

VIRTUE & VICE

Shaykh Muhammad Mitwalli ash-Sha'rawi



VIRTUE & VICE

Shaykh Muhammad Mitwalli ash-Sha'rawi



© Dar Al Taqwa Ltd. 2009

ISBN 978-1-870582-57-5

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

Translation: Aisha Bewley

Editors: Abdalhaqq Bewley and Muhammad Isa Waley

Production: Bookwork, Bookwork.

Published by:
Dar Al Taqwa Ltd.
7A Melcombe Street
Baker Street
London NW1 6AE

Printed and Bound by:
IMAK OFSET, Istanbul
Tel: +90 212 656 49 97
www.imakofset.com.tr
info@imakofset.com.tr

Table of Contents

Preface	1
Virtue	6
Obedience	6
Veiling People's Faults	9
Trusting in Allah	11
Doing Good	14
Truthfulness	15
Steadfastness	17
Goodness (<i>Birr</i>)	19
Restraining Anger	22
Correct Behaviour towards Parents, Relatives and Orphans	25
Parents	25
Relatives	26
Orphans	27
Wisdom (<i>Hikma</i>)	29
Justice	31
Man's Acceptance of Allah's Trust	38
Accepting Allah's Decree	42
Spending out of the desire to please Allah	44
Vice	47
Envy	48
Prodigality	50
Wrongdoing	54
Mockery and Making Light of People	56
Corruption	58

Treachery	62
Scheming (<i>Kayd</i>)	64
Demands of Gratitude for <i>sadaqa</i>	66
Pride	68
Vanity and Boastfulness	69
Miserliness	70
Evildoing	74
Glossary	76

Preface

The gifts of His Excellency Shaykh Imam Muhammad Mitwalli ash-Sha'rawi and the bestowal of Allah's knowledge on Him are a contribution to an ongoing transmission of gifts and help over the course of generations which have illuminated the Path for those who obey Allah and travel the path of truth, and have deterred rebels so that they might be guided and leave the path of error, disobedience and vice, and go straight by following Allah's command. The Almighty says:

"Go straight as you have been commanded..." (11:112)

So the command to go straight is a command to scrupulously execute the commands and prohibitions demanded by Allah so that we do not deviate to one side or the other. Going straight demands complete wakefulness and lack of heedlessness. The Almighty says:

"The angels descend on those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah,' and then go straight: 'Do not fear and do not grieve, but rejoice in the Garden you have been promised.'" (41:30)

This means that they travel straight ahead without glancing to the right or the left and do not remain stationary on the Wide Path. Rather they travel up the middle of it without any deviation or digression. That is why Allah Almighty says in the *Fatiba*:

"Guide us to the Straight Path (Sirat)." (1:6)

What is this *Sirat*? It is the path that leads right to your destination. It is a straight path because Allah – glorified and exalted is He! – has laid out the straight path for us in His *Shari'a*. It is the

quickest way to achieve the goal. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. That is why, when you are heading for a place, the shortest path you can travel is one that has no bends in it – one that is completely straight. But do not assume that going far from the straight path need start with a big deviation. No, the first deviation may be very small indeed, but you still end up miles and miles from your destination. You just have to look at a railway line. When a track begins to turn away from the direction in which it was going, it only deviates a few millimetres at first, but then the difference rapidly widens and becomