

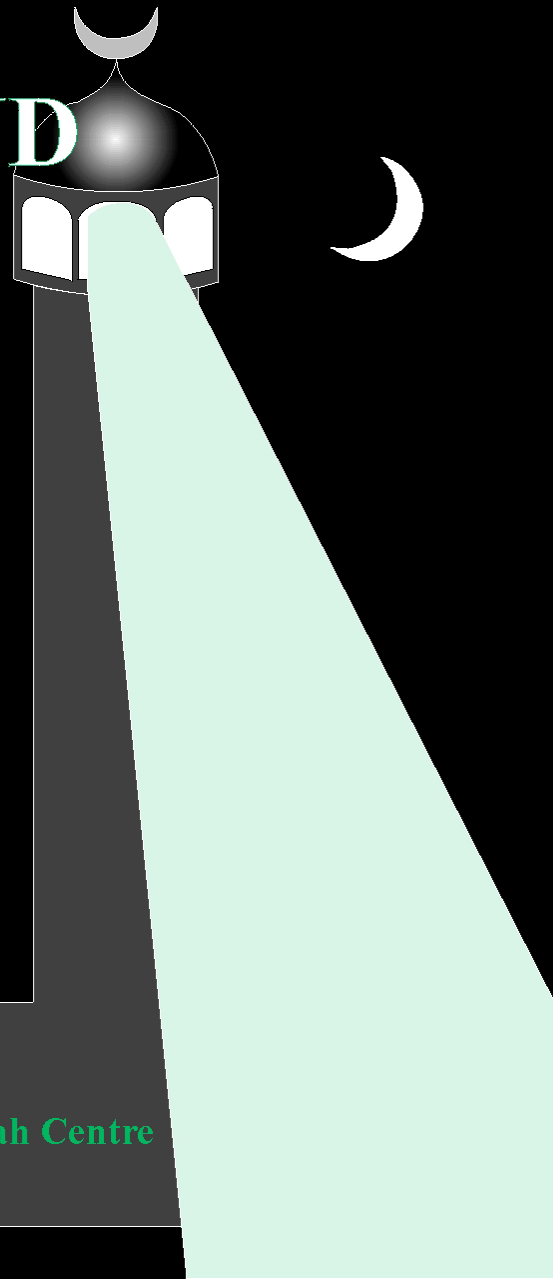
Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi

WITNESSES UNTO MANKIND

The Purpose and Duty
of the
Muslim Ummah

*Translated by
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UK Islamic Mission Dawah Centre



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Witness to the Truth

Praise and Salutations

All praise be to Allah who alone is the Creator, Master and Sovereign of the Universe. It is He who rules over it with perfect wisdom, absolute power and infinite mercy. He who has created man, endowed him with knowledge and reason, made him His vicegerent on earth, and has sent His Book and Messengers to guide him.

May Allah bless all those righteous and noble servants of His who were appointed to teach man how to live as true human beings and who made man aware of the real purpose of his life, and showed him the right way to live in this world. Whatever measure of true guidance, morality, piety and selflessness that the world possesses today, it owes to the teachings of these servants of Allah, peace be upon them. This is a debt that can never be sufficiently repaid.

Our Message

Brothers and friends, we usually divide our meetings into two parts. In one part, we review, among ourselves, our activities and discuss plans for their achievement. The other part we devote to conveying our message to the people of the area where we hold our meeting. We have, thus, asked you to join us in this meeting so that we may explain our message to you.

On the one hand our message is addressed to Muslims, and on the other hand to all those human beings who are outside the fold of Islam. It is unfortunate, however, that I do not see here today people belonging to the second category. Our past mistakes and present errors are responsible for alienating a great many people from us. Therefore, we hardly ever find the opportunity either to draw them near to us or draw near to them, so that we may communicate to them the message sent by Allah, in whom we all believe, through His Messengers for the guidance of us all. Since we do not have any non-Muslims present among us, I shall concentrate upon that part of our message which is meant for Muslims.

The Purpose and Duty of the Muslim Ummah

Responsibilities and Duties

To the Muslims we have only one very simple thing to say: Understand and fulfil the responsibilities and duties that fall upon you by virtue of your being Muslims. You cannot get away with merely affirming that you have accepted Allah as your only God and Islam as your religion. Rather, as soon as you acknowledge Allah as your only Lord and His guidance as

your way of life, you take upon yourselves certain obligations and duties. These obligations you must always remain conscious of, these duties you must always endeavour to discharge. If you evade them, you shall not escape the evil consequences of your conduct in this world or in the Hereafter.

What are these duties? They are not merely confined to the affirmation of faith in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Day of Judgement. Nor are they confined to performing the Prayers, observing the Fasts, going on the Pilgrimage, and paying the Alms. Nor are these duties exhausted by observing the injunctions of Islam relating to marriage, divorce and inheritance. Over and above all these duties, there is one which is the most important: that your lives bear witness to the Truth that you have been given by Allah before all mankind, the Truth which you believe to be true.

The Only Purpose of Existence

The Qur'an clearly states that witnessing to the Truth in a manner that would leave mankind with no justifiable ground to deny it is the only purpose behind constituting you as a distinct Ummah (community), named Muslims.

