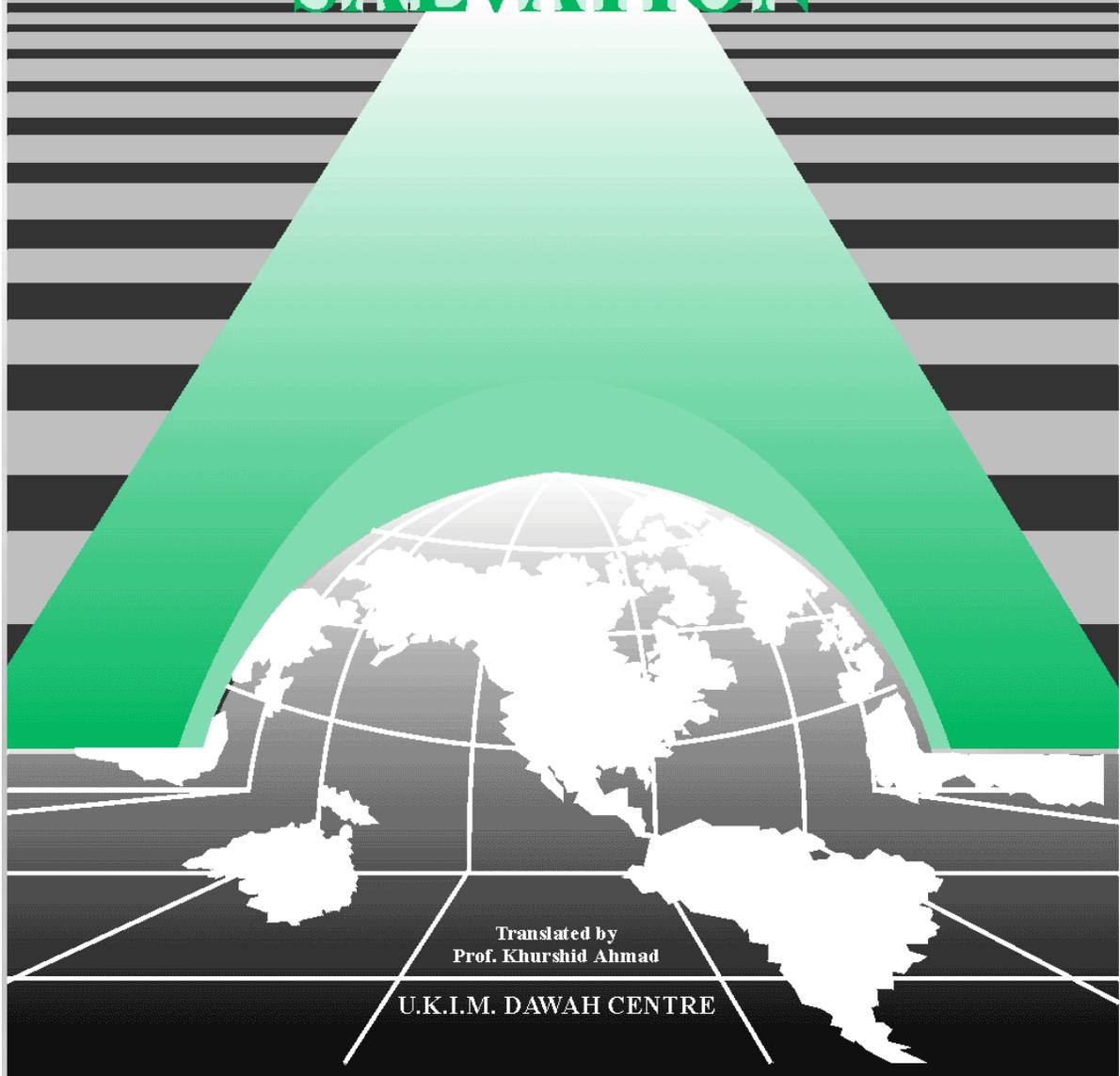


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# THE ROAD TO PEACE AND SALVATION



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## INTRODUCTION

There are major issues which vex every thinking man and woman at sometime in life. One of these matters is the existence of God. Another is the anguished question: why, if there is a God and He is merciful, is there so much suffering in the world, and why is peace so elusive? This last question is particularly pertinent in this last decade of a century which seems to have nothing but war and bloodshed.

Mawlana Mawdudi, like many scholars before him, tackles these questions head-on. But his approach is down-to-earth, and seeks to explain his answers to these questions by using everyday examples which are easily understood.

Having pointed towards the answers to these important questions, Mawdudi throws some questions back at us, which each and every one has to answer: Now that we know of the Maker and His plan, what are we going to do about it?

Huda Khattab May 1994.

Huda Khattab was born in Lancashire (England), and raised as a Protestant Christian. Although a devoted and regular church-attender in her teens, she found that many of her questions were not answered by Christianity. After studying Christianity and other religions, she embraced Islam in 1983, whilst still at University. She received her BA (Hons) in Arabic from the School of Oriental and African Studies (London University) in 1986. She has translated several books from Arabic to English, and is the author of "Stories from the Muslim World" (Macdonald 1987) and "The Muslim Woman's Handbook" (Ta-Ha 1993).

## Chapter 1

### ON THE EXISTENCE OF THE DIVINE BEING

If some one were to tell you that in the centre of town there was a big store, with no sales staff or managers, which was running smoothly, with goods coming in on time and being sold automatically to customers, would you believe it? Could you accept the notion of goods coming in without any supplier, and being sold without the agency of any salesmen? Could you agree that the goods in the shop would be safe from burglars and thieves without the supervision of security staff? It goes without saying that nobody in his right mind could believe in the existence of such a store.

Or take another example: Suppose somebody told you that he had seen a large factory running by itself, without any managers, foremen, engineers or machine operators. Imagine, furthermore, being told that the factory had come into existence spontaneously, that all the components of the machines had fitted themselves into place and were running smoothly, churning out excellent products. Surely you would doubt the sanity of the person telling you this story - only a mad-man could make up such a tale!

Think, then, about these examples: Could you accept that an electric light bulb would generate light by itself? Could the greatest philosopher in the world convince you that a chair had assumed its present form by itself? Could you be persuaded that the cloth of your coat had woven itself, or that your house had not been built, but had come into existence spontaneously?

These are just a few everyday examples. But if you cannot believe that a shop can be run without salesman, or that a factory can be built without engineers and run without staff, how can you possibly be persuaded that the Universe is without a creator or master? In the vast complexity of the Universe, countless living beings and innumerable heavenly bodies function and interact with clockwork precision. Vapour rises from the oceans and forms into clouds; the wind blows the clouds to distant parts of the earth and, under the right conditions, the vapour condenses and falls to the earth as rain. The rain-water brings the dead earth to life, and facilitates the growth of food-crops, trees, fruit and flowers. Could any rational person be convinced that this vast, complex and integrated system came in to existence without any creator and is running without a master controller?

We have no hesitation in dismissing as a lunatic a person who believes that a piece of cloth or a chair came into existence spontaneously; can we then accept the thesis of the person who says that the earth sprang into existence of its own accord, that the animals came to life by themselves and that the most complex of living beings - mankind - came into existence without any creator? Chemical analysis of the physical make-up of the human body has shown it to be composed of certain quantities of iron, carbon, sulphur, phosphorus, calcium, sodium, etc. - substances which would cost no more than a few pennies altogether. But could anybody create a human being merely by combining these substances in the same proportion in which they are found in the human body? Surely not - so how can we be expected to believe that a human being, capable of such complicated feats of technology as making aeroplanes and televisions, came into existence without the design of a superior intelligence and the skill of a master craftsman?

Have you ever thought about how the human infant is formed and developed in the tiny workshop of the mother's womb? Neither father nor mother has anything to do with this wonderful process. At a moment of which neither father nor mother is aware, two small "life-germs", which cannot even be seen without the aid of a microscope, come together and unite. Thereafter, the new life draws its nourishment from the mother's blood, which supplies it with sufficient quantities of iron, calcium and other essential nutrients. In time, the two cells which initially united develop into a bundle of cells, like a lump of flesh. Then this "lump" begins to acquire a definite and recognizable shape, and the various organs and parts of the body begin to grow in the appropriate places: the eyes, ears, brain, heart, bones and muscles are all developing as and where they should. The embryo then acquires life, and begins to develop senses. When the embryo has at last developed into a fully-formed human infant, the small workshop of the womb delivers it to the outside world, to begin independent life. These "uterine workshops" are delivering millions of new infants every day, but every single one is different from the others - in appearance, voice, disposition and potential. Even "identical" twins will have some important differences, and will never be one hundred percent identical. This is indeed a marvel which staggers the imagination.

