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

WAR & RELIGION

BY

MUHAMMAD MARMADUKE PICKTHALL

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WAR AND RELIGION

I

THE PRACTICE AND THE VIEWS
OF
TWO RELIGIONS

They call Islam a religion of the sword; and Christianity they call a religion of pure love. Yet Christians, in their history, have resorted to the sword repeatedly; Christian nations, just as much as Muslim nations, pride themselves on warlike prowess, and a majority of professed Christians at this moment would maintain that war is nowise contrary to their profession.

If you had gone to morning or evening service at an English church any day during the late most awful of all wars—a war in which the most enlightened Christian nations of the world were using all their efforts, all their ingenuity, to invent efficient means for destroying one another—in any English church, I say, you would have heard the priest intone:—

"Give peace in our time, O Lord!"

and the congregation answer:—

"Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only Thou, O God!"
That prayer was becoming and natural upon the lips of the early Christians, who, obedient to some well-known words of Jesus Christ, regarded it as wicked to defend themselves; and who in any case were much too weak to do so with a reasonable prospect of success. But it does not seem so becoming or so natural in the mouths of people belonging to a mighty nation, which builds dreadnoughts, submarines, and aeroplanes, and invents fresh weapons of destruction every day—people who, in fact, are fighting for themselves with all their might, and calling half the nations of the world to come and fight for them—people who imprison those among them who, like the early Christians, think it wicked to defend themselves.

Jesus, they will tell you, himself said: "I come not to bring peace among you, but a sword." The sword in that case meant division only—division in the family, especially between the believing and the unbelieving members. But, supposing that it did mean war, would not the saying then be contradictory of many other of the well-known words of Christ? Do you know any other of his sayings which can be construed as foreseeing war as a condition for his followers, much less commanding them to take a part in it? They quote his saying, "My kingdom is not of this world," as if it licensed the common, sinful practice of mankind in public; forgetting that he taught his disciples to pray to God: "Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The simple explanation is, to Muslim mind, that Jesus was far from the position of his followers, and never did he identify himself with God. The words “My kingdom is not of this world” mean “My success”—the triumph that the Jews expected their Messiah to obtain—“is not of this world,” while the clause in the Lord’s Prayer refers to the Kingdom of God on earth. But you cannot expect people whose minds are wedded to the doctrine of the Trinity to admit that. A religion which possessed no rules for war, and seemed, if it acknowledged war’s existence as a possibility, to recommend its adherents to endure it meekly, unrresisting in a world where people had at times to fight for bare existence, was sure as it increased in strength to come at last to a position where believers in it had to choose between two lines of conduct: either to adhere to the text of the Gospel and be wiped out of existence, or to be practical and fight in self-defence.

Do not think for one moment that I am seeking to belittle or deride the mission of the Prophet Jesus. But he himself declared, near the end of that mission, that he had not had time to teach men all that it was needful they should know. Jesus himself foretold another Prophet who should supplement his teaching and complete it. And we believe that promised Prophet to have been Muhammad, whose teaching does complete the teaching of the Prophet Jesus. As
far as metaphysical religion goes—the attitude of God to man, and man to God—the teaching of our lord Muhammad is identical with that of our lord Jesus Christ. All the ideals to be derived from the life and sayings of Jesus—mercy and forgiveness, unselfishness, patience, charity, human brotherhood, purity—are to be found in the Qur-án and in the sayings of our lord Muhammad, not merely as ideals without a rule of conduct, but embodied in a practical and reasoned code of laws. The teaching of Jesus was individualist, as is but natural when we recollect that Jesus led the life on earth of a private individual—and, I say it with no disrespect, an eccentric private individual—an individual belonging to a subject race despised and disregarded by their conquerors. The Jewish Prophet never was confronted with the problems of government, and empire, and international intercourse with which the Arab Prophet, who became the sovereign of Arabia, had to deal; nor had the humble folks to whom he preached any remote concern with such affairs. It is not upon the spiritual side that Christ’s teaching in its original simplicity required supplementing, nor as regards the individual soul in its approach to God. It is upon the human side that it was incomplete. For human life is not entirely individual, nor even mainly individual, save in exceptionally favoured or unruly cases. It is also collective; and for collective human life Jesus of Nazareth left no guidance whatsoever. Hence the confusion which we see in modern Europe,
the conflict between bad things, which are called religious, and good things, which are labelled secular. Hence these tears! All might be well if Christians viewed him as a prophet only, and subject to a prophet's limitations, not as God. But they have called him God, and so admit no limitations. And impious all those who venture to point out that the curious half-heathen structure which the Church has raised upon the teaching of the Gospels is imperfect, though that itself is a proof that the Gospel teaching does not cover everything, since it has grown up frankly as a supplement.

By the time Muhammad came—after an interval of six centuries—the spiritual teaching of the Jewish Prophet had been overgrown with superstition of the grossest kind. It had to be restated in its first simplicity, and that Muhammad did. The Qur-án abounds in appeal and warnings to the Christians to forsake the vain beliefs they had themselves invented and to return to the pure faith as taught by Jesus, taught also by those older prophets of Semitic race from whose religion Jesus never separated. At the same time the Qur-án completes the teaching of the Messiah, by giving rules to be observed by true believers in such affairs as commerce, government, international politics, and war. These rules are not vague generalities, no mere counsels of perfection. They are practical and detailed laws, enforced by illustrations drawn from human experience;
and they form the most enlightened scheme of statecraft in existence, on a theocratic basis, free from all alloy of opportunism or aggressive violence.

There is one thing, of course, that the Christian pacifist—the Christian who obeys, or wishes to obey, literally certain commands of Christ, which he accepts as absolute, without regard to the condition of the people to whom they were addressed, or the position of the speaker; without recognizing even the possibility of their limitation to a certain period or place, or kind of audience—there is one thing, of course, which such a Christian will object to always in Islamic teaching, and that is the command to fight in self-defence, for the protection of the weak and helpless, and for the redress of wrongs—the plain command to kill men under certain circumstances. We cannot argue with such people. We agree with them that war is terrible, that it is deplorable that men should be sent forth to kill other men with whom they have no quarrel personally. We can sympathize with their point of view, which we believe indeed to be that recommended by the true Christian religion, as Jesus left it, uncompleted. But in a world where war, however much we may deplore it, is a constantly recurring phenomenon, a religion which gives rules to its adherents in regard to war is manifestly at an advantage over a religion which does not take this constantly recurring phenomenon into account at all (which is our view of Christianity as Christ left it), or
absolutely forbids its followers to fight even in self-defence, or for the protection of the weak and helpless, or for the redress of wrongs (which is the view of Christian pacifists themselves). For there comes a time in the history of all communities when they must fight or be exterminated, or enslaved. The Christians broke up so early into sects, disputing over definitions of the indefinable, that it was long before they faced the world as a political community, and their first fighting was among themselves.

You know the Qur-án:—

"And from those who say 'We are Christians' We took a covenant, but they forgot a part of that which they were bidden to remember. So We excited enmity and hate among them till the Day of Resurrection. And Allah shall announce to them what they have done."

War is in itself a savage and a cruel thing; and people who had no religious rule to mitigate its savage cruelty, who regarded the indulgence in it as a horrid outbreak on their part, waged war savagely and cruelly. Long after the Islamic laws of war were promulgated, Christian warfare, at any rate against non-Christians, remained savage warfare. Indeed, we may almost say that until now Christian warfare remains savage warfare—that is, unrestrained—in spite of many efforts to improve it. And there has been an improvement, less in the theory and practice of war than in the minds
of those who do the actual fighting. As men become less superstitious, they grow more humane. The finger or the toe of a reputed saint, or a piece of the True Cross, is now no longer carried in the van of Christian armies, sanctifying horrors. War has in time evolved its own philosophy—or, at least, its code of honour which good men respect. There is a distinction between clean fighting and dirty fighting; and dirty fighting rouses indignation among decent men. It is recognized, although obscurely that the duty of a man in a representative capacity is not the same as that of the same man in a private capacity. For example, Christ’s saying that you should forgive your brother not only seven times, but even seventy times seven, if the need arises, is a counsel of perfection between individuals. But apply the same to collective humanity; for “you” read the government of one nation, and for “your brother” read the government of another nation, and it becomes absurd, a counsel of destruction. For it is a part of his duty to his neighbour—it is nowise selfishness—for a person representing others to defend their interests against aggression. But the people represented still applaud aggression in their representatives.

