

JIHÁD



THE question of *jihád* is one which has exercised to no small extent the minds of many Moslems, in Egypt at least, since the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish war, and not a few have felt it to be their duty, in spite of the enforced neutrality of Egypt, to proceed to the seat of war, and there fight "in the way of God" against what they naturally regard as unprovoked and unwarrantable attack on a Moslem country; while those who cannot go to Tripoli have subscribed freely for the support of the army, or by their writings and manifest sympathy have done much to encourage their brethren in the faith who are on active service.

Sheikh Muhammad Reshéd Ridá wrote an article in the January issue of *El Manár*, in which he claimed that Christians have completely misunderstood the word *jihád*, and do not intend, when they use the word, the same thing as is intended by Moslems when they employ it. *Jihád*, he pointed out, is etymologically connected with a root which expresses simply the doing of anything with energy and wholeheartedness. It implies strenuous exertion and endeavour in the carrying out of any action. And he denied that the word *jihád* refers primarily to war or warlike action. *Jihád*, he further claimed, when employed by Mohammedan writers, expresses very often moral and ethical endeavour alone, and corresponds very much with the meaning of the Apostle Paul when he exhorts those to whom he is writing to fight the good fight of faith. All the endeavour of a Moslem to fulfil the duties of his religion with wholehearted devotion is *jihád*; and that part of his endeavour which has to deal with the fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, is in special *jihád*. This, indeed, is the greater *jihád*, while it is to the lesser *jihád* (actual warfare) that non-Mohammedan writers and speakers have limited their use of the word. Even in this limited use of the word,

however, he claimed that non-Mohammedan writers have erred. For even this lesser *jihád* does not mean war for the propagation of the Faith, but war for the support of the Faith when that Faith is attacked. He then went on to state that there is nothing in the teaching of the Koran, or in that of the Moslem doctors, to support the view which is held by many Westerners that *jihád* is war against non-Moslems merely because they are non-Moslems. And, further, he claimed that in the case of war between Moslems and non-Moslems, the teaching of the Koran and the practice of Moslems has been to shew consideration and kindness to the non-combatants and to those who have been taken prisoners. Instances to the contrary he would explain as being due to disregard of the clear injunctions of the Koran, and as arising from the fact that in war the passions of men are so aroused that they often break all bounds and act with horrible cruelty. But he desired it to be understood that such actions are not commended and approved by the majority of Moslems, and are quite contrary to the spirit of the teaching of the Koran, as to the methods to be employed in war and the manner in which the enemy is to be treated.

There is undoubtedly a feeling, if not a belief, among many Westerners that a Moslem regards it as a duty binding on him in accordance with the literal command of the Koran, to kill any and every unbeliever whom he may meet when once *jihád* has been proclaimed. Sheikh Ridá acknowledges that this conception of the duty of a Moslem during *jihád* may have been in the past, and may even now be that which is common among the ignorant or less educated Moslems, but he says that much of this feeling has been the result of mixing with foreigners (non-Moslems), who have had a mistaken idea of what Moslems mean by *jihád*, and that this mistaken idea of these non-Moslems has crept into Moslem minds, and has thus given apparent support to the belief that this is really a Mohammedan conception of one's duty in *jihád*.

Let us note here that it is because this conception of the duty of a "believer" in time of *jihád* is, as a matter of fact, the common belief of the ignorant Mos-

lems (as the Sheikh admits, and for practical purposes it matters not how it arose), and because the ignorant Moslems form the greater part of the population in any Mohammedan land, that the non-Moslem subjects and residents in any land under Moslem rule have come to fear the word "*jihād*," and appeal to the more enlightened Moslems to be careful in their use of it. For they know that, however it may be used by educated writers, the common people understand by it, attack on non-Moslems, and believe that it is their duty to destroy as many as possible of these unbelievers. Further, they know well how easy it is for an ignorant mob to get out of hand, especially when, rightly or wrongly, it believes that any action which has as its object the glory of God and the better establishment of the true religion, would be looked upon by those in authority with a lenient eye, if not with actual sympathy.

