

How Should We Witness to the Truth?

Let us now see in what manner we should discharge our duty of witnessing to the Truth. Witnessing is of two types: one, witness by words, or the word-witness; the other, witness by acts and deeds, or the act-witness. [1]

Word-witness

In what way should our words witness to the Truth? Through our speech and writing, we should proclaim and explain to the world the guidance that has come to us through God's Messengers. This, in sum, is the word-witness. Employing all possible methods of education, using all possible means of communication and propagation, mastering all knowledge provided by the contemporary arts and sciences, we should inform mankind of the way of life that God has laid down for man. The guidance that Islam gives to humanity in thought and belief, in morality and behavior, in culture and civilization, in economics and business, in jurisprudence and judiciary, in politics and civil administration that is, in all aspects of inter-human relations we should clearly and fully expound before mankind. By rational discourse and convincing evidence, we should establish its truth and soundness. By soundly reasoned critique, we should rebut all that is contrary to the guidance given by God.

The task is enormous. Full justice cannot be done to it unless the thought of guiding man to the right path seizes the whole Ummah as completely as it did each Messenger personally. It is essential, too, that this task should become the central objective of all our collective endeavors, that we should commit all our hearts and minds, all of our resources, to this cause. Uppermost in all our actions should be this objective. Under no circumstances should we allow any voice within ourselves to bear witness against the Truth and Divine guidance that we have.

Act-witness

In what way should our acts and deeds witness to the Truth? For this purpose, the guidance that we hold to be true we must put into practice. Our actions should demonstrate the principles we profess to believe in.

Put simply: let our lives speak the truth, and let the world hear it not merely from our lips but also from our deeds; let mankind witness all the blessings that the Divine guidance brings to human life. Let the world taste in our conduct, individual and collective, that sweetness and flavor which only the faith in One God can impart to character and morality. Let the world see what fine examples of humanity are fashioned by Islam, what a just society is established, what a sound social order emerges, what a clean and noble civilization arises, how science, literature, and art flourish and develop on sound lines, what a just economy compassionate and free from conflict is brought about. Indeed, how every aspect of life is set right, developed and enriched.

We shall not be doing our duty to this task unless our lives, individual and collective, become a living embodiment of Islam: unless our personal characters are a living proof of its truth, our homes are fragrant with its teachings, our businesses and factories are illuminated by its rules and laws, our schools and institutions are shaped by its ideas and norms, and our literature and media reflect its principles.

Indeed until our entire national policy and public life make its truth manifest and self-evident.

In short, wherever and whenever any individual or people come in contact with us it is our duty to convince them, by our example, that the principles and teachings which Islam proclaims to be true are indeed true, and that they do improve the quality of human life and raise it to better and higher levels.

Notes by Khurram Murad

1. Types of witness:

The witness by word may be taken to be broadly subsumed under the Quranic terminology of warning (indhar), bringing glad tidings (tabshir), inviting and calling (da'wah), communicating (tabligh), teaching and instructing (ta'lim), conveying and propagating (tilawah). The terminology for the witness by actions includes establishing Islam (iqamatu 'd-din), making God's guidance and way of life prevail over all others (izhar), establishing justice (qist), enjoining right and forbidding wrong, and .

Where Do we Stand?

Our Word - Witness

First, look at the testimony that is being given by our word-witness. There are few people amongst us who are using their tongues and pens to witness to the truth of Islam. Still fewer in number are those who are doing so in an appropriate and adequate manner. Otherwise, in almost every respect Muslims, on the whole, are giving their witness against Islam and not in its favor as they should.

What is the witness of our landlords? That the Islamic law of inheritance is wrong and that the customs which came down from the pre-Islamic days are correct. What is the witness of our lawyers and judges? That all the laws of Islam are bad laws, and that their very basis the sovereignty of God is unacceptable. They tell us that only the man-made laws, which have come to us through the British, are good laws.

