**February 8, 1915**

**An Explanation of the Terms Righteousness (*bir*), Keeping One’s Duty (*taqwa*), Retaliation (*qisas*) and Bequest (*wasiyat*) and the Mutual Relationship of These Terms**

I bear witness that none deserves to be served besides Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allah. —

After this, I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.



“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteous is the one who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and to set slaves free and keeps up prayer and pays the poor-rate; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in the time of conflict. These are they who are truthful; and these are they who keep their duty.” (2:177)



“O you who believe, retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain: the free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But if remission is made to one by his (aggrieved) brother, prosecution (for blood-money) should be according to usage, and payment to him in a good manner. This is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. Whoever exceeds the limit after this, will have a painful chastisement.” (2:178)



“And there is life for you in retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may guard yourselves.” (2:179)



“It is prescribed for you, when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth for parents and near relatives, to make a bequest in a kindly manner; it is incumbent upon the dutiful.” (2:180)



“Then whoever changes it after he has heard it, the sin of it is only upon those who change it. Surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing.” (2:181)



“But if one fears a wrong or a sinful course on the part of the testator, and effects an agreement between the parties, there is no blame on him. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” (2:182)

**The Meaning of, “It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West.”**

What kind of a person does the Quran want a Muslim to be? In my opinion this subject is discussed in this section. Three or four subjects are outlined.

1. What is righteousness?

2. Who are the dutiful?

3. Retaliation.

4. Bequest.

These four subjects do not seem to be connected but they all relate to the statement, “It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West.” After all, who says that turning one’s face toward the East or West is righteousness? Did Jews or Christians think this was the case? Was this what Muslims thought? Certainly none of these nations had this concept. Why does the Holy Quran then make this statement? This is because in another verse it is stated:

“And Allah’s is the East and the West, so whither you turn thither is Allah’s purpose. Surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.” (2:115)

In whatever direction you turn, Allah will be in that direction for the East and the West belong to Him. It does not belong to anybody else. Wherever you go will become yours. I have observed that wherever in the Holy Quran the words, “to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and earth,” (2:284) and “Allah’s is the East and West” are used, promises of future victories are given to the Muslim nation. East and West together represent the whole world. The same terminology is even used today. What is implied is that Allah has seen what is in your hearts. You have firmly committed to belief in One God and have sacrificed all other thoughts, desires, and emotions for this purpose. Since East and West all belong to Allah, you will be successful in whichever direction you turn.

Do not, however, start thinking that turning eastwards or westwards defines all that righteousness and keeping of duty is, and the conquest of lands thus becomes your goal. This is something temporary, which Allah gives to some and takes away from others. “Righteous is the one who believes in Allah,” and this should be your real goal.

**Why is Belief in Allah, The Last Day, Angels, The Books, and The Prophets Necessary?**

Create the moral characteristics of Allah within you. Do not consider that all your deeds are for this life only. A day will certainly come when the consequences of your actions will be fully manifested. Bear in mind while doing anything that on the last day (*al-yaum–al-akhira*) the results of your actions will become apparent. It is also essential to have belief in the angels. When your heart is inspired to perform a good deed and you act immediately upon the thought of giving up evil, all of this is part of belief in Angels. Besides these three, belief in The Book is also enjoined. All that is best for you is collected in it. You could claim that we believe in Allah, but where do we find knowledge about accountability for our actions and the guidance of what is right and wrong? This knowledge is given by the Book. If you believe in it, you will be able to distinguish between good and evil and also know the significance of reward and punishment.

Man is also in need of a role model to confirm the truth of these beliefs. To see someone perform these deeds and witness the recompense for their good deeds is essential. That is why it is stated, “and the prophets.” Belief in the prophets is necessary in order to benefit from their role model.

