone astray, some more, some less. If you examine carefully the various great religions of the world, you will find that they all set forth one truth originally, and preserve some vestige of it still behind the mass of superstition. That truth is the Eternal Unity of God, and the promise that those who do good works, who serve mankind on earth, shall come to happiness in Allah's favour. And the older the religious-writings you consult, the more Islamic does this truth appear. But nowhere will you find God's message undistorted at the present day except in the Qur-án and in our Prophet's teaching. Here you will find the whole duty of man towards God, his neighbour and himself set forth in terms that every one can understand. Those who conform to it are indeed "on a course directed by their Lord. These are the successful."

And just one more remark about that word successful. It does not refer to the success of a business man or a politician, or a social magnate, or any of those vulgar triumphs which are acclaimed in the daily papers, with a portrait of the successful one. "Success" in El Islam is something very different. The Qur-án defines it in a later Surah. "He is indeed successful who improves it (the soul) and gives it growth; and he is indeed a failure who stunts and starves the soul."

Christians triumph over Muslims at this moment. Soon their missionaries will be rushing off like vultures to every part of the Islamic world, crying: "Look at us! How successful we are! Look at our dreadnoughts, battleplanes and submarines. Behold our handsome, well-fed business men. Look at our wealth. Think what an eminently desirable religion ours must be. Give up your foolish scruples and restrictions. Be a Christian and make money."

Poor creatures! They will say that at a time when every nation in Europe is proclaiming their civilization a

failure, and clamouring for a new order of things much nearer to Islam than Christianity; when the great majority of Christian peoples are complaining that their souls are starved and stunted, and demanding new conditions to allow their souls full growth. Let no Muslim feel intimidated or humiliated by those missionaries. The state of things they represent is proved a failure. Europe is in revolt against it, for it stunts and starves the soul; while in the Muslim Empire, though less strictly organized, and without commercial ardour or ambition, every man and woman, whether rich or poor, no matter of what creed or class or race or colour, has always had the freedom and the leisure to improve the soul and give it growth. The meek and gentle Prophet of Nazareth has no part in this dead failure of a civilization. What has he to do with their commercial aims, their capital and interest, their crushing of the thoughtful in the race for wealth? On the authority of the Gospels no less than that of the Qur-án, I say that Jesus Christ himself will stand with us, the Muslims, on the Day of Judgment, against such Christians

## II

## THE DARK HOURS

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالضُّحَىٰ

وَالْبَيْتِ إِذْ أَسْفَىٰ

مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَنْ قَلَىٰ

وَلَلْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْأُولَىٰ

وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَىٰ

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَىٰ

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ

وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ

فَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَىٰ

وَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ

وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَىٰ

وَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ

“ By the early hours, and by the night when it sheds darkness, thy Lord has not forsaken neither does He hate thee And verily the latter portion shall be better for thee than the former, and verily thy Lord shall give to thee, and thou shalt know His favour. Did He not find thee an orphan, and protect thee? Did He not find thee in perplexity, and guide thee? Did He not find thee destitute, and enrich thee? Therefore the orphan oppress not. Therefore the seeker drive not away. Therefore of the bounty of thy Lord be thy discourse.

BELOW the title of this chapter—Surat ed-Duha—in my copy of the Qur-án, there are characters which might be

taken easily for part of the decoration, which is most elaborate. They form the word "Makkiyeh," meaning "Meccan." Other chapters bear in the same place the word "Madaniyeh," meaning "of or belonging to Al Medinah." These words are of great importance to the student of the Qur-án, because they tell the period at which any chapter was revealed, whether before or after the Hijrah, whether in the time of persecution or of triumph for the faith. The chapter I have just read is a Meccan chapter; that is to say, it was revealed at a time when the wonderful success which crowned the Prophet's latter years must have seemed, to every human understanding, quite impossible. Tradition tells us that it was revealed after a period of great anguish for the Prophet (may God bless and keep him), because during that period the inspiration which had become as the breath of life to him was withheld. You must think of him at that time as one who, for the love of Allah, had cut himself off from the comfort of old friendships, and was looked on as a kind of madman by the great majority of those who once respected him. A man near fifty, not a young man any longer, it was natural to suppose that the best portion of his life, the time of greatest usefulness, was past. His humble followers were being persecuted, tortured, murdered, his own life was in constant danger. His one sustaining support was in the revelations he received from Allah, the repeated assurance that he was God's chosen messenger; and even that was for a time withheld from him. The idolaters sneered at him, saying, "Allah has forsaken Muhammad and become displeased with him"; and who shall say but that some fear that he had sinned unknowingly, and so had forfeited the heavenly favour, haunted his own mind. Tradition says that he was much depressed, consumed with longing for the heavenly voice to speak again. Surely those were "the early hours" of the faith, surely "the night when it sheds darkness" was around Muhammad (may God bless and keep him) at that time.

And then there was revealed to him this Surah

"By the early hours, and by the night when it sheds darkness, thy Lord has not forsaken neither does He hate thee. And verily the latter portion shall be better for thee than the former, and verily thy Lord shall give to thee, and thou shalt know His favour."

Was not that promise abundantly fulfilled? Was not the latter portion of his life better far than the former portion to which he then looked back as to a happier day? Did not Allah give to him? Did not he know Allah's favour? Yet who would have thought it at the time,

seeing a man already well past middle life, who had lost the respect in which he was once held, for the sake of a cause which most men thought ridiculous, a man whom many thought quite mad, while others called him forger and impostor; credited only by a small band of followers. Were not the idolaters justified by all appearances when they said of their once respected fellow-citizen: "Allah has forsaken Muhammad and become displeased with him." Would not the opening verses of this "Surah" uttered by such a man at such a time and in such circumstances have struck you or me, had we been present, as an impossible prediction, a mere dream? And yet it was fulfilled abundantly, and many of those who scoffed at the prediction were witnesses of its amazing, stupefying fulfilment. I am not telling you a legend. These are facts of history. In the following verses the Prophet is bidden to look back upon all that his Lord had done for him in the past.

"Did He not find thee an orphan, and protect thee?  
Did He not find thee in perplexity, and guide thee?  
Did He not find thee destitute, and enrich thee?"

All those things had happened to him in accordance with his prayers and longings, and against all expectations. There had been dark hours in his life before, though never any quite so dark as this hour, and he is bidden to judge of Allah's mercies in the future by His mercies in the past. In proportion to the darkness of the night, in proportion to the chilly lonesomeness of the early hours, in proportion to the anguish of his prayer and longing, so should be the bliss and splendour of the coming day.

"Therefore the orphan oppress not; therefore the seeker drive not away; therefore of the bounty of thy Lord be thy discourse."

In other words, therefore, do unto others as you would have wished that others should do unto you—(that is the whole duty of man)—and give praise where praise is due, to Allah only. Go on doing your duty towards man and towards God, and leave the consequences and results to Allah, who alone controls them. "By the early hours, and by the night when it sheds darkness, thy Lord has not forsaken thee neither does He hate thee. And verily the latter portion shall be better for thee than the former, and verily thy Lord will give to thee, and thou shalt know His favour."

Brethren, the Prophet's earthly life, and more especially the history of his divine mission, have always been held an example to believers, and to some extent a type of things to come in El-Islam. There has been many a dark hour

in the history of the faith since then, though never any quite so dark as this.—Remember the bounty of Allah to us on those past occasions, the almost miraculous changes which were wrought in our favour, how oppressors of Islam were changed to champions of the faith, how help was raised up in the quarter least expected; and, by Allah's mercy to us in the past, "by the early hours and by the night when it sheds darkness"—phenomena which must precede the brightest day—I swear we should be ingrates, unbelievers, were we to despair.

It is not for us to foresee, much less to pre-judge, results. Is not good for ever coming out of evil and evil out of good, exactly as the day comes out of the night and the night out of the day, exactly as Allah brings the dead out of the living and the living out of the dead? Do we comprehend these things? How can we judge them? But this we know: that Allah is a Lord of kindness to creation, and that He has given men sure guidance through His messenger Muhammad (may God bless and keep him), and the promise that, if we hold fast to that guidance, then we must succeed. Remembering the mercy of our Lord towards us in the past, we must simply do our duty in the present, leaving the rest with perfect trust to God. Had Muslims done their duty in the past, these great misfortunes could not have befallen us. Oh, any one of us who has instruction let him find a Muslim who is ignorant, and teach him. Oh, any one of us who has wealth or any kind of influence, let him spend it for the edifying and uplifting of the Muslim brotherhood. Oh, any one of us who bears a grudge against a Muslim or has a difference with him, let him bury the grudge against him, sink the difference. Surely the things you like in him who is a Muslim are greater than the things which irritate you; the points in which you must agree with him are greater than the points in which you differ. Remember that the world will judge our faith by our behaviour.

Islam is greater than its military strength has ever been. The holy Prophet never desired war. War was forced upon him by the world outside Islam, which was then utterly intolerant and would not listen to his healing message, which was Peace; which tried to kill him and suppress his message. The thinking world is much more tolerant to-day. I make bold to say that never until now has the world been ready to receive the message which Muhammad (may God bless and keep him) brought to men.

But how can we, the whole body of Muslims, we who represent the Prophet's mission in the world to-day, become effective witnesses while we are disputing among ourselves, and while so many millions of our brethren linger in half-savage ignorance. We can all do something to relieve

that ignorance—all of us who travel, or can read and write, or speak intelligibly. Here in the centre of this mighty Empire, a word spoken can now be carried to the ends of the earth.

If we do our duty gladly, each in his or her own sphere of opportunity, if we endeavour to behave as proper Muslims should behave, charitably and justly towards all with whom we come in contact, if we hide not the truth, but bear witness to the bounty of our Lord, that is all that is asked of us. The rest belongs to Allah.

“By the early hours, and by the night when it sheds darkness, thy Lord has not forsaken neither does He hate thee. And verily the latter portion shall be better for thee than the former, and verily thy Lord shall give to thee, and thou shalt know His favour.”

### III

#### VICTORY AFTER DEFEAT

The Romans have been defeated. In a near country, and after their defeat they will be victorious within ten years. From Allah is the decree in the former case and in the latter, and on that day believers will rejoice in Allah's help to victory. He helps to victory whom He will. Mighty is He and merciful. A promise of Allah who never fails to keep His promise, but the most part of mankind are unaware. They are aware only of the phenomena of this world's life, and of the life to come they are forgetful. Will they not give thought to themselves? Allah did not create the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, save aright and to a designed end. Yet many of mankind reject the thought of meeting with their Lord. Do they not travel in the earth and see the nature of the latter end of those who were before them? They were superior to them in might, and they dug up the earth and built upon it more than these have built. Allah did them no injustice, but they did injustice to themselves. Thus calamity was the consequence of evil-doing because they deemed the warnings of Allah a falsehood and made light of them”—AL-QUR-ÁN, ch. xxx

“THE Romans have been defeated in a near country.” That was an announcement that any one in Mecca could have made at the time when this Surah was revealed. The Persians had laid waste and conquered the Eastern Roman Empire almost up to the gates of Constantinople. They had taken Syria, Asia Minor, and Egypt. And the idolators of Mecca rejoiced because the Persians were worshippers of the sun, whereas the Romans of those days were Christians—people who had received the Scripture and had a knowledge of Allah and of the Day of Judgment. They triumphed in the tidings of the Persian victory over the Prophet, and the little company of Muslims in their city, who said that Allah gave victory to those who believed in him, and overthrew the idolators and evil-doers. That the Romans were defeated everybody knew; and everybody thought

that they could never recover in the East from a defeat so great and overwhelming. The Qur-án continues :

“ And after their defeat they will be victorious within ten years. Allāh's is the decree in the former case as in the latter, and in that day the believers will rejoice in Allah's help to victory.”