What is the witness of our teachers and educational institutions? That in philosophy and science, history and sociology, economics and politics, law and ethics, the only true and valid knowledge and thought is that derived from the Western secular world-view. That in all these disciplines the Islamic approach is not even worthy of consideration. What is the witness of our writers? That their literature has the same message to impart as that of the godless writers of the secular West. They demonstrate that as Muslims they have no distinctive literary approach of their own. What is the witness of our press and media? That the only issues and debates that they consider important and which preoccupy them, and the only methods and standards of communication that they consider fit to employ, are those which bear the hallmark of the non-Muslim media.

What is the witness of our businessmen and industrialists? That the rules laid down by Islam for economic transactions are impracticable, that business can be

conducted only by the methods devised by the non-Muslims. What is the witness of our leaders and rulers? That they have the same slogans of nationalism and motherland to mobilize people, the same goals to pursue on national levels, the same methods of solving national problems, the same principles of politics and constitution-making as are practiced by the non-Muslims. They declare that Islam has no guidance to offer in this respect.

And what is the witness of our masses? They testify that they have nothing to speak about except worldly matters that they have no such Din which desires to be propagated or which demands that they spend part of their time for this purpose. This, then, is the state of witness being given by our whole Ummah by means of its words. This is the case not only in this country but throughout the whole world.

Our Act - Witness

Now let us turn to our act-witness and look at the witness being given by our actions and deeds. Here our conduct is even more scandalous than that in respect of our witness by words. No doubt there are a few good Muslims whose lives are a true example of Islam. But consider how the overwhelming majority of the Ummah, the society at large, is conducting itself.

What is the witness being given by the life of a typical, ordinary Muslim? That the persons shaped and molded by Islam are in no way better than, or different from, those prepared by Kufr. If anything, the former are worse than the latter: for instance, it is more likely that a Muslim would speak a lie, that he would betray and breach a trust placed in him, that he would oppress people and do wrong to them, that he would abandon his promise, that he would steal and rob, that he would engage himself in disorderly and violent conduct, that he would indulge in all sorts of indecent acts. Indeed, in respect of all these immoral actions the level of Muslim 'performance' is no less than that of any non-Muslim people.

What is the witness of our social life? Look at our life-styles, our customs and ceremonies, our festivities, our fairs and religious gatherings, our meetings and processions: in no aspect do we truly represent Islam. Indeed, on the contrary, our social life is a pathetic testimony that the followers of Islam consider the un-Islamic ways to be better and preferable than the Islamic.

Similar is the testimony of our other social institutions and collective pursuits. When we set up educational institutions, we import everything from non-Muslims, our knowledge, our educational system, our philosophy, our spirit and objective. When we form parties and associations, we model everything on the patterns set by the non-Muslims, our ideals and goals, our structures and constitutions, our policies and methods. When we, as a people, launch a struggle, our cause, our slogans and demands, our issues and debates, our programmes and procedures, our resolutions, statements, and speeches, are all true replicas of the practices of the non-Muslim communities and nations.

This, then, is the witness being given by the actions of almost all Muslims. This witness, too, goes against Islam. It is not in its favor. Whatever lip-service we might pay to Islam, our public conduct proves that there is no aspect of Islam that we approve of, that we do not consider its laws to be good and conducive to our well-being.

And With What Consequences!

Our Punishment

In view of our conduct, we are guilty of giving false witness, of perjury and concealing the Truth. As a consequence, we are facing precisely the same punishment that has been prescribed in the Law of God for such grave and heinous crimes.

