

Insistence

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It seems it will continue, and continue, until God opens a way for the ministry and for the Council of Senior Scholars out of this suspicious silence, and out of this stillness that no Muslim and no Egyptian can be content with or find reassuring. For it ought to be known to the ministry, and it ought to be known to the Council of Senior Scholars, that the Egyptian people is not a child whose assent can be won and whose acquiescence can be obtained by procrastination and delay, or by pretext and distraction and an appeal to forgetfulness. And it ought to be known to the ministry, and it ought to be known to the Council of Senior Scholars, that those who contend with them over the matter of proselytism and the missionaries seek no amusement and no sport, and do not seek words that spend time in the writing and spend with them those passing things by which morning follows evening without yielding any result; they seek, rather, seriousness — every measure of seriousness — and they write in order to see the fruit of what they write. If they obtain this fruit, so much the better; if not, they press on in demanding what is right and calling for the performance of duty — and it harms them not at all that the ministry should stop its ears, nor that the Council of Senior Scholars should turn away as though it neither hears nor reads; for if the ministry's and the Council's hearing of them escapes them, what will not escape them is that people read, and understand, and know, after reading and understanding, after deliberation and reflection, where defence of the right, performance of duty, the guarding of what is sacred, and the protection of dignity are to be found. Are they to be found with those who proclaim that they are rising to all this, earnest in it, and yet reach none of it, nor achieve anything of it, little or much — nothing but words followed by words, and declaration followed by declaration? Or with those who demand the right, possessing nothing but the power to demand it, and who call to duty, possessing nothing but the power to call to it, and who spend what power and effort they possess to encourage those who render right to its proper people, and to support those who rise to duty in sincerity?

This is a matter in which the position of the ministry and the position of the sheikhs must be made plain in the clearest and most manifest form, for it admits of no obscurity and no ambiguity, and brooks no delay and

no evasion. Either the ministry and the Council act, and we give them our sincere thanks for what they do; or the Council and the ministry speak, and we learn the measure of what they are able to do.

As for silence and stillness, as for muteness and inertness — the only thing people will understand from these is that the ministry and the Council are entirely incapable of the most binding thing they ought to rise to, or fall entirely short of rising to the most binding purpose for which they were established. And either of these is an evil, and either of these befits the ministry and the Council to step down from this work which they cannot or will not rise to.

We wish to know: were these shari'a rulings, issued by the Islamic judiciary in the matter of Nazla Ghoneim, void or valid? If void, why do the ministry and the Council of Senior Scholars not announce their nullity to the people, so that the people may know that their silence is not from incapacity, nor from dereliction, but from a loathing of falsehood and a love of truth, a protection of justice and a safeguarding of the law? And if they were valid, why have they not been executed to this day? And what is this strange, overpowering force that paralyses the ministry's hand and stands between it and the enforcement of these rulings? We further wish to know: why does the judiciary in Egypt exist? Does it exist to issue rulings that are obstructed, or to issue rulings that are enforced? If the former, why does the ministry not announce this to the people, so that they do not delude themselves with the justice and equity they seek before the courts — since the courts perform their duty by ruling with justice and equity, and the executive authority then refuses to carry out what they have ruled? And if the latter, why are these rulings issued by the courts suspended, awaiting enforcement, neglected, awaiting observance? Were they suspended deliberately, or were they suspended against the ministry's will? And who is it that coerces the ministry into suspending the courts' rulings and neglecting the enforcement of the law? Is this person Egyptian or foreign? If Egyptian, who is he? And what is his authority? And how can it be permitted for an Egyptian's authority to stand above the authority of the state, and to be capable of suspending court rulings and disregarding the law? And if foreign, who is he? And by what power is a foreigner, whoever he may be, able to interpose himself among the Egyptians to this extent, and to coerce the Egyptian ministry into neglecting its own laws and suspending the rulings of the judiciary?

All these are matters to which the ministry must give answer, and to which those who have appointed themselves defenders of the ministry,

advocates for it, must give answer. For it is quite unsustainable that the ministry should declare a thousand times and more, in Parliament and outside Parliament, that it will protect Islam from all aggression, that it will restrain the missionaries within their bounds, and that it will accomplish in this what pleases God and pleases the Muslims. All this is easy enough; but the thing the people want, and the only thing they believe and find reassurance in, is that the ministry keep its word when it gives it, and that the ministry act when it speaks. And however much the advocates and supporters of the ministry may claim that it has set about establishing shelters and spreading them across the provinces of Egypt, they will achieve nothing of the people's satisfaction, nor turn them away in the slightest from this case at hand. For the establishment of shelters, as we have said, is a social duty from which no ministry whatsoever can excuse itself, whether missionaries exist or not; it is not a resistance to the missionaries, but a necessary precaution against the social ills brought by missionaries and non-missionaries alike. The true resistance to the missionaries is what we demand when we insist on imposing surveillance upon them, and on lifting their hands from the sons and daughters of the Egyptians, and on rescuing this captive woman over whom God has given no authority to any but Muslims.

Let the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Justice demonstrate that they are genuinely serious in their resistance to proselytism, genuinely rising to what the office of minister imposes upon them of carrying out the rulings of the judiciary, of upholding the law, and of protecting order. And it is altogether too much that we should be insisting in this, and that other writers — to whom no one has granted a monopoly on the defence of Islam, and whom the state has not paid salaries on the grounds that they are scholars of religion and defenders of Islam — should equally be insisting in this, while these actual defenders among the scholars maintain this splendid silence and this profound stillness.

This is too much; and more than this is that the scholars should believe that people will listen to them when they say they are the defenders of Islam, and will believe them when they say they are the heirs of the prophets.

The defenders of Islam and the heirs of the prophets — those who hold exclusive claim to calling to the way of God and defending God's religion — they are these ones: those who press upon the ministry and press, and who persist in pressing until the ministry enforces the rulings

of the Islamic judiciary; and if this defeats them, they declare to the people that they have performed their duty, discharged their obligation, and given sincere counsel to God, His Prophet, and the Muslims.

Let the ministry reflect upon all this, and let the scholars reflect upon all this; and let the ministry and the scholars know that the Egyptians will not sleep, and will not be made to forget by silence and turning away, and will not be satisfied until they know with trust and certainty whether the matter of proselytism and the missionaries is, with them, jest or earnest.