Only a person who is out of his mind could believe that the whole wonderful system of life and the universe, which has continued for countless centuries and generations, could have come into existence without the agency of a wise, all-knowing and all-powerful God.

## Chapter 2

### THE UNITY OF GOD

Let us take the matter of life a little further. Anyone possessed with basic common-sense would accept that no enterprise, whether big or small, can run smoothly unless a single person is made ultimately responsible for its progress.

Have you heard of a single school with two headmasters, a department with two directors, an army with two commanders-in-chief, or a country with two presidents? Could any institution under such dual control function efficiently?

Even in everyday life, we are aware that "too many cooks spoil the broth". Any project left under the leadership of more than one person cannot be managed properly - they will bicker and squabble until the work is ruined. However good the team spirit may be, good management, smooth working and efficiency are inconceivable without the presence of a single authority in ultimate control.

Bearing this simple, common-sense fact in mind, take a look around you at the grand system of the universe. Look at the planets in constant motion, the earth on which you live, the moon which rises in the evening and the sun which rises at dawn; their movements indicate a strict set

of rules or laws. Have you ever found evening setting in or the sun rising before the natural hour? Has the moon ever collided with the earth? Has the sun ever deviated from its fixed position? Have you ever heard of a planet deviating from its fixed course by even a hair's breadth? Like the parts of a watch, these millions of heavenly bodies, some of which are thousands of times bigger than our own earth or sun, are following their appointed courses strictly in accordance with the "laws of nature". The distances between them, and the direction and speed of their movements, are fixed, and even the slightest deviation of one of them would throw the entire system into chaos.

Moving down from the heavens to our own earth, let us look more closely at the world in which we live, and at our own selves. The whole system of the earth and the drama of life which we see enacted upon it are governed by certain strict rules. For example, the gravitational pull of the earth keeps everything on it in its proper place. If the earth were to relax this hold for even a second, the world would quite literally fall to pieces. All the wheels and cogs of the world's vast workshop are governed by a rigid set of regulations, which cannot be altered in the least. Air, water and light obey the laws laid down for them; the seasons of the year adhere strictly to the schedule set out for them. Rocks, metals, electricity, trees, animals... nothing has the power to overstep the boundaries within which it is required to exist by the laws which govern it. Nothing can change its qualities or properties, or refuse to discharge the duties assigned to it. Within the limits set, all parts of this vast machine are co-operating with one another, and every event and development we witness is due to this co-operation.

Take the apparently insignificant example of a seed which has been sown in the ground. It is obvious that the seed cannot germinate and grow unless everything else in heaven and earth co-operates in sustaining it and aiding its development. The soil has to provide it with the necessary heat and light. Water and air also have their part to play. The night makes it cool and provides dew; the day brings warmth and helps it to germinate and grow. The various elements co-operate for months, even years, on end, until the plant reaches maturity and bears fruit. All the crops which provide our food and sustenance grow as a result of this co-operation between the various forces of nature. Indeed, we are only alive because of this natural co-operation which sustains us. If the co-operation of any one of these elements was to be withdrawn, life would become virtually, if not absolutely, impossible. If, for example, the air were to withdraw itself from this co-operative enterprise, we would instantly cease to exist. If water refused to act in harmony with the air and heat in the atmosphere, there would be not a drop of rain. If the soil did not co-operate with water, our gardens and fields would dry up, our crops would never ripen, and we would never be able to build houses. If fire refused to be kindled, all our ovens, mills and factories would grind to a halt. If iron refused to react to fire, we would not be able to make a needle or a knife, not to mention cars, trains and heavy machinery. In short, the world in which we live exists only because of the interdependence and co-operation of the various elements and "departments" of the world around us.

