

Reply to Welcome by

*His Eminence Maulana Shah Muhammad
Abdul Aleem Siddiqui, Al Quaderi (RA)*

delivered at the Grand Stand,
Queen's Park Savannah, Port-of Spain, Trinidad, West Indies in 1950.

In the Name of Allaah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

Dear Sisters and Brothers!

Assalamu Alaikum

The deep love and warm affection which you have demonstrated in welcoming me and the magnificent manner in which you have held the receptions in honour of a humble Darvesh and Sadhu like me, is positive proof of your own devotion to religion and your love for God. It is evident that those who are loyal to a certain Government show their loyalty by honouring the representatives of that Government. Similarly, those who are loyal to God and devoted to religion, not formally but truly, honour persons like me, considering us to be the inviters towards God and the representatives of His Prophets. While I thank you most heartily for it, I leave your reward to God. May He shower on you His choicest blessings, honour you as you have honoured me and enable us all to serve His cause in the way He likes.

My Friends!

In your address, you have pinned certain hopes in me. May the Almighty fulfil them. I wish to point out, however, that, as a servant of humanity working for God's pleasure, my only function and

obligation is to deliver the Message and to show the path which I consider to be the right on in the light of God's revealed Guidance. God's command to His last Prophet also was:

"O Prophet ! deliver the Message which comes to thee from thy Lord."

And again: "Thy concern (O Prophet) is nothing else than the delivery of the Message."

Thus, my responsibility, too, is confined to the task of delivering the Message which I have received through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, (peace be with him!) and of expounding it to the best of my ability. The acceptance or rejection of that Message rests solely with the people. You can liken me at the most to a physician, and a physician's only duty is to diagnose the disease and prescribe the remedy. If the patient obeys the physician, that is to his own good. If he disobeys or neglects, he alone will ultimately suffer.

If you cast a glance at the world around you, you will find that all things of the universe are bound together and governed by the laws of nature in a way which makes it impossible for them to act except mechanically. All created things, whether organic or inorganic, whether belonging to the heavenly regions or the earthly environment, seem to fall in this category. The only exception to it is man. Man alone, of all created things, seems to possess Will and Volition, and it is this distinguishing feature which gives to man the position of superiority which he obviously enjoys.

Closely connected with the power of 'volition', is the faculty of distinguishing between right and wrong, of leaving one thing and adopting another.

This brings us to the problem of the moral freedom of man. I do not wish to enter here into any detailed philosophical discussion of this problem. But I might point out that action, by itself, is neither good nor evil.

To move the tongue is an action. But, to speak truth, or to utter a lie is to give a certain special colour to this action. From the point of view of consequence, truth is called good and falsehood is termed evil. Certainly, no movement is possible without a mover. No physical action is possible without a physical power behind it. Had not man received the power of action from his Creator, he could not have been in a position to act. But he possess the faculty of choosing between right and wrong. Hence, he is morally responsible for what he does. You might understand this point from a simple example relating to the electric light. The electric power comes from the Power House. It rests with you to get the light from it by using the red bulb or the green bulb. The illumination in your room will take red or green colour in accordance with the red or green bulbs used by you, and your action will be judged accordingly.

Thus the laws of nature are there. The fixed consequences of using those laws of nature are there. Your faculty of choosing your path is there. You cannot expect green light from a red bulb, nor the red light from the green bulb. So far as the human side of the problem is concerned, you must reap what you sow. If you employ your faculty of inner freedom in harmony with the laws of nature, you must flourish. If you act to the contrary, you must be prepared to face the evil consequences.

In the short time at my disposal, it is not possible for me to give you a complete picture of those natural laws on which the success of humanity and its peace and security are based. I may, however, invite your attention to one of those laws which might be named as the Law of Mutual Cooperation. It does not require the specialised knowledge and insight of a scientist to realise that this is one of the most universal laws. Every single particle of which the earth is composed is so closely related to its brother-particles and is bound up with them so intimately, that it is difficult to view it in isolation. With a broader vision we shall notice that all those planets which move in space and all those bodies which are considered static, are so closely inter-related that a slight non-cooperation on the part of any of them would be enough to destroy the whole universe. This earth, which is our abode,

and which appears to us to be an independent world, would not exist for a day, were it not for the absolute cooperation on the part of other planets. Just try to imagine what would happen if the heat and light which we receive from the sun were to be cut off from us even for a short while. Well, life would be forthwith transformed into death. Similarly is our relation with air, water and the mineral and vegetable worlds.

