(*Note:* Wherever the word "you" or "your" is singular and refers to one human being, it is printed with an italic *y,* as in: *y*ou. Wherever such a word refers to God, the y is printed in capital, as in: You.)

For Fast 18

Chapter 24

35   Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. A likeness of His light is as a pillar on which is a lamp — the lamp is in a glass, the glass is as it were a brightly shining star — lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western, whose oil gives light, even though fire does not touch it — light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He pleases. And Allah sets forth parables for people, and Allah is Knower of all things —

> *Note:* Allah is called here the *light of the heavens and the earth* because He has manifested hidden things and brought them into existence. *Mishkāt* means a *niche*, but it also has the meaning of *pillar*. In this parable, Islam is represented as a likeness of the Divine light, a light placed high on a pillar so as to illuminate the whole world; a light guarded by being placed in a glass, so that no puff of wind can put it out; a light so resplendent that the glass itself in which it is placed is as a brilliant star. It should be noted that the religion of Islam is repeatedly spoken of as *Divine light* in the Quran: "They desire to put out *the light of Allah* with their mouths, but Allah will allow nothing except the perfection of *His light*, though the disbelievers are averse" (9:32; 61:8). Hence it is of Islam that the parable of Divine light speaks. The *blessed olive*, from which that light is lit, and which stands here for a symbol of Islam, as the fig stands for a symbol of Judaism (see 95:3), belongs neither to the East nor to the West. Even so is Islam, which must give light to both the East and the West, and which, therefore, does not specially belong to either of them. The reference seems to be to the welding together of the East and the West in Islam, a prophecy which is now approaching its fulfilment in the awakening of the West to the truth of the principles of Islam.
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> The parable becomes clearer if *light* is taken to refer to the Holy Prophet. The Prophet was by nature gifted with the highest qualifications. Even before he received Divine revelation, his life was a life of purity and devoted to the service of humanity. Light emanated from him even before the light from on High came to him in the form of Divine revelation, so that when revelation came to him it was *light upon light*.

36   (that light is) in houses which Allah has permitted to be exalted and His name to be remembered within them. In there do glorify Him, in the mornings and the evenings,

Note: The Divine light spoken of in the last verse is here stated as being met with in certain houses, the distinctive mark of those houses being that the name of Allah is remembered in them, thus showing that these houses are the houses of Muslims, and the light is therefore the light of Islam. These houses, we are further told, though humble now, will be *exalted*. And the exaltation of the humble huts of the Arab dwellers of the desert to royal palaces is a fact of history.

37   men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of the due charity — they fear a day in which the hearts and the eyes will turn about,

38   that Allah may give them the best reward for what they did, and give them more out of His grace. And Allah provides without measure for whom He pleases.

Note: In these houses Allah is glorified in the morning and the evening, and therefore these can be the houses of no other than Muslims, because the keeping up of prayer and the paying of the due charity is the distinguishing characteristic of Islam. The opposition to His light, and the end of that opposition, are described in verses 39–40. The turning about of the hearts and the eyes means either that they will be transformed in the new life or that they will be in a state of commotion by reason of fear. The verse that follows lends support to the first meaning.