Could anyone find anything wrong or false in the statements made above? If it is all true, and supported by our own observations, is it not natural to wonder about the *raison d'être* of this

whole grand scheme, with its regularity and harmony, this perfect co-operation between the myriad elements and forces of the Universe? The cosmos has existed as such for billions of years; trees and animals have existed on the earth for millions of years; mankind has lived on earth for thousands of years. But the system of the Universe has never experienced any disruption. The moon has never fallen upon the earth, or the earth collided with the sun. The fixed duration of day and night has never altered, and soil and water, fire and heat, have continued their appointed partnerships. One is bound to wonder, why do all the various 'departments' of this vast realm adhere so strictly and faithfully to the rules and regulations laid down for them? Why do they not fall foul of one another? Why is there no disorder or disturbance in this system? What is the force that keeps its various parts under the control of a single administration? You only have to search your own hearts for the answers. Don't you feel intuitively that a single Divine Being is the Sovereign of the Universe, and that it is the Supreme Power of this Single Sovereign that keeps everything in the Universe subject to His own laws and regulations? If this Universe were governed by two gods let alone several - its affairs could not possibly have been run so regularly and efficiently. If even a small enterprise such as a school or business cannot be run by two leaders at the same time, how could the vast realms of the heavens and earth be run by more than one Sovereign?

In short, it is a fact that the Universe did not come into existence by itself, and that it is not functioning spontaneously. The Universe has been created, and is being run, by a single Being. The regularity, precision and efficiency with which it is being run, and the adherence of all its components to its laws leaves no room for any doubt that it is under the control of a single Administrator. The strictness of the laws of the Universe bears testimony to the fact that a single Sovereign rules the heavens, the earth and everything in between. The sun, the moon and the stars, the earth and all that it contains - rivers, trees, mountains, animals - are all under His command. The life and death of human beings are in His hands. He has full control over the whole world, and nothing is able to enforce its own will in the kingdom of God.

The perfect order of the Universe precludes the existence of more than one administrator. The very nature of its organization demands that no other being should have a share in His authority, that there should be a single Ruler and that all other beings should be His subjects. If any other being enjoyed even a fraction of the original authority, disorder, indiscipline and chaos would surely follow. Moreover, the administration of such a vast realm demands not only power, but also knowledge. It requires such a vision as can encompass the whole universe at one time, and a mind so comprehensive that it can issue commands and directions whilst keeping in view the needs and demands of the entire system. The organization of the universe would surely have been disrupted if some lesser "deities", not endowed with this universal vision, had been allowed to share the sovereignty of the universe with the supreme Lord and Master, and been entrusted with authority over particular matters and certain parts of creation. Even a simple machine is likely to be thrown out of gear if it is entrusted to a person who does not know how to operate it and tries to interfere with its workings. With regard to the greater system of the Universe, the very fact that it is being run with complete efficiency and

order should make it clear that no force or being shares even the slightest degree of the sovereignty of the Universe with God.

This is not merely a statement of fact. It is also right and proper that God's sovereignty over the universe should not be shared with any other entity and that His law alone should govern the entire realm. Those who are His own creatures, who depend entirely upon His mercy for their very survival, who cannot live for a second by virtue of their own capacities, are surely not competent to share His sovereignty. Could a servant share his master's right of ownership? Would a master share his power or rights with his servant? Such a situation is not only unacceptable according to the patent realities of the universe; it is also repugnant to reason, nature, truth and logic.

### Chapter 3

#### THE REAL CAUSE OF MAN'S DISTRESS

These are the basic realities underlying the scheme and system of this world and of the entire Universe. As the saying goes, "No man is an Island"; none of us exists independently - each of us is a part of the grand system, like parts of a machine. For every one of us, therefore, these realities are as relevant and fundamentally important as they are for the world as a whole.

Each of us is perplexed as to why human life is so lacking in peace and security. Why are we so frequently faced with such troubles and hardships? Why have our systems and laws gone awry? We are forever seeing nations falling foul of one another, country struggling against country, men tearing one another apart like wolves. Millions of people are being killed, wounded, or displaced by war. Homes are being destroyed, and property and businesses worth billions of pounds are being devastated. The strong are crushing the weak, the rich are exploiting the poor, governments are tyrannical and oppressive, and the so-called guardians of law and order are corrupt and unjust. The rich man is intoxicated by his wealth and the man in authority is consumed with arrogance. There is no loyalty in friendship, and promises are easily broken. Morals are unknown and godlessness prevails, even under the guise of religion. Man has lost faith in man; humanity is divided into countless groups, parties, tribes, each of which is trying to harm others by force, by fraud, by whatever means it has at its disposal - as if this were the correct way, indeed the only way to conduct one's affairs.