There was a statement to astound the men of Mecca. The Muslims, who believed implicitly the truth of every word of the Qur-án, as it was revealed to the Holy Prophet, triumphed in their turn. Abu Bekr told the idolators on a public occasion that the Romans would overcome their enemies within three years; and one of the idolators, who were all, of course, incredulous, bet him ten camels that it would not come to pass. When the Prophet came to hear of the incident he corrected Abu Bekr, reminding him that the word *Bid'a* meant not definitely three years but any period from three to ten years. The bet was altered accordingly and the stake raised to a hundred camels. It would be safe to say that there was not a non-Muslim in the city who did not think Abu Bekr a credulous fool who would simply have to pay a hundred camels. Yet within ten years—A D 624—the Roman armies were on Persian territory. And in that day the believers rejoiced. For it was in the same year that three hundred and thirteen Muslims, many of them mere boys and armed only with sticks, overcame the flower of Coreysh chivalry upon the field of Badr. The Qur-án here associates the two events just as if the Roman Christians and the Arab Muslims had been men of one religion, fighting for one and the same cause. In the Qur-án you will notice that the Christians and the Jews are repeatedly mentioned as people of essentially the same religion with the Muslims, who ought to be one hand with them against idolatry and evil-doing. They are constantly adjured to throw aside the foolish dogmas over which they quarrel, and combine upon the common ground of monotheism and the love of righteousness. People who think that El Islam was originally hostile to the Christian Roman Empire, and sought a quarrel with it in order to annex rich provinces, are in error. No, on the contrary, it was the Christian Roman Empire which repelled the Prophet's overtures of peace and friendship, his proposals for a new era of tolerance, which insulted his ambassadors and murdered one of them. There was no tolerance in Christians or in Jews at that stage of the world's history; and the tolerance of the Muslims seemed to those bigots an unholy thing because it treated man-made doctrines, which they thought essential, as ridiculous and negligible when compared with

the essential belief in the One God and in a Day of Judgment, and when compared with righteous conduct.

"In that day the believers will rejoice in Allah's help to victory," so runs the prophecy. And was not Allah's help to victory apparent on the field of Badr, when that little ill-armed Muslim army—a mere rabble—defeated nearly three times their number of the finest troops of Coreysh? Was not Allah's help to victory apparent in the defeat of the Persians by the Christian Romans in the same year, which also smote the pride of the opponents of Islam, who used to vaunt the greatness of the Persian Empire as showing that idolators were more successful than the worshippers of Allah. "Within ten years." Yet at the time when the prophetic words of the Qur-án were uttered, both those events appeared to reasonable men—men who judged by reason merely, and disbelieved in Allah and His revelation—quite impossible. It was "a promise of Allah who never fails to keep His promise, but the most part of mankind are unaware."

It is no reproach to the majority of mankind to say that they are unaware of the deep and hidden meaning, the purpose of Allah, which underlies this mortal life. It is the simple truth. We are not all of us prophets or of the number of those favoured, because highly gifted, men and women who do perceive that meaning and that truth continually. Most of us are "aware only of the externals—the phenomena—of this world's life." But we have to recognize our limitation, and, seeing what a number of problems arise from those phenomena which we can never hope to solve by mere intelligence, problems which do for their solution involve the supposition of a world unseen, a Power outside the forces of what we call Nature, we ought to pay regard to those who are aware of more than we are able to perceive with our eyes, and be guided by the revelation which they bring to us. We ought not to be "forgetful of the other life."

"Will they not give thought to themselves?"—to their own souls? "Allah did not create the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, save aright and to a designed end. Yet many of mankind reject the thought of meeting with their Lord."

The Qur-án shows clearly the meaning and the purpose of this life. In the pages of this book, that meaning and that purpose are the one reality. "Will they not give thought to themselves?" No one who gives serious thought to the problem of his or her existence can fail to recognize the need of guidance, to guess at the existence of some scheme in the creation more vast than he or she unguided

can possibly apprehend. Nobody, considering the gift of reason which raises him or her above all other creatures, can fail to wonder for what purpose it was given. And only in revealed religion is there any answer. "Allah did not create the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, save aright and to a designed end." The whole scheme of creation, of which life is, as it were, the spirit, originated in Allah and ends in Allah; and all life is leading gradually up to consciousness and then to reason and so, by guidance, to communion with Allah. "Yet many of mankind reject the thought of meeting with their Lord"—that is, disclaim responsibility with regard to their behaviour, and do not believe that they will be rewarded or punished according to what they have done, whether as individuals or as nations and communities. The judgment upon nations and communities happens in this world. "Do they not travel in the earth and see the nature of the latter end of those who were before them? They were superior to them in power, and they dug up the earth and built upon it more than these have built. Allah did them no injustice, but they did injustice to themselves. Thus calamity was the consequence of evil-doing, because they deemed the warnings of Allah a falsehood, and made light of them"—AL-QUR-ÁN.

Calamity is the consequence of evil-doing by a nation or community, no less than by an individual, but in the former case it is material calamity, a calamity which all may see. When the men of Mecca travelled with their merchandise to Syria they passed by the remains of different civilizations, some of them so ancient and remote as to be altogether legendary, belonging to peoples who had disappeared from off this earth. When they travelled to the Yaman or to Hadramaut, they saw remains of ancient buildings, some of them gigantic, of which the builders had been people of a nation which was now no longer to be found on earth. And haunting every ancient ruin was the legend of how a people, rich and mighty in their day, enjoying all the blessings of the earth, had been cut off in the moment of their pride by some immense catastrophe, because they would not listen to the message of some simple prophet, who had warned them that unless they did good with their wealth and power, as good is reckoned among righteous individuals, they would be destroyed.

Brethren, in this house last Friday a gentleman was trying to persuade me that we Muslims were no longer Muslims worthy of the name, and that the plight of El Islam was hopeless because the last great Muslim Power has been defeated, and we have now no military strength compared with Europe. He said that we are henceforth

homeless like the Jews. As if Islam were local to Palestine or to the Turkish Empire, as if Islam were an affair of pomp and empire, not of righteous conduct. I do not blame that gentleman, for I know his words were but the cry of bitter grief at what has happened—grief which every Muslim feels. I yield to no man in affection for the Muslim Empire. I sympathize most fully with that gentleman. And yet the views which he expressed are far from mine. And they are far from the teaching of the Qur-án. For nowhere in this book do I find it stated that a nation or community which has been unjustly humbled, plundered and defeated is in hopeless plight. I find, upon the other hand, on almost every page, that victorious nations boastful of their military strength and civilization, of their buildings and their engineering works, and arrogating to themselves the victory, forgetful of Allah, are in great danger.

“Do they not travel in the earth and see the nature of the latter end of those who were before them? They were superior to them in power, and they dug up the earth and built upon it more than these have built. Allah did them no injustice, but they did injustice to themselves. Thus calamity was the consequence of evil-doing, because they deemed the signs of Allah false and made a mock of them.”

How do we do injustice to ourselves? By selfish greed and oppression

“The Romans are defeated in a near country, and after their defeat they will be victorious within ten years. Allah’s is the decree in the former case as in the latter, and in that day believers will rejoice in Allah’s help to victory.”

That prophecy was given at a moment of great changes in the world. And now again it is a moment of great changes in the world. Everything is in a state of upheaval. And who to-day would venture to predict what changes will have taken place within ten years. And the Muslims have no longer any military power! Had Muslims military power or any thought of military power at the time of this prophecy? Or was it military power which won the day at Badr? No, it was Allah’s help to victory vouchsafed to simple-hearted, righteous men bound together firmly in one brotherhood by uncompelled, sincere obedience to the laws of God. Are Muslims in a worse position in the world to-day than were the early

Muslims in the days of persecution there in Mecca, or in the first struggling years at El Medinah? What complaint have we, when they did not complain? Is Allah's help to victory not as near now as it was then to men like them, as single-hearted and as energetic in the cause of righteousness? Of course it is. It is "a promise of Allah who never fails to keep His promise, but the most part of mankind are unaware."

The military power of El Islam—and the idea which, strange to say, was entertained by Muslims, not by Christians only, that Islam must be propagated chiefly by the sword—for centuries have placed a barrier of warlike rivalry between Islam and Christendom. Islam has spread enormously in recent years in Africa and Eastern Asia—China in particular—not by the sword at all, but by the force of good example set by individual Muslims. But it has not spread appreciably in Europe, owing to the warlike barrier which I have mentioned, which kept back all Islamic teaching until now, when Christendom, disillusioned with its ancient dogmas and grown tolerant, is open to receive the truth. I would consolidate whatever power remains to El Islam, for military power is not to be despised, but in the diminution of our military power there is a lesson from Allah. It is that military power is not and never was essential to Islam, as we supposed it. But righteousness, a strict obedience to the law, charity, brotherhood, the search for knowledge, energy and self-devotion in the way of Allah—these are essential. Military power is a blessing only when used exclusively for Jihad, the effort after righteousness in the whole world. We must not support a Muslim if he is transgressing Allah's law, and we must not oppose a non-Muslim who is obeying Allah's law although perhaps unconsciously. We must support righteousness and oppose evil wherever they are found, thus opening men's eyes to the truth, which is that the whole world is one theocracy. Those people there at Paris think themselves the rulers, but Allah is the real Ruler. "He gives sovereignty to whom He will, and takes sovereignty away from whom He will. He exalts whom He will, and He abases whom He will. In His hand is wealth. Verily He has absolute control of all things."

We must never think that because we are Muslims the warnings of Allah to other nations and communities do not apply to us if in the day of grandeur we grow proud and boastful and contemptuous of the life of others. If we accept the lesson read to us in this calamity, and renew our effort after righteousness, simply, without pride or any selfish motive, as did the first companions of the holy Prophet, setting an example to the world in brotherhood, devotion, and just dealing, then there is no doubt for

Muslims but that "after their defeat they will be victorious." Pray God that it may even be "within ten years."