**Service of Humanity and Excellence in Morals Enjoined with Belief**

These five components of belief have an order and arrangement. It is a misconception that belief in them is randomly prescribed. The arrangement is excellent with innate beauty and logic and makes us aware of the real purpose underlying belief. Mere verbal acknowledgement of belief is not enough. With it, stress is laid upon the characteristic of the believer as the one who “gives away wealth out of love for Him.” He who does not sacrifice his wealth for the love of Allah, his belief is deficient. Christian critics raise the objection that, in the Holy Quran, love of Allah has not been identified as the source of good deeds. On the contrary, the Holy Quran has repeatedly stressed the love of Allah, the Most High and has identified it as the source of all goodness.

“Say: If you love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you, and grant you protection from your sins. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” (3:31)

“And they give food, out of love for Him, to the poor and the orphan and the captive.” (76:8)

Close family are also a part of this giving. Objection is frequently raised that since they are also earning, why should we be supporting them? Allah the Most High tells us to give to them also. “And (also give to the orphans) for the orphans are frequently ignored.” A poor orphan is quite often looked down upon as somebody inferior. You may have observed the orphans belonging to the *Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam* passing by and a similar thought might have occurred to you. Great emphasis has been made in the Holy Quran to give to orphans, the needy, and the wayfarer. They may also be facing great adversity and are not usually treated well. Observe how much stress the Holy Quran has laid upon treating them with kindness. In fact, anyone who asks for help should be helped if you have the means to help them.

**Islam Practically Elevated the Status of Slaves**

“And to set slaves free (*wa fil-riqab*),” the Arabic word *riqab* means *neck*. It was customary in Arabia that prisoners of war were kept as slaves in homes. Muslims followed the same custom since there was no war department whose duty would be to house prisoners of war. Islam commands that prisoners of war be treated with exemplary kindness. Nowhere else does one find an example of such gracious treatment toward an enemy. It is enjoined to ‘feed them out of what you eat and clothe them with what you wear’. Christians claim that their religion teaches treating an enemy with love. Their claim was put into practice by Islam. It pointed out how to love one’s enemy. The Holy Quran tells us that, if you love Allah the Most High, you should spend your money to set free prisoners of war who are in your possession. In the eyes of Allah the captor and the captive are closely related for they are both His creation. In spite of the enmity between you and them, you can provide proof of oneness of humanity by spending your money for the sake of their freedom. This is the way in which Islam has taught us to love our enemies. It shows the manner whereby this injunction can be followed completely. If it were enough to command loving the enemy, this was already enjoined in the teachings of the Gospel. Islam goes a step further and shows how to put this ordinance into practice. On the one hand, those who were given charge of these prisoners are enjoined to treat them in the best manner. In addition, money was allocated in the amount of one eighth of the Zakaat fund from the national exchequer of the Muslim nation for this purpose. This demonstrates a practical and wholesome approach to the principle of loving your enemy, which exceeds all human perception. These injunctions are followed by the command: “Keeps up prayer and pays the poor-rate” (2:177) This short sentence in my opinion is a comprehensive expression of all Divine and human rights.

**Humility and Submissiveness is the True Spirit of Prayer**

I have repeatedly stressed that your prayer should be kept up and that you should keep it from falling down. Keeping up prayers means they should be performed with a spirit of humility and complete submission. This reflects the condition of your heart and can only be acquired by Allah’s grace. Physical posture, however, also has its significance. I am not saying that if you have the urge to scratch, you should avoid it or be at a complete standstill. People, however, do such absurd actions during prayer, not appropriate for one standing before Allah. Hadith tells us that goodness is that one should worship Allah as if he is seeing Him. If this is not possible, one should at least have the feeling in the heart that The Glorious God is seeing him.

I have observed people who hurriedly go through the different prayer postures. This is not the proper way to pray. Somebody said his prayer hurriedly before the Holy Prophet. When he was ready to leave, the Holy Prophet told him that he had not prayed properly and taught him how to pray in the appropriate manner. The different postures should be performed completely and deliberately. No one is chastising you while you stand in front of Allah. Some people have come with the excuse that a lot of distracting thoughts come to mind while praying; hence the prayer should be finished hurriedly to get rid of such thoughts. These are wrong concepts and absurd actions that must be avoided. One should completely follow the actions of the *Imam* (leader of the prayer) and not utter words or perform a posture before he does. When someone is praying, loud conversation is to be avoided for it can be a source of distraction. One should not cross in front of someone praying, because this can also be distracting. These are some of the rules about keeping up prayer. More details can be found in hadith reports.