What is the root cause of all these troubles? Beyond the human realm, we find perfect tranquillity. The stars, air, water, trees and animals are at peace, obediently following the laws laid down for them. The rest of creation is running smoothly, showing no sign of indiscipline or disorder; why is human life deprived of this blessing? This is a very important, but difficult, question. Most people find it deeply disturbing and baffling, but the answer is not so hard to find. My analysis of the situation, which may give you food for thought, is this: Man is suffering because he has adopted a way of life at variance with truth and reality. Unless he brings his life into line with truth and reality, he will never know peace.

This is not so difficult to understand. Imagine, if you were travelling by train, and took the door of the carriage to be just like your own front door. If you stepped out of it, just as you would out of your front door, your delusion would not help you in the least. The carriage door would not turn into your front door, and the ground you fell onto would not turn into your garden path. When you fell from the speeding train, your fate would be inevitable, even if you were to continue to nurse your delusion along with your broken limbs.

Similarly, if you persuade yourself that this world is without a Divine Master, or choose to believe in a deity other than the One God, or even declared yourself to be divine, this would not change reality. God would still be the Lord and Master of the Universe, and His vast realms, of which you occupy the smallest part where you live as His subject, would still remain under His control. Only you would have to pay the consequences for the unsound way of life which you adopt because of your delusion, even if you continue to regard it as correct and proper.

It should be clear that God has not been made the Lord and Master of the Universe by any external force. He is the Sovereign of the Universe in His own right, and His Sovereignty does not depend upon your recognition. His Sovereignty depends upon His own strength. He has created you as well as the Universe. The earth, the sun, the moon and the rest of creation, and all the forces in it, are subject to His command. All the things that help to keep you alive are under His control. Your very existence depends entirely on His will. These are hard facts, which you cannot change by any means. You may refuse to recognise them, you may close your eyes to them, you may explain them away in any manner you like, but they will still remain as they are. Your refusal to accept these realities will make no difference to them whatsoever, but it will have an effect on you.

If you accept these realities, and recognize your own position in the scheme of things, you will be able to order your life accordingly, and live in peace and contentment. If, however, you reject these realities and try to assume a position which you are not really entitled to, you will meet a fate not very different from that of the person who mistakes the door of a railway carriage for his own front door. You will inevitably hurt yourself, you may even lose your life, but the reality will remain unchanged.

What, then, is our proper position in the light of these realities? What is the position of the servant vis-a-vis the master? Is he not duty bound to obey the master's commands, to carry out his wishes, and not to overstep the bounds of his position as a servant? The servant's job is to serve. The subordinate officer's job is to carry out the order of his superiors and not try to assume the position of a general himself. If you own a piece of land or property, you will want to see that it is managed precisely according to your wishes - this is your right. If you lived in a country where all power is concentrated in the hands of a monarch or ruler, what would your position be in relation to his? Surely you would be expected to live peacefully as a law-abiding citizen. If you decided to assume power yourself, would you not be regarded as a rebel and a traitor?

These examples make it clear to us what our position is in the realms of the Universe, where the Sovereign is Almighty God. It is He Who has created us, and our only duty is to live and act in accordance with the will of our Creator. It is He Who sustains and feeds us from His treasury. Our position is that of a servant, and we have no rights beyond that. He is the supreme Sovereign of the whole world, including our own selves, and we can have no other status except that of the subjects of the Sovereign. The heavens and the earth are all His property, and should be administered and managed according to His will. We have no business to try and run the world according to our own wishes and desires, independent of Him; if we try to do so, we are bound to suffer grievously.

God's sovereignty over the Universe exists by virtue of His own power and authority. The heavens and the earth are all within His power. No human being can claim any other status except that of His subject. His law is the law of the Universe and His command alone is worthy of obedience. None of His subjects has the right to assume for himself the position of a sovereign ruler. No individual or legislative body has the right to make laws according to their whims or desires, and call upon the subjects of God to follow that law rather than the Divine law. No government has the right to enforce its own authority and require people to obey its own commands rather than the Divine injunctions. No individual or group has the right to recognize the rule of any of the pretenders to power in preference to the rule of the True Sovereign, to reject the laws of God and accept those made by human law-makers, to reject the commands of a legitimate ruler, or to obey an illegitimate, self-appointed ruler. False claims of sovereignty and recognition of these claims all amount to acts of manifest rebellion, and guilty parties are bound to be punished sooner or later.