Many a Christian soldier goes to war with the spirit of a true Mujahid of Islam, believing wholly in the justice of his cause, and resolute to keep the limits of fair fighting—though his religion, Christianity, knows nothing of it. Fair fighting is no growth of Christianity.
This religion or code of honour—call it what you will—is in no sense Christian, whether we take Christianity to be what Jesus taught or what the Churches teach. What is it then? It is based upon the law of retaliation—one of the basic laws of human life—a law which Christianity repudiates. The Qur-án says:—

"Fight in the way of God against those who make war against you; but do not attack them first, for Allah loves not the aggressors."

And—

"O ye who believe, retaliation is enjoined upon you in the matter of the slain."

And again—

"And there is life for you in this law of retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may guard against evil." And again—

"And if it had not been for Allah's repelling some men by others, the world would have gone to badness; but Allah is a lord of kindness to creation."

Where in the range of Christian scripture will you find such texts? And yet millions of men whose rule of conduct—aye, and the faith which animates and ennobles that conduct—is in strict accordance with those texts, call themselves Christians! Where is the sense in men professing one religion and practising, religiously, another? It would be better if they openly confessed that they cannot be Christians, acting as they
do, better if they became Muslims in belief as well as warlike practice. And for this reason: that at present this code of honour—"this religion," I have called it—is held and practised only by the fighting men; no such limits are acknowledged by the governments at home as are considered honourable by the soldier in the field. The governments which make the wars know no restraint of conscience or religion. There is no clear distinction between clean and dirty diplomacy; and so it may occasionally happen that heroic men, moved by the noblest motives, are led to give their lives for causes quite unworthy of a life's devotion. Whereas, if the same nation became Muslim, diplomacy and politics in general would be governed by religious law no less than war. Every member of the government would then know that nations have the same rights as individuals, although the mode of intercourse between them cannot be the same in detail. International obligations would acquire a sacred character. And, of course, if Al-Islam spread to other Christian nations, destroying that aggressive nationality which is so strange a growth to be ascribed, however distantly, to the Messiah's teaching, and substituting human brotherhood, in highly civilized communities like those of Europe, wars would cease. This is mere speculation, you will say—an idle dream. Well, I do not think that you can call it idle, for the dream is realizable. It has been realized in its essentials more than once. And
though we cannot hope for the conversion of all Europe at a moment’s notice, it is certain that Europe could learn something very useful from Islam, something which would tend to heal its wounds and save its revolution from much inhumanity and crime and folly.

The whole code of Islam was put in perfect practice by a nation—though without religious law it would have been a rabble composed of half the nations of the earth—for several years with a success unequalled in the history of the world. That was under the Prophet, and the first four Caliphs. After that there came divisions in the Muslim body—not religious, strictly speaking, for they did not touch the creed nor the practice of religion, but “hierarchical,” if one may use the word, where there was scarce a hierarchy—and lesser, more ambitious men obtained the leadership. But ever and again, from time to time, the full code of Islam was strictly practised, and always with conspicuous success in human welfare, human happiness. If it could have been maintained in practice permanently war would have been unknown within the frontiers of Islam. But the nations of those days were not so civilized that they could see the world in modern conditions as the Prophet undoubtedly saw it. The object of Islamic warfare is to put an end to war; it is the end proclaimed by Christian statesmen also. But whereas Islam took legal measures, as well as fought to end it, denouncing
an aggressive nationality as criminal, and limiting the
 cruelty and scope of war by drastic laws, Christian
 statesmen love the principle of an aggressive nationality.
 They foster it, and other things as well. Truly the
 one legitimate aim of warfare is to put an end to war.
 And only by Islamic methods can that object be
 accomplished.

 "Destroy not their means of subsistence."

 That was the Prophet’s law against the enemy—the
 enemy of his religion, mind; he had no other.

 The Muslims of old days, as I have hinted, had
 not the vision for these things we have to-day, excepting
 the companions of the Prophet. And I doubt whether
 even they can be said to have had the vision clearly as
 we have it, sociology and political economy being at the
 time unknown. The Prophet had it, miraculously, but
 he was for all time. They, his companions and devoted
 followers, only obeyed his words and the Qur-án, with
 such zeal and rapture as amounts to vision. The
 Muslims of to-day are not in a position to put in practice
 the world-system of Islamic law, which I believe to be
 the Heaven-send complement of Christianity. It would
 be curious if Christians of their own accord should come
 to practise it, as they have come to cherish the Islamic
 rule of war, not knowing whence it came. There are
 not wanting signs that this may happen. The faint
 beginnings of a public law in Europe have more the
colour of Islam than Christendom. It is a pity that they lack the power of faith behind them to rouse enthusiasm in the masses of mankind.

All that I have said so far—and it is all that I intend to say to you here—is only by way of preface to addresses which I hope to give you in the future on the subject of Islamic teaching and the European War.

II

THE RELIGION OF THE EUROPEAN WAR

Christianity, as a religion, does not recognize war. Religion means that which is binding upon a man, and neither Jesus of Nazareth in his teaching, nor the Church in rules which are supposed to supplement or to fulfil that teaching, pays particular regard to war, or lays down anything that can be called indubitably binding upon Christians in respect of it. Yet war is for all men a religious matter, since it is a matter of life and death. We may take it, I suppose, for granted, that there is nothing one would care to call religious in the minds of those who cause and manage Christian warfare at the present day: with them it is a matter of routine, at best—at worst, the most exciting of all games; but they are obliged in order to persuade the people, to "assume a virtue if they have it not," to feign the highest, most disinterested motives, to swear
that they are moved by nothing less than love of righteousness, that they have no other object than the welfare of mankind, and so on—in brief, they have to give the war a colour of religion. But of what religion? Not, assuredly, of Christianity, for Christianity, as a religion, does not treat of war at all. Upon the face of it, it seems to forbid even self-defence. That is, as I have already explained to you, from our Muslim point of view, because it was left incomplete as a religion, with no directions whatsoever touching the collective life of man. We believe Islam to be the complement of Christianity in this respect and others. But, whether you agree with us in this belief or differ from us, you will have to admit that the religious atmosphere which does ennable Christian warfare in the minds of millions, the dogmas preached by governments concerning it, and sanctified by the belief of millions of quite honest people, the only atmosphere, the only dogmas upon such a subject which could appeal to decent and enlightened people, are Islamic.

Let us glance over the history of the late war as it appeared to the multitude in England which regarded it, and still regards it, in the religious light which I have mentioned. Such people have no knowledge of the dark, confused, unhallowed causes and be ginungs in the East.

As a matter of fact treaties have been broken, and allowed to be broken many times before. European
treaties had never been regarded in the past as religious undertakings, but as convenient arrangements. And so long as treaties were discussed by politicians and diplomatists among themselves, this cynical view of international obligations would have prevailed. But the peoples of the different countries have a natural honour, and some honesty. They would give their lives for an arrangement which the politicians would regard as obsolete, and think themselves dishonoured if their country broke its word. They think of nations as a kind of super-individuals, with the same rights as individuals, and the same honour in proportion to good conduct as individuals earn. Well, that is the Islamic point of view. When they were told that a most solemn treaty bearing the name of England had been violated, they thought it an abominable crime.

The Qur-án says:—

"Verily the worst of beasts in Allah's sight are those who repel and will not comprehend. Those with whom thou"—i.e. the Prophet, Sovereign of Medinah, "madest a treaty, then they broke their part of the treaty at every occasion, and they do not fear God. If thou comest upon them in war, scatter with them those that are beyond them"—that is, inflict on them an exemplary punishment that other peoples in the distance may take warning—"that they may remember. And if you fear treachery from a people, throw back (their treaty) to them as you fairly may, for Allah does not love the treacherous."
Again, upon a memorable occasion:—

“A proclamation from Allah and His Apostle to the people on the day of the greater pilgrimage: that Allah and His Apostle are free of liability towards the idolaters, therefore if you repent it will be better for you, and if you turn back know that you will not weaken Allah’s purpose, and announce a painful chastisement to those who reject the truth.

“Except those of the idolaters with whom you have made treaty, and they have not failed you in anything, nor supported any one against you. In their case keep the treaty strictly for its full period; Allah love those who are conscientious.”

Throughout the Qur-án the word “treaty” means a sacred compact, a solemn covenant, which to break is impious. Allah is said to have made a treaty with the children of Israel through Moses, and with the early Christians through Jesus; which they failed to keep, and therefore evil and misfortune came upon them and, as a punishment, they went astray. With Islamic nations treaties have always had this sacred character. I cannot recall a single instance of a Muslim fower ever consciously breaking a treaty, though they have the right to throw the treaty back if they fear treachery. I do not think that even the worst enemies of Islam accuse Islam of treachery in international politics.