What is this law? When a people reject and turn away from God's guidance, when they are guilty of perjury and disloyalty to their Creator, and when they turn traitors to Him, then God punishes them severely in this world as well as in the world-to-come. [2] This law was applied to the Children of Israel. [3] Now it is we, the Muslim Ummah, who stand in the dock. God had no personal vendetta against the Jews that He should have punished only them. Nor does He have any kinship or special relationship with Muslims that He should set us free even though we are now committing the same crime as they did then. [4]

In This World

The punishment meted out to Muslims for their crimes in this world is there for all to see. Indeed, the extent and pace of our decline has been in true proportion to the extent and pace of our negligence and failure to do our duty to witness to the Truth and our 'progress' in witnessing to falsehood. During the last one hundred years, from Morocco to Indonesia, country after country has been lost by us to alien subjugation; one Muslim people after another have fallen under the yoke of colonial rule and domination. No longer does the word 'Muslim' stand for dignity, no longer does it command respect; rather it has become a mark of degradation, humiliation, gross backwardness, and utter powerlessness.

How powerless have we become? We have lost all honor and respect in the eyes of the world. In some places, our blood has flowed like water and we have been subjected to large-scale massacres; in other places, we have been driven out of our homes; in others, we have been tortured and persecuted; in still others, we have been reduced to living as serfs. If in some places Muslim states have survived, they have suffered defeat after defeat until they have been reduced to positions of fear and impotency in the face of foreign powers. If only they had witnessed to Islam by their words and deeds, the secular powers would have stood in awe of them.

If you are being trampled upon today, if you fear greater catastrophes tomorrow, is this not but the punishment for your false witness and concealment of the Truth?

Punishment in the World-to-Come

This is the punishment you are receiving in this world; but a more severe punishment is likely to be meted out to you in the world-to-come. How can you be absolved of the blame for every evil and every wrong to which man has been subjected only because you failed to do your duty as witnesses of the Truth? Unless you do your duty, whatever oppression and corruption is perpetrated in the world and whatever immorality and wickedness prevails, there is no reason why you should not be held accountable for it. You may not be responsible for originating them

yourselves, but you are certainly responsible, because of your false witness, for maintaining and perpetuating them, for their origination by others, and for allowing them to spread.

Notes by Khurram Murad

2. Consequences of failure and neglect:

The mission to witness the Truth and invite mankind to surrender to its Creator has the status of a covenant with God. Those who give up this mission, or fail to fulfill it or neglect it, are guilty of breaching their covenant. Hence they are cursed by God, and deprived of His blessings. They are cursed by angels, too, because the light brought by them has been extinguished by such people while mankind gropes in darkness; and by mankind as well, for its sufferings and miseries are due mainly to the conduct of those who were entrusted with that light.

Those who conceal the clear messages and the guidance that We have sent down, after We have made them clear, for mankind, in the Book they shall be cursed by God and the cursers; but such as repent and put themselves right, and make [the Book] known towards them I shall turn, I am the Acceptor of repentance, the Mercy-giving. But those who remain [in the state of] denial and die denying upon them shall be the curse of God, and the angels, and of all mankind . . . (al-Baqarah 2: 159-61).

And, humiliation and powerlessness afflicted them, and they earned God's anger; all this, because they persisted in denying God's messages and in slaying the Prophets against all right; all this, because they rebelled [against God], and persisted in transgressing [the bounds of God] (al-Baqarah 2: 61).

The duty, obviously, is neglected or given up for the sake of worldly gains. These gains the Quran describes as a trifle, which earn God's anger for the defaulters. The punishment for this crime which the Quran mentions is indeed the only one of its kind, for such punishment is not mentioned for any other crime.

Indeed, those who conceal what God has sent down in the Book, and barter it away for a trifle price they eat nothing but fire in their bellies. And God shall not speak unto them on the Day of Resurrection, nor purify them; and for them is painful punishment. It is they who have bought error at the price of guidance, and punishment at the price of forgiveness. How patiently have they accepted the Fire! All that, because God has sent down the Book with the Truth, those who differ in the matter of the Book are most deeply in the wrong (al-Baqarah 2: 174-6; also 3: 77-8).