## IV

## CHRISTIANITY FAILS AT HOME

"Many of the People of the Scripture would like to make you once more infidels after your belief, because of envy which is in their souls since the truth has become manifest to them. But pardon them and bear with them, till Allah brings His ordinance to pass. Verily Allah has power over all things

"And be constant in prayer, and give the poor their portion. Whatever of good you lay in store for your souls, you will find it with Allah. Verily Allah is aware of what you do

"And they say 'None enters Paradise, save he who is a Jew or a Christian.' Those are their own desires. Say 'Bring your proof, if you speak truth (in that assertion)'

"Nay, but whosoever turns his face entirely towards Allah, while doing good to men, his reward is with his Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve"—AL-QUR-ÁN

I AM very curious to see whether, after this atrocious war, which, whatever one may think about the rights and wrongs of it, cannot be regarded as exactly creditable to the Christian nations as a whole—I am curious to see whether, after this war, the Christian missionaries will assail the Muslim world as heretofore with claims of manifest superiority; whether at a time when eight-tenths of the intelligence of Europe is no longer Christian, when among the peoples there is a revolt against the dogmas of the Churches, they will go on preaching those dogmas to the peoples outside Christendom as if they were unquestioningly accepted in their land of birth. Especially I wonder whether they will go on claiming, as they used to do before the war, the whole of modern civilization as a blessed growth of Christianity. I suppose they will; yet it seems hardly possible. Even in days when I supposed myself to be a Christian it used to seem to me disgraceful that a country so enlightened as my country claims to be should allow and, even as it seemed in some instances, encourage Christian missionaries to annoy non-Christians by their attempts to proselytize within the boundaries of the British Empire, an Empire which I had been taught to regard as the home or rather school of civil and religious liberty. I wished the British Government would forbid by law any annoying attempts to proselytize a British subject; even as in the Turkish Empire it was forbidden by law, under the death penalty, for any member of the dominant religion—El Islam—to attempt to convert a Jew or Christian subject of that Empire. I thought then, and I still think, that such a law is desirable. It would not prevent the followers of any religion from setting forth their views in their places of worship before any one who

chose to go and hear them, nor from proving in the conduct of their daily lives that they were better than the followers of any other religion. But it would prevent them from thrusting their views, as a commercial traveller will thrust his wares, on those who disagree with them, and it would prevent them from using such extraneous things as medical skill and tendance of the sick, educational advantages and the sight of wealth and comfort as baits to make men swallow some unpalatable dogmas. Christian missions have done good in Eastern lands, they have cared for the sick and orphans, they have brought in modern notions of sanitation and cleanliness, they have educated children. But their action has aroused hostility and bitterness instead of gratitude, because they did not "turn their face entirely towards God while doing good to men." They were not disinterested. They were thinking all the while of imposing on the victims of their benevolence some special formula and so spreading that particular form of Christianity which they favoured; they were thinking of the show of numbers in the missionary magazine. The whole thing seems to me, and always seemed to me, intolerably vulgar, mean, and irreligious. I always hated the false air of pure philanthropy. But the missionaries do not see it in that light at all. Among them there are excellent men and women, leading excellent lives, of whom the worst that one can say is that it is a pity their religious training should have been of such a kind as to prevent even a conception of the transcendent majesty of Allah.

For Allah has no favourites. It is true that He has made now one part of humanity and now another the vehicle of religious truth. But the measure of His mercy and His justice is for all alike. He never applied one standard to the Jews and another to the rest of mankind; nor one standard to the Christians and another to the rest of mankind; nor one standard to the Muslims and another to the rest of mankind. "These are their vain desires." Whosoever does right will be rewarded, and whosoever does wrong will be punished, and no belief in any dogma will save him or her from the consequences which bad deeds entail. But false beliefs are not a help to righteous conduct.

The Muslim's answer to the Christian missionary who tells him that in order to enter Paradise he must believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ the Prophet (upon whom be peace), and in his propitiatory sacrifice upon the Cross, is in my text:

"Nay, but whosoever turns his face entirely towards Allah, while doing good to men, his reward is with his Lord; and there shall no fear come upon him, neither shall he grieve."

## FRIDAY SERMONS

### V

## THE MUSLIM CONCEPTION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East and to the West, but righteousness is whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and the Holy Scripture and the Prophets, and gives wealth for love of Allah to kindred and to orphans and to poor people and to homeless people, and to beggars, and to emancipate slaves, and who is constant in prayer and pays the poor-rate, and those who keep a treaty when they make one, and who are patient in disaster, tribulation, and adversity. Those are they who are sincere. Those are the God-fearing — AL-QURÁN

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ  
الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ  
آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ  
وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ  
عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَ  
السَّكِينِ وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ  
وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى  
الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا  
عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ  
وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْمَآسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ  
صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ١

THE first words of this verse, "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West," are generally taken as referring to the question of the "Qibleh," the direction towards which Muslims were to turn their faces when they prayed. At the time when this verse was revealed at El Medinah, that direction had just been changed. At first the Qibleh had been the Temple at Jerusalem, thenceforth it was to be the Kaabah at Mecca. The Jews, who had hoped from the first command that the Prophet had an inclination towards their faith, and would in time become a Jew, were disappointed and angry at the change. They made much talk about the question, which, as Jews, the strictest of all formalists, they regarded as of very great importance. The Qur-án, upon the other hand, declares it to be of small importance as compared with individual good conduct and public faith and endurance in a just cause, virtues for which the Jewish tribes of El Medinah were so little famous that their name has become a by-word for unjust dealing and bad faith. Yet they considered themselves righteous and God-fearing so long as they turned their faces in prayer towards Jerusalem, and conformed to a host of other traditions, Scriptural or

rabbinical. To the congregation which assembled in the little mosque at El Medinah—the first mosque of Islam—where the Prophet himself used to preach, leaning against the trunk of a palm-tree, where there were fewer formalities than in any other place of worship that the world had known—that must have been the meaning of this verse. It was a lesson for the Jews, much more than for the early Muslims, whose chief characteristics were sincerity, simplicity, and honest conduct. But in the course of years, as Islam spread and developed in the world, its full meaning became apparent to the thoughtful, and to-day it is a lesson for the Muslims rather than for any other community. In proportion as they take it to heart, so shall the Muslim world regain success and superiority.

First, let me call your attention to the peculiar grammatical structure of this verse, so peculiar as to give the reader at first sight the shock he would receive from a mistake in grammar.

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East and the West, but righteousness is whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day,” etc.

We should have expected to read “but righteousness is that you believe in Allah and the Last Day” Well, that is the natural sequence, but it has nothing like the force of meaning of that “whosoever” in the Qur-ān. How often in the history of the world had men been told to do right, and how repeatedly had they accepted the injunction, and neglected to apply it to their actual conduct. Righteousness is no vague counsel of perfection, it cannot be attained by any ritual acts or blind acceptance of a creed or formula. It is the actual doing of right, and you cannot realize righteousness save in the person of the man or woman who does right. All injunctions, exhortations, counsels of perfection are as nothing to the good example of one righteous man. Righteousness—active, practical righteousness as distinct from sentimental dreams of what should be in an amended world—is “Whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and the Holy Scripture and the Prophets, and gives wealth for the love of Allah to kindred and to orphans and to poor people and to wanderers and to the homeless and to beggars and for the emancipation of slaves, and is constant in prayer,” and does his duty towards the State. And then again there is an odd grammatical change from the singular to the plural: “And those who keep a treaty when they make one; and the patient in conflict, tribulation and adversity. Those are they who are sincere. Those are the God-fearing.” That is to say, that righteousness can be realized in the community which does right as well as in the individual which does right. But in order that a community shall do

right it must contain many individuals who do right. It was not a large or influential company which gathered in the little courtyard at El Medinah where the Prophet preached, leaning against the trunk of a palm-tree. Yet the members of that congregation in their lifetime conquered and converted half the world. What was the power which they possessed above all other nations of the world? It was the force of faith and personal righteousness described in this verse, a singleness of purpose such as has never been known in any community before or since, and a self-surrender to the will of Allah, which is righteousness, a lack of selfish ambitions such as never has been known in a community before or since.

They turned their faces towards the East and West in another sense. They carried the banner of the faith to the Atlantic on the one hand and the frontiers of India on the other. And it is no wonder that their descendants and successors should have come to regard the great Muslim Empire which they founded as the greatest part of their achievement. It was not. The greatest part of their achievement was that they preserved their simple, honest conduct, their personal righteousness, and wherever they went spread righteousness by their example.

Brethren, that Muslim Empire, though so great and in its origin illustrious, was nothing to the greatness of Islam. Yet how many Muslims have identified the greater with the lesser, and when the Muslim Empire is humiliated, say: "Islam has suffered a defeat." The enemies of Islam say that, but they are much deceived. Too long have we been turning our faces to the East and West, saying. "So far the Muslim Empire has extended in this direction or in that. We are Muslims, therefore we are superior to all mankind." The Jews of El Medinah thought themselves superior to all mankind because they were Jews. The Christians thought themselves superior to all mankind because they were Christians. The Qur-án teaches something very different. Islam is the true religion which Abraham, Moses, Jesus taught before Muhammad, but righteousness does not consist in being technically a Muslim or a Christian or a Jew; but righteousness consists in doing right with earnest purpose. Look through the history of Islam and you will find that when Muslims have been most distinguished for personal righteousness, and for the simple faith and tolerance which always go with it, they have been most successful politically. And when they have regarded themselves as privileged and superior people, sure of Allah's favour, simply because they say the "tashahhud," they have failed. They have done precisely what Islam has told them not to do; they have trusted to the formalities of belief, neglecting

action and that true belief which always moves to action.

One righteous man in the sense of this verse of the Qur-án is worth ten of these formal Muslims; and a score of righteous men, if they could come together, would be worth a regiment. The influence and power of Islam can be restored only by the growth among us of true righteousness; and that growth must be fostered by charity, enlightened education, prayer, and brotherly acts of all kinds from one Muslim to another. This is a small room in which we are assembled, yet it is the only Muslim masjid in all London. The congregation is a small one, and contains no person of great influence; but in that congregation there is more than one individual who for belief, sincerity, and pure simplicity in righteous conduct may compare with those first Muslims who assembled in the first small mosque of El Medinah, when the splendours of Islam were yet to come. Brethren, the splendours of Islam are yet to come if we but do our duty. "The latter portion shall be better for thee than the former."

Never till now has the whole world been ready to tolerate and understand Islamic teaching, which is, and always was, for all the world. As an Englishman and, I hope, a patriotic Englishman, I pray that from this little, humble masjid here in London may go forth a helpful and reviving spirit, a spirit of true brotherhood in righteous action among Muslims, to found a Muslim Empire in the world far greater and more durable than any that the military power of Muslims ever founded.

## VI

### EVERY DAY, LORD'S DAY

"O ye who believe. When the call to Friday prayer goes forth, haste to the remembrance of Allah and leave your business. That is better for you if you did but know.

"And when the prayer is ended then disperse in the land and seek of Allah's bounty, and remember Allah's bounty much that you may be successful.

"But if they see some bargaining or sport afoot, they break away to it and leave thee standing. Say: That which Allah has to give is better than sport and better than the object of your trading. And Allah is the best giver of sustenance."—THE QUR-ÁN.