The conscience of the English people was aroused
when they were told that Germany had violated an international arrangement which England was pledged to preserve. Thousands volunteered at once for the defence of public law, but there was no great fervour of enthusiasm until tidings came of the brutalities committed by the German troops on helpless Belgians. Then, indeed, there was a tremendous wave of indignation and enthusiasm for the war, which became religious on behalf of those unfortunates. But where, in Christian Scriptures, are Christians told to fight on behalf of the oppressed?

The Qur-án says:

"Why should you not fight in the way of Allah, for the weak among men and for women and for children, those who say: Our Lord, take us out of this city whose people are oppressors. Oh, send us from Thy presence a befriender! Oh, send us from Thy presence one to help!" ¹

Then when all the young adventurers—the daring reckless spirits had enlisted, more men still were needed. It became necessary to enlist the men of settled habits, settled occupations. And again it was depicted to them as a matter of duty, not merely civic duty but religious duty, since they were required to give their lives. Where in the range of Christian Scriptures is there any text which could be held to authorize such a proceeding? In the Qur-án there are many texts to justify conscription in the case of holy warfare. I do not say that the late war was holy warfare in this sense at all, but I do say that a

¹ The Holy Qur-án 4:75.
large proportion of the English people thought it was, and that the Government proclaimed it to be war "on behalf of the weak among men, and on behalf of women and of little children." Out of a wealth of texts in the Qur-án, I quote two only on this point:

"Fighting is enjoined upon you, and it is a hateful thing to you. But it may be that you hate a thing which is good for you; and it may be that you love a thing which is bad for you; God knows best, and you do not know." 1

"If it had not been for Allah's repelling some men by others the world would have gone all to badness, but Allah is lord of kindness to creation." 2

Admit that we were fighting only in self-defence and for the defence of the oppressed and weak and the redress of wrong. Where, in Christian Scriptures, is war for such a purpose specified as lawful?

The Qur-án, on the other hand, demands:

"Why should you not fight in the way of Allah, for the weak among men and for women and for children, those who say: Our Lord, take us out of this city whose inhabitants oppress us. Oh, send us from Thy presence a befriender, and send us from Thy presence one to help!" 3

Admit that we were never the aggressor. Can any text of Christian Scripture be produced to justify our course of action to be compared with this from the Qur-án?

"Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not originate hostility. Truly Allah loves not the aggressors."

When poisoned gas was used at first, you will remember, there were people here who thought that we ought not to use it in retaliation. It was dirty warfare with which we could not condescend to soil our hands. But retaliation is a fundamental law of man's existence. Necessity prevailed as always. And when they heard of the atrocious sufferings which this new weapon inflicted on our men, and the immense advantage it would give the enemy if we did not retaliate, even sober-minded humane people ceased to hesitate, while sentimentalists grew cruel and vindictive. But the geneal sentiment—what I call the religious sentiment—was for nothing more than just retaliation. Again, when air-raids were first made on unfortified towns; when first news came of the ill-treatment of our prisoners in Germany, there were many people who were much against reprisals. Such warfare was beneath us as a race. But by and by, as indignation grew, most people came to see the justice of reprisals. The sentimentalists again were cruel and vindictive, but the religious sentiment was for no more than just retaliation.

Listen to the words of the Qur-án:

"O ye who believe, retaliation is enjoined upon you in the matter of the slain, the freeman for the freeman, the slave for the slave, the female for the female. But if a remission is made to any one by his aggrieved brother, then prosecution according to usage and payment in a handsome manner. This is alleviation from your Lord and mercy. And whoever transgresses after this,
he shall have painful chastisement

"And there is life for you in (this law of) retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may guard against evil."

"And kill them (the enemy) wherever you find them, and drive them out of the places from which they drove you out. Persecution is more cruel than killing. And do not fight them round the Sacred Mosque, unless they attack you there. And if they do attack you, kill them. Such is the reward of graceless people.

"The forbidden month for the forbidden month, and forbidden things in retaliation. He who attacks you, attack him in like manner as he attacked you. And fear God, and know that God is with those who fear Him."

There are many other texts to the same purpose.

There is a little point which, as a soldier, rather puzzled and amused me. I always understood that it was Christian teaching that every soul expression, every idle word was recorded against a man, and jeopardized his soul's salvation. Yet how do English people reconcile this piece of doctrine with their general belief in the salvation of all soldiers? It is a natural belief for those who love a soldier that he will be pardoned everything in consideration of the noble cause for which he fights the noble sacrifice he is prepared to make, but nowhere is it sanctioned in the Christian Scriptures; whereas the doctrine about idle words has some authority. No sort of people use more shocking language than do English soldiers—except, of course, Italian and French soldiers, who abound in utter blasphemy—or with more innocent

I fear they are condemned by their religion. But the Qur-án says:

"Allah does not call you to account for what is thoughtless in your oaths, but Allah calls you to account for what your hearts have earned. Truly Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." 1

And this is what the Qur-án says of the fate of soldiers who die fighting "in God’s way"—that is in the defence of true religion, and on behalf of the oppressed and weak, for the redress of wrongs:

"Say not of those who are slain in Allah's way that they are dead, but that they are living, only you do not perceive.

"And verily We shall try you with something of fear and hunger, and lack of wealth, and men, and provisions. But give good tidings to the patient who when misfortune falls upon them, say: Truly we belong to God, and unto Him we shall return.

"These are they on whom is blessing from Allah and mercy. These are the rightly guided." 2

The people in the recent war were told: Fight for the land for which your fathers fought. They suffered hardships to make this land safe for you. If you shirk your duty now, you are unworthy of the name of Englishman. Does not the exhortation seem a worldly echo of this verse of the Qur-án:

"Or do you imagine that you will enter Paradise without enduring that which those who went before you endured? Distress and tribulation touched them, they were shaken violently

*Inspite of this allowance, the Muslim soldiers' conduct is dignified in contrast to that of the Christian soldiers.—Publishers.

so that the Apostle and those who believed with him cried: 'When comes Allah's help? Now truly Allah's help is very near.'

And finally, now that fighting is over, some people still desire harsh treatment of the enemy, soldiers and civilians, men, women, and children. That is not Islamic in the least. But the great majority desire to see fair, and, as far as can be in the circumstances, friendly treatment meted out to Germany—with this condition, that the persons immediately responsible for crimes and cruelties shall be sought out and punished after trial. I do not think that this idea can be supported by a text of Scripture which the Christians recognize, though the doctrine of revenge has plenty of support in the Old Testament. The Jews, as patriots at home in Palestine, were very narrow, cruel, and vindictive people. Nowhere does the Qur-án approve a spirit of revenge, and with the end of war there is an end of enmity save against evil-doers:

"And fight against them till there is no more persecution, and religion is for Allah only. But if they desist, then (there shall be) no hostility except against the evil-doers."

WAR AND RELIGION

III

THE PROPHET'S WARFARE

There is an impression still prevailing in Christendom that Muhammad (may God bless him!) was a fierce and warlike individual, who preferred fighting to discussion, whose most cogent argument was force. There is no historic ground for that opinion.

For the first forty years of his life, till he received his mission, Muhammad was a quiet, law-abiding man, exemplary in his sobriety, chastity, and upright dealing among a people famed for orgies and excess of all kinds. He earned by his conduct in those days the surname Al-Ameen, "The Trustworthy," and no mean reputation as a peacemaker. And after he received his mission, when with the vision of man's heavenly destiny he saw with horror the abominations which his people thought and practised, and knew himself predestined to the superhuman work of reclaiming them, for the first twelve years, under terrible persecution, he remained a simple preacher of the word of God. He risked his life daily in remonstrance with the crowds of people round the Ka'ba and in other public places. The torture and martyrdom of many of his followers, the daily risk he ran of the same cruel fate—nothing could move him to allow reprisals. Believing, as he did, that the revelation made to Jesus was the last command from God to men before his time, having himself as yet received no reve-
lation justifying the recourse to arms, he religiously obeyed the Christian rule of non-resistance, and enjoined it on his followers. Opponents are sure to say—as they have said so often—that Muhammad only waited till he had an army. If he had wished to fight in Makka before the Emigration to Yathrib, there is not the least doubt but that he could have commanded a large faction of his own family, the members of which, though heathen, stood by him to protect him from assassination, with the solitary exception of Abu Lahab. And he could have counted, I believe, upon a rising of the slaves on his behalf. He would have had, it is true, no certainty of success, humanly speaking, any more than he had when he set out from Madinah with his little army, mostly armed with sticks, to face the trained and well-armed Makkan army on the field of Badr. But if he had been a lover of violence, he would have taken the risk then instead of later. If he had believed that war was lawful, a leader of his tender nature would have gone to war on behalf of his tortured followers. It is a blessing that he did believe at that time that war was unlawful for Muslims, a blessing that he did await the revelation. For the war which would have risen then in Makka, being waged by Muslims side by side with heathens, and complicated by tribal and family considerations as well as by the problems consequent upon a rising of the slaves, could not have had that character of example—of war for good against evil—which the contests of the
early Muslims now possess.