3. The Jewish example:

The history of the people of Israel is narrated by the Quran in considerable detail. It provides the most instructive example of a people who were guided by some of the greatest Messengers of God. They made a covenant with God that they will be only His servants and obey only Him and be His witnesses. They rose to great heights and contributed much to the good of mankind by fulfilling their covenant. But, finally,

they broke their covenant, suffered grievously, and thus became an object lesson in how people chosen by God to be witnesses to His guidance may go astray and how they may earn God's anger.

The purpose of narrating their history is neither to create hatred against any particular religion and people nor to take pleasure and comfort in their suffering and humiliation. This becomes evident from the fact that, despite very severe strictures against the people of Israel by the Quran, the most peaceful and glorious days of Jewish history, in the last two thousand years, have been lived under Islamic rule. In fact their history is meant to act like a mirror which the Quran holds to the Muslims so that they may recognize themselves when they go astray and may remain aware of the painful consequences of such conduct. Another purpose, of course, was to awaken the Jews at the time of the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, and to invite them to believe in the Last Prophet and support him, as their own mission demanded. The Quranic account is similar to the Biblical account; if anything, much milder in tone and language.

Firstly, the Quran shows that great blessings were conferred by God on the people of Israel, the greatest of them being the Book and guidance from Him, and that they were chosen to be His special servants.

Children of Israel, remember My blessing with which I blessed you, and how I favored you above all other people (al-Baqarah 2: 47).

And when Moses said unto his people: O my people, remember God's blessing upon you, when He appointed among you Prophets, and made you kings, and gave you such as He had not given to any beings (al-Ma'idah 5: 20).

And when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel: You shall serve and worship none but God; and to be good to parents, and the near kinsman, and to the orphan, and to the needy; and speak good to man, and perform the prayer, and give the alms (al-Baqarah 2: 83).

And when We made covenant with you [O Children of Israel], and raised above you the Mount: hold fast with [all your] strength unto what We have given you, and remember what is in it, so that you might remain conscious of God. Then you turned away after that . . . (al-Baqarah 2: 63-4). **Surely We sent down the Torah, wherein was guidance and light; thereby the Prophets, who had surrendered themselves [to God], gave judgment for those who were Jews; and so did the men of God and the rabbis, following such portion of God's Book as they were given to keep; and they bore witness to its truth** (al-Ma'idah 5: 44).

The Bible gives a similar account:

Do this because you belong to the Lord your God. From all the peoples on earth, He chose you to be His own special people. The Lord did not love you and choose you because you outnumbered other peoples; you were the smallest nation on earth (Deut. 7: 6-7).

At Mount Sinai the Lord our God made a covenant, not only with our fathers, but with all of us who are living today. There on the mountain the Lord spoke to you face-to-face from the Fire . . . The Lord said, 'I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves. Worship no god but Me' (Deut. 5: 2-7).

Israel, remember this! The Lord and the Lord alone is our God. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Never forget these commands that I am giving you today. Teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working. Tie them on your arms and wear them on your foreheads as a reminder. Write them on the door-posts of your houses and on your gates (Deut. 6: 4-9). [This is a very good exegesis of the Quranic words 'and remember'.]

Never forget the Lord your God or turn to other gods to worship and serve them. If you do, then I warn you today that you will certainly be destroyed (Deut. 8: 19).

People of Israel, you are My witnesses; I chose you to be My servant, so that you would know Me and believe in Me and understand that I am the only God. Beside Me there is no other god; there never was and never will be (Isa. 43: 10) .

Secondly, the Quran exhorts and invites the people of Israel, as does the Bible, to fulfill their covenant with God, to believe in His last message, and to bear witness to its truth, reminding them of the promise and threat that were made to them. Children of Israel, remember My blessing with which I blessed you, and fulfill My covenant [with you], and I shall fulfill your covenant [with Me]; and of Me alone stand in awe! (al-Baqarah 2: 40).