**Believers are Performers of Their Promise When They Make a Promise, and Patient in Distress and Affliction**

Payment of Zakaat (poor rate) is made mandatory for believers in order to fulfill obligations of human rights. The believers are also performers of their promise when they make a promise. The greatest quality of a person is that he keeps his promise. Historically, nations that hold on to this principle, indeed achieve great success. When they make a promise with someone, they do not break it even if their lives are threatened. You have also made a commitment at the hands of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to keep your religion above the world. Fulfill this promise and your name will go down in history. Another hallmark of the character of believers is that they are, “Patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflict.” Distress is what comes from outside, such as hunger, while afflictions are illnesses that arise from within the human body.

Believers are enjoined to be patient under all of these circumstances, including difficulties arising, “in time of conflict.” To manifest patience when in conflict with an enemy is the hardest. The Arabic word *basa* means conflict. What is the lesson in this for us? Neither you nor I have to go and fight. You have to talk to people, which can sometimes lead to conflict. It is on such occasions that this injunction applies to you. You have to show patience under these circumstances. While in conflict with an enemy, it is human nature to sometimes stoop to very low and despicable behavior. The believer is a role model of patience under these conditions. To remain silent while facing criticism and not losing self-control is the real manifestation of patience in times of conflict. It is only then that you can uphold the Quranic standard of: “These are they who are truthful; and these are they who keep their duty.” (2:177)

**Retaliation is Prescribed Only in the Matter of the Slain**

Now another problem is mentioned, “And there is life for you in retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may guard yourselves.” At this time in their history the need had arisen for Muslims to engage in warfare. Reference is made in this verse toward such circumstance. The enemy was bent upon complete annihilation of Muslims. If they did not now stand up to face them, they would be totally destroyed. Retaliation against your enemies is therefore prescribed for you so that you can defend yourself against them. The ordinance for retaliation is mentioned in the form of a general law, but in my opinion there is a reference in this toward the impending situation of war and the words, “And there is life for you in retaliation,” bear witness to this. People have also gravely misunderstood the words, “the free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female.” Their understanding is to retaliate against a free man if a free man has been murdered, a slave in case of murder of a slave, and a woman if a woman has been killed. The Pre-Islamic Arabs had a custom whereby they discriminated amongst the high and the low in their society. If a free man of a tribe was murdered by a slave of another tribe, they retaliated only against the free men of that tribe instead of the slave. Similarly, if a woman murdered a woman of another tribe, they would instead retaliate against a man of that tribe who would be of the same status as the woman. The Holy Quran has challenged this custom and has prescribed retaliation only against the murderer, “the free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female” (2:178).

**Remission in the Form of Blood Money for Murder Allowed under Special Circumstances**

Retaliation is not prescribed randomly but only against those who commit murder. “But if remission is made to one by his (aggrieved) brother, prosecution (for blood-money) should be according to usage and payment to him in a good manner.” It is then stated, “This is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy.” There may be circumstances that alleviate the guilt. In such cases, the murderer may be made to pay a fine to the relatives of the murdered person. Such money is called *diyat* or blood-money. The reference to the alleviation of the guilt is plainly contained in the concluding words of the verse: “This is an alleviation from your Lord.” A comparison with 4:92 makes it clear that when homicide is not intentional, blood money may be paid.

Such circumstances can occur even today. For example, an employee of our friend Sheikh Rehmatullah was run over with a horse by an Englishman and died from the injuries. If this crime was unintentional, then the wife and children of the deceased should be given some compensation.

There is no commandment in Islam that is defective. All aspects of the problem are considered and a decision is rendered. A way was needed to provide maintenance for the dependents of the murdered individual; therefore arrangement was made for this. For those who exceed the limit, warning is added: “Whoever exceeds the limit after this, will have a painful chastisement.”