As an escape from persecution, the Prophet allowed his followers to leave the city, and many of them went to Abyssinia. But he himself remained to bear the brunt of the hostility which his ideas aroused among the Makkans. This hostility increased to such a point that the majority of the Quraish resolved to kill him if he went abroad. His own family, as I have said, stood by him then. He was imprisoned with them for three years in the family quarters of the city, till an event which was regarded at the time as a miracle confirming his teaching, astonished the Quraish and made them change their minds concerning him. But only for a little while. The Prophet was at liberty once again to go abroad, but when he went abroad he preached wherever he could find an audience; and his preaching angered the idolaters more than ever. He was insulted, threatened, stoned, but he would not desist. It was at this period that the Prophet, going forth "one evening to risk his life among the people as his custom was," came upon six men, pilgrims from the town of Yathrib—the town now known to all the world as Al-Madinah, "the City" par excellence. To them he preached Islam, and they became his converts. On their return to their own city, they spoke about Islam among their friends and neighbours, and the Faith found general acceptance. Yathrib had been divided, time out of mind, between two rival tribes who fought with one another. In the
excitement over the new gospel, these tribes came together and were friendly, and this, regarded as a miracle when they observed it, tended to confirm their favour for the new religion. Soon we are told that there was not a house in Yathrib "in which there was not mention of the Messenger of God." In the following year a number of Muslim pilgrims came from Yathrib. The Prophet met them at the same spot—Al-Aqabah—where he had preached to six men only the year before. The persecution of the Faith in Makka had grown so acute that the Prophet sought some place of refuge for his people, and the proposal of the Yathrib folk that he should go to them was welcome. Then, in the oath of allegiance to Muhammad which the men from Yathrib took on that occasion, is the first hint of war. They were to defend the Prophet and his people with their lives, their wealth, and their families. But that it was only to be in the last resort, like defending their own houses, would appear to have been the intention and the understanding from the reluctance which the Muslims showed to going out to fight when the revelation came commanding them to do so.

The chiefs of the Quraish had resolved to kill the Prophet and exterminate his religion; assassins had been chosen, one from each great family, so that the odium and the revenge might be divided and made national, when Muhammad, having superintended the departure of his followers, himself escaped with Abu
Bakr. They were pursued, but by the grace of God eluded their pursuers, and reached Madinah safely, to the boundless joy of the inhabitants.

The Prophet was then fifty-three years of age. He had a little kingdom, but no army. Nor was his first concern to raise an army. His first concern was peaceful legislation.

And here I must call your attention to what I think the most wonderful thing in this most wonderful of human lives. Any one who knows anything of the complexion of the Arabs, any one who has studied Arab history, would have thought that any Arab, however pious or long-suffering, having suffered cruel persecution at the hands of certain people, when fortune made him independent of those people, and gave him means to face them with some faint hope of success, would straightway have indulged in projects of revenge. But the Prophet did nothing of the kind. He applied himself to peaceful legislation, to the government of Al-Madinah. It was only when his enemies were actually in the field against him, advancing with the avowed design to hound him down in Al-Madinah, to destroy his people, and exterminate Islam, that the command was given to the Muslims to take part in war. You will observe that up till then the Muslims and the Prophet had embraced, in spite of cruel suffering, the Christian rule of non-resistance, though they could have
raised a powerful faction had they wished to do so. And numbers of them now protested that it was not part of their duty to repel aggression. It was only by the weight of a new revelation from on high that their objections of this kind were overcome. Even the duty of resistance in the last resort seemed wrong to some of them. It was for these strict pacifists that the law of retaliation was so fully and so forcibly expounded in the Book:

"And if Allah had not repelled some men by others, churches, and synagogues, and oratories, and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is commemorated, would have been destroyed."

And again:

"If it had not been for Allah’s repelling some men by others the world would have gone all to badness, but Allah is a lord of kindness to creation."

And when it came to marching out against an army of invaders the reluctance of the early Muslims was at first extreme.—The Qur-án says:

"Fighting is enjoined upon you, and it is a thing abhorrent to you; but it may be that you hate a thing which is good for you. Allah knows best, and you do not know."

"The forbidden month for the forbidden month, and forbidden things in retaliation."

War, I would remark, had ranked for them till then among forbidden things:

"And he who attacks you, attack him in like manner as he

attacks you. And fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who fear (Him).”¹

“Fight against those who fight against you but do not originate hostility. Truly Allah loves not the aggressors.”²

Now there is a point to which I want to call your most particular attention. It is this: All non-Muslim writers have taken it for granted that Muhammad, being prince of Madinah, did himself and of his own authority command the Muslims to take part in war for reasons of policy. I don’t believe for one minute that such was in reality the case. I believe that the words which I have quoted were addressed to the Prophet quite as much as to his followers, and overcame the same objections and the same reluctance in his breast. He had obeyed the Christian rule of non-resistance until then. He had been guided to a point where Christian teaching was no longer useful. He had no longer to behave as a private individual, who is free to sacrifice his life. He was now the guardian of the lives of others, and of a little state and a community exemplary among the peoples of Arabia, containing hope of reformation for mankind. He had no longer to deal with men individually, but collectively. The revelation Jesus had received afforded him no guidance in this position. I do not for a moment think that he perceived this in the terms in which I have just stated it. The Prophet’s trust in God was so implicit that he would not have doubted Allah’s power to protect His people, whether

they fought or did not fight. It is far more in keeping with what we find recorded of the Prophet’s character to suppose that he was suddenly inspired with this command to fight, than that he arrived at it by cautious calculation. That it was an effort of reason, we may well admit; but then the Prophet’s reason was the medium of inspiration. It is impossible to separate the two. But that the inspiration he received did not invariably coincide with his own wishes is certain. There are well-known instances. But he invariably obeyed the orders of the Heavenly Voice, and all his people knew him as a servant just as they were, above them only in position as the Messenger of God.

Well, the Prophet and his followers had received the divine command to fight. Any one acquainted with the fiery character of the Arabs, even the best among them, would suppose that an Arab who received command from God to fight against old enemies would have indulged in all the savagery of war, which contemporary custom justified, and even gone beyond it, on the strength of the Divine sanction, and such denunciation of the enemies as is found in the Qur'ân. It was not so with Muhammad. It was not the old unbridled fighting of Arabia that was enjoined upon him and his followers, but a new sort of warfare, which if its principles had been generally accepted, would have ended war some centuries ago. Contemporary
warfare had no limit to its savagery. The new Muslim warfare had strict limits—"the limits of Allah"—as they are called in the Qur-án. There were things commonly done by the idolaters and Jews and Christians in their warfare which the Muslims were commanded not to do in any case. There were other things done commonly by the surrounding peoples which the Muslims were allowed to do only in retaliation. And, again, there were other customs of contemporary warfare which seem to us cruel, which they were commanded to use against a certain sort of people—men so brutal as to be impervious to argument, persistent evil-doers who corrupted others—by way of exemplary punishment. Considering the state of human society in Arabia at the period, the wonder is, not that there should be commands in the Qur-án regarding war which shock our modern sensitiveness, but that such commands should be so very few. At the battle of Badr, where the Muslims were victorious, the victors ceased fighting when the enemy gave in, the prisoners were treated with a kindness which was something new in those days. But at the battle of Uhud, where the Muslims suffered a reverse, the idolaters exultant mutilated the bodies of the fallen Muslims, the women strung their ears and noses together and made bracelets which they wore in the sight of the Prophet and his company! Hinda, the wife of Abu Sufyan, actually dug out the liver of the Prophet’s uncle,
Hamzah, who was among the slain, and ate a portion of it with vindictive glee! It is when, from contemplating such a scene as that, one realizes what the Muslims had to look for from their enemies, that one marvels at the rarity in the Qur-án of passages relating to war which shock even at first sight our modern sentiment. And it is curious to note—I have not seen it noted—that the Qur-án allows in one verse a severity towards the enemy which the Prophet never practised, thereby showing that such severity was to be used only in the last extremity, to stop abominations which could not be checked by other means. Only once did the Prophet enforce contemporary rules of war in all their rigour. That was in the case of the Banu Quraidza, a Jewish tribe of Al-Madinah, who, after entering into an alliance with the Prophet, and reaping all the benefits of that alliance, treacherously attacked the Muslims in the rear at the moment when they were besieged by an enormous army of idolaters, in what is known as “the War of the Confederates,” because the heathen tribes had made a federation to destroy the Muslims, or “the War of the Moat,” because a moat or trench was dug round Al-Madinah for defence. When the Banu Quraidza were captured and brought in for trial, they were allowed to choose their judge among the Muslims. Instead of throwing themselves on the Prophet’s mercy, they chose a man whom they supposed would favour them, but he, when he was
brought out to give judgment, condemned them all to death! And the sentence was executed. That is the one case of extreme severity, and you will observe that it is not a case of open enemies, but treacherous allies.

