

Discord . . .

Al-Wadi, 5 July 1934

It is said that another discord is wanted to be stirred up, and that another ordeal is wanted to be imposed upon some Egyptians, just as discord broke out this summer as it broke out last summer in the form of notorious strife, and just as an ordeal was imposed last summer whose consequences the people still bear to this day.

You may perhaps have read what was published in *Al-Wadi* yesterday, from the sons of Port Said: a group of Baha'is spreading the call to their sect, as it is said, and pursuing devious, winding paths toward that end — paths that involve no assault on people's honor, no seduction of children, no enticement of the weak, but which do involve a wanton tampering with the Noble Qur'an, a corruption of its sacred wording, and a distortion of its words that ought to be raised above such distortion. For among what is said, they recite the words of God Most High, "And the earth will shine with the light of its Lord," then claim that the letter 'ra' in 'rabbiha' ('its Lord') is superfluous — a reading meant to suggest the word 'bashar,' or 'a mortal.' And they recite His saying, Mighty and Majestic, "And to God belong the Most Beautiful Names, so call upon Him by them," and pause their recitation at the letter 'ba' of instrumentality in 'bi-ha' ('by them'), in order to claim that the Qur'an had already foretold Baha (the founder of their faith) and pointed to him.

This aggression, if it is true, is one that the law ought to condemn and punish, for the law's grant of limited freedom to people does not mean this freedom should extend so far as to be free of all restraint against assault, transgression, or insult; and any assault, transgression, or insult that resembles this tampering with the wording of the Qur'an, in a manner admitting no possible interpretation or justification, and leaving no doubt that it is a condemnable act of tampering, ought not to go unpunished.

Stranger still is what was also published in *Al-Wadi* yesterday: that a man among the Muslim scholars and preachers of Port Said refused to meet evil with evil, disliked confronting wanton mischief with wanton mischief, and carried out the command of God Most High by repelling evil with good, resisting corruption with righteousness, and calling to God in the finest manner, and tried to protect the ordinary Muslims from being influenced by this corruption. And when the administration summoned

him, it was only to forbid him from continuing what he had begun, to order him to cease from the path he had taken, and to command him to stop delivering the lectures he had begun to deliver. And the meaning of all this, if what the Port Said correspondent wrote to Al-Wadi is accurate, is that some people find no harm in the Baha'is spreading their call, and in their taking the tampering with the Qur'an, the distortion of its wording, and the corruption of its words, as a means of spreading this call — yet they find the utmost harm, the utmost embarrassment, in a man of religion rising to erase this evil, remove this wanton mischief, and set right this corruption. We would like to know, then, who has permitted corruption to the Baha'is who spread corruption in Port Said, while forbidding reform to the Muslims who wish to bring reform in Port Said? And we would like to know where in the text of the Constitution it permits freedom of opinion and the call to it for the Baha'is, while forbidding freedom of opinion and its defense to the Muslims? And we would like to know where in the text of the law it makes Islam a stranger in its own land, silencing the state's own religion from defending itself in accordance with what is proper, and empowering the men of the state to prevent the men of the state's own religion from protecting and safeguarding it against the enemies of the faith?

The Minister of the Interior ought to think, and think at length, for it is in no one's interest that discord should erupt among the people as it erupted last year, and it is not fitting for a state that claims Islam as its official religion to persist in permitting an assault upon this official religion, and to refuse to allow the men of this religion to defend it and to rise up on its behalf. We are as far as anyone could be from asking the Minister of the Interior, or any other man of authority, to confiscate freedom of opinion — let the Baha'is call to their sect as far as their call may extend, but within the bounds of the law; and let the men of the Islamic religion, the state's official religion, defend Islam as far as their defense may extend, likewise within the bounds of the law. And let the administration take the stance of one who understands the law rightly, who values justice at its true worth, and who subjects all people equally to the provisions of the Constitution, favoring no party over another, showing no preference for one faction over another, and wronging neither a recognized religion — indeed, an official religion, the religion of the state — for the benefit of a sect not yet recognized in Egypt.

As for what came after this: a group of scholars wrote to their leader, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar — not seeking redress against anyone, but

asking him to rise to his duty, to render right to its rightful owners, and to petition the Sultan that freedom be restored to Muslims so that they may defend Islam, and that this preacher be permitted to continue his preaching, and to defend his religion, and to restore these Qur'anic words that the Baha'is corrupt to their correct original form — words that falsehood ought never approach, from before them or behind them, and that ought never be assailed, even by the Baha'is themselves. Will the Sheikh of Al-Azhar listen to these scholars? Will the Sheikh of Al-Azhar petition the Minister of the Interior to satisfy these scholars? Will we read, tomorrow or the day after, that Muslim scholars have finally been permitted to protect Islam in a land that is itself one of the lands of Islam?

Taha Hussein

Al-Wadi, 5 July 1934.