Each and every one of us is under God's control, and He can call any of us back to Him whenever He wills. No-one has the power to escape the reach of His Law. After death, our bodies may be buried, or burnt, or otherwise reduced to "dust" and "ashes", yet we will never escape the long arm of the Divine Law. The entire Universe is under His control, and even if the particles of our bodies are scattered throughout the world, as soon as He wills it, we will be brought before Him and asked: By what right did you claim sovereignty when you were nothing but My subjects and slaves? Who empowered you to enforce your laws in My realms? Why did you recognize the authority of imposters and pretenders when you were My subjects? Why did you obey illegitimate masters when you were My servants? Why did you give credit to others for providing your livelihood when in fact it was I Who sustained you and you drew your living from My treasury?

Would you be able to answer these charges? Is there any lawyer, no matter how skilled and persuasive, who could defend you? Could he offer any recommendation to save you from the severe penalty prescribed for such rebellion?

It is not merely a matter of rights; it is also a question of ability. Is any human individual or group really capable of being a ruler or law-maker? Even ordinary machinery will be thrown out of gear if it is operated by someone who does not know how to operate it. If you entrust a car to

someone who does not know how to drive, you will soon come to grief. If a machine made of cold and lifeless steel and plastic cannot be used without full knowledge of its nature and workings, how can the world of men - this most complicated machine with a myriad of psychological and other facets, each of which may exhibit innumerable difficulties - be controlled and ruled by men, who far from knowing others, do not even know themselves well enough? When such novices assume the role of law-makers and try to run human life, their fate will most likely resemble that of the car entrusted to the non-driver. It is easy to see that wherever man-made laws have been followed, rather than the laws of God, and wherever the affairs of man have been run by men with disregard for Divine commands, things have not been properly managed and there has been no peace or tranquillity. On the contrary, there is only violence and bloodshed, oppression and injustice, exploitation and degradation. It has become a dog-eat-dog world, where public morality has been shattered and social well-being destroyed. All the powers and faculties with which God created man have been used for destruction rather than welfare and progress. The reason why man has turned this world into a veritable hell is that, like a curious child, he has tried to run a machine about whose mechanism and working he knows next to nothing. Only the Maker of this machine knows its secrets and the precise manner in which it can be run efficiently. If mankind can persuade itself even now to retrace the steps it has taken on the path to perdition, and start following the laws laid down by the Maker of the human machine, the damage that we have so far done to ourselves can yet be repaired, and our life redeemed. There is no other way out of the troubles and tribulations which we have created for ourselves.

## Chapter 4

### WHY IS THERE SO MUCH INJUSTICE IN THE WORLD?

If you look at this problem a little more deeply, you will find another reason, beside his own ignorance, for mankind's undoing.

The word "man" or "mankind" does not refer to any particular individual or tribe or nation. Moreover, these words, in their traditional usage, are taken to refer to women as well as men. All men and women are human beings and have the right to live and obtain the necessities of life; all are entitled to justice, honour and dignity. Human welfare does not entail merely the welfare of any particular individual, tribe, class or nation, but the welfare of all people. When wealth and comfort are enjoyed by the few while the majority languishes amidst hardship and adversity, it cannot be said that mankind is happy and prosperous.

Having accepted this self-evident truth, how may the welfare and prosperity of the whole of mankind be achieved? This goal can only be reached if laws are made for mankind by One Who does not discriminate amongst men. It can be achieved only if the rights of men are justly determined by One Who has no personal stake in the matter, and Who is not associated with the interests of any tribe, family, class, country or nation. It can be achieved only if all are

subject to the commands of One Who can neither err in His judgement because of ignorance or inadequate knowledge, nor abuse authority for personal gain, nor take the side of one against another.

This is the only way to establish justice and ensure that all individuals, nations, classes and groups will have equal rights. This is the only way to end oppression, injustice and tyranny.