“And there is life for you in retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may guard yourselves.” This is a further reference toward the impending warfare in which it was essential for Muslims to engage the enemy in order to survive. As a general principle also if the murderer is not punished with the death penalty, the peace of a society is demolished. People have experimented with alternative punishments for the crime of murder. This leads to a dangerous rise in the rate of murder.

**Bequest for a Charitable or a Religious Purpose**

“It is prescribed for you, when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth for parents and near relatives, to make a bequest in a kindly manner; it is incumbent upon the dutiful.” (2:180)

There has been much debate regarding this verse, which is abrogated. Even those who consider only five verses to be abrogated have included this verse amongst those five verses. In my opinion, this is incorrect for the bequest mentioned here is for charitable or religious purposes. Researchers have understood the Arabic word *khair* to mean abundant wealth. Evidence for bequests made under the direction of this verse was either for charitable or religious purposes. I have three pieces of evidence in support of this contention.

In an hadith related by Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas: “The Messenger of Allah used to visit me at Makkah, in the year of the Farewell Pilgrimage, on account of my illness which had become very severe. So I said: ‘My illness has become very severe and I have much wealth, and there is none to inherit from me but a daughter; shall I then bequeath two-thirds of my property as a charity?’ He said, ‘No’. I said, ‘Half?’ He said, ‘No’. Then he said: ‘bequeath one-third, and one-third is much, for if thou leave thy heirs free from want, it is better than that thou leave them in want, begging from people; and thou dost not spend anything seeking thereby the pleasure of Allah but thou art rewarded for it, even for that which thou puttest into the mouth of thy wife’” (B. 23:36). The mention of the year of the Farewell Pilgrimage shows clearly that the incident relates to the last year of the Prophet’s life, to a time when both the verse under discussion and 4:11 had long been revealed. Hence, the making of a bequest was not contrary to 4:11, and this verse really speaks of bequests made for charitable purposes and not of bequests to heirs. It should be further noted that the making of a bequest is necessary only if a person leaves behind *khair*, which means abundant, or considerable, wealth.

There are two other incidents of a still later date that make it clear that the companions of the Prophet did not consider this verse to be abrogated. A man who intended to make a bequest came to ‘A’ishah. She asked him how much property he had, and being told that he had 3000 Dirhems and four heirs, told him not to make a bequest and to leave the amount to his heirs, and recited the words in *taraka khaira* occurring in this verse, indicating that the leaving behind of a large property was a condition for a bequest. A similar incident is reported in connection with ‘Ali, the fourth Caliph. He had freed a man possessing 700 Dirhems and he expressed a desire to make a bequest. ‘Ali told him not to do so, reciting the same words in *taraka khaira* in support of his contention. Both these incidents happening after the death of the Prophet, show conclusively: (1) that v. 180 was not regarded as abrogated, because people still made bequests under it; and (2) that the bequests spoken of in this verse were never meant for those who would inherit under 4:11, but for charitable purposes, or for those relatives who could not inherit under 4:11.

**This Type of Bequest is also Needed Today**

I am also drawing your attention to this commandment of the Holy Quran, that it is not abrogated. It is essential for us even today to act upon it. You give a due portion to your relatives but those of you who possess abundant wealth according to prevailing standards should also set aside a portion for charitable purposes. Allah says that bequest is prescribed for you. So if you give some to your parents and relatives, then also bequeath a portion for charitable and religious purposes so that it may serve these causes. “Then whoever changes it after he has heard it, the sin of it is only upon those who change it. Surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing.” “But if one fears a wrong or a sinful course on the part of the testator, and effects an agreement between the parties, there is no blame on him. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” (2:181-182)

Proper advice may be tendered to the testator, not to show undue favor to anyone or not to exceed the limits of the law to the detriment of legal heirs. This was what the Prophet himself, and ‘A’ishah and ‘Ali did in the three cases cited in the above hadith.