Remember that the Lord your God is the only God and that He is faithful. He will keep His covenant and show His constant love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and obey His commands, but He will not hesitate to punish those who hate Him (Deut. 7: 9-10).

If you obey the Lord your God and do everything He commands, He will make you His own people, as He has promised . . . The Lord your God will make you the leader among the nations and not a follower; you will always prosper and never fail . . . But if you disobey the Lord your God and do not faithfully keep all His commandments and laws that I am giving you today, all these evil things will happen to you . . . the Lord will curse everything you do . . . (Deut. 28: 9-19).

I will be your God, and you will be My people (Lev. 26: 12) .

Thirdly, the Quran indicts the people of Israel for breaking their covenant and neglecting their duty to worship and obey only God and to be His witnesses. Not only did they themselves turn away from the message of their Lord, they also prevented others from accepting and following it.

People of the Book, why do you disbelieve God's revelations while you yourselves witness [their truth]? People of the Book, why do you cloak the truth with falsehood and conceal the truth, and that knowingly (Al 'Imran 3: 70-1).

Say: People of the book, why do you bar from the path of God those who believe, trying to make it appear crooked, you yourselves being witnesses to its truth? (Al 'Imran 3: 99) .

Indeed, God made covenant with the Children of Israel, when We raised from among them twelve of their leaders, and God said: I am with you. Surely, if you perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and believe in My Messengers, and succor them and lend to God a good loan, I will surely efface your evil deeds and I will admit you to gardens through which running waters flow. But whosoever of you thereafter disbelieves, surely he has gone astray from the right way. Then, for their breaking their covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hard . . . (al-Ma'idah 5: 12-13).

Indeed, We made covenant with the Children of Israel, and We sent Messengers to them; whenever there came to them a Messenger with what they did not like [they rebelled], to some they gave the lie, while others they slayed (al-Ma'idah 5: 70).

The People of the Book will ask you to bring down upon them a Book from heaven; and they asked Moses for greater than that, for they said: Make us see God face to face whereupon the thunderbolt overtook them for their evil doing. Then, they took to [worshipping] the calf and this after the clear Truth had come to them; yet We pardoned them that, and We bestowed upon Moses a clear authority [for the Truth]. And We raised above them the Mount making covenant with them; and We said to them: Enter the gate, prostrating; and We said to them: Transgress not the Sabbath; and We made a solemn covenant with them. So [We cursed them] for their breaking the covenant, and their denying the revelations of God, and their slaying the Prophets without right, and for their saying, 'Our hearts are closed [to false guidance]' nay, but God sealed them for their disbelief so they believe not, except a few and for their disbelief and their uttering against Mary an awesome calumny, and for their saying, 'We killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of God' (al-Nisa' 4: 153-7).

Cursed were the disbelievers among the Children of Israel by the tongue of David, and Jesus, the son of Mary; this, because they rebelled [against God] and persisted in transgression. They did not prevent one another from the wrongs they committed. Surely evil were the things they did (al-Ma'idah 5: 78-9).

The Bible speaks in the same vein. Its indictment is no different from that which the Quran says, although it is said more harshly and with severer strictures.

In addition, the leaders of Judah, the priests, and the people followed the sinful example of the nations round them in worshipping idols, and so they defiled the Temple, which the Lord Himself had made holy. The Lord, the God of their ancestors, had continued to send prophets to warn His people, because He wanted to spare them and the Temple. But they ridiculed God's Messengers, ignoring His words and laughing at His prophets, until at last the Lord's anger against His people was so great that there was no escape (2 Chr. 36: 14-16).

God told me to write down in a Book what the people are like, so that there would be a permanent record of how evil they are. They are always rebelling against God, always Lying, always refusing to listen to the Lord's teachings. They tell the prophets to keep quiet. They say: 'don't talk to us about what's right. Tell us what we want to hear. Let us keep our illusions. Get out of our way and stop blocking our path. We don't want to hear about your holy God of Israel' (Isa. 30: 8-11).