Is there any man on earth who could be so fair, just and selfless? Is there anyone who is so free from human weaknesses? Surely this question cannot be answered in the affirmative. Such perfect fairness and justice are attributes which belong to God alone. Any human being, no matter how fair and big-hearted he may be, will have some personal interests; he is bound to feel closer to some people than others, to be very fond of some and take a dislike to others. Moreover, no human being can claim to be free from weaknesses and shortcomings. This is the reason why we find oppression and injustice, in one form or another, wherever man-made laws are in force instead of the law of God, and where human authority is obeyed instead of the Divine commands.

Think of the various royal families who have secured for themselves by force positions of honour and distinction, fabulous wealth, and a life of pomp and privileges that are denied to others. They are above the law and cannot be sued in court, no matter what they do. They commit manifest errors and yet the fiction is maintained - and believed by many - that the monarch can do no wrong. It is patently obvious that they are mere mortals like all others, yet they pose as demi-gods and are placed on a high pedestal, and ordinary folks, if they approach them at all, appear before them with folded hands and on bended knee, as if they depended on the royalty for their livelihood, and even for their very life. The kings and their kinsmen collect money from the people by fair means or foul, and squander it on palaces and carriages, on luxury and sport. The rich people's dogs often eat better food than many human beings, the very people who toil to fill the coffers of the wealthy. Is this justice? Could this scheme of things possibly be the invention of a just sovereign who has equal regard for the rights and interests of all?

Or think of the Brahmins in India, or priests and wealthy princes and nobles in other lands, or of the business magnates and tycoons throughout the world. All of them consider themselves to be above the "common people". They have been able to put many laws on the statute books, in many countries, which grant them rights not available to ordinary people. They are considered to be clean and respectable, while common folk are viewed as dirty and despicable. They are regarded as noble and the others as mean. It is as if their role is to rob and the common people are there just to be robbed. The life, honour and property of the common people are often sacrificed to keep the privileged classes happy. Could such rules and regulations possibly be the handiwork of a just being? Do they not reflect glaring selfishness and partiality?

Or think of history, when powerful states enslaved weaker states by force. Is there any law enacted or resolution passed by them which does not betray selfishness? Everywhere

certain nations are claiming that they are superior races; indeed they regard themselves alone as human beings, and regard the members of weaker nations to be inferior races, or even sub-human. They believe themselves to be perfectly justified in sacrificing the interests of others for the sake of their own. All the laws passed by them, or under their influence or pressure, clearly betray this attitude.

These examples are merely hints and brief illustrations. The matter could be dwelt upon at length, but there is no need. It is obvious that man-made laws reflect injustice of one kind or another. On the one hand, they give a few people more than is their right; on the other, they deny millions not only their rights, but even their human dignity. The reason for these injustices is not too hard to find: when a man sits down to decide a matter, his mind and heart will be dominated by his own interests and inclinations, or by those of his family, race, class, tribe or nation. He cannot look at others with the same understanding and sympathy as he shows towards those who are closest to him.

There is no remedy for this prevalent injustice except to scrap man-made laws and accept, unconditionally and without reservation, the law of God in Whose eyes all human beings are equal and Who distinguishes between them on the basis of their piety, virtue, character, conduct and merits, rather than their race, colour, class or nationality.

## Chapter 5

### HOW CAN WE ESTABLISH PEACE?

There is a further aspect of the problem that cannot be ignored. It is evident that, in the ultimate analysis, the sense of responsibility is the only force that can keep a person under restraint. If a person is convinced that there is nobody to call him to account, and that there is no power that can punish him, then he will naturally tend to lose all sense of discipline and lead a life of license and irresponsibility, with no respect or concern for others.

This is as true of families, nations and mankind at large, as it is for individuals. A family will lose control and exceed the limits of responsibility and authority when it finds that there is nobody to question it and bring it to book. A socio-economic class will not hesitate to oppress other classes when it finds that it is not answerable to anybody. When a nation finds that it is strong enough to assert itself with impunity, it sets out to overrun and destroy weaker nations, just as the wolf will attack the sheep.

Much of the disorder that plagues the world today is due primarily to the fact that most people do not recognize the sovereignty of a Being superior to all of them, and that there is a Being to Whom they will all have to answer for their deeds one day, Who has the power to punish them. Unless they come to recognize and believe in such a Being, oppression and injustice will continue, and true peace cannot be established.

