

# League of Faith

## A Lecture

BY

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“Say O followers of the Book come to a proposition equitable between us and you :—that we shall not serve any but Allah and that we shall not associate aught with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for Lords besides Allah.” This noble message of universal fraternization was delivered, some thirteen hundred years ago, by the last of that blessed race of Prophets who were raised by God from time to time in different parts of the world chiefly with the object of creating a harmonious whole out of conflicting elements in the human race. To-day again, Brethren, I repeat that very message in the name of Islam, Ye who believe in the Vedas and are descendants of Rishis, ye Members of Christianity and Judiasm ; in short all those who are votaries and believers in any Message from God, come to this one principle : let us join hand in hand and worship one and only one Great God. Let us create a big shrine with the whole world as its parish. Is this cry from me, a cry in the wilderness, especially when the whole atmosphere of religion is saturated with diversity and divergence? How to create uniformity out of this diversity and how to secure homogeneity out of this heterogeneity ?

But brethren, you need not labour under any disappointment. Has not all this heterogeneity risen out of homogeneity, and again does not every heterogeneity acting upon certain principles tend towards homogeneity? Observe what is going on all around you in the realm of Nature. Is not progress another name for differentiation? The other day I was speaking of progress as the order of the day, and to-day I formulate that progress synchronises with differentiation, and diversity is the lever on which the whole machinery of Evolution goes on. If you need any illustration, Gentlemen, to substantiate this proposition of mine I have simply to refer you to an ordinary organism you find in the form of a tree before your eyes. The seed is the materialisation of homogeneity. In the seedling comes the growth which converts itself into two divergent sprouts which develop into so many twigs, so many branches and so many leaves, foliage and flowers. In each step there

is heterogeneity and differentiation. Go to any anatomical room in any medical college and study your embryonic conditions. In the womb, again, each step of growth means differentiation—a seminal seed, a clot of blood, a piece of boneless flesh, then big bones to be gradually covered with flesh. A new differentiation again into two arms and then hands and fingers. The same is observable in the lower part of our body. In short the whole process of evolution from the ethereal specks and electronic collocation to the human frame is characterised everywhere by differentiation.

Does not the same proposition hold good in human society, whether on the social plane or moral? In the tribal days when the world was in the primitive stage, homogeneity worked in every family. Every one was doing every thing for himself and looked to his own needs. But it was stagnation and no progress. In some way or other we came to discover the principle of division of labour which caused divergence. Diverse occupations were given to different units of the same family or country which worked out progress. Villages grew into towns and these brought together gave birth to countries while countries grew into continents.

If this is the principle of progress in every other department of nature, why should it not hold water on the plane of religion? What is after all religion? It would be fetishism and not religion if we accept this thing or that with the belief that our such doing makes us immune from harm. Religion is higher and nobler than this, it is something elevating. The essence of religion consists in the development of our potentialities by balancing our passions and impulses into ethics and morality and to sublimate morality again into what is called the Soul. Religion came to evolve our physical nature into spirituality. Let us trace first the origin of our emotions and impulses which are the bedrock of our further development under religion. Our emotions and impulses are the outcome of our consciousness which come out of plasmic congeries forming the brain; and the protoplasmic matter which constitutes brain cells in its turn is only a developed form of ethereal specks. The history of all religious thought is, therefore, only a history of the development of ethereal specks, in the long runs into ethics, philosophy and spirituality as I find in the Quran. The rule of progress

applicable to the physical plane is, therefore, also applicable to the mental, moral and spiritual planes. Variety in religion is, therefore, only a sign of progress in religious thought as the Holy Prophet Muhamad said :—Difference of opinion in my followers is a blessing.

If so is the case, how are we to create harmony in this mass of heterogeneity in order to make "League of Faith" a reality ?