If we cast a glance at our own selves, we will find that though our bodies appear to be something like solid units, they are in actuality aggregates of harmoniously functioning parts. Every part has its own distinct function to perform, but it is closely linked with the other by a vast chain of nerves. The relation between the various organs of the human body is indeed so intimate that if one organ gets an experience, the nerves transmit the message immediately to the brain, and all other organs become ready at a moment's notice to perform their cooperative function. Suppose a thorn pierces the foot. The brain gets information immediately. The tongue expresses the pain. The eyes become focussed at the point of injury. The hand moves to take the thorn out. In short, the whole body gets mobilised immediately. If the various organs do not cooperate in this way; if the hand were to think that it is no concern of his, and if the eye were to behave similarly and to feel that the foot should take care of itself, what will be the ultimate result? Well, it is possible that the thorn may be septic and its poison may travel to all parts of the body in due course and paralyse the hand and the eye.

Nay, the non-cooperation on the part of various organs can ultimately lead to the death of them all.

My dear Friends!

Just think in the light of what I have said just now, that if the various parts of the universe and the various parts of the human body are bound together by an unbreakable bond and are subject, to the law of Mutual Cooperation, without which they must fall into pieces, how can it be possible to consider the world of humanity an exception to it?

In fact, it is not possible. We are bound to admit that just as the various planets and heavenly bodies go to make the unit known as Universe, and just as the various human organs go to make the unit known as the human body, similarly the different individual, men and women, go to make the organic unit known as humanity, and that the relation between the different human individuals should be the same as that which exists between the different organs of the human body. I might observe here only in passing the latest scientific research has finished with the idea of classifying the physical reality into various elements. It is now common knowledge that everything which you find in this Universe is basically nothing but the waves of electricity, ultimately reducible to Light. This gives us the theory of the fundamental unity and sameness of all created things. What, then, about humanity and human unity? I do not think there can be any two opinions. It is, therefore, self-evident that if the individual human beings do not act in the light of the essential unity of mankind and refuse to observe the law of Mutual Cooperation, sooner or later, humanity must face a mighty catastrophe.

Only four days ago, an old Canadian tourist came to see me. He put to me a number of questions, and, when he found that I was born in India he asked me as to which religion was that which divides humanity into four castes. Fortunately, an eminent Sanatan Dharma lecturer of your colony was also present. I am glad that he supported my reply. I do not know whether other Hindu friends would also agree with me. Well, if they do not agree with me they might, excuse me, for my reply was based on the best of motives. I said to my Canadian friend that, according to my view, the present-day caste system found in Hinduism was originally something different. When, during ancient times, India entered the era of cultural progress, the people were classified into four groups on the principle of division of labour and for stop the sake of social convenience.

One group was entrusted with the task of acquiring and imparting moral and spiritual education, and was called Brahmin. A second group was established, whose function it was to learn the arts of warfare and administration. It was given the name of Kshatri. A third group,

known as the Vaishyas, was given the work of trade and agriculture. Those who took up subordinate jobs were called Sudras. Later on, this classification acquired a meaning which may not be very agreeable to many people.

Sisters and Brothers!

The law of Mutual Cooperation is an eternal law of nature and the social life of humanity cannot survive without it. A great Sufi-poet, says explicitly that any human being who is unmindful of the agonies and pains of others, does not deserve to be called a human being at all. I am sure, he is right. Just think for a while that you give the name of hand only to that thing which performs the work of hand. Similarly you apply the word eye to that organ which does the work of seeing. Now, if the hand gets affected with paralysis or the eye loses its function of seeing these names cannot be applied to them except in a formal sense. Similar is the case of the man who loses the sense of human feeling. He cannot properly be called a human being. And just as in the case of paralysis of the hand or the foot, he requires a treatment and needs a cure which should reactivate and re-invigorate him with a fresh current of life, with the serum of the spirit of humanity.

We now come to the problem?

What is that source from which human personality can feed itself?

As regards the origin of life on earth, Sir Oliver Lodge is of the opinion that it came from the Unknown. This Unknown of the Scientist is what religious terminology names as God, and the philosophers term as the Supreme Spirit. To receive life, it is necessary to approach this Source. Now, just as for the revival of the dying cells inside the human organism and for the development of the human body, it is necessary to keep a continuous supply of physical diet, similarly if we want to awaken and strengthen our spiritual self, we need the spiritual diet which consists in communion with God. Religious terminology gives to it the name of Worship. Every religion and every creed has its distinct rules of worship, even as, we might say, different nations of

the world have different types of meals. Of course, in the matter of food stuffs, we always try to see what can supply us with the required vitamins in the right form and build up our health properly. Similarly, it is a problem in the spiritual realm also to know what form of worship is suitable for our spiritual growth and for the establishment of right relation with God.

My Friends!

If worship and remembrance of God have any meaning, it cannot consist in mere formal attendance of houses of worship and performing certain rituals in a spiritless manner. Concentration is the very life of worship, so that, in the act of prayer, human personality may become so absorbed in the Great Reality that it may be able to taste something of that sweet relation.

This remembrance of God has received such importance in Islam that it cannot be over-emphasised. Islam has commanded us to pray not once a week, but five times a day; and for every prayer, it wants us to see to it that our bodies and clothes are clean and, further, that we have emptied our minds, at least temporarily, of evil inclinations and material engrossments. With these conditions of formal and actual purity, it commands us to plunge ourselves in communion with the Source of all Life and Light. This is known in Islamic terminology as

Salaah. When a Muslim performs his worship in this manner and with full consciousness, he experiences, metaphorically speaking, a sort of electric current which penetrates his being gradually and brings into activity his spiritual faculties even as the paralysed hand may feel when treated electrically. The Islamic prayer increases the power to resist baser passions, on the one hand, and to develop high and sublime morals on the other. The Holy Qur'aan says:

"Verily prayer guards you against indecencies and immoralities." When this act of prayer is constantly repeated, the consciousness of the presence of God grows, so much so that one feels himself confronted with the Lord every moment.

Here, I am reminded of an incident. A great Sufi teacher used to love one of his pupils more than the rest. These others could not make out the cause of that preference and felt uneasy.

One day, the Darwesh asked someone to bring a few birds. When the birds were brought, he called each one of them separately, gave him a bird and commanded him to slaughter it at a place where none could see him. All the pupils went away in search of solitary corners and, with the exception of one, returned to the teacher with the birds slaughtered. The last to come was the beloved pupil. He came back bringing the bird alive in his hand. He told the teacher that he had failed in finding such a place where none could see him, because he found God present everywhere.

The teacher then pointed out to the other pupils that he loved that pupil more because of that quality of God - consciousness.

My Friends !

Think for a while. If this consciousness of the presence of God comes to stay in the heart of anyone, would it be possible for him to commit, any ugly deed ?

Can any one have the courage to maltreat a beloved child in the presence of the latter's powerful father ?

The fact is that the peace of the world is in danger today only because humanity has forgotten God. Otherwise, none dare commit any such act in the presence of his beloved which the beloved does not like.

For the cultivation of this concept, Islam has given us the following instruction in the words of the Holy Qur'aan; "*Verily in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and in the alternation of the night and the day, there are signs for men of understanding, who remember God standing, sitting and reclining, and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth, (and say:) O our Lord! Thou hast not created all this in vain. Glory be to Thee. Preserve us from the doom of fire!*"

Today, we claim to be men of reason and understanding. But if we really employ our reason, we will remember God before every act of ours, we will feel that He is watching us, and we will make it a point to decide before committing any act whether our proposed act is in conformity with God's Pleasure or not.

Literally, the word "Islam" means "submission". As a religious term, it means submitting oneself to God's pleasure in each and every act of one's life. This is the essence of the Islamic teaching, and it is in fact that which the Prophets and Messengers of God came to teach in every age and every clime. The divine Messengers came to individual countries so long as the races and peoples of the world remained isolated from one another. But at the dawn of the present era, when means of communication have removed all barriers of separation and have united human activity, one Guide was sent by God for the whole mankind. He gave the same Message to the world which other Prophets and Messengers had brought before him. He taught the Law of Divine pleasure in its most perfect form and handed it down to us in the form of a Book which has preserved its authenticity until today. So long as this perfect Law and this Authentic Book exists, humanity needs no new Law, no new Book, no new Guide. The Creator and Sustainer of the universe, whose Knowledge encompasses the past, the present and the future, has delivered to matured humanity the perfect Law, which exists in all its purity, standing out as a beacon of light and as the Standard. This is the summary of Islam's claim.

As I have hinted already, you cannot satisfy your hunger merely by calling out the names of foodstuffs. You cannot get your ailment removed simply by getting it diagnosed and the remedy prescribed. What is needed is positive action. For your nourishment, you must take the proper type of food. For your health, you must take medicine and observe the physician's advice fully.

Today, the parents just teach the name of religion to their children. Some faint voices regarding the existence of God also enter the ears of the youngsters. They also hear the appellations of Christian, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim applied to them, and a few moral injunctions are taught to them.