THE Muslims have no day which corresponds to the Jewish Sabbath or the Christian Sunday, no one day in the week

which is set apart for the service of Allah, while all the other days are relegated to the commerce of this world. Our Friday is simply the day of assembly, the day on which we all assemble in the Mosque and hear a sermon, and say the prayer together behind one imam, the day on which we remember Allah collectively, as members of one holy institution and one mighty brotherhood. And then we go back to our commerce, or our study, or our labour—our daily work, whatever that may be. But is our duty done for all the week? Certainly not. Every day of the week is for a Muslim the Lord's Day. We must remember Allah much at all times if we will succeed. I hope that nobody who comes here thinks that by listening to the sermon and joining in the congregational prayer he or she has done his or her duty for the week. It would be better to stop away than to come here on that understanding. That idea of worship can only be held by people who believe that in their service of Allah they need the ministrations of a particular class of man—a priest, or minister, or rabbi, or whatever they may choose to call him, who is not in every place, at every time available. No such necessity is recognized in El Islam. There is no reason why I should lead your prayer to-day more than any other member of this congregation, except that I possess more Arabic than some of you, and that I have been chosen to act as your Imam during the illness of a much more worthy man. And it is the same with all the rites of our religion. Any one who knows Arabic and the legal ceremonies is qualified to perform them. There occurs in the Qur-án a verse which puzzles some people. Its meaning always seemed to me as clear as day —

“Thou shalt assuredly find the most violent of mankind in enmity to those who believe to be the Jews and the idolators; and thou shalt assuredly find the nearest to them in affection to be those who say: Verily we are Christians. That is because there are among them priests and monks, and they are not puffed up with pride.”

Of course, if you take the verse to apply to worldly intercourse, it is unintelligible, for the Christians were then, and have been ever since, more formidable enemies to El Islam than were the Jews. And that they should be nearer to us “because there are among them priests and monks” —a class of people which Islam abolished—makes the meaning still more hard to grasp in that connection. But apply it to the purpose of Islam, the service of Allah, and to Muslims, Jews, and Christians, not in their political relation to each other, but in their respective attitudes towards Allah, apply it not to the worst, but to the best among them, and the sense is clear. The Jews and the idolators are most strongly opposed to Muslims because, for different reasons and in

different ways, both are puffed up with pride in their relation to Allah, and there are no individuals among them who devote themselves exclusively to Allah's service. And the Christians are nearest to us, because there are among them persons who dedicate themselves to Allah's service, as every Muslim, every Muslimah is bound to do; and who are humble in their attitude towards Allah.

Every Muslim is, or ought to be, a priest, a man completely dedicated to the service of Allah, but in the business and the battle of the world, not out of it, shut up in a church or monastery. Every Muslimah should be a priestess, or, if you like it better—I do not—a nun in her devotion, while fulfilling all her natural functions and her worldly duties as a daughter, sister, wife, and mother. According to strict Muslim notions, women should have on ordinary occasions their separate prayers, their separate sermon, with some lady learned in religion for their leader and instructress. Muslims of both sexes are enjoined to pray five times in every twenty-four hours. The Christian priests and monks and nuns do much the same, but not the laity. Again, the fraternity existing between monks of one community or nuns of one community is like the fraternity which should exist among Muslim men and women. So you see, the Friday prayers are really but a small part of our worship. We are not religious people on Fridays and worldly people on every other day of the week. But while on other days we say our prayers alone, or with a little circle of our friends, coming to the mosque, if we are near a mosque, for the purpose at any time within the lawful hours, each group assembled choosing its Imam, to-day we pray together at one moment in congregation behind one Imam, and we listen to a discourse on some religious subject. If we were to put it into terms which Christians would understand, you are not to-day a congregation benefiting by the ministrations of a priest, or "sitting under" some ordained or licensed minister, but you are priests and ordained ministers yourselves, both men and women, who have appointed one of your number, in no way your superior, to preach the sermon and to lead the prayer on this occasion. I detail all this—which is, of course, perfectly well known to you—because last week, when we dispersed, a lady who had been present asked me whether I was "a Mohammedan priest." I hope we all are priests and priestesses of the order of our lord Muhammad (may God bless and keep him!), who abolished priesthood and monasticism, bidding every man and woman use intelligence, as priests alone had been allowed till then to use it in religious matters, and to dedicate themselves to Allah's service in the world, as only priests and monks and nuns till then had dedicated themselves to Allah's service in seclusion. But I am certainly not a Mohammedan

priest in the sense in which that lady used the term, and no more is anybody else on earth.

If you regarded attendance at these Friday prayers as the sum-total of your Muslim worship for the week, you would be in a terrible and deadly error. If you regarded this assembly every Friday as some mystic rite conferring spiritual benefits on those who come here irrespective of their conduct in the world, again you would be in a terrible and deadly error. If you thought that here in this room, or in the most glorious mosque in the world, you are nearer to Allah, or bound to greater sanctity of conduct than is the case in your own homes or in your place of business, you would be in error. This place is only holy with the holiness we bring to it. The benefit which we derive from prayer in congregation is in direct proportion to each individual's contribution of earnest piety, which is the result of striving after righteousness and private prayer. Without that striving after righteousness, those private prayers which are the daily bread of the believer, the Friday prayers become a mere formality, in no way better than the practice of the lukewarm Christians, who give a formal adherence to their faith by putting in an appearance at church once every week. But the Friday prayers are of immense importance, as my text shows plainly. We must not allow any business or amusement to detain us from attending them, nor any thought of business or amusement to distract us after we have stood to pray. Cannot you picture the simplicity of those meetings of the early Muslims, when men could break away, attracted by some noise of concourse in the street, and leave the Prophet standing? They thought no harm, perhaps, until this Scripture was revealed, and then they knew, and we know also that these prayers are no mere priestly ceremony, which the Imam—even when he was the holy Prophet—can perform alone, or on behalf of others. Every member of the congregation must perform his own part for himself. It is an act which we perform together, we free worshippers of Allah, we the nation of priests; not for the satisfaction of our Lord, for He is independent of His creatures, not to seek the spiritual light and rapture of the soul's communion with the Lord of all the worlds, for that can be sought only by the way of lonely prayer and meditation and remembrance of Allah; but to show and to feel that we are members of one brotherhood, every one of us dedicated and devoted, sacrificed completely, to the will of the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Merciful, the living King who sleepeth not nor dieth—Allah, whose holy purpose will encompass and sustain us when all the business and amusements of this world have passed away. We are not hermits, and we are not monks and nuns that we should dwell apart, each group or individual absorbed

in separate devotions. We are fellow-workers in the cause of righteousness, fellow-servants of the One Eternal Lord, fellow-subjects, fellow-soldiers of God's kingdom upon earth. And if we do not hold together, if we have no discipline, if we do not come together once a week to remember Allah in congregation, and to remember all that He has done for us, in giving us this guidance and befriending us; if we forget that we are all one brotherhood, and hold aloof one from another, then we withdraw ourselves from the kingdom of Allah, which is of this world just as much as of the world to come. While we are on earth, the Kingdom of God on earth claims all our service, and through that service only can we reach the Kingdom of God hereafter—that paradise which He has promised to His faithful servants. Our Friday prayers are thus of very great importance, and I do not think that any Muslim, any Mushmah, who was able to come to them, would stop away. I know that it is difficult in this country for Muslims employed in business houses, or the public service, to obtain permission for the necessary time. But that is very largely our own fault. If all of us had realized the great importance of the Friday prayers, the English would not now be under the impression that Muslims can dispense with their observance. That notion, as you all know, does exist, and is the cause that no allowance of time off on Fridays is made to Muslims in the service of the English. But as things are, it is wellnigh impossible for Muslims thus employed to join us here. But what must be said of those who let any avoidable business or some project of amusement turn them away from joining their brethren in this sacred and solemn assembly, like those of old, who broke away and left the Prophet standing? Do they not perceive that "that which Allah has to give is better than sport and better than the object of your trading, and Allah is the best giver of sustenance"?

## VII

### BELIEF AND PRACTICE

"But when they are bidden, Spend of that which Allah has bestowed upon you, those who disbelieve say to those who believe: Shall we feed those whom God could feed if He so willed it? Verily you are in nothing less than error manifest

"And they say: When, pray, is this promised judgment, if you speak the truth?"

"They are only waiting for one shout, which shall surprise them while they are contending

"And they will not be able to make dispositions nor to return to their own folk

"And the trumpet will sound, and lo! out of the places of corruption they shall hasten to their Lord

"Saying: Woe unto us! Who has roused us from our resting-place? This then is what the Merciful One promised, and the Apostles spoke the truth

“ There will be but one shout, and behold ! they will all be gathered in Our presence.

“ On that day shall no soul be wronged in anything You will only be repaid for that which you have done

“ Verily those who deserve Paradise on that day will be happily employed

“ They and their wives reclining upon thrones in pleasant shades

“ Wherein is fruit for them, and all that they require

“ Their message from a merciful Lord is ‘ Peace ! ’ ”—AL-QURÁN.

THE verses I have just read to you, with my own translation of them, are part of Surat Yá Sín, a chapter of the Qur-án which in many parts of the Muslim world is recited in the presence of the dying. You may think it a depressing chapter—even a terrifying chapter—but it is one of the most beautiful in the whole book, and there is nothing terrifying or depressing in it for the true believer. The word believer in the Qur-án invariably means one who not only believes in El Íslam, but practises El Íslam. For what, I ask you, is the worth of the belief without the practice ? Íslam is all a matter of obedience, of self-surrender to the will of the Merciful One who has bidden us express belief in works. Other religions have been told . believe and you are saved. We are told . believe and do. Belief alone will not preserve us from the fate of those who disobey the will of God, whose conduct goes against God’s purpose in creation. We must try to do what we are told to do in this sure guide of conduct which has been revealed to us. We shall not be judged by our belief at all but by the fruits of our belief in conduct

“ You will only be repaid for that which you have done.”

“ And when they are bidden, Spend of that which Allah has bestowed on you, those who disbelieve say to those who believe . What, are we to feed those whom Allah Himself could feed if He so willed it ? ”

There you have the unbelievers mocking Muslims for practising Íslam. For them, belief in Allah, an omnipotent, almighty God, does away with the need for man to act at all benevolently. They do not understand that man is Allah’s deputy on earth, and that the welfare of humanity is made dependent upon man’s behaviour, subject to the guidance which has been given to him at divers times through God’s appointed messengers. It is this high position of man as the deputy, the Khalifah, the successor of Allah, which makes the awfulness of his position if he goes astray after receiving guidance.

The scoffers mentioned in this verse who asked, “ What !

shall we feed those whom Allah could feed if He wished ? ” were men who daily listened to the preaching of the final Prophet. Yet they scoffed, and would not do what they were told to do. They set themselves deliberately to deride, and so far as they could, to frustrate the beneficent purpose of Allah, who once again had sent a messenger to show men the straight path to happiness—they who, as the sons of Adam, shared the high position of Khalifah of Allah on earth ! To man has been handed over the government of this world, as Allah’s deputy, yet men deliberately shirk their part in it, and strive to make it bad instead of good. They do not believe in Allah’s purpose. They do not believe that the course they are pursuing is so very bad, they do not believe in the punishment of which the Holy Prophet warns them

“ They say . When will this threatened judgment come to pass, if you are truthful ? ”

And Allah makes this answer to all evil-doers .