Much that the learned Sheikh claims may be conceded. It is true that the word *jihād* is employed in the Koran and by Moslem writers with a double meaning. There are passages in which it refers to the strenuous exertion or endeavour of the believer to fight the good fight of faith, especially as regards the conquest of himself and his passions, and the fulfilment of all his ceremonial obligations which undoubtedly involves a not inconsiderable struggle with carelessness, indifference, and what may be called the natural disinclination of mankind in general to do more than is absolutely necessary in religious matters (*e.g.*, xxix. 5, xxxi. 14, xxix. 69, v. 59). It is also more than possible that Sheikh Ridá is right in claiming that the verse, "When ye encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads, until ye have made a great slaughter among them; and bind them in bands; and either give them a free discussion afterwards, or exact a ransom; until the war shall have laid down its arms" (xlvi. 4), and similar verses, do not refer to the attitude to be adopted by Moslems towards non-Moslems in general during war, but are simply directions as to how the actual fighting is to be carried on. According to this interpretation of the verse (and similar verses), the injunction to kill the unbelievers refers solely to actual

battle, and means simply that the attack is to be carried out with energy, and slaughter of the opposing enemy. It corresponds to the modern dictum that an attack must be pressed home, and a victory followed up, so that the advantage gained may not be lost. The fleeing enemy must be pursued till all opposition ceases. Let us even concede that the Sheikh may be right in claiming that the Koran teaches not merely moderation but humanity in the treatment of the wounded and the non-combatants, especially the aged, and defenceless women and children.

Yet however interesting all this may be, it is rather away from the point at issue. For the question of what *jihād* is cannot be settled by reference alone to the etymology of the word *jihād*. The Koran plainly teaches in many passages, notwithstanding the claims put forward by Maulavi Chirágh 'Alí (cf. Sell's "The Faith of Islam," pp. 411 ff.), the duty of fighting for the Faith or "in the way of God," by using the word *qátala*, and El Zamakhshary, commenting on ii. 186, 7, says, "Fighting in the way of God is *jihād* for the glorifying of his word and the strengthening of the Religion." And whatever may be the etymological meaning of the word *jihād*, there can be no gainsaying the fact that it is sometimes used in the Koran in the sense of warlike actions, a warfare for the sake of the Faith. And when one asks what the teaching of Mohammedanism is concerning *jihād*, the word is employed in this latter sense. In fact, when we ask the questions, What is *jihād*? and what are the duties of the Moslem with regard to *jihād*? the real point of the question is, What does the Koran mean when it teaches, and what do Moslem doctors mean when they teach that the taking up of arms on behalf of the Faith is the duty of every Moslem unless circumstances prevent him? And, further, is this war necessarily one of defence alone, or is it for the establishment and propagation of Islam?

Sheikh Ridá claims that Islam knows nothing of religious wars, and by this he means wars carried on for the propagation of the Faith, or for the establishment of certain religious principles. He admits, however, as all Mohammedans must who do not absolutely throw over the teachings of the Koran or explain them away more

or less plausibly, as does Maulavi Chirágh 'Ali, that it is the absolute duty of Moslems to fight in defence of the faith when it is attacked. With regard, then, to the question, what is *jihád*? he would say, *jihád* is the taking up of arms in defence of Islam when an attack is made on it, and *jihád* is lawful only when such an attack is made. We see, then, that the question, When is *jihád* lawful? thus turns on the point of what constitutes an attack on Islam.

Dr. Muhammad Badr, an eager exponent of the New Islam, takes up an extreme position with regard to *jihád*. He would make the individual believer absolute judge of what constitutes an attack on Islam, and denies that an attack, however unprovoked, which has as its object only the infringement of the territorial rights of a Mohammedan power, can be regarded as an attack on Islam. He writes, "If the Sultan or Khalif call on believers to defend the Faith, the men called on are judges of the righteousness of the command, whether it is to the defence of Islam they are called, or to the help of the Sultan's special territory . . . A 'Holy War' (*jihád*) could only be proclaimed against an enemy who had obviously determined on the extermination of Islam. The infringements of territorial rights, even to the extent of unmistakable aggressions and injuries, does not enter into the sphere of the Khalif's power." ("The Truth about Islam," p. 45). In writing thus, Dr. Badr, however much we may sympathize with his position and hope that it will ultimately be recognized as the only possible position which can be taken up by Mohammedans if they desire to be free from the imputation of fanaticism, is, we fear, far ahead of the general Mohammedan opinion at the present day. He appears to believe that because with his European education he has come to distinguish between religious and political or social questions, others of his fellow-believers do the same. He has apparently forgotten, when he penned these lines, what he acknowledges elsewhere, that "Islam was not only a religion, but a system wherein a highly complex code of laws regulated the daily life of the believers. These laws are remarkably framed to meet the eventualities of ordinary life. They

are decidedly the work of a far-sighted teacher, to say the least. Their divine inspiration is claimed " (p. 43).

If Dr. Badr's position were generally acknowledged by Mohammedans, there could be no question about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of *jihád* against Italy. Unless it could be proved that Italy intended to exterminate Islam, *jihád* would be unlawful. Few Mohammedans, however, at the present day, will agree with Dr. Badr. In the concrete case before us, Italy has attacked a Mohammedan power, and while the Italian Government has issued a proclamation stating that the religion and the religious customs and practices of the inhabitants of the country attacked will not, in any way, be interfered with, all Mohammedan writers insist that the war against Italy is *jihád*—a Holy War in defence of the Faith. Sheikh Ridá maintains, as we saw, that *jihád* is defensive—a war in defence of Islam, and so, to shew that the present war is true *jihád*, he asserts, in spite of the statement of the Italian Government referred to above, that Islam is attacked. His words are, "These Italians desire to do away with the laws of the Koran in this land, and to bring the Moslems into subjection to their own (Italian) laws, to destroy their power . . ." (El Manár, Vol. XIV., p. 928).