Towards open enemies the Prophet’s warfare was so much more merciful than any warfare known before his time, that there is no doubt in my mind that it contributed enormously to the spread of his religion. Men who, by all the warlike customs that they knew, had forfeited their right to live, unless it might be as the victor’s slave, surprised at the fair treatment they received, embraced Islam, and the moment they embraced Islam they were the equals of the conquerors. Before Muhammad’s time—and among non-Muslim nations for centuries after his time, aye, even to the present day—the fact of one set of people being conquered by another meant that the conquered forfeited all human rights and lay entirely at the mercy of the conqueror, even though they might be of the same religion. Muhammad changed all that. Those of the nations conquered by the Muslims who embraced Islam became entirely equal to the conquerors in all respects, became incorporated in the Muslim brotherhood. And what of those who refused to accept Islam? If they had any decent civilization of their own, and standard of morality—which was not the case with the idolaters of Arabia—they were obliged to pay an annual tribute for the cost of their defence, in consideration of which
they were allowed to continue unmolested in their occupations as separate communities, with the internal affairs of which the Muslims had no right to interfere. It was impious for any Muslim to attack or in any way molest them. That was originally the case of all those Christian subjects in the Muslim Empire, of whom we hear so much in our own days. It was an enlightened way of dealing with minorities, but Christendom has made of it a crime against Islam—Christendom which in those days, and until not so long ago, disposed of religious minorities by massacre, by torture and the stake.

Muhammad, alone of all great conquerors that I have read of, used mercy and forgiveness in the very act of war, and with conspicuous success. When, at the end of years of war, he conquered Makka, and had the people who had persecuted Muslims, who had sought to kill him more than once, the people who in war against him had put forth every foul device that treachery and cruelty could frame, entirely at his mercy, he destroyed the idols in the temple with the words, “Truth is come, darkness departeth,” and proclaimed a general amnesty, giving alms to the poor, and freeing fugitive slaves. There was no punishment, no indemnity, no recrimination, and the Makkans were converted as one man.

Well, you will say, but all that you have told us,
though no doubt very wonderful at the period, is no good to us to-day. We, of the present day, are more enlightened, and we wage war in a more enlightened way. We have nothing to learn from an Arabian Prophet of the seventh century C.E. Is that true?

The Prophet’s aim—the aim of the Qur-án—was so to limit war both as to occasion and practice that it would eventually, as the world progressed, become impossible. Surely, if civilization was worth anything it would tend to reduce the horrors of war. I can remember hearing in my youth in Syria of a great battle between Arabs of the desert—twenty thousand men engaged—which raged for two days, yet not one man was killed. They fought with lances, in old-fashioned armour, and every man unhorsed was counted dead. Well, that was before the general introduction of enlightened Christian rifles!

Have Christian peoples tried to limit war sincerely? I know all about the Hague Convention and the Geneva Convention, they are small beginnings in the right direction, but I am speaking of the actual work of war.

Muslims invading a country are forbidden to destroy fields of corn, or palms, or any fruit-trees, or to slaughter cattle except in case of urgent need.

“Destroy not their means of subsistence,” said the
Prophet. The command is unconditional, and it is incumbent upon loyal Muslims in all circumstances. It makes unlawful, absolutely, what we call economic weapons, the cutting off of food-supply and raw materials.*

Is not that command certain to reduce the horrors of war, and likely to make wars less frequent? Then the unarmed inhabitants, "the quiet people" as the old Muslim jurists love to call them—the people who had no concern with fighting—were to be unmolested. Imagine what the Prophet would have thought of bombs on open towns, and submarine attacks on liners!

Then strict fidelity to treaties is enjoined, and fidelity to treaties has not been much observed among the Powers of Europe. The government, as much as the people—nay, more than the people—is subject to the law of God, and its individuals are morally responsible for any breach of that law. In Christendom, since Machiavelli, the power vested in a Christian government has been considered for all practical purposes absolute and irresponsible; and what restrictions were admitted in theory before Machiavelli were no result of Christianity, but a relic of pre-Christian Rome.

*If the author had lived long enough he would have mentioned the scorched-earth policy adopted by Christian belligerents in the war just ended.— Publishers,
Then the modern practice of raising loans for purposes of war among the wealthy people of a nation at attractive rates of interest is absolutely forbidden to Muslims, as I read it—first, by the law against usury, which is absolute, and second, by the command to men of wealth to spend their lives and money freely in the way of Allah. We are not even told to lend our money without interest, we are commanded to give it, when the State is risking its existence on the hazard of war. That command makes short work of the profiteer. Nor can the people who thus give their money hope to get it back with increase in the case of victory, for the law laid down for the division of the spoils of war—money, slaves, cattle, and supplies of all kinds captured with the enemy—is absolute. One-fifth is to go to Allah and His Apostle—that is, to the State—and the remainder is to be divided among that people, but not in proportion to their pecuniary contributions towards the cost of war.

These are but a few instances in which, I fancy, Christendom might still learn something from an Arabian Prophet of the seventh century of the Christian Era.

But the most important word of all is this: The Prophet said:—

He who sides with his tribe in injustice is not one of us; nor is he one of us who gathers men together for a purpose of oppression; nor is he one of us who dies while assisting his tribe in tyranny.
Nationality, as we understand it—aggressive nationality—is abolished by Islam; and patriotism as we understand it—"my country right or wrong"—is denounced as a crime.

Have you, then—worshippers of nationality of the aggressive type, the cause of the most awful wars the world has known—you, who at what you call a "Peace" Conference, make nationality, aggressive nationality, the very fiend of war, your idol—have you nothing to learn from an Arabian Prophet of the seventh century C.E.? 

You have seen what increasing the horror of war leads to. You, and I, and everybody heard people saying, long before the German outbreak: "Oh, there can never be another war. The weapons of destruction have become too terrible." Nation was vying with nation to invent fresh weapons to strike terror in opponents.

Brethren, there will always be another war so long as war results in conquest, wealth, and power for the victor. You will never stop war by piling on its horrors. Might it not be well to try the Prophet's way of limiting its horrors and restricting its occasion? This can be done at first by strict retaliation; and then, when men have learnt the lesson of retaliation—"Do unto others as you would they should do unto you" (You see I was not talking nonsense when I said that
the law of Islam is essentially Christ's teaching codified and rendered practical)—then by progressive giving up of this and that atrocious weapon. But above all, the governments of Christian countries must be under the same law of moral conduct as the peoples, they must recognize the same responsibility as that which governs individuals, must ascribe to foreign nations the same rights as individuals, and rule out certain classes of negotiation and transaction altogether, as Islam has done. And the ideal of aggressive nationality must be discouraged and replaced by that of human brotherhood.

IV

JIHAD

I think that I have made it clear to you already that no Muslim can be what in England at the present day is called a pacifist, because he has received what he believes to be Divine commands to fight in certain circumstances. The only kind of warfare sanctioned by Divine command and by the practice of the Prophet and his companions is for the defence of true religion against violent opponents, and the spread of true religion by the conquest of those peoples who attack the Muslims; and on behalf of the weak and the oppressed, and for the defence of treaties, i.e. public right. In other words, the only warfare lawful to the Muslims is holy warfare—the war of manifest good
against manifest evil. The idea of such warfare among other religions up till then carried with it the idea of absolute ruthlessness, as is only natural, for people fighting with a strong idea of their own righteousness and of the utter wickedness of their opponents were not likely to mince matters or respect the feeling of the said opponents. Particularly in Eastern lands, where brains take fire with an idea, and men go fighting mad, one side in a religious war was apt to see the other merely as dark and ugly objects thrust between them and celestial light, and wipe them out remorselessly.