“ They are only waiting for one shout, which will surprise them while they are contending

“ They will have no time to make dispositions, nor will they return to their own folk.

“ The trumpet will sound, and lo ! from the places of corruption they will hasten to their Lord

“ Saying Woe upon us. Who has roused us from our resting-place ? This then is what the Merciful One promised . So the messengers spoke truth ! ”

The Merciful One did really exist. The messengers had really spoken truth. Obedience, the doing of good to men, the feeding of the hungry “ whom Allah could have fed if He had wished to do so,” had been really by command of the Lord of all the worlds . The practice of Islam had been really worth while after all . All that they disbelieved had actually come to pass. They had been opposing the will of the Creator of the heavens and earth. What was their position, what their feelings, when the earth, where by permission of Allah they had enjoyed free will, the right to choose, and had possessed some dignity, some power of self-control—think of it, when earth and its conditions, all that gave them any grandeur or importance had passed away from them, when they found themselves before the Maker of the Heavens and the earth, as His opponents—the opponents of the Universal King, compared with whom they were as nought, and absolutely helpless in His presence, having no befriender, no intercessor, objects of scorn and derision to the whole universe. That was their punishment. It is said to them in this same Surah :

“ Stand forth, separately, on that day, O evil-doers. Did I not enjoin upon you, O sons of Adam, that you

should not worship the Devil—verily he is an open enemy to you—and that you should worship me. That is the straight path. But now he has seduced great numbers of you, had you then no sense? This is Hell, which you were promised. Burn in it to-day for that you disbelieved.”

This is Hell, this all-too-late discovery of the faithfulness of Allah’s promise and the truthfulness of the Prophets. What a fire of scorn, self-horror and remorse! One’s spirit shrivels at the very thought of it.

“This is what the Merciful One promised.” And the Apostles spoke the truth.

In that day the wicked themselves, in their despair, call Allah by His name of Er-Rahman, the Merciful, seeing clearly that the guidance which He sent to them by His Apostles, the repeated warnings, the repeated threats were a great mercy. For the gift of reason which He had bestowed on them alone, of all the creatures of this earth, should of itself have been sufficient to prevent their doing wrong.

These warnings, terrible though they may seem, are merciful. The threat of punishment is not personal, much less vindictive, against any individual, man or woman. It is a warning addressed to me and you and everybody, of what will be our state hereafter if we disobey the will of Allah and obstruct His purpose in this world.

Brethren, since I met you last a week ago, I have had a great shock. The man whom I had reason to regard as my most cruel enemy, and whom, rightly or wrongly, I had come to regard as the most bitter enemy of El Islam in England, died suddenly, in the prime of life, wealthy, famous, having everything that men desire. While he was alive I had regarded him as a typical Kafir—an unscrupulous opponent of the truth. But when I had the tidings of his death, my feelings changed. I thought, he has passed out of the region of man’s judgment; he has gone before the Judge who reads the secrets of men’s breasts, who “knows what is before them and what is behind them, while they can comprehend nothing of His knowledge save what He wills.” And I thought, I too shall go before that Judge to-day, to-morrow, in a few years’ time. Only a little while remains to me at any rate, compared with all the precious moments I have spent already, and have wasted. And, as I looked back on my own past life, remembering a host of episodes I am ashamed of, the feeling of enmity disappeared, and I found myself saying from the bottom of my heart: “Allah, have mercy on him!”

There is no difference between the good and bad save in the mercy of Allah; and Allah alone is able to adjudge the difference. Allah alone can judge the deed with its

intention, and make allowance for the disabilities which cripple certain men. Allah alone can make excuses for man's faults. As Al Ghazzali wrote: "He comprehends whatever passes from the extremest parts of earth up to the highest heaven, so that an ant's weight would not escape him either in earth or heaven; but he would know the creeping of the black ant in the dark night on the black stone." It is not for us to say, "This man is bad, he will go to Hell"; or "That group of people are wicked, Allah will punish them." We have enough to do in keeping watch on our own conduct.

Oh, Muslims, we who have this knowledge of the greatness of Allah, we who, on every page of the Qur-án, are warned of the tremendous consequences of transgression, neglect and forgetfulness, we who have been commanded to put forth our strength in a continuous effort after righteousness; we, who know that "we shall only be repaid for what we have done," what, in the name of Allah, are we doing? We, who have the final revelation from on high, who, therefore, more than any other of the sons of Adam, now hold the high, responsible position of our Lord's Khalifah upon earth, who have a duty from our Lord to all mankind, what are we doing? We are commanded constant effort. The blessings promised to us, the reliefs allowed to us, are all conditional upon that effort—our Jihad. And we are idle. Or rather we are quarrelling among ourselves, backbiting one another, betraying one another, frustrating one another's effort—all things we are commanded not to do. In Eastern lands, before I was a Muslim, I used to be amused by one worldly-wise Muslim coming to me to warn me solemnly against some other Muslim, and then that other Muslim coming to me to warn me solemnly against my first adviser. And then next day, perhaps, I saw the two of them walking together hand in hand, apparently the closest friends in all the world. The thing amused me then. It horrifies me now. And that is not the case only in Eastern lands, but is also in the West. Here in London the Muslims, being few in number, ought to be the more united. We sometimes try to pick holes in one another, striving to belittle and deride each other's efforts, seeking small points of difference and eccentricity rather than essential points on which we all agree. What kind of a Jihad is this? The crying need of the Islamic world to-day is unity. We hold a truth of inestimable value to the world, we have a duty to the whole world as custodians of that truth. All that is needed in order to recommend—nay, to enforce—that truth, is our example. There is nothing wrong with our religion. All the fault is in ourselves.

Brethren, our property, our worldly reputation, worldly

price, the little piques and private grudges which divide us each from each based upon altogether worldly matters—these are things which pass away. Remember, we are all of us upon the way to meet our Lord. It is but a little while in any case before the shout will come for us. Shall it surprise us while we are contending? Then all those worldly things will fail us utterly. We can take nothing with us then. We shall be utterly alone, and destitute. Nay, brethren, please God we may find something waiting for us—"the good things which our hands have sent before us"—the result of our Jihad, our striving after goodness here on earth. That is the only wealth which can avail us, then. Look at the Muslim world—Allah's Khalifah upon earth—and tell me, is there nothing that wants doing? Look at the poor, triumphant rulers of the earth, wandering in hopeless error for lack of knowledge of the truth we hold in trust for them. Look at the poor insurgent nations of the earth rising up with reckless bloodshed, threatening destruction to themselves no less than others. Their revolution could be made beneficent if they but knew the laws of God. The course of our Jihad is clearly indicated first for the healing, re-uniting and uplifting of the Muslim brotherhood, so as to set a great example to the world, and secondly by that means to spread Islam throughout the world.

Our effort must begin at once, and here in London. Work for unity. By all means seek the ground of union with our Muslim brothers. Co-ordinate such efforts as are being made, so that they may no longer even seem to work against each other. Above all, keep up prayer together, help the poor and the afflicted, refrain from stupid quarrelling and backbiting, remember we are going all of us to meet our Lord, to whom we have to render an account of all our doings, and the only thing which will have value for us on that day is the account of our Jihad, our effort after righteousness, and effort for the spreading of the light of truth. If that is satisfactory, by Allah's mercy, then is His promise sure. The message from our Lord to those who did their best on earth is. Peace.

## VIII

### SPIDER'S HOUSE

"The parable of those who take unto themselves protectors other than Allah is as the parable of the spider when she taketh to herself a house. And verily the most fragile of houses is the spider's house, if they but knew" (AL-QUR'AN).

THE spider's web has always been regarded as a type of man's imaginings—or man's illusions, if you will—because of its fragility in spite of all the pains the spider takes with its con-

struction, and all the delicate beauty of the finished structure, and because the spider draws the material for it from within herself. Cobwebs are among the frailest and most evanescent things in nature. They are always being torn and brushed or blown away, and the spiders are for ever reconstructing them; and so are men for ever seeing their imaginings proved false, and reconstructing them on what they think a stronger framework. There is nothing ridiculous or contemptible about the spider's web, it is a miracle of workmanship, which ought to lead men to perception of God's providence. And there is nothing ridiculous or contemptible about the imaginative dwellings which men and women spin from their own brains. The spider is in no way to be pitied or despised for spinning because the web it spins is frail, the sport of every breath of air; and man is no way to be pitied or despised because he uses his imagination for the purpose for which it was given to him—to build a spiritual dwelling for himself.

Let us refer back to the text.

“The parable of those who take unto themselves protectors other than Allah is as the parable of the spider when she taketh to herself a house”

Every translator of the Qur-án that I know of, has taken the spider's house to mean the spider's web. But the Arabic word, which I have translated “taketh to herself,” means “taketh after choosing from among others” But the spider does not choose her web in any sense, nor does she take it. It is a part of herself, her own natural production. But she may be said to choose the supports to which she hangs her web and the position in which she hangs it. And on the nature of those supports and that position, not upon the strength or weakness of the web itself, depends the durability of her handiwork. The spider's house in this parable means the cobweb in the place to which the spider has attached it. And the spider really cannot choose. She hangs it on to anything that seems convenient—two twigs which the wind will blow apart next minute, the corner of a room which is swept daily. She has not man's perception of these things. She is obeying Allah's law in her own sphere, without intelligence. But man has been given not only intelligence, but heavenly guidance. Yet see, he hangs the delicate and lovely fabric of his brain to objects which are bound to fail him and destroy that fabric, which might, had he but taken care, have had eternal value instead of shrivelling to nothing like a spider's web. He has free choice. And yet he chooses to construct a perishable spider's house, rather than a durable, palatial dwelling for the soul here and hereafter. Every man and woman in existence has to choose between the perishable and the everlasting, and it is not always easy to distinguish, for the perishable often seems so very strong

that we are tempted to hang all our hopes upon it for a time at any rate. And the fabrics men have spun out of their own brains are often beautiful enough to make a man or woman fall in love with them, forgetting that they are illusions no more lasting than the spider's web. Such was the old Greek idolatry; such are some of the religions in the world to-day. But is it only those who worship idols or who join their faith to intercessors no more potent than themselves who can be described as taking to themselves protectors other than Allah? Surely every man who values wealth or power or any of the blessings of this world so much that in his secret heart he ranks that blessing first and Allah second, every one who recognizes in his heart that wealth or power or human love, or a certain position in the world, or any art or talent he may have, has grown essential to his inner life—surely every man or woman who has thus exalted temporal things to the position which belongs to Allah only, is as much a dweller in the spider's house as any worshipper of idols.