And thus We have made you a community of the middle way, so that you may be witness [to the Truth] before all mankind, and the Messenger may be witness [to it] before you. (al-Baqarah 2:143)

This mission is the sole objective for which your Ummah has been brought into being, it is the *raison d'être* of its existence as a society of human beings. Unless you fulfil it you are squandering your life.

For this is no ordinary duty; it is a duty enjoined on you by Allah. It is a Divine command and a Divine call:

O believers, be ever steadfast in standing up, for the sake of Allah, bearing witness to justice. (al-Ma'idah 5:8)

It is not a mere trifle but an emphatic and grave mandate, for Allah also says:

And who is a greater wrong-doer than he who suppresses a witness entrusted to him by Allah. (al-Baqarah 2:140)

You have been warned of the consequences of evading this duty. Look at the history of the people of Israel. They too were appointed to stand in the witness-box; but sometimes they suppressed the Truth, and sometimes they witnessed against it. By their conduct, they, in fact, became witnesses to falsehood rather than witnesses to the Truth. The consequence was that Allah forsook them and a curse fell upon them.

And so, humiliation and powerlessness afflicted them, and they earned Allah's anger. (al-Baqarah 2:61)

Witness to the Truth

What does this duty of witness imply? Consider it carefully: You have been given Divine guidance, you have been shown the Truth. You must, therefore, establish by your testimony and witness its authenticity and truthfulness before all mankind. This is a testimony that will make the authenticity and truthfulness of Divine guidance self-evident, for all to see, and a witness that will make it clear and indisputable for all people.

For this very purpose all the Messengers were sent to the world; this was their primary duty. After them, their followers were entrusted with the same duty. And now the Muslim Ummah, as the successor to the Last prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, is charged with this very mission, just as he was charged with it during his lifetime.

Nature and Importance

What is the importance of this witness? You will know its importance only when you understand that man has been made accountable for his conduct and will be rewarded and punished in the Hereafter under the Divine Law which resets entirely on this witness. Allah is all-wise, All-merciful and All-just. His mercy, justice and wisdom are not such that He should punish people for living against His will while they had no knowledge of it, that He should take people to task for deviating from the right path of which they were ignorant, that He should hold people accountable for things of which they were unaware.

It was as a provision against this that the first man He created was a Messenger, and that after him many were sent from time to time. They were all to be witnesses to mankind, to make it understand and remember the will of Allah. They were all to teach human beings the proper way of conducting their lives, the code of behaviour that they should adopt to win Allah's favour, the acts that they should perform, the acts that they should avoid, and the things for which they will be brought to account.

This witness was given by Allah's Messengers so that the people may not be in a position to say to Allah: How can we be punished for things of which we were not warned? The Qur'an says:

[We sent] all Messengers as heralds of glad tidings and as warners, so that men may not have any argument against Allah, after [the coming of] these Messengers; Allah is indeed All-mighty, All-wise. (al-Nisa' 4:165)

In this manner Allah made His Messengers bear the crucial responsibility for guiding man on His behalf. They were thus charged with a very delicate and grave responsibility: if they bore witness to the Truth properly, the people would be accountable for their own actions, but if they failed in their duty, they themselves would be called to account for their people going astray. In other words, unless the Messengers made people responsible for their conduct by giving them conclusive and indisputable testimony to the Truth, the people would hold the Messengers responsible for their own misdeeds, saying: 'The knowledge that Allah gave you, that you did not communicate to us; the way of life that He showed you, that you did not show us.' That is why all the Messengers always remained acutely conscious of the burden of this

responsibility, and that is why they endeavoured so hard to bear witness before the people to the Truth entrusted to them.

Responsibility of the Ummah

All those who were led by the Messengers to the knowledge of the Truth and Divine guidance were formed into a community, an Ummah. Every Ummah was charged with the same mission as the Messengers of witnessing to the Truth. As successors to the Messengers, every Ummah has the same crucial role and responsibility as they had. Thus, if an Ummah properly fulfils its duty of witnessing to the Truth and yet the people do not pay heed, it will be rewarded and the people will be brought to account. However, if the Ummah neglects its duty, or if it gives false witness, it will deserve to be punished more severely than the people. The Ummah shall be accountable not only for its own misdeeds, but also for the misdeeds of those who went astray or turned to error and wickedness because the testimony given to them by the Ummah was misleading or false.

This, brothers, is the nature and logic of that grave and crucial duty which lies upon you, and all those who consider themselves part of the Ummah, or those who have become sufficiently aware of Allah's Book and the guidance brought by His Messengers.

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.

Word-witness

In what way should 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 Allah'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 Allah has laid down for man. The guidance that Islam gives to humanity in thought and belief, in morality and behaviour, in culture and civilisation, 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 Allah.

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 endeavours, 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: 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 flavour 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 civilisation 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 should 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.