It was different, as we have seen, with the Muslims. Neither the Prophet nor his people were conscious of tremendous righteousness, they were conscious only of desire to do the will of God as it had been revealed to them, and scrupulously to observe the limits imposed by Allah on their mode of war. And the wickedness of their opponents they viewed less as wickedness towards themselves than towards the Lord of Heaven and Earth, Whose will was justice. Their aim was rather to convert opponents than destroy them, and no convert to Islam, whatever might have been his previous record as a cruel and unprincipled opponent, was refused or coldly received. "Islam obliterates what is past," the Prophet said, and it has always been so in the history of Islam. The conquered peoples of another faith, the Jews and Christians, were preserved as separate, complete communities, practically independent.
within the structure of the Muslim realm, and it was sin for Muslims to attack them or in any way molest them so long as they paid the tribute towards the cost of the defence, for, being of another faith, they were not expected to take part in purely Muslim warfare, the only kind of warfare lawful in the Muslim State. Those subject peoples were preserved from war thenceforward. And so was every Power, no matter of what faith, which was friendly to the Muslim Power and bound to it by an alliance, a dweller in the Dar-us-Salam, or House of Peace—though not in the "Dar-ul-Islam," or "House of Surrender," a term which was confined to people who embraced Islam as a religion. The subject Christian communities were reckoned as dwellers in the "Dar-ul-Amanah," or "House of Security," while the peoples who were violent opponents of the Muslim realm were dwellers in the "Dar-ul-Harb," or "House of War." That was the original distribution. Centuries later, when the Christian Powers, which long have typified "the House of War" for Al-Islam, began to use the subject Christians as a pretext for aggression and a cat's-paw, the Christian communities within the Muslim realm were transferred to the Dar-ul-Harb for purposes of vigilance, though without the least infringement of their privileges or right to protection. If you see the system clearly—I am afraid I have not sketched it very clearly—you will see that the spread of the Islamic system
meant the end of war. It made an ever-growing continent of peace. Why did it never spread to the whole world? We are accustomed to ascribe its failure to the fault of Christendom, which never would accept the least contentious of Islamic principles—religious tolerance—and never would give up attacking something which it did not understand. No Christian Power would ever enter into true alliance with the Muslims. Well, while I called myself a Christian, I considered that to be the reason of the failure of Islam to bring the world to peace. But now that I am a Muslim, I think otherwise. I think the cause was in our own misconduct—our failure in so many cases to live up to the true Muslim standard; our failure, under provocation, to observe the limits imposed upon us absolutely by Divine command; our failure for some centuries to use the light of reason upon texts and rules and edicts, which thus became for us no longer part of a great system tending to the spread of light, but formulæ to be obeyed superstitiously as far as the letter was concerned, with very little thought about the spirit and designed for Muslims only, not for all the world. That Islam has succeeded in many respects, where Christianity has failed, is an undoubted fact; that it has failed in other respects, as Christianity has failed, is due to sad shortcomings in the Muslim brotherhood.

During the reign of the Prophet and of the first
four Caliphs there was no such thing as personal ambition in that brotherhood—at any rate, as a factor in politics. There never was in this world a more unworldly, or, if you like it better, “other-worldly” system of government and order of society, and never was there one more perfectly successful both without and within, both politically and in terms of human happiness. The first war between Muslims was caused by difference of opinion regarding the succession to the Caliphate, regarded by both parties as a sacred matter, justifying the recourse to arms. The division which that war created in the Muslim world exists, unfortunately, to this day. It is not a difference of religion, as some people seem to suppose, like the difference between Catholics and Protestants in Christendom. Shi’a and Sunni have the same beliefs and the same form of worship. There are no sects in Islam in the sense in which the word “sect” is used in Christendom. The so-called sects of Islam differ on some historic point of policy, or it may be, with regard to the degree of strictness with which the religious law should be enforced—a question sometimes of the letter and the spirit. Now, whatever we may think about the right or wrong of that first war in Al-Islam, every one must agree that it was deplorable, and that it does sound the first note of personal ambition in the Muslim brotherhood. Still it was upon a burning question, which both parties thought essentially religious, and the personal ambition referred to was not the prime motive, but
rather a chance outcome of the controversy. Later, in the history of Islam we have to notice wars of mere ambition, wars made for their own aggrandizement by potentates, wars of aggression, utterly against the sacred law. These were exactly like the wars of Christendom, except in this one very important respect, that they were condemned by public opinion, which was strong enough to keep such warfare strictly within certain limits. The limits were that the belligerents were to have no army except "that which their right hands possess"—"i.e. their slaves, bought with their own money—and those who joined them out of free good-will. They were on no account to call upon the quiet people—that is to say, the huge majority of Muslims—for reinforcements or for help of any kind. And they were in no way to molest the quiet people, or touch a stick or ear of corn belonging to them on pain of—what? On pain of being cursed by all believers, on pain of excommunication—one may call it—or, better, upon pain of outlawry, for the delinquent was thenceforth outside the law, and made to feel it. War was thus made harmless to the quiet people—I am not telling you a fairy story; it is what every one who has read the history of Arabia, Syria, Mesopotamia, in times when the Caliphate was weak and lacked control, knows to have actually happened. The quiet people went about their work as usual. They stood and watched the glittering hosts of fighting slaves go by to battle somewhere with some other host of figh-
ting slaves. They watched the pageant with a shrug of the shoulders, and a prayer that sinful men might be forgiven, and they went on calmly with their work. It was no concern of theirs, nor were they interested, though the army passing might be that of their own prince. If he won they said a prayer for the slain, and shrugged their shoulders; and if he lost the day, and was perhaps killed, their action was precisely the same. The children of ambition were alike to them. The change of rulers altered nothing in their round of life. The taxes were according to Islamic law. The new prince was a Muslim, as the old had been, so did not interfere with any matters of importance. War was a wicked and a foolish thing in Al-Islam, but it was not the devastating curse which it has always been in Christendom, precisely because it was restrained by public opinion within strict limits gathered from the sacred law.

Now, how—you will naturally ask—could public opinion have sufficient power to restrain armed force in an empire so disorganized, and among a people so indifferent, as that I have depicted? The answer is simple. Those people, though themselves defenceless, had strong guardians. The most ambitious of the provincial rulers was a Muslim and owed a mystical allegiance to the Caliphate, of which he broke the peace. The Caliph was too weak to keep his satraps within bounds. But the Muslim Caliphate is not the
Caliph only. It is also the whole body of the Ulama—the learned men of Al-Islam—incorporated in a hundred universities of wealth and power, filled with the light of reason in those days—whom every person of ambition sought to propitiate. These universities scattered all over the Islamic world were in constant communication with one another, and were always watching over the affairs of the Caliphathe. If anything went seriously wrong they took concerted action, and when that happened, woe betide that man, or group of men, whose conduct they thought fit to reprehend. They were at all times the guardians of the great body of Muslims—the quiet people, they themselves were wont to call them—and to attempt to conscript peaceful citizens was the same crime as to rob them or to kill them, and the prince who did it did not long survive. So, for a greater number of years than has ever happened on the continent of Europe, a greater number of years than has happened even on this favoured island, the vast mass of the population was kept free from war. It seems a great advantage, but it had for Al-Islam great disadvantages. The vast mass of the population grew unwarlike. Jihád—that holy war of self-defence—the defence of the whole Muslim realm against the infidel—which is a duty for every believer, was confined to distant frontiers of the empire—so distant that the people thought that it could never come to them—and became the work of border tribes,
The Caliph, for purposes of State and to enforce his authority where necessary, employed a mercenary army of those tribes. When at last a barbarous host broke through the outer defences of the empire, they found nothing further to resist them. They trod down the crops, cut down the fruit-trees, destroyed the watercourses, and the splendid cities, and butchered the inhabitants like sheep. The Muslim universities never quite recovered from that awful inroad, which has no connection whatever with the Ottoman Turks, though some of our professional prevaricators have lately tried to pretend that it was their doing. It happened centuries before the Ottoman Turks appeared upon the scene.

Now what was the reason of the extermination of so many millions of the "quiet people"—Muslims who had no concern with war? It was precisely because they had no concern with war. They had forgotten the true meaning of Jihád. They and their ancestors had quite forgotten that command in the Qur-án:

For verily with effort goeth ease, verily with effort goeth ease; so, when thou art relieved still strive, and yearn to please the Lord.¹

It is the duty of every Muslim to fight, if need arises, "in the way of Allah"—that is to say, in self-defence, or on behalf of the weak and the oppressed, or for the redress of wrongs—and how can he fight

¹. The Holy Qur-án, 94: 5. 6,
efficiently if he is unprepared? Every able-bodied Muslim should, I think, undoubtedly, have been trained in warlike exercises as naturally as he was taught the truths of his religion, as naturally as he was taught to say his prayers, and pay the poor-rate. As I have said, the vast majority of Muslims had, in case and comfort, forgotten the whole meaning of the word “Jihád.” Now what is the religious meaning of the word “Jihád”? The natural meaning of the word is “manful striving.” From association it had come to mean “A manful striving for things good and honourable,” before the Qur-án developed its full meaning by saying:—

“He who strives”—or, in other words, he who practises Jihád—“strives for his own soul’s good, for Allah has no need of His creatures.”