“And verily the most fragile of houses is the spider's house, if they but knew”

We must not suffer the idea of rank or wealth or power or pride, anything of earth ever to invade our inner life. In our own private thoughts and dreams about ourselves such matters of congratulation must rank as what they really are, mere accidents that may be taken from us any day and will assuredly be taken from us one day. The only thing we have to ask ourselves is, are we doing the best we can, in Allah's way, with all the means He has bestowed on us, including intellect, or have we hung our whole imaginative building to some false ideal of our own importance or of the importance of our own opinions or our own school of thought or our own position or our own race, which causes us to look with coldness on some fellow-creatures whom we ought to look upon as brothers, to offend and perhaps oppress some fellow-creatures whom we ought to help. That would be to spoil our effort. Make sure that nothing intervenes between you and Allah, that nothing, no one, under Allah, has your soul's devotion, that you are doing to the very utmost of your power your Muslim duty with the means bestowed on you, and then you can be absolutely certain that you are not dwelling in the spider's house. But make quite sure, every day of your life

Thirteen hundred years ago and more there lived a gracious lady who gave up all that she possessed to Allah's Messenger (God bless and keep him), to be spent by him in Allah's way. She gave it all, as if it had been nothing, to him, her husband, of her own free will. She did not live to see the triumph of Islam save with the eye of faith, but never for a moment did she doubt that triumph. She was

the first believer in the Prophet's mission, his comforter on many sad occasions. She believed in him when men derided, she gave him all her wealth to spend when men denied him. And an angel (it is said) came to our lord Muhammad with the tidings that, as the consequence of what she had done, a splendid mansion stood prepared for her "in that garden where toil and sorrow are not."

That is the sort of house that we must try to build, and it cannot be built without the sacrifice of this world's good. Sacrifice does not necessarily mean the giving up of all the blessings of this world, but the holding of them always as a trust from Allah, the readiness to give up all or any of them at a moment's notice in the cause of righteousness, the consciousness at all times that they are but fleeting things. Many people at the present day are dazzled by the inventions of this wonderful civilization of the twentieth century. Curiously, many seem to think that the discovery that man can do so much that was once thought impossible detracts in some way from the Majesty of God, and does away with the need of worship. Surely the discovery that the laws and providence of nature—Allah's laws and providence—are much more wonderful than men of old imagined, ought to increase, and not diminish reverence! But man is self-sufficient, so they say. Is he?

Some one once told me of a flying accident which he had seen. The body of the airman, he said, among the debris of his machine, reminded him of a crushed spider in its web. Is this civilization with its wonderful inventions of more permanency than a monstrous spider's web compared with human life and death and life again? Let not a Muslim in the world be daunted or deceived. These are no miracles that men have wrought against Allah. They are proofs of the infallibility of certain natural laws—the laws of Allah—discovered by the ingenuity of learned men and brought to use by human skill and energy and perseverance. If those who use them transgress the laws of Allah by but the fraction of an inch, they perish with their whole contrivance. These things are henceforth part of man's achievement in the world, the gifts vouchsafed to him, and everybody ought to learn about them, to command them, for they are a source of power. But it is with them as with all other gifts of God to man, they must not become the end and object of man's effort. Use them for good, according to the sacred law, regarding them as what they are, a trust from God, and they will help the edifice which we desire to build, use them for evil, or allow them to become a source of foolish pride, as if we really thought that man was equal to Allah because of those inventions governed by His law—ah, then indeed we shall be dwellers in the spider's house.

"And verily the most fragile of houses is the spider's house, if they but knew."

## KHUTBA-TUL-EID

Sermon delivered by Mr. MARMADUKE PICKTHALL at the Mosque, Woking, on the occasion of "Eid-ul-Fitr," on the 29th June, 1919.

"O you who believe! Be careful of your duty to Allah with the care which is due to Him, and do not die without submitting to Him utterly

"And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, and do not separate. And remember Allah's goodness to you, how you were enemies and He united your hearts so that you became brothers. And how you were on the brink of an abyss of fire and He rescued you from it. Thus Allah makes clear His revelations to you, in order that you may be rightly guided."

"THE cable of Allah!" In another chapter of the Book it is written: "There is no compulsion in religion. The Right Direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who discards vain superstitions and believes in Allah has grasped a firm handhold which will not give way." Everything else gives way and fails us except the tie which binds the sons of men by duty to Allah. And in that tie, that cable joining us to God, is the one certain and unflinching hope of human progress, the one sure way of human brotherhood, the one way to success in that which hitherto has been a failure—the progress of mankind as a whole to peace and happiness. Self-sacrifice is the proof of true religion. But some people when they speak of self-sacrifice mean the sacrifice of one human being for another. That may be anti-social, anti-human. It may happen that a worthy, useful, good person sacrifices himself or herself for a worthless, useless, wicked person. The only self-sacrifice which has real human—and therefore religious—value, is the sacrifice of the self to Allah, the surrender of our selfish and ambitious aims to Allah's universal purpose.

In the same way love of children, friends, relations, and the desire to serve them; love of country, love of creed, are admirable in their way; but without the thought of Allah, and the higher purpose, they become detrimental to humanity at large. Allah is the Creator and Sustainer alike of all mankind, no matter what their race, or creed, or colour. His mercy and His purpose are for all alike. If we serve our friends, or our relations, or our country, or our religious community without that personal adherence to Allah which is the duty of every one of us, without the thought of Allah's universal purpose, we exalt our relations, or our country, at the expense of other men's relations, other people's countries, and we are really doing harm instead of good, in terms of humanity. And as objects of

devotion, all these things must fail and disappoint us. "All men die. All men must meet the judgment of their Lord. Be not of those who forget." Our closest intimacy with a fellow-creature is not perfect intimacy. No human being really comprehends another. We touch each other only externally at certain points, and the attempt to get to closer intimacy leads to disappointment, pessimism and despair. There is in every one of us an inner self, which was old when we first woke to consciousness and will be young when all our faculties are smitten with decay. If that inner self surrenders to another human being there is tragedy, for no human being has the power to satisfy its yearnings. In Allah only can it find contentment. In Allah only can all our various personalities find fulfilment and really reach communion with each other. There is no such thing as a perfect communion of two human souls. The inmost soul of every man and woman is solitary from the cradle to the grave, unless and until it surrenders to Allah, and then it is never solitary any more. It is at one with Allah's purpose in the universe, reconciled to the conditions of existence, content with life and death, happy to strive in the way which Allah has appointed, leaving the results to Him. That is Islam. It is not, as some suppose, a state of ecstatic lethargy, but a state of ecstatic energy, of glad fulfilment of the laws of God. And the laws of Allah in the Qur-án are not negative; they are positive; not merely, Thou shalt not do so-and-so; but, Do so-and-so, and so-and-so with all your might. If you fail to do the works commanded you are no believer; for in Islam belief and works are one. At the time of the coming of Muhammad religion was a thing apart from daily life. It was bound up with vain ideas of the miraculous. A phenomenon to be regarded as divine had to transgress the natural order in a glaring way. The men of Mecca said: "What is the matter with this Prophet? He eats food and walks in the streets. Why has not an angel been sent down to support him in his admonitions? Why has not a heavenly treasure been bestowed on him? Why has he not a paradise from which to eat?" They had such legends of the former prophets. The Qur-án informs them of the truth: "We have not sent any messengers before you but they did assuredly eat food and walk in the streets." In other words the former prophets, whom they deified, were only men.

Islam brought back religion to the light of every day. It proclaimed the phenomena of every day to be the signs of Allah, bearing testimony to His power and majesty more truly than any miracle that ever was related. And it placed the goal of true religion in this world. Allah is the king of this world. We are all in His hands, helpless against laws *we* never made—the laws of nature, which are laws of God.

## KHUTBA-TUL-EID

Man is His Khalifah (viceroys) in this world. But Allah is not an absent king. Allah is the protecting friend of those who believe. He leads them out of darkness into light. The light to which He leads us is no mysterious, unearthly light. It is the light of every day, the light of reason. While we looked for Him in miracles and mystic ceremonies, as something distant, we were in darkness. His evidences are around us. He is here. "And do not die without submitting to Him utterly." Do not die without becoming Muslims in the inward sense.

But do not think of that submission as the end of spiritual life. It is not an end at all, it is a state of being, and a very active state of being in obedience to the law of God—a law above the laws which men have made—and that law is the service of humanity as a whole. It covers not only personal conduct, but social relations, commerce and finance, politics and international relations. "Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you." The laws of Allah as revealed in the Qur-án are simply that maxim extended to collective as well as individual human conduct, codified and reasoned out in detail in such a way that the ignorant and the intelligent, the nation and the individual, alike can know for certain what their duty is in given circumstances.

Usury is anti-social, gambling is anti-social, drunkenness is anti-social. The ideal of property as belonging absolutely to the individual to do exactly what he likes with it, and leave it in his will to whom he likes, is anti-social. All property is a trust from God, and held upon conditions clearly laid down in the sacred law. A certain portion of the income must be given to the poor, a certain portion to the community every year. And when a man dies his property must be divided among certain relatives, women as well as men, in fixed proportions. Aggressive nationalism is a crime in the Kingdom of Allah. Patriotism, as Europeans generally understand it—my country right or wrong—is anti-human. The Muslim has no business with such errors. Obedience to the law of Allah as revealed in the Qur-án is, in my belief, the only way to reconcile the claims of rich and poor, of governors and governed, of slave and free. When once the law of Allah is accepted all those troubles disappear. I believe it is the only way out of the dilemma in which civilization is now placed; and it is interesting, for a Muslim to note how nearly the most enlightened European thinkers approach to it in their suggested remedies. They little guess that what they deem the latest thing in human thought was first propounded by an unlettered Arab thirteen hundred years ago as part of the divine law governing all human progress. When you hear the Muezzin calling "Come to success! Come

to success!" what do you suppose is meant? Not selfish success. Spiritual success? Yes, for only through the service of humanity can we attain the sense of Allah's protecting friendship in this world, and to attain that is the purpose of our being. For thirteen hundred years that cry has been going forth from every mosque in the world by night and day. "Come to success! Come to success!"

Success in that which hitherto has been a failure—the progress of mankind as a whole! Success within the Muslim world there has been, and there is. Nationalism has been abolished. Patriotism has been replaced by the spirit of brotherhood. Black and white and brown and yellow people mix in Islam upon a footing of complete equality, holding fast, all of them together, to the cable of Allah, the sacred law. There is no police and no priesthood in the Kingdom of Allah. There was no police for centuries within the Muslim empire, and no need of one. There is no need of a police for happy people. And what need can there be of any priest or intermediary where every servant has free access to the Living King, where all are priests and priestesses, having the right to think? Oh, we Muslims have great cause to remember Allah's goodness to us "how we were enemies and He united our hearts and we became brothers; and how we were on the brink of an abyss of fire and He saved us from it."

But what of the world outside Islam? Have Muslims thought sufficiently of that? Have they not been content with their own happiness, and neglected their duty as a community to do good to others, to mention Allah's goodness to them so that others too might come to knowledge of it? And so it has happened that the tortured peoples of the earth, made energetic by their misery, attacked the happy peoples. They overcame the Muslim empire, bit by bit, till now they stand above the last heroic remnant of it in the attitude of executioners. They know no law of God—nor even any law of man—where conquered peoples are concerned.