The only ground on which such a statement can be made with even the slightest claim to truth is, that it is impossible to distinguish between religious and social laws and customs. And from the point of view of orthodox Mohammedan belief, he is right. But he ought to acknowledge that just because this is so, *jihád* is religious war; for a religious war does not mean simply a war for the propagation of any certain religion, but a war, for the support of which, religious motives are used and urged. It is, then, the impossibility on the part of orthodox Mohammedans to distinguish between religious and political in social questions, which makes it difficult for them to regard any war in which a Mohammedan power is engaged as other than *jihád*. In other words, any war between Moslems and non-Moslems, in which the non-Moslems are the aggressors, must inevitably become a Holy War, a *jihád*, whether it actually be proclaimed as

such or not : for anything which interferes with the social and civil institutions and customs of Islam is an attack on Islam itself, and therefore war in defence of these is *jihád*. Church and State in Islam are indissolubly one.

In the present war between Italy and Turkey, the non-Moslem subjects of the Turkish Empire, almost without exception, sympathize with Turkey, and support the Ottoman cause. Many of them are filled with indignation at the action of Italy in making war on what was considered the defenceless province of a tottering empire. But, on the part of the Moslem subjects of Turkey, while the unwarrantableness of the attack has aroused equal indignation, it is the religious feeling that Islam is attacked, which forms the main ground of their support of the Ottoman cause. They feel that not merely has their country been attacked, but that the Faith has been insulted and challenged, if not threatened, that a Moslem land has been attacked by a non-Moslem power.

We do not here enter into the academic question of whether *jihád* ought to be proclaimed by a properly constituted authority. This side of the question is purely theoretical. In the case of the present war between Italy and Turkey, the question is never asked, Has *jihád* been lawfully proclaimed or not ? Orthodox Mohammedans universally regard the war as *jihád* ; it is so described in their newspapers ; those who take part in it are *Mujahidin* : every one killed in it is a *Shahíd* and the proclamation or letter of Sidi Ahmed El Sennusi to the inhabitants of Tripoli is not the proclamation of a *jihád*, but an appeal to those who are fighting, to realize that the war is a *jihád*, and to quit them like good and true Moslems for the glory of God and the honour of the Faith. That the war is *jihád* he takes for granted.

We must now pass to consider another point. So far we have seen that, among the more recent Moslem apologists, *jihád* is regarded as war in defence of Islam, but we have been forced to the conclusion that any war in which a non-Moslem power is the aggressor must inevitably be regarded by Moslems as involving on their part *jihád*. The point we have now to consider is, what

is the teaching of Mohammedanism as to wars of aggression. Is a war for the extension of Islamic rule also *jihád*?

In considering this point, not much light is to be got from the writings of the more recent Moslem authors, such as those we have quoted. They simply deny that it is a principle of Islam that *jihád* may include wars of aggression. By denying this, however, they do not prove anything; and, in order to get light on this part of the question before us, we must look at the Koran itself through those explanations of it which up to the present time pass as authoritative. This does not, of course, mean that these explanations are necessarily correct. Maulavi Chirágh 'Ali, for example, denies that they are correct. To quote his opinion as given in Sell's "The Faith of Islam," p. 411, "All fighting injunctions in the Koran are, in the first place, only for self-defence, and none of them has any reference to making war offensively. In the second place, they are transitory in their nature. The Mohammedan Common Law is wrong on this point where it allows unbelievers to be attacked without provocation." We do not desire here to discuss this question as to whether the Common Law is right or wrong, that is, whether orthodox Mohammedanism is a fine representation of the spirit and teaching of the Koran, or whether a better and truer representation of the conception of Mohammed and of his teachings might not have been given in a system of doctrine, developed from the point of view of Maulavi Chirágh 'Ali and such Moslems as he. These reformers of Islam may be right. The intention of Mohammed, in what he said of *jihád*, may have been misunderstood and misrepresented. But into this question we do not desire to go. For what we are considering is, what Mohammedanism is and has been—that is, what orthodox Mohammedanism teaches concerning *jihád*, founding its doctrine on a certain definite interpretation of those passages in the Koran which speak of *jihád*. Until the newer conceptions, as to what the Koran teaches as to the duty of the believer towards non-believers, have spread further and have more generally leavened the mass of Moslem belief and opinion,

it is the older and orthodox standpoint on this question which must be regarded by non-Moslems as representing Mohammedan teaching and as guiding Mohammedan action.