Before I dwell on this proposition further I wish to draw your attention to those unchangeable rules and regulations which are implicitly obeyed in matters I have been speaking of, and for my illustrations I will again refer to a tree. Let us see how this bundle of diversities manages to work on harmoniously. Examine this organism and you will find seven laws operating on all the elements and atoms which combine in the form of a tree. In the first place there is unity in origin in the form of the seed—the fountain-head of all growth ; then ramification ; thirdly community of allegiance to the root from all its various branches ; fourthly mutual recognition by every branch of the other branch as an independent entity ; fifthly mutual willingness to be benefited by each other ; sixthly, abstention from injury to each other, and lastly, to complete the sacred number seven, we see the principle of co-operation for working out one big purpose. These are those unalterable Laws of God that are furthering progress in every department of the universe by creating diversity out of uniformity and then again reducing these diverse things into one harmonious whole.

What is true of a tree is true of every other thing on any plane, physical or moral, social, political or spiritual. Fortunately enough the world of our day is on the move to universalism. All these congresses, conferences and international leagues are mere hankerings of man for universal brotherhood to be established in the whole world. Gentlemen, if this our ideal on any plane is ever to be realised, it is only in the observance of these seven principles ; and if I am afraid of the success of the so trumpeted out "League of Nations," it is only for this very reason. I do find that some of these seven principles of unification are badly wanting in the working of this proposed institution. A society created with a view to subordinating one unit of humanity to serve the interests of another unit, cannot lead to universal peace.

Now to my subject ; but before I go further I wish to remind you again of these seven principles. The first is unity in origin, secondly ramification, thirdly community of connection with the origin, fourthly mutual recognition, fifthly mutual dependence, sixthly abstention from injury, and lastly co-operation. Out of these seven principles, I may say, the fourth principle, that is, the recognition of one by the other as an independent entity, is the most difficult to be observed especially in matters of religion. Do we not condemn each other's religion and is it not diametrically opposed to the said principle of mutual recognition. It is the hardest problem to solve. But for it, we could have accelerated the working out of that fraternity which the world in general and India in particular needs so badly now a days. Now, how proud I feel when I find that Islam has cut this gordian knot. Before the revelation of the Quran, every person, though he claimed divine revelation as the origin of his religion, was not willing to award the same privilege to any other religion on the surface of the earth. Every one believed that only his faith came from his God ; as if he only was the son of God and others were His step-sons. This kind of narrow-mindedness created disintegration and discordance. It ruined all human fabric and destroyed universal social basis. This state of things went on, however, for centuries, and unfortunately, I say, even now that narrow-mindedness is ruling every where on the religious plane. Go to the different sects of Christians and every one would say:—"Believe in what we believe otherwise you are eternally condemned." As if the passport to heaven lay exclusively in their hands. The same dogma is re-echoing from various quarters. No one cares to observe those great Divine morals which find their manifestation in various forms of nature for our physical sustenance. Look to the great luminaries and various other functionaries of nature, the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, water, clouds, trees and so on. Name to me any class or community that has not been allowed to be benefited by these various blessings of God. Our God is not partial in His dispensations as far as physical sustenance is concerned. He makes no difference between man and man and he knows no distinction between race and race. Does not the same sun, the same cloud and moon benefit every part of the world ? If God is so impartial in his

physical dispensation, and if the soul is much more important than the body, how can He afford to be partial in matters spiritual? The whole of nature gives the lie to a belief which confines Divine revelation to a certain community or class of people. The premises were too clear for the salubrious inference, but narrowmindedness never left the world. Al Quran, however, came to uproot it. It brought the happiest message at the very outset, in the opening line of its opening chapter "All praise and glory is due to Allah, Who is the Creator, the Maintainer, the Evolver, (not only of Arabia or Mesopotamia, of Persia or Syria, Europe or America but) of all the worlds." If He insures the protection and preservation, through His manifold bounties, of my physical nature, He treats me in the same way in things spiritual. This Gospel of Universalism, the Quran brought for the first time to the world in order to bring different religions to closer relations of fraternity, and repeated it again and again. "Every nationality has been given a guide" and "Every race has been given a messenger from God." "There has been no class of people but had its Warner from God." Gentlemen, this comes from the book of a religion which has been ruthlessly stigmatized by its adversaries, especially Christian Missionaries, as the book of narrow-mindedness which teaches persecution and oppression. Can you refer, if you are students of comparative theology, to a single line in any sacred book of the world which in the clearest and most unequivocal terms like the Quran teaches such broad-mindedness? The Quran and only the Quran creates in me that largeness of soul which inspires me to-day to make a profession the like of which will hardly come from any other religious quarter:—If I accept, I say, the Quran and accept also the Bible in its original purity as revealed books from God, I do claim the Vedas as joint property with my Hindu brethren. If I believe Moses a Messenger from God I also believe Krishna and Ramachandra as bringers of good tidings and warners from the same God; they appeared in India to crush down evil and restore virtue. If I believe that the Holy stream of Divine beatitude trickled down from the Olive Mount to fertilize the valley of the Jordan, I also believe that Zoroaster came to kindle the Fire of God in Persia to consume impiety. In short, wherever there was any community or class of humanity there was a Warner, a Messenger and an Apostle;