But is that their fault? Is it not the fault of Muslims in the past? It is thirteen hundred years since the Divine laws regulating war and conquest for the welfare of mankind were revealed. How comes it that the rulers of the world to-day have never even heard of them?

But is the Kingdom of Allah destroyed? Is the Kingdom of Allah at anybody's mercy? No, indeed! The Muslims had become distracted; in their bewilderment they scattered, going this way and that. Now, praise to Allah, they are once again united, holding fast, all together, to the cable of Allah, no longer separate. The Kingdom of Allah can never be defeated while Muslims keep that

spirit, while our men in high positions are ready to resign, while every Muslim is prepared to give up everything and die if necessary, in order to secure an act of justice. The Muslim empire has been conquered once before; and then what happened? The conquerors themselves were conquered. They embraced Islam. Is that impossible to-day? No, it is not; if by Islam we mean what the Prophet and the Qur-án mean by it: not necessarily our own form of worship, but the great principles of our religion, acknowledgment of Allah's kingship over earth and acceptance of that law of universal brotherhood and tolerance which Muhammad (may God bless and keep him) preached to men. It is what the tortured nations of the world are longing for. The one thing needed is a good example from the Muslims. Strive to do good to everyone with whom you come in contact; avoid all evil and degrading habits; stand up for good, wherever you perceive it, not only among Muslims but in all the world; oppose evil wherever it appears; call upon everyone who believes in a higher law than that of men, and looks for a higher judgment than that of men, who believes in abstract right and wrong according to the measure of Allah, whether he call himself a follower of Jesus (on whom be peace) or of Moses (on whom be peace) or of any Prophet or of no Prophet, to join with us in a great effort after righteousness. Let us hold fast, all of us together, to the cable of Allah, and never separate!

## IX

### **SUFFERINGS NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS**

“Or do you calculate that you will enter Paradise when there has not come to you the like of that which came to those who passed away before you? Tribulation and calamity afflicted them, they were shaken as by earthquake, so that the Prophet and those who believed with him said: ‘When comes Allah's help?’ Now truly Allah's help is very nigh.”—AL-QUR-ÁN.

THIS verse in its context has a close connection with the revelation which first told the Prophet and the early Muslims that they must fight in self-defence. They had suffered cruel persecution for twelve years in Mecca. At last they had escaped by flight to Yathrib—the city which we now call El Medínah—among friendly people, and they had thought their troubles were all over. Then came the news that the idolatrous Coreysh in Mecca, not content with their voluntary exile from that city, were raising a great army, for those days, with intent to follow them to their place of refuge and destroy them utterly. They saw themselves already overwhelmed, they were thinking of a further flight; and the Ansâr, their faithful helpers in

Medīnah, were preparing to fly with them rather than abjure the Faith, when word from Allah came that they were not to flee away at all, but to go out and fight.

They were dismayed at the command; for they possessed no fighting force to bear comparison with that of their pursuers. Some of them grumbled and complained about it in the simple fashion of those days when every Muslim spoke his mind before the Holy Prophet freely. They said that they would all be dead in a short while. And the word of Allah came:

“Call not those who are killed in the way of Allah dead, but rather living, only you do not perceive.”

They complained that they had hoped, after all they had already suffered, that they would be allowed to live out the remainder of their pious lives in peace, and enter Paradise without more tribulation. And the word of Allah came:

“Or do you calculate that you will enter Paradise when there has not come to you the like of that which came to those who passed away before you? Tribulation and calamity afflicted them. They were shaken as by earthquake, so that the Prophet and those who believed with him said: ‘When comes Allah’s help?’ Now truly Allah’s help is very nigh.”

It took a long while to make the simpler companions understand that they were no longer ordinary people, but companions of a wonder-working Prophet like those of old of whom the story had come down to them. They did not know the future. They could not foresee the miraculous success which would attend their fighting. They did not realize that they were called by God Himself to play the part of saints and heroes in the holy war which liberated human destiny from all the earthborn superstitions and restrictions which till then had held it bound, and broke the walls which foolish people had erected, shutting out the light of Heaven and barring the approach to God which should be free to all. It was hard for them to realize that they were highly favoured when they found themselves subjected to great hardships and unheard-of dangers, things they disliked as heartily as you and I do. Some of them even thought, comparing all this tribulation with the quiet life which they had led before conversion, that Allah was angry with them for becoming Muslims. For we find in the Qur-ān a verse warning believers not to mistake the persecution of the heathen for the wrath of God, and assuring them of Allah’s favour if they persevered. They persevered, and they found Allah’s favour, and they entered Paradise.

If they had disobeyed the Divine command to fight, if they had fled before the danger threatening them, only

intent to lead their harmless lives in peace, they would have missed the happiness which was, in fact, in store for them—the glorious peace, the wonderful prosperity, the triumph of good over evil which gave new life to the world. And they would not have entered Paradise hereafter. And their enemies also would have been the losers, for they would not have known the peace which comes from resignation to Allah; Arabia would have remained idolatrous, disgraced by drunkenness and senseless bloodshed and every kind of vicious and degrading orgy.

It is obvious that those who strive and suffer and endure the most in Allah's service are the most notable, if not necessarily always the best, of Allah's servants. But some of you may be astonished when I say that they are the happiest of Allah's servants in this world, provided always that they persevere. For Allah's help is always near to them, and that is no mere figure of speech or poetical expression. It is a promise of Allah, who never breaks His promise. You must not think that the early Muslims, who were privileged to be the companions or the helpers of the Holy Prophet, enjoyed a measure of Allah's favour greater than is attainable by you or me, or that the promises which were made to them are not for us as well, in the like circumstances. I need not tell you that for every one who has endured some persecution for the Faith—and few British Muslims, I imagine, can have quite escaped it—must have experienced the curious serenity of mind, the flood of happiness coming at the very moment when the greatest shame, the greatest suffering, or the greatest fear was to be expected. It is just as if a powerful protecting friend had clasped your hand and said. "Fear nothing. You are not alone. Leave all to me." I am not at all the type of person who is naturally addicted to seeing visions and to dreaming dreams, yet I have had that experience sometimes for days together, not once nor twice, but many times in the past year. So evidently other and more spiritually gifted people must have had it too in the like circumstances. I have no doubt but that some perfect Muslims enjoy that serene communion at all times, and that it is the condition mentioned in the Qur-án when it is said:

"And there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve."

But I have only known it in its fullness at moments which would have been moments of despair for anybody who did not hold himself subservient to Allah's purpose. And looking back upon those moments I would not exchange them for as many years of quiet, comfortable life. So I say that we, the Muslims of to-day, are fortunate in a religious sense because we live in a time of trial and mis-

fortune for the Faith. The touch of persecution we have to endure, the fight we have to wage against an overwhelming foe, is nothing when compared with "that which came to those who passed away before us"—the Holy Prophet and his blest companions—for the world has grown in toleration since those days! But it is sufficient to awake in us new spiritual life through the assurance which each one of us receives of Allah's help—"Now truly Allah's help is very nigh"—and to draw us all more close together in affection and comradeship. When I think of all the dangers and the temptations of the past four years, of the furious way in which the Muslim world has been assailed, with threats and bribes and war-time propaganda from both sides incessantly, it is with a glow of pride that I look round upon the Muslim world to-day and see that it stands firm; it has not flinched nor moved the fraction of an inch from the correct position defined for it by the Holy Prophet and the Sacred Book; it is with a thrill of pride that I see Sunni and Shi'a standing side by side as brothers in the firm demand for what is just and right. Thank God for that.

But we must not now sit down to comfort and a life of laziness, thinking that our work is done and we shall enter Paradise. Our work, perhaps, is only just beginning. We must stand prepared for a yet greater ordeal, if it be Allah's will that it should come to us. We have been passive until now; we must henceforth be active in defending the essentials of our Faith. There comes a time when further yielding, a further flight, on our part would mean incalculable loss and ruin to ourselves and our opponents, because the essentials of Islam are essential to the welfare of the world. But if the ordeal comes, we need not fear it; because the end, we know, is peace and the great victory, and because we know now, from our own experience, that in the darkest hour we shall find help from Allah, transforming enemies into friends and deserts into flowering fields.

We, the little band of English Muslims, have a most important part to play at present—a very honourable part. We, indeed, probably more than any other Muslim community to-day, are in the position of the early Muslims in Mecca in the days when they were looked upon as weak and negligible. Alas, you say, we are without the Prophet. We are without the person of the Prophet (may God bless and keep him), but we have his teaching with us, and we have the Qur-ân. And He in whose hand was the life of Muhammad (may God bless and keep him), in whose hand is my life and the life of every one of you, my hearers, is with us. His help is as near to-day, and as effective, as it was to the early Muslims in Mecca and Medînah. We have our part in the great struggle which is going on between two parties in the world, one seeking to enthrone man's handi-

work as Lord and King—these are the idolators; the other striving for the recognition of Allah by every nation as the only Lord and King of Heaven and Earth, the Lord of all the Worlds, whom some men do not know because they never seek Him. Seek Him; you will surely find Him. Strive in His way, be constant and sincere in prayer, be kind and charitable, and you will be conscious of His active help; you will know true happiness in the consciousness of God's kingdom upon earth. Do all that is in your power to spread true knowledge of Islam among our English people, dispelling the false notions and the prejudices which still prevail among so many English Christians. Make your Islam respected and beloved in your own circles, and give the lie to those who say false things about the Faith. And if, in the course of your striving, you should meet with persecution, do not fear it. It is good that "there should come to you the like of that which came to those who passed away before you." Then you will know that Allah's help is coming to you.

"Now truly Allah's help is very nigh."

## X

## FRATERNITY

"O people, listen to my words, and understand the same. Know that all Muslims are brothers one to another. You are one fraternity. Nothing which belongs to one of you is lawful to his brother unless given out of free goodwill. Guard yourselves from committing injustice."—AL-QUR-ĀN.

THOSE words are from the solemn admonition which our lord Muhammad (God bless him!) addressed to the whole Muslim community from Mount 'Arafât on the occasion of his last pilgrimage to Mecca—The Pilgrimage of Farewell, as it is called. And no one can say that the injunction has been fruitless. For where in the world to-day can we find a real fraternity of rich and poor, of black and white and brown and yellow people, except in El Islam?

"Liberty, equality, fraternity!" has been, and is the cry of revolutionaries here in Europe. Well, liberty is a fine thing, but in a civilized community it must be always

relative, for ever bounded by the liberties of others. Equality of opportunity is an ideal to be aimed at, rather than a law which can be practised rigidly. Still every one will admit that it is desirable. Equality of persons and of personalities is contrary to natural law, and so impossible. These two ideals are abstract and entirely relative. Fraternity, upon the other hand, is positive, and can be practised wherever men of like opinions and goodwill consort together. In the political body of Islam, which was at first a model to free peoples, there has of late years been too little liberty. There has been of late years less equality of opportunity than there was formerly, though more than you could find in modern Europe. But fraternity there is, and always has been, in that body.