But Your people rebelled and disobeyed You; they turned their backs on Your law. They killed the prophets who warned them, who told them to turn back to You. They insulted You time after time, so You let their enemies conquer and rule them (Neh. 9: 26-7).

The Children I brought up have rebelled against Me. Cattle know who owns them, and donkeys know where their master feeds them. But that is more than my people Israel know. They don't understand at all . . . The city that once was faithful is behaving like a whore! At one time it was filled with righteous men, but now only murderers remain. Jerusalem, you were once like silver, but now you are worthless; . . . Your leaders are rebels and friends of thieves; they are always accepting gifts and bribes. They never defend orphans in court or listen when widows present their case (Isa. 1: 2-23).

And this is how Jesus censures the people of Israel.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and stone the Messengers God has sent you! . . . And so your temple will be abandoned and empty (Mt. 23: 37-8).

They tie on to people's backs loads that are heavy and are hard to carry, yet they aren't willing even to lift a finger to help them carry those loads. They do everything so that people will see them. Look at the straps with Scripture verses on them which they wear on their foreheads and arms, and notice how large they are! Notice also how long are the tassels on their cloaks! They love the best places at feasts and the reserved seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the market places and to be called 'Teacher' . . . You hypocrites! You lock the door to the Kingdom of heaven in people's faces, and you yourselves don't go in, nor do you allow in those who are trying to enter! . . . You clean the outside of your cup and plate, while the inside is full of what you have obtained by violence and selfishness . . . You are like whitewashed tombs, which look fine on the outside but are full of bones and decaying corpses on the inside . . . So you actually admit that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets! Go on, then, and finish what your ancestors started! You snakes and sons of snakes! How do you expect to escape from being condemned to hell? And so I tell you that I will send you prophets and wise men and teachers; you will kill some of them, crucify others, and whip others in the synagogues and chase them from town to town (Mt. 23: 4-34).

Perhaps the most moving account of the fate of Israel is in the lamentations of the Prophet Isaiah, peace be upon him. Describing Israel as a vineyard planted by God, he first describes how He blessed it with every bounty, then goes on to describe how it produced sour fruits, and how God punished it something very similar to what Sayyid Mawdudi has said about the Muslims.

My friend had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug the soil and cleared it of stones; he planted the finest vines. He built a tower to guard them, dug a pit for treading the grapes. He waited for the grapes to ripen, but every grape was sour.

So now my friend says: 'You people who live in Jerusalem and Judah, judge, between my vineyard and me. Is there anything I failed to do for it? Then why did it produce sour grapes and not the good grapes I expected?

This is what I am going to do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge round it, break down the wall that protects it, and let wild animals eat it and trample it down. I will let it be overgrown with weeds. I will not prune the vines or hoe the ground; instead I will let briars and thorns cover it. I will even forbid the clouds to let rain fall upon it (Isa. 5: 14).

Finally, the Quran also makes it clear that, after Israel, it is the Muslims who have been appointed to fulfill the same mission as was granted to Israel.

Indeed, We gave the Children of Israel the Book, the Judgment, and the Prophethood; and We provided them with good things, and We favored them above all other people. And We gave them clear revelations pertaining to the affair [of their Din]; so they did not take to different ways after the knowledge had come to them except for the sake of mutual transgression . . . then We set you [O Muhammad] on the Way [Shari'ah] pertaining to the affair [of your Din]; therefore follow it, and follow not the likes and dislikes of those who do not know (al-Jathiyah 45: 1S18) .