But where is that religious and moral training, where is that environment which could guarantee happiness and peace to humanity? If the religious teachers give little instruction in religion or morals inside the church or the mosque, there are so many source of the infection of immorality in the general environment, that the influence of religious instruction cannot simply survive.

Therefore, we need today a total effort for spreading religious morals. We have to reform the atmosphere of the home as well as of the school, and we have to take an aggressive stand against the progress of immorality and irreligion.

Fortunately, we have here, the father of the City, that is, His Worship the Mayor, and the god-father of our youngsters, that is, the Director of Public Instruction. It has been an honour to me to know them, and I congratulate them, and the Government of Trinidad, in general, on the introduction of religious instruction in the schools. I only hope that the Government will strive further to improve the moral and religious condition of the people.

My Friends!

The world has lost its equilibrium. It has become deformed, and the misfortune is that corruption and disease are fast in coming and slow in going. As things stand, we must try our best to accomplish the great task of spiritual and moral reform. We must carry the message of God to every home. We must preach the right type of faith in God and the higher moral values at the home and the school, at the market place and the cinema. Centuries of growing neglect has already played havoc. We had not succeeded in removing the evil effects of the first World-War when the second World-War burst upon us with all the attendant miseries. Now, mankind is trembling at the idea of the third World-War under the shadows of the Atomic and Hydrogen bombs. Where shall it end? Alas, humanity seems to have forgotten that she cannot be rescued from wars unless the root-cause is removed.

Unfortunately, the world is going on the opposite path. The war-

mongers are busy in deceiving mankind that religion is the cause of strife and war. Some of them have gone even so far as to demolish churches, temples and mosques and to put to sword the upholders of religion.

My friends !

It was only last year that at a big public meeting held under the auspices of the Inter-Religious Organisation, of which I had the honour to be the initiator, the representatives of the different great religions of the world spoke on the subject of "The Contribution of Religion to Peace." There, every speaker supported my view that not only the revealed religions but also the philosophical faiths, have, without exception, stood for peace. I also spoke in that meeting and, because a general misunderstanding has been spread in the world about Islam that it was propagated by the sword, I proved there emphatically not only that Islam was not a religion of war, but that it was through and through a religion of peace. Regarding the freedom of religion, there can be no more powerful pronouncement than that of the Holy Qur'aan when it says:

"There is no compulsion in religion."

And again:

"Let him who perishes perish on argument; and let him who lives, live on argument."

Islam regards "freedom of religion" as precious as the protection of human life and honour. And just as it is the birth-right of man to take up sword whenever his life or honour is threatened, similarly Islam allows its followers to fight when the right of freedom of religion is attacked. Even then, Islam attaches certain very far-reaching conditions to the permission of fighting, which actually rule out all possibility of immoral war. In no case, can a Muslim fight to compel anyone to change his religion. Conversion in Islam is voluntary only.

Islam allows full legitimate freedom to human reason in the matter of religion, and Islam invites humanity to accept its message only on rational basis.

Thus, Islam has no scope in its teaching for persecuting the followers of other religions. Rather, the Islamic state owes it to the non — Muslims living within its boundries to protect not only their lives and honour but also their temples and churches. Islam made it obligatory on its followers to believe in all the Prophets and Messengers of God, to refrain from abusing even the idols, and to show respect whenever any thing worthy of respect is found. During my conversation with George Bernard Shaw in 1936, I had explained to him that just as the Holy and sinless Jesus cannot be accused on account of the massacres which the Christian sects perpetrated on each other for centuries, similarly Islam cannot be held responsible if any misguided Muslim ruler led the people against the express injunctions of his religion.

There can be no doubt that just as every human being has the right of adopting a religion after satisfying himself on the basis of reason, similarly it is the duty of every lover of humanity to invite his fellow-beings to the path which he honestly and rationally considers as true and which, he feels, will benefit the world. But this task of delivering the message can be and should be accomplished with utmost love and without any unfair means. The Holy Qur'aan says :

"Call to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and have controversy with them in a goodly way."

My Sisters and Brothers!

Whatever I have said today and whatever I will say afterwards, is and will be in accordance with this command of God. My heart contains only sentiments of love for all. I always take the greatest care not to injure the feelings of anyone. I hope those who might come in contact with me will also behave in the same way. If any one wants to take my advice or to know the conclusions of my researches, I shall be only too glad to inform him.

My function, as I said at the very beginning of my speech, is only to deliver the Message.

Before I conclude, I should thank you all again for this cordial welcome and for giving me a patient hearing.

May God bless us with what He loves.

Ameen!