The prejudices both of race and class which taint the atmosphere of Christendom seem a strange growth of Christianity when we reflect that Jesus of Nazareth was the apostle of meekness and of love, and himself adorned a modest station in society. Many Christians would protest that these developments have nothing to do with Christianity. That they have nothing to do with Christ, we all agree. But what has Christianity to do with Christ? If these prejudices of class and race are not in any sense a growth of Christianity, how comes it that we find them flourishing in Christian lands, and altogether absent from the Muslim brotherhood? Class distinctions are not absent from the Muslim brotherhood, but class prejudices are. There is free speech and free intercourse between all sorts and conditions of men, and between all sorts and conditions of women. Those prejudices mar the outlook of most English people, even of those who rail against them and denounce them—I should say, especially of those who rail against them and denounce them; for where will you find a revolutionary who has a brotherly regard for individual aristocrats? One of the great blessings which Islam brings to an Englishman is deliverance from this insanity. His vision grows serene, enabling him to smile at the pretensions of all parties, to accept men on their merits, with a brotherly regard for men whose conduct pleases him irrespective of class or race

or colour. I have just been in the British army in the ranks—pitchforked, so to speak, at forty-three, among all sorts of men—and I have found this Muslim point of view a very godsend, making me content where I should once have been extremely miserable.

The feeling of fraternity inherent in Islam has sometimes struck me as miraculous, such comfort does it bring to one in circumstances which by every standard would be called uncomfortable. Why, I have asked myself occasionally, did I never know such happiness while I was a Christian? Well, it may seem a strange answer to give, it may appear far-fetched to some of you, but I believe the reason is that Christianity—the Christianity that I was taught in childhood—practically does away with the Last Judgment.

You know the words of the Qur-án :

“ Verily those who believe (i.e. the Muslims) and those who obey the Jew’s religious rule, and the Christians and the Sabaeans—whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and does good works, their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve.”

Christians did once believe in the Last Day—that is, the Day of Judgment for all mankind. It was part of the teaching of Christ. But by proclaiming that salvation can be obtained by a belief in such and such dogmas, and the observance of such and such ceremonies, the Church, while still formally maintaining the doctrine of the Last Judgment, has made the judgment a foregone conclusion for its own adherents. Certain people thus appear before their Lord in a privileged position. Where then is fraternity? And how can any Christian man, brought up in that belief, be happy, with the consciousness of all the people in the world who are not Christian in belief, who consequently are condemned to everlasting torment? Another foregone conclusion, you perceive. The judgment of God is reduced to a mere ceremony, a formal confirmation of the Church’s judgment. And if a Christian can be found who does find happiness in thinking that he himself

is certain to be saved through certain doctrines and observances, while countless millions of mankind are no less certain to be damned; can such a man be suspected of any sense or spirit of fraternity? And yet these people have been taught to say "Our Father, which art in heaven."

God is metaphorically the Father—since He is the primal Author of the being—of all mankind. That was, I think, unquestionably, the meaning of the Prophet Jesus when he gave that prayer to his disciples. But see what they have made of it. An earthly father, the partisan of his own family against all who differ from them. A father to the Christians—it amounts to that—with angry feelings for all other people in the world. The first meaning—that of Christ himself—is in accord with nature, the second, that of Christendom, is against nature, since Allah's blessings in the world of nature are bestowed on all alike.

Our Prophet saw that error among Christians in his day, and for that reason, to avoid a similar misguidance of his followers, he never used the words Our Father when speaking of Allah. We Muslims shun those words, for the same reason, though there can be not the least objection in the mind of any Muslim to the words of the Lord's prayer, which is a Muslim prayer, without a trace of all those doctrines which later turned the Christians from Islam. We believe that Jesus was a Muslim Prophet. The religion which he preached, the life he wished that men should lead, is not to be found to-day in Christendom, but in Islam. And Muslims have a better right than Christians to pray "Our Father, which art in heaven," for they have kept the true ideal of human brotherhood which Christians have discarded; and that brotherhood is based on the idea of Allah's universal fatherhood. We never use the word, but the idea is with us always. Allah has given certain laws which we know, and strive always to obey. We naturally have a sentiment of brotherhood for all who recognize those laws, and try to conform to them. All who love the Father of us all, the Source of all Existence, and look only for His judgment on their actions, are our brothers.

“And there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve.”

I do not know whether you, my audience, prefer an autocratic or a democratic form of government. Where theocracy is acknowledged, it matters little whether earthly sovereignty is held by one man or a crowd of men. For, in presence of the Mighty Sovereign of the universe, fearing His judgment, the autocrat becomes in fact the brother of his poorest subject. And as for democracy, compare the French Revolution, or that Russian Revolution which took place only the other day, with the greatest revolution which the world has ever known—the advent of Islam in consequence of our Prophet’s preaching. In all three cases you have multitudes of people suddenly released from old restraints and discipline, and confronted with an altogether new idea of life. In all three cases you have the demand for brotherhood. Why were the first two characterized by cruelty, bloodshed, and disorder, and why was the Islamic Revolution free from all these things? The Russian and the French revolutionaries established governments which had to use harsh measures to maintain their sway. The Muslims were without any of the machinery of government, and yet they were perfectly orderly and, what is more, entirely happy. Why? Simply because they had a common ground of brotherhood, a common standard of morality which all accepted. Simply because they had a true fraternity in complete dependence on the will of the Universal Father. Simply because they believed in the Day of Judgment.

Some people seem to think that a belief in a Day of Judgment is an antiquated belief. Some people even seem to think it horrible. Well, I personally do not care a fig for any man or woman who does not, consciously or unconsciously, believe in a Day of Reckoning. Every man or woman who accepts a life of service or of suffering sooner than get success by evil doing; every man or woman who does his or her best without reward rather than gain the applause of the multitude, whatever motive they themselves would give for their behaving in that way, and most of them would find it difficult to give a reason for their

behaviour, are looking to a judgment higher and purer than the judgment of men, a judgment quite impersonal, which God alone is capable of giving. I do not care if they are Muslims, or Christians, or agnostics. I say that they all in fact believe in the Last Day, and the words of the Qur-án may apply to them.

“ And there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve.”

And as for the belief in the Last Judgment being in any way horrible or terrifying—why, ladies and gentlemen, it seems to me the most radiantly hopeful of all the doctrines which have ever been accepted among men. If any man were to be the judge, if any being at all resembling man in limitation were to be the judge, then indeed we might be terrified, for we should fear injustice. No man could make all due allowance for inherited tendencies in determining the criminal's career of crime. No man could know all the extenuating circumstances which in every case appear to the All-knowing God. Has any son of earth to fear injustice before the throne of Him who made the heavens and the earth, who knows all their temptations and their disabilities, who knows His creatures infinitely better than they know themselves? And when we know, as every Muslim knows, that the All-wise is also the All-Merciful! Surely this doctrine, which has been so much maligned, really holds out a hope for all mankind.

I think the horror and dislike which it inspires in some intelligent people comes from misapprehension. They associate the judgment with the threats of dreadful punishment denounced against the wicked in all Scripture, as if those threats were levelled against individuals. They are not; they cannot be, since we are not the judges. They merely mean that if we do certain things against our spiritual and moral welfare, or against the welfare of our neighbour, we have to fear the condemnation of the Lord of heaven and earth, even though the wrongs which we commit according to human laws may be no crime. But we are not the judges. Every one of us has to await the judgment of his Lord, and if we are quite honest in our self-examination, we shall admit that it is only by the grace of God we have

escaped great crimes. Are we then any better than the actual criminals? Have we not equal need with them to ask for mercy before a Judge who reads the secrets of men's hearts?

King and beggar, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, all will appear before their Lord on equal terms. The ruler will have no advantage of his power, the savant no advantage of his education, unless that power, that education has been used for good. That is the true foundation of Islamic brotherhood. We shall be judged not by accidents of class, or race, or wealth, but by that which we have done, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Acknowledging this common destination, this equality, how can we hold aloof from one another, or despise one another?

There is another aspect of Islamic fraternity, of particular importance at the present time. Islam abolished nationality, as we understand it; and patriotism, as we understand it, it denounced as a crime. A Muslim of India is the brother of a Muslim of Egypt or West Africa. If any one of another religion asked him of his nationality, he would not say: "I am an Indian," but "I am a Musulman." Only if a fellow Muslim from another country were to ask him the same question, would he answer "I am of India," since his faith was understood already by the other. I have heard Englishmen exclaim concerning Muslim peoples that "they have no patriotism, only religious fanaticism." By fanaticism such people mean no more than a passionate regard for a religion and obedience to its precepts. Well, which has done most, which is capable of doing most, for the great cause of human progress, human brotherhood: the unbridled nationalism which appears to-day to be the chief political ideal of Christians, a nationalism which makes big states avaricious and little states ridiculously self-assertive, a cause of wars; past, present, or to come; or the religion of Islam, which wipes away all that as worthless, and in its place sets universal brotherhood? The backward state of many Muslim peoples in respect of modern sanitation and mechanical contrivances blinds Europeans to the fact that the Muslim world is thirteen centuries ahead of Europe in political and social science. It also blinds young

Muslims, who have been educated here in Europe to admire things European indiscriminately, to this most important fact of Muslim progress. But only for a time, in youth. They shake off the illusion with a little thought. Let them remember that, as Muslims, they are representatives of an ideal more advanced than any that prevails in Europe. If they forsake that high ideal of brotherhood for the lower one of national pride, they (in the words of the Qur-án) "barter the higher for the lower," as certainly as did the Children of Israel when they turned from worshipping Allah, and bowed themselves before a calf of gold, the work of men's hands.

A Christian can say: "I am an Englishman, or a Frenchman, or a German first, and a Christian afterwards"; for it is the truth. The development of Christianity has produced this nationalism. But that is not the case in El Islam. Whatever nationalism has appeared in Muslim countries has been purely imitative and artificial, the work of foreign influences, foreign money. I speak of nationalism in the European sense. Pan-islamism—which is true Islamic patriotism—has been misnamed "nationalism" in the Press of Europe more than once; and a pan-Islamic movement in some Eastern country has been wrongly represented as a nationalist movement. A pan-Islamic movement would, of course, if left alone, be a peaceful and progressive movement, aiming at the raising of the Muslim brotherhood in every land by education. A nationalist movement, on the other hand, is an aggressive movement, jealous of all other nationalities and heedless of religion. It is therefore foreign to the spirit of Islam.

There is nothing that we Muslims ought to guard more zealously than this brotherhood of all believers. I dare say that some of you English Muslims are occasionally impatient at some of the customs of the Muslim world, at some of the minute details of religious practice which our Oriental brethren think of very great importance. Well, if you have in you the true Islamic spirit, you will be careful of those little matters for your brother's sake, who loves them. They may be little in themselves. A nail or rivet is a little thing. And these small matters hold us all together.

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