

## THE LAST DAYS OF OUR WORLD

The Eleventh Hour, Martin Lings, Quinta Essentia, Cambridge, 1987, p. 124.

The Hadith literature contains detailed prophecies concerning the dramatic signs of the last days, many of which have already been fulfilled. The extremes of moral and social deterioration of our times is unprecedented in all of history except during the decline of the Roman Empire nearly two thousand years ago. The Romans were saved by Christianity. Tragically, now all the religions and civilizations throughout the world have fallen victim to the same decay and deviations, there is no other vigorous traditional civilization which can replace the present one and halt the accelerating fall downhill.

The imminence of the Last Days is widely felt among religious people today all over the world in the west as well as the East. An intimate friend recently wrote the following to the reviewer in her last letter: "I am only praying that the Mandi will come soon to save us. I am convinced that the year 2100 A.D. will never arrive that it will be all finished by then. Believe me, so many people I know here in America are longing for that because our hearts and nerves are worn out by all the fasad and fitnah around us - terrible satanic energies preying on our being at a totally unseen level and grinding us down...." The Eleventh Hour by Martin Lings is completely devoted to this subject, which is the result of the spiritual crisis of contemporary life. With considerable eloquence he refutes and condemns the entire concepts of evolutionism and progressivism upon which our present-day culture and education of the young are based. The fallacious and erroneous theory that mankind emerged from a lower species of life is totally at variance not only with Islam but all the other authentic traditions of other peoples throughout the world which teach that, far from emerging from below, mankind came down from above in pristine perfection as the representative of God on earth. The subsequent history of mankind after the fall is not one of progress but retrogression.

Modern "Civilization" cannot rightly be called a "civilization" if we are to go on speaking of the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Islamic civilizations, to take only four examples which are the most important. The purpose of all

these - and of their analogues -was to preserve such of man's primordial heritage as had been partially restored by the Revelations on which their respective religions are based and to retard the inevitable process of degeneration. Of all they stood for, the modern "civilization" is the direct antithesis, for it is nothing other than an organized system of subversion and degeneration. Instead of trying to resist the natural downward tendencies of man the movement from the higher to the lower it welcomes and encourages them in the name of progress and evolution. (pp. 54-55)

Since (the thirteenth century A.D. ), the Muslim world has suffered a gradual decline retarded on the one hand by the "renewers" Mujaddideen who have not ceased to come -- although there is less and less that they can achieve except in the domain of esoterism, that is, for a minority, and on the other hand, by human efforts of spiritual conservation which the west has been pleased to call "stagnation." But it is precisely thanks to this "stagnation" that the Islamic civilization, unlike the Christian one, could still be pieced together, structurally speaking. It would also probably be true to say that the mass of the people is still theocratically governable in most Islamic countries. But the active and dominant few are not. The call for one's country to become a "modern" nation with an internationally acceptable government is altogether typical of the average "enlightened" Near and Middle-Eastern politician, industrialist, teacher and their like. Nor in any case could there be an effective return to the Islamic civilization in the true sense so long as the modern civilization exists since the two are incompatible. It would be altogether inadequate simply to change the legal system from profane law to Islamic law which many seem to think is all that need be done. A whole network of far-reaching changes would be necessary if the civilization were to be spiritually operative. Meanwhile a minority of intellectuals might re-establish a traditional framework for themselves and have the spiritual benefits it offers while keeping the modern world at bay by all sorts of compromises which only they would know how to make. But whole nations could become traditionally civilized only if and when the modern "civilization" is taken from them by force. (pp. 58-59)

Many devout Muslims will be enraged by Ling's emphatic denial that any one religion can claim to be the sole repository of Truth to the total exclusion of all others. Lings thinks that none of the major world religions

was providentially ever meant to become global but each limited to particular geographic areas, despite their universal claims. Among the greatest advantages of being alive today is the easy accessibility of the total spiritual heritage of all mankind for any sincere seeker. The great danger for the less intelligent, which the author admits but has insufficiently restressed, is that of moral relativity that would lead to fatal indifference in religious practice and at worst, skepticism and cynicism. These dangers, he feels, can be avoided by staunch adherence to Orthodoxy, and a study of the traditional writers he recommends and wholehearted zeal on the esoteric (Sufi) path. It is astonishing that fundamentalists regard as anathema any suggestion that some of the spiritual truths of Islam may also be found in other traditions yet do not hesitate to appropriate the most secular and materialistic of modern “ideologies”.

Lings is convinced that the imminent destruction of this world, although catastrophic, will not be absolute but result in the recreation of a new and infinitely better world, once more restoring, to humanity spiritual normalcy and equilibrium.

Throughout this book the universality of absolute transcendental Truth is emphasized and its crucial relevance to the acute spiritual crisis which confronts us all today.

**Maryam Jameelah**