4. Illusions and excuses:

When a faith as total, pervasive, deep and dynamic as Islam living in surrender to the One God which is a calling and a commitment, becomes transformed into a religion, hereditary and sectarian, its followers invent certain popular beliefs to calm and quieten their conscience. On the basis of such illusions and excuses, they are able to live peacefully while failing in their total commitment to God. They neglect the mission that He has entrusted to them, as well as refuse to accept any summons to renew their faith and take up their duty. The Quran mentions some such popular notions which had become part of the Jewish faith, and categorically rejects them. Again, the objective is neither to condemn a certain faith and people for all times to come nor to nurture hatred against them, but to induce them to correct their wrong beliefs, and more importantly, to warn the Muslims to beware of such notions. It is ironic that one would find all such popular beliefs to be part of the Muslims' faith as well today; for example, that our Ummah is the beloved of God, that Muslims, whatever the state of their belief and conduct, have a monopoly over Paradise, that God's mercies and rewards are reserved exclusively for them, that, even if they are punished, their punishment will last only a few days

And the Jews and Christians say: We are God's children, and His beloved ones. Say: Why then does He punish you for your sins? Nay, you are but human beings of His creating. He forgives whom He wills, and He punishes whom He wills (al-Ma'idah 5: 18).

And that they say: None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian. Such are their wishful beliefs! Say: Produce your proof, if what

you say is true! Nay, whosoever surrenders his whole being unto God, attaining to excellence, his reward shall be with his Lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow (al-Baqarah 2: 111-12).

And they say: The Fire shall not touch us save a number of days. Say: Have you made with God a covenant then God will not fail in His covenant or you attribute to God some thing of which you know nothing? Not so; whoso earns evil, and is engulfed by his transgressions those are the inhabitants of the Fire . . . (al-Baqarah 2: 81).

And when they are told: Believe in what God has sent down, they say: We believe in what was sent down on us; and they disbelieve what is beyond that, yet it is the truth confirming what is with them. Say: Why then did you kill God's Prophets in former times, if you were believers? (al-Baqarah 2: 91).

Say: If the abode in the life-to-come is to be for you alone, to the exclusion of all other people, then long for that if what you say is true! But never will they long for it, because of what their hands have sent ahead; God knows the evil-doers; . . . (al-Baqarah 2: 95).

What is Our Real Problem?

Pseudo Problems

By now, brothers, you must have understood how we, as Muslims, ought to have been living and behaving, and how we in fact are living and behaving. You must also have realized what grave consequences we are suffering because of our conduct. You should, therefore, have no difficulty in seeing that the problems which Muslims consider crucial for their societies and which they are doing their utmost to solve by various devices some of them invented by them, but mostly copied from others are not their real problem. The time, energy and resources that they spend on solving these problems are simply being wasted.

For example, we look upon ourselves as a minority engulfed by an overwhelming alien majority, or as a majority deprived of its sovereignty within its own territory, or as a nation subjugated and exploited by a foreign power, or as a people suffering from backwardness and poverty. Then we devote all our efforts to achieving objectives which emanate from these conceptions and images of ourselves. For instance, to objectives such as safeguarding and securing our status in a country as a minority, or to achieving sovereignty within our territorial boundaries, or to winning freedom from foreign domination, or to achieving the same levels of economic progress and development as those of the advanced nations.

These and other similar issues may be the foremost concerns of those who are not Muslims, who do not accept God as their Lord and Guide, and may form the central objects of their endeavors. But for us Muslims they are not the primary problems; we face them only because we have been, and still are, neglecting to do our duty. Had we been true witnesses of Islam, we would not have found ourselves lost in such a dense jungle of complex and inextricable problems. If we now direct all our attention and endeavors to doing our duty instead of dissipating our energies on clearing the woods, they will clear in no time, and not only for ourselves but for all mankind. For,

keeping the world clean and improving it is our responsibility; as we have forsaken our appointed duty, the world has become infested with thorny woods. And no wonder that the most thorny part has fallen to our lot.

Unfortunately, our religious and political leaders do not try to understand this simple but crucial reality. Everywhere they continue to convince the Muslims that their problems are the problems of a minority as against a majority, of material progress, of national security, of winning freedom and independence as a nation state. Furthermore, even the solutions that they recommend have been borrowed from non-Muslims. But just as I believe in God, so I believe that you are being misled, and that by following such paths you will never achieve your well-being and destiny.