The Islamic State

Finally, I should state one more important thing. This witness of ours would not be complete unless we establish a state based on the principles and teachings of Islam. By translating its ideas and practices, its norm and values, its rules and laws, into public policies and programmes, such a state would demonstrate how the Divine guidance leads to equity and justice, reform and upliftment, caring and efficient administration, social welfare, peace and order, high standards of morality in public servants, virtue and righteousness in internal politics, honesty in foreign policies, civilised conduct in war, integrity and loyalty in peace. Such public conduct would be a living testimony for all mankind that Islam is indeed the true grantor of human-being, that only following its tenets can ensure the good of mankind.

Only when the Truth is witnessed in this manner, by both words and actions, will the crucial responsibility laid upon the Muslim Ummah be fully discharged. Only then will no ground remain for mankind to deny or turn away from the Divine guidance. Only then, in the Hereafter, will the Muslim Ummah be in a position to take the witness-stand after the Prophet, blessing and peace be upon him, and declare that: Whatever truth and guidance we were given by this Prophet, that we conveyed to mankind; those who did not follow it are themselves to blame for going astray, not us.

This is the real meaning and scope of the witness that we as Muslims ought to have been giving to this world, both by our words and our deeds. But now let us turn to the actual state of affairs and examine the witness that we in fact are giving in favour of the Divine guidance.

Where Do We Stand?

Our Word-witness

First, look at the testimony that is 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 favour 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 Allah - 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 method and standards of communication that they consider fit to employ, are those which bear the hall-mark 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 Kafirs.* What is the witness of our leaders and rulers? That they have the same slogans of nationalism and motherland to mobilise 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 Kafirs. 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 moulded by Islam are in no way better than, or different to, 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 Kafir person.

What is the witness of our social life? Look at our life-styles, our customs and ceremonies, our festivals, 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 social institutions and collective pursuits. When we set up educational institutes, we import everything from Kafirs - 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 Kafirs - 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 Kafir communities and nations.

Things have come such a pass that even our independent states, where they exist, have borrowed their constitutions, their codes of law, and their guiding policies and principles from Kafirs. In some states, the Islamic law has been reduced to a mere personal law; in some others even this personal law has been altered. An English writer tauntingly remarks:

In view of the many charges levelled by Indians at the British administration, it is important to realise that the British were extraordinarily slow to introduce any innovations in the law ... [Indeed] as far as Islam is concerned the result of the British connexion with India has been to establish on a firmer basis the Muslim personal and religious law ... while all the rest of the shari'a has been abolished ...

On the other hand Albania and Turkey have both become secular states [adopting European penal and civil codes, even altering Muslim penal law] ... [Thus, it can be said, as Lindsay says, that] 'The Muslim doctrine that legislation is not within the competence of an earthly sovereign was never, indeed, anything more than a pious fiction...'*

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 favour. 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 Allah for such grave and heinous crimes.

What is this law? When a people reject and turn away from Allah's guidance, when they are guilty of perjury and disloyalty to their Creator, and when they turn traitors to Him, then Allah punishes them in this world as well as in the world-to-come. This law was applied to the Children of Israel. Now it is we, the Muslim Ummah, who stand in the dock. Allah has 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.

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 honour 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 like serfs. If in some places Muslim states have survived, they have suffered 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.

Why go so far afield? Just look at your situation in India.* Because you evaded your duty of bearing witness to the truth of Islam, indeed because you went further and gave false witness against it both by your words and deeds, the entire country was wrested from your control. First, you were vanquished by the Marathas and Sikhs, and later, servitude to the British rule became your fate. And now still greater calamities stare you in the face.

Today your minority status has become your greatest anxiety; you live in fear of the Hindu majority lest it subjugates you and you meet the same fate as did the untouchables. But, for Allah's sake, tell me: Could a majority have threatened you if you had only been true witnesses to Islam? Will not this problem of majority and minority vanish within a few years if today your words and actions bear true witnesses to Islam?

In Arabia, an extremely hostile and oppressive majority set out to exterminate an insignificant minority of about one in one hundred thousand. With what result? Within ten

years, this minority, by its truthful and trustworthy witness in favour of Islam, turned into a one hundred per cent majority. Later, when these witnesses of Islam emerged from Arabia, within twenty-five years, from Turkistan to Morocco, people after people trusted the probity of their witness and joined them in their faith. Where no one but Zoroastrians, Christians and pagans once lived, now only Muslims live. No intransigence, no chauvinism, no religious bigotry, proved strong enough to resist the living, true witness of the Divine guidance that Muslims gave.

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 to 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 responsibly, because of your false witness, for maintaining and perpetuating them, for their origination by others, and for allowing them to spread.

What is Our Real Problem?

Pseudo Problems

By now, brothers, you must have understood how we, Muslims, ought to have been living and behaving, and how we in fact are living and behaving. You must also have realised 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 Allah as their Lord and Guide, and may form the central objectives of their endeavours. 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 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 endeavours 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 the 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 Allah, 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 Allah'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 honour 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 secularism will lose all credibility and authority. Their philosophy and world-view, their economic and 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 favour of ignorance (Jahiliyah), idolatry, materialism and immorality. You have the Book of Allah 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 Allah. 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 party to your cause.

Thus, your conduct has, on the one hand, deprived your lives of the blessings that Islam has to offer you, 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 Allah, is that miserable situation in which you find yourself