We may sympathize strongly with the newer ideas ; we may even believe that they are such as would be approved by the founder of Islam were he to return to direct the believers in the altered circumstances in which they find themselves in these latter days ; we may hope that those who advance these ideas may succeed in having them generally accepted by Mohammedans ; but we repeat, it is the older and narrower orthodox conception of Mohammed's teaching alone, which we can as yet regard as representing the views and practice of Islam with regard to *jihád* on this question of aggressive war. And the words of Maulavi Chirágh 'Ali are such that we need not spend any time in trying to prove that orthodox Mohammedanism believes and teaches that, according to the Koran, it is the nature of *jihád* to be aggressive. Let us quote his words again : "The Mohammedan Common Law is wrong on this point when it allows unbelievers to be attacked without provocation."

We take then as proved, the statement that Mohammedan Common Law allows unbelievers to be attacked without provocation : and we know that this position need not surprise us, if we remember the ideas prevalent among Semitic races and the genius of Semitic religions. But, first, we must distinguish between the extension of Islamic rule and the propagation of Islamic Faith. The two are not the same, however closely they may be at times united. It is easy to see that wars might be waged for the extension of Islamic rule, which were in no sense wars for the propagation and extension of Islam as a religion, though the ulterior motive in such wars may have been the conviction that the inhabitants of lands thus coming under the influence of Islam would, in course of time, accept as their own the common or general faith of the country in which they lived.

It may thus be true that the object of *jihád*, as prescribed and enjoined in the Koran, was not the direct propagation of the Faith : but there can be little doubt

that the extension of Islamic rule was one of its main objects. With regard to Arabia itself, there is no questioning the fact that war was enjoined on the Moslems till Arabia became wholly believing. Whether the motives which lay at the back of the conquest of Arabia for Islam by force of arms, were religious or were political, the fact remains that the Arabs were given the alternative of Islam or the sword. No tribute was to be accepted from an Arab, and any Arab apostatising was to be killed off-hand. It is an easy method of apologetics to maintain now that such commands were given in special circumstances and that their force was temporary: but such is not the teaching of the earlier commentators, whose views are still regarded as authoritative by all orthodox Moslems. In fact, it was just the other way. "Let there be no compulsion in religion" preceded and was abrogated by the verse of the Sword. And the command in II. 186-7 to fight against those who fight, but not to transgress by attacking first, was, according to Zamakhshary and others, abrogated by the command, "Fight against all the idolaters," IX. 36. (See Zamakhshary *in loco*).

That *jihād* is thus enjoined in the Koran for the establishment or extension of Islamic rule is, we have said, not surprising. One is almost inclined to say that it could scarcely have been otherwise with a Semitic race. Among all Semites, the idea that war was, or could be, dissociated from religion, may be said to have been almost unthinkable. We are not maintaining that war was commanded for the propagation of the faith; but we can certainly maintain that it was for the overthrow of opposing error and the destruction of the power of the unbeliever. Thus, for instance, not merely was Jehovah the God of the hosts of heaven, but He was regarded as the God of the armies of Israel, and it was inconceivable that Israel should make war which was not a war for the overthrow of His enemies, the extension of His rule and the glory of His name.

That this was understood by Mohammed, and that in his eyes the wars of Israel were for the religion of God, may be seen from the following passage: "Hast thou

not considered the assembly of the children of Israel, after the time of Moses, when they said unto their prophet (Samuel), Set a king over us, that we may fight for the religion of God ? ” II., 247. Similarly the wars of the Semitic tribes who surrounded Israel, were wars for the glory of their gods (cf., the inscription of Mesha). And the same may be held to have been true with regard to the Arabs in pre-Mohammedan times. That this conception was not cast away by Mohammed, but was only altered to suit the altered circumstances, is quite apparent. Allah is no tribal God, but the maker of heaven and earth—the one and only God : war in His name and for His glory does not, then, necessarily imply the destruction of the people of the other—the false gods : but it does imply their submission at least to His rule, though not their acceptance of His service. Allah, the ruler over all, had, in accordance with His own wise providence, not yet exerted His power and extended His dominion over all the earth ; but He was now about to do so through His prophet, Mohammed, and His religion, Islam, and one of the chief means whereby Mohammed apparently conceived Him as doing this was war. Those against whom the war was carried on were offered the alternative of coming over peaceably and accepting His religion or of taking the chances of war. It may be true that they were not compelled to accept Islam, but they were compelled, except where they succeeded in resisting by force of arms, to recognize Islam as their master and to submit to whatever laws it laid upon them.

Zeitún,

Egypt.

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