Who could this supreme Being be, but God Almighty, the Lord and Master of the Universe. He could not be any human being, for any individual or group invested with supreme power would become irresponsible and capricious, like a Pharaoh, acting selfishly and partially, unfairly favouring some over others. “Absolute power corrupts absolutely”. Earlier this century, the League of Nations was set up by the European powers to solve the problem of international disorder, but it soon degenerated into an association of White Nations and was used as a tool in the hands of a few Great Powers who began to treat smaller and weaker nations unjustly.\*

These and other lessons of history should have taught us that we cannot expect man to provide an ideal power the fear of which can keep all individuals, groups, nations and empires under restraint, and ensure proper conduct at all levels from the individual to the international. Such a power has to be outside, and above, the human world. It can only be the power of God. If we are concerned about our own welfare and progress, there is no alternative for us but to believe in God, submit to His sovereignty, obey His law, and realise that He sees and knows all that we do and think, and that we will one day have to appear before Him to render a full account of our lives on this earth. This is the only way in which we can hope to become good, peaceful and law-abiding men and women. This is the only way in which we can attain peace in this world and salvation in the Hereafter.

There remains one more doubt to be dispelled. If God’s sovereignty over the Universe is so absolute, if everything from the sub-atomic particles to the mighty heavenly bodies is under His control, and if man is merely a humble subject of the realms of the Almighty, how then is man able to rebel against the Divine sovereign and set up his own dominions in which he rides roughshod over others through man-made laws? Why does the Almighty not put a stop to it immediately and punish them?

Let us take the example of a country where the ruler posts one of his subjects as the governor of a particular province. The whole country is under the control of the ruler; the citizens are his subjects, the roads, railways, telecommunications, armed forces and all other means of control are at his disposal; and the province in question is surrounded on all sides by the dominions of the ruler. If he so wished, the ruler could compel the governor by force into complete loyalty and unquestioning obedience, but he wants to test the man’s intelligence, loyalty, sense of duty and ability. So he gives the governor free rein in the province - to such an extent that the governor ceases to feel the controlling authority and power of the supreme sovereign.

If the governor is wise, loyal and dutiful, he will never lose sight of his position as a subject and subordinate of the ruler, and will run his province within the limits of his jurisdiction in accordance with the authority of the sovereign. He will exercise his authority within the framework of the sovereign’s commission and according to the latter’s wishes. This loyal and dutiful conduct will prove his ability and competence, and he will be in line for promotion to higher positions.

On the other hand, imagine that the governor is foolish, disloyal and wicked, and that the people of the province are ignorant and naive. Taking advantage of the free rein given to him by the sovereign, the governor decides on rebellion. He takes it into his head to rule independently as the lord and master of the province, and the people begin to obey him, because they see that he pays them, he controls the local police and courts, and he has the power to punish and execute, and to make or break the lives of people in the province.

The sovereign is aware of the treason committed by the rebellious governor, and of its acceptance by the short-sighted local populace. He is surely powerful enough to put an end to the rebellion and inflict a severe punishment on the guilty parties, but he does not do so. He wants to put the governor and people to a thorough test. He continues to give them free rein, and looks on as they pursue their disastrous course. He wants all their evil to be fully expressed. He enjoys absolute power, and has no fear that the rebellious governor may eventually march on the capital and overthrow him. He is certain that the rebels would never be able to leave their province, which is surrounded by loyal territory. He is, therefore, in no hurry to force the issue. He can continue to tolerate the situation for years on end. But ultimately, when all the evil latent in the offending governor and people has fully manifested itself, he swoops on them and his punishment is so severe that no stratagem on their part can avert it.

Each and every one of us, from the rulers and men in authority to the humblest peasants and slum-dwellers, is on trial. Our intelligence and wisdom, our sense of duty, our integrity and loyalty, are being put to a severe test. Each of us has to decide whether he wants to be loyal or disloyal to the real Lord. This is the most vital question, the most important issue in life. Success or failure depends on this alone. Let each of us engage in some deep and sincere soul-searching. Have we really chosen to be loyal to our Lord, or are we following the road that leads to disloyalty, betrayal, and ultimate disaster...?