And the Prophet completed it when he said:—

The best of Jihád is that for the conquest of self.

It has been said by divines of another religion that a man has no duty towards himself; he has a duty towards God, and a duty towards his neighbour, and his duty towards himself is lost in those two duties. That is perfectly true in a way, for the duty towards Allah and the duty towards one’s neighbour may be taken to include the whole of duty. But Islam has put it to us in another way, and it does recognize a duty of a man towards himself, and that duty is Jihád, this

1. The Holy Qur-án, 29; 6,
striving after righteousness, beginning with the conquest of a man's own lusts. We are told expressly that all those efforts which we make are not required in any way by Allah, or needed for His pleasure; they are for ourselves.

He who strives, strives for his own soul's good, for Allah is independent of His creatures.

This duty of a man towards himself includes the duty to make war in certain circumstances. Every Muslim is, or ought to be, a *fidā‘i*—a self-devoted fighter in the cause of Allah, ready at any moment to leave all that he possesses, ready at any moment to lay down his life for Allah's love. But not as a passive resister. He must fight, for he has received Divine command to fight, in self-defence, on behalf of the weak and helpless, and for the redress of wrongs. And if he has received Divine command to fight, it goes without saying that he has to fight as efficiently as possible, that he has to be prepared for the contingency—in other words, that he has to have some military training. Conscription is, or ought to be—I think it is—unnecessary in Islam, when it is a case of self-defence, or defending the weak and oppressed, or redressing manifest and glaring wrong. It is utterly unlawful and abominable in Islam if enforced for selfish and aggressive purposes—or purposes which Europeans would call purely national. Upon the other hand, universal military training is the natural corollary of
the command to fight; every Muslim ought to be a trained mujáhid, qualified to bear his part in the Jihád which is for ever going on against the powers of evil to the utmost, whether it be in his own conscience, or in the workshop, or in the market-place, or in the council-chamber, or upon the battle-field. He ought never to become so absorbed in temporal possessions or occupations, that it would break his heart to be deprived of them or torn from them suddenly. He should be prepared, the moment that his possessions or his settled peaceful life bring him into disobedience to the Divine commands, to resign them or to change their nature or to emigrate without reluctance, much less the despair which among Christians would accompany such resignation.

For we are Allah’s, and unto Him we are returning.¹

We are returning to Him. We are all of us upon the way to meet our Lord. It is but a little while, in any case, before we shall be obliged to leave behind us everything that we have loved and valued in this world. What do we take with us? Nothing. But we shall find something waiting for us, and by that we shall be judged for good or ill. It is “that which our hands have sent before us”—in the words of the Qur-án—the record of the efforts we have made in the cause of righteousness, for the defence of Allah’s kingdom upon earth, on behalf of the weak, the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed, and for the redress of wrongs. It

is the account of our Jihád. The wealth of this world is the gift of Allah—He bestows it upon whom He will, and He removes it from whom He will. It is given often as a test of principle, sometimes as a trial, sometimes even, I believe, as a punishment. It is a dangerous and a troublesome possession, spiritually speaking, and it is insecure. What can we count on as secure? Only the promise of Allah, that those who believe and those who strive for righteousness and who leave their homes and their most loved possessions for the sake of Allah, "their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve."

V

THE LAW OF LIFE

(Conclusion.)

You may perhaps think that I have said enough already about war, and the rules of war. We are all sick to death of the subject. We want to forget all that horror and tragedy, to dwell in peace, to take our ease. We want only what is pleasant to ourselves.

Near the end of the Qur-án there is a little chapter, which I have already quoted more than once. It is well known, no doubt, to most of you—a word of warning to the Holy Prophet in view of the success which, as you all know, came to him.
Have We not expanded thy breast, and removed from thee the burden which oppressed thy back, and exalted thy renown. But verily with effort goeth ease, verily with effort goeth ease, so when thou art relieved still strive and seek to please thy Lord.¹

The inferior political position occupied by Muslim nations in the world to-day is due entirely to neglect of this injunction. When the victory had brought them ease they ceased to strive. They lost sight of the whole meaning of "Jihád."

Brethren, is it not at least imaginable, considering the limitations of our human nature, that the thing which pleases God for us to do may not be always that which is agreeable to ourselves? As the Qur-án says, in relation to this very subject—war:—

It may happen that you hate a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that you love a thing which is bad for you. God knows best, and you do not know.²

There are words in the Qur-án and the Bible which are most unpalatable to my understanding, but that does not mean that they are untrue. Unpalatable truth is known to every one's experience. We cherish our illusions, and are shocked when they are torn to shreds. We make an idol of our own illusions, our comfortable, study-made conception of how things should be. That is great folly. If we are true Mujáhidín—if we are really engaged in that great striving after truth, which is Jihád al-Akbar—the greater Jihád—

¹ The Holy Qur-án, Ch. 94. ² Ibid. 2:216.
we should rejoice, not sorrow, in the loss of our illusions, as a great step forward in the path we have set out to tread. So many men, in their religious lucubrations, seem to me to go upon the principle that what appeals to them personally must be true, and what does not appeal to them must be false. They would reject the whole idea of punishment hereafter, because it is not nice to contemplate. Well, walk in the earth and look about you on the world of nature, and see how many things are there existing by Divine decree which shock the gentle, timid soul averse to bloodshed.

Some people see a hope of progress in a vegetarian diet, horrified by the slaughter of dumb, helpless creatures for man's daily food. They would gladly let the race of men grow timid and effeminate if only that appalling massacre might cease. Some people even would esteem it wrong to shed the blood of any creature, having life, even a beast of prey. Well, even if man did become benevolent to that extent, I seriously doubt if his abstention would affect the conduct of the other animals—some of them man's enemies—who, moved by instinct rather than intelligence, could not admire or follow man's example. The birds, the beasts, the fishes, and the insects would continue to feed one upon another, following the natural law—God's law—which is the law of life; the higher orders of creation feeding on the lower. It is horrible until you come
to realize that life is one, that individual lives are of importance only as they further life, and chiefly in their sacrifice to support or to produce life of a higher order; and that no life, however infinitesimal, is apart from Allah's purpose.

And there is not an animal or creeping thing upon the earth, nor a flying creature which flies with wings but is a people like unto yourselves. We have neglected nothing in the Book (of Our decrees). Eventually to their Lord they shall return.1

Death and life are not two separate and hostile things. They are two aspects of the same, like light and darkness.

Say: Allah, Thine is the sovereignty. Thou givest the kingdom to whom Thou wilt, and Thou takest the kingdom away from whom Thou wilt, and Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt, and Thou abasest whom Thou wilt. In Thy hand is good. Surely Thou hast absolute control of all things.

Thou makest the night to pass into the day, and Thou makest the day to pass into the night. And Thou causest the living to come out of the dead, and Thou causest the dead to come out of the living, and Thou bestowest bounty without count on whom thou wilt.2

Brethren, the laws of God are quite inexorable, ruthless if you will. There is no remotest possibility of our escape from them. They are not made for man alone. The scheme of which our short existence forms

a part is so immense as to be utterly and immeasurably beyond our human power of comprehension or imagination. Yet I have heard men say, the world is ill-arranged. Surely it is beyond man's power to judge of its arrangement. People who talk like that have been taught in childhood to ascribe their own misfortunes, their own faults, to God's decree—the decree of a vindictive, jealous deity, an imaginary deity, not Allah—against them personally. Islam has taught us, on the other hand, that Allah is a God of boundless mercy towards His creatures. There is no other god but He. He is the Patron of all life, and is leading all life upwards to a glorious goal. He has given man—the creature who possesses god-like intellect—plain rules by which success and happiness may be obtained in a world which has been delegated to man's governance. If men, entrusted with that governance, disobey those rules, the bulk of men will have to suffer for that disobedience here on earth, in which they have a share, for they are witnesses. If men obey those rules religiously the sure result is general progress, general happiness. This is quite apart from the inexorable laws of nature, which surround us all—inexorable, certainly, but neither cruel nor ignoble. The cruelty and vileness to be found in human life is all of man's own making. This is quite apart, too, from the hope held out to every individual soul of drawing near to Allah by obedience and by prayer, and ceaseless striving after
righteousness—Jihád, in short. Think what most individual lives would be without that hope—quite meaningless, yet everybody feels that life has some deep meaning. Then, if we had not that high hope made sure by Allah’s promise, then, indeed, when we surveyed some wretched fragment of a life, of which the owner never had a chance of happiness, a chance of goodness, or some dead youth of promise, we might say: “Here is injustice.” But injustice cannot be associated with the thought of Allah.