Our Real Problem

What, then, is our real problem? If I do not tell you that clearly, without any reservation, I shall be doing you a great disservice. To my mind, your destiny, now and ever, depends on one issue only: How do you conduct yourselves in respect of God's guidance that has come to you through His Messenger, blessings and peace be on him?

Because of this guidance you are Muslims. Because of this guidance, whether you like it or not, you have agreed to become ambassadors of Islam to the entire world. Therefore, only if you follow Islam totally and devotedly, if your words and actions bear true witness to its teachings, if your social and public conduct faithfully represents every aspect of Islam, will you rise from glory to glory in this world, and receive highest honors in the world-to-come. Then, in no time, the dark clouds of fear and anxiety, of disgrace and humiliation, of subjugation and slavery will disperse. Then, the truth of your message and the virtue of your character will capture mind after mind and heart after heart. Then, your prestige and reputation, your influence and authority, will hold sway over the world. Hopes of securing justice will be pinned on you, trust will be placed in your integrity and honesty, prospects of virtue will be confided in you, and authority will be accorded to your world.

In contrast, the leaders of secularism will lose all credibility and authority. Their philosophy and world-view, their economic and political ideologies, will prove fake and spurious when confronted by your truth and right conduct. The forces that today belong to the secular camp will, one by one, break away and join the camp of Islam. A time will, then, come when communism will live in fear of its very survival in Moscow itself, when capitalist democracy will shudder at the thought of defending itself even in Washington and New York, when materialist secularism will be unable to find a place even in the universities of London and Paris, when racialism and nationalism will not win even one devotee even among the Brahmans and Germans.

The present era of abject humiliation will, then, become consigned to the pages of history. It will only serve to remind us of the days when the followers of a faith as universal and powerful as Islam were reduced to such stupidity that they trembled in the face of sticks and ropes while they held the staff of Moses under their arm.

This future is yours! But only if you follow Islam sincerely and exclusively and serve as its faithful witnesses. Your present conduct, however, is entirely contrary. You have been blessed with the Divine guidance, but, like a snake guarding treasure, you neither benefit from it yourselves nor allow others to benefit from it. By calling

yourselves Muslims, you have assumed for yourselves the position of Islam's representatives, but the combined witness of your words and deeds is being given mostly in favor of Ignorance (Jahiliyah), idolatry, materialism, and immorality. You have the Book of God with you, but you have put it on the shelf and, to seek guidance, you turn to all sorts of persons who lead to Kufr, and to sources which lead you astray. You claim to be the servants of the One God, but in fact you are serving every false god, every Satan, and every power in rebellion against God. You have friends and enemies, but it is always your personal, selfish interests that determine your friendship and enmity. In both cases you use Islam as a party to your cause.

Thus, your conduct has, on the one hand, deprived your lives of the blessings that Islam has to offer you, and, on the other, you are alienating mankind rather than attracting it to Islam. If you continue to behave in this manner, you can attain no good, either in this world or in the world-to-come. Its outcome, according to the Law of God, is that miserable situation in which you find yourselves. What the future holds for you may be much worse.

To be truthful, perhaps, if you remove the label of Islam from yourselves and follow Kufr openly and sincerely, then you might at least make as much worldly progress as America, Russia and Britain have made. But, claiming to be Muslims and yet behaving as non-Muslims, closing the door of Divine guidance to mankind by representing Islam falsely before it, is such a heinous crime that it will never allow you to prosper in this world. There is no way you can avert the punishment prescribed by the Quran for this crime. Jewish history provides a living proof of this reality. You may turn to secular nationalism as a lesser evil, you may get yourself accepted as a separate nation and achieve whatever Muslim nationalism seeks to achieve. But none of this will help you.

There is only one way to ward off the punishment of God. Turn back from your sin, and repent.