wherever there was darkness there was light. The faith I have professed is not my own make. I read to you the Quran "Say we (Muslims) believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to us and (in) that which has been revealed to Ishmael and Issac and Jacob and the tribes and (in) that which was given to Moses and Jesus and in that which was given to the Prophets from their Lord; we do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him we submit (the Quran 11 : 136). A Muslim under this verse is bound to accept any message delivered to any nation through any Prophet from God. Thus you see, Gentlemen, the fourth condition, *i. e.*, the law of mutual recognition out of the seven principles of progress which I have been enunciating in this discourse, has so comprehensively and so lucidly been confirmed under the teachings of the Quran that I can find no parallel to it elsewhere in the whole realm of religion. A Muslim finds no difficulty in believing in the divine origin of every other religion besides Islam. Now, as to the remaining six principles,—(1) Unity in origin, (2) (2) ramification, (3) connection with and allegiance to the fountain-root (5) mutual willingness to be benefited from each other (6) abstention from injury (7) Co-operation for the common cause. Gentlemen, I am glad to say, the Quran comes to help me to work them out in the same liberal spirit as in the case of the 4th principle. If we care to make the "League of Faith" a success, it can be done only on the basis of these healthy principles and I take them one by one, under the teachings of the Quran. As to the 1st, the Book says :—Say : Do you dispute with us about Allah and He is our Lord and your Lord?" (11 : 139). Allah is the object of worship every where and if various faiths and creeds bow down to His altar, why all this wrangling and dispute? We should all do unite in Him and should accept the Most High as the Fountain-root of all with various religions as ramifications from the same stock. If we believe in the 1st principle we are led to believe in the 2nd; and in this respect the Book (Ch. 11 : 213) says :—"All people are a single nation so Allah raised Prophets as bearers of Good news and as Warners and He revealed with them the Book with truth." From both the quotations it will appear to you gentlemen of various persuasions that the Lord we worship is after all one, the common source of all guidance, and all His human creations are members

of a single family, to whom guidance has come from time to time through the blessed race of Prophets. Now Gentlemen, the God we worship being one and the same, and all His creation being one people, as the Holy Quran says, it follows as a corollary that no two revealed religions in their original purity, could minister to humanity truths contradictory or baneful to human salvation. Removed of all human alloy they must reveal the same great truth, that God is One. The same truth has been revealed in different climes and countries. Then comes the third principle, the community of allegiance on the part of each branch to the fountain-head. On this point the Holy Quran says "Ye believers in different books come to the thing which is right, that is, worship one God and do not associate any other thing with Him." This is what I call community of allegiance to that fountain-head. Let us join in worshipping one God and not to associate any other with His holy name. The Fourth principle, namely, the principle of mutual recognition that every religion has had its original source from God, has already been dealt with fully in the light of the teachings of the Holy Quran, that there is no nationality, race or community where there has not been a warner from God. Fifth is the principle of willingness on the part of every unit to be benefited by any good if found to proceed from the other. Our Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) orders us to do the same in the following words "The words of wisdom are the lost things of a believer and he must claim them wherever he finds them." Under this healthy teaching of the Holy Prophet I became a student of the Vedas and the Bible, and why should not you members of various persuasions read the Holy Quran? And I assure you your labours will be amply rewarded.