So, friends, it really comes to this: either you accept the scheme of things by which alone you live in its entirety, or you reject it in its entirety; in which latter case you cut a curious figure, for you have to die, whether you will or no. If you accept the bare conditions of existence, then you must awake to many things which comfortable, highly-civilized, and sentimental folk would rather not observe; among them, this:

That individual life in nature—that is, in reality—has nothing like the value which comfortable, civilized people like to ascribe to it; and that individual death is nothing horrible. It is natural, perhaps, that a sort of gloomy cult of death should have arisen in these northern latitudes, where corpses can be kept above the ground much longer than in warmer climates. The cult of death, the trappings and the pomp of mourning—things forbidden in Islam—all that, I grant you, is
horrible. But not death itself. Death, though sad from the survivor’s point of view, is nothing horrible; and for those who believe in the Scripture, and look for fuller life beyond the grave, it should be no more dreadful than the falling of ripe seed to ground. The misery surrounding natural things like death and birth is of man’s making, and is due to what is called in the Qur-án “transgression of the limits.” If a child thrusts its hand into the fire, it will be hurt through ignorance or disobedience as the case may be. It will have “transgressed the limits” nature has imposed to fire’s beneficent action in relation to animal life. If the child had not been warned, and so could not foresee the consequence of its action, it could not be blamed. But when it has been warned repeatedly, it is to blame. No one can say that Allah has not warned mankind repeatedly, in matters which they could not gather from experience. In matters moral, spiritual, and political, there is a natural law—that is, a law of God—and it is known. Many of you will no doubt remember the title of a book which made a stir some years ago, The Natural Law in the Spiritual World. Well, that is not a bad description of Islam in one important aspect of its teaching.

But when horror and cruelty have been imported into life by man’s shortcomings, how are you to overcome them and destroy them when they reach a head? You will say, by gentle influence, by education. But
there are men so brutal they would trample you to death, they would sacrifice all that we hold valuable to their own desires. There are men so wicked that they are not content with their own corruption, they would corrupt others, spread corruption like a pestilence. They find their keenest pleasure in the propagation of evil. When these abominations reach a head—they do occasionally—and evil on the one hand threatens good upon the other, would you have the friends of goodness offer no resistance? Then it will be annihilated. Will you not rather fight with all the strength which God has given you to destroy the powers of evil? If they are horrible and cruel, you must fight as they do, or your opposition will have no effect on them. Some people, you must remember, are far worse than brutes—still are, though, thank God, in our own country such are fewer than they used to be. On people who are used to full indulgence of the lust of cruelty—I will not say, on savages, for savages are less abominable than the scum of civilized communities—kind words and gentle admonitions are quite thrown away. You must frighten them out of their wits, you must half murder them, to make them understand that you forbid them to do certain things; and if you wish to stop them doing those same things, you must make it clear to them by terrible examples that so often as they do them they will suffer painfully. Exemplary punishment is justified by the result. A certain evil is stamped out,
or greatly mitigated, a real advance in civilization is made; and the necessity for such examples being past, the crimes they were designed to meet having become uncommon, the punishment falls into disuse.

That, at least, is what has happened in Islam. The punishment enjoined in the Qur-án as an example against theft, for instance—the cutting off of the thief’s hand—is only legal in quite savage countries like Darfur, where the Muslim inhabitants are as honest as the day. I had the fortune to know one Darfuri pretty intimately in my youth before I had aspired to study the Qur-án. He told me once about this punishment for theft in his own country, and I was shocked. “How would you like,” I said, “to have your hand cut off?” “If I became that shameful thing, a thief,” he said, “I should not be content with one hand only. They could cut my head as well.”

That is the proper Muslim point of view, of course. Every true Muslim would rather lose his hand or foot, his tongue or eyesight, than commit a sin against the law of Allah. But Islam forbids self-mutilation, which the Prophet Jesus had made lawful by his saying:

If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out. If thy hand or foot offend thee, cut it off.

Readers of George Moore’s story, The Book Cherith, were, many of them, shocked at the picture of a dread-
ful act of self-mutilation committed by a certain kind of sinner at the suggestion, and with the approval, of Jesus himself. And yet that picture did not lack full scriptural authority. Christians who shudder at some texts of the Qur-án, commanding cruel punishment of cruel people as an example in extreme cases, should remember that the Bible—aye, even in the Gospels—contains texts which make a Muslim shudder, and with greater reason, for they are anti-social. I have said already several times that the teaching of Jesus concerned only the individual soul in its approach to Allah. The text which I have partly quoted proves it.

If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out. If thy hand or foot offend thee, cut it off.

As if our eyes, our hands, our feet, were ours alone, to deal with as we liked, as if they did not in a sense belong to all mankind. "Pluck it out, cut it off." Do it yourself, without consulting anybody. It is a matter which concerns you only. How much more social and more civilized is the Muslim law, allowing mutilation to be practised as an exemplary punishment only in certain cases of extreme brutality, after proper trial, and by the hand of public executioner. It seems a cruel punishment to us. But you must remember that the term "a thief" in Muslim countries implies a much more lawless and abandoned person than it does in Christian countries. I mean, for one thing, that the thief in Muslim countries never steals from dire
necessity, for in Muslim countries people never refuse food and clothing to a man in need. In Muslim countries no one ever died of hunger at his neighbour's gate. And, I ask you, is that punishment which seems to us so cruel, that punishment applicable in practice to men utterly unsensitive, really more cruel than to confine a highly-strung, refined, well-educated man in solitude and gloom and silence for a term of months, for no worse crime than that of an expressed opinion, and for no exemplary purpose, since the torture he endures is quite unknown outside the prison walls. Yet that, I understand, is the last refinement which Christian justice or humanitarianism, or a combination of both, has produced. Every one would, of course, have screamed aloud in horror if those same highly-educated men had been condemned to have their hands cut off; but would it really have been half so cruel?

As a substitute for punishment, also, the sentimentalists of Europe have devised perpetual solitary confinement. The criminal is in fact, walled up alive, deprived of all that makes life bearable, yet kept technically alive, a more ingenious, long-drawn-out atrocity than ever mind of fiend contrived or hand of savage executed. And it has been practised not in one case only but on thousands of unlucky human creatures. To such appalling cruelty does the false sentimental value attached to human life in some
highly-civilized communities mislead its victims. Death—killing—in itself is no atrocity. It can be merciful. For Muslims it is not the end of life, but a beginning under other and less adverse circumstances. And sudden death the Muslim thinks the best of all, having a natural dread of sickness, pain, and a prolonged agony.

You cannot be a Muslim and a sentimentalist. For nature has no sentimentality, and Muslims reverence the laws of nature as the laws of God. In nature there is much to shock the timid, gentle soul, just as in the Bible and the Qur-án there are verses which dismay the reader at the first approach. In the Bible, these are many and unqualified. In the Qur-án, not quite so many, and are qualified by circumstances and explained in their relation to the general law in such a manner as to make their meaning and occasion clear. I should not, for myself, have counted war among the subjects which might shock an English reader in a sacred book. It seems to me one of the natural phenomena of collective human life. But many Christians do regard it as a thing obnoxious to religion, simply because Jesus Christ had no concern with it; and it is on their account that I have gone to all this length of explanation.

If you refuse to recognize war as a natural phenomenon coming within the province of religious
law, if you hold aloof from it and from the politics which cause it, you will not contribute to the ending of all war nor mitigate its horrors in the least. Your attitude will tend rather to increase the horrors, for you consider it as of necessity wicked and horrible, and are glad when it appears to all the world as such. You think—though you may disavow the thought—just as aggressive militarists think, that by dint of piling on the horrors wars will cease. You would never condescend to regulate it or control it. You would never condescend to touch so foul a thing.

That is the proper Christian point of view, you tell us. Well, that point of view has been known and presumably active in the world for nineteen centuries. We think that it was a mistake from the outset; we believe that our Islamic rules for modifying and restraining war, making it harmless and unprofitable, and so ending it, are in fact the complement of Christ's instruction, applying to collective human conduct the rules he gave for individual human conduct. I have shown how Christians, as they grew enlightened, have all unconsciously adopted some of them. I only ask that you will think about them seriously, and if they interest you, give them careful study. Islamic laws are not for Muslims only, but for all the world. Everybody who desires the happiness and progress of the human race, quite apart from the spiritual side of religion, must be to some extent a follower of Muhammad,