The sixth principle of abstention from injuring others has been lucidly enunciated in the last Book of God—"And do not abuse those who call upon besides Allah (V. 1 : 109).

Then comes the seventh principle—the principle of co-operation in order to secure the great purpose which religion came to accomplish. In this connection again I find the Holy Quran unique in laying down the purpose for the fulfilment of which, the religion of Islam and I should say every religion came, but which received its formulation only in the terms of the Quran. This I say after studying the various books of the various reli-



gions. I never approached them in a rancorous spirit nor in any hostile attitude, but with the greatest reverence and love. In this study I have come across teachings not consistent with the tenets of Islam or requirements of reason. I ascribe these to human interpolations; and to my great consolation the world of to-day has endorsed the truth revealed 13 hundred years ago in the Quran that the various revealed books have been tampered with. That grand object which religion came to perform is laid down in the Quran in these words. "You have been raised for the service of humanity and you are to enjoy good things upon others, to warn them against evils and to believe in one God." I draw your attention Gentlemen to this one word which defines the object of my life. *I as a Muslim am given the lease of my life simply for the service of humanity.* I have got no other reason to possess these hands, these eyes, these ears and other organs. I hold them as a trust to be used in the furtherance of the human cause. To use them for self-aggrandisement will be a gross abuse. It is a trust pure and simple as the Quran says:—If you hold a thing as trust you hold it for the benefit of others." You have been allowed to live only to work out what is conducive to the best interests of humanity and if you work to pamper your own self, it would be a misappropriation in the terms of the Quran. This grand principle found its illustration in the words of the Quran as put in the mouth of the Prophet when defining the objects of his own life. "Say: surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord (the Nourisher and Maintainer) of the worlds" (V 1: 163). Whether I sleep or rise, whether I eat or drink, whether I pray or perform other religious duties, they are all for the cause of Allah which in the teachings of the Quran is the cause of humanity.

These are the seven principles on which any league of any thought can be maintained. If India was ever in need of such unification, these are the days. I am telling you a simple truth when I say that religion and only religion in its present form is responsible for all these internecine troubles here. Our faiths have become clothed with a lot of traditions which are mere additions and accretions from man. This creates a gulf between Hindus, Christians and Muslims. Let us do away with this. Let us kill our disputes in adoration of Allah, and worship one God

and have a League of Faith in His Holy Name. If any country in the world needs such a league it is India which is a hot-bed of various religious disputes. This trouble can easily be got over by mutual recognition of each other's prophets. You may be Muslims or Hindus, you may belong to any persuasion, but you can become worshippers of one God and accept the great benefactors of humanity, I mean the prophets—Ramachandra, Krishna, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, as true Messengers from Him. Need I remind you of the days only 50 years before when Hindus and Mussalmans were hand in gloves with each other? You younger generation, I wish to remind you of those days when a Muslim and a Hindu called one another brethren. My address applies to the followers of other religions as well. They are equally my brethren. Do you not remember those days when a Muslim son felt proud to call the Hindu friend of his father his own father and a Hindu child would go to a Muslim friend of his father and would be proud to call him his own Pita (father)? Are not those days in your memory? If we have been paying this mutual courtesy as far as physical paternity is concerned, where lies the difficulty in doing the same as regards spiritual paternity? If with all decency I can call your father as mine, where is the harm in calling your prophet as mine? On these lines we can create a League of Faith; and suppose you ask me what should be the pledge of its members, I as a member of the said institution will formulate it in these terms :—I believe in one Allah and I do not associate with Him any other person; I accept Ramachandra, Krishna, Budha, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad as the true prophets and messengers of God; I accept all these sacred books of different religions in their original purity as books from God, with the Quran as the final revelation of the Divine Will. I will abstain from speaking ill of other religions.”

This is the pledge I would ask every one of you to sign so that the League may come within the possibility of realization. I am speaking on my own behalf. I simply give some idea to think over—a food for your mental cogitation. If you think there is likelihood of brotherhood on this principle, I assure you there are 10,000 men with me who are ready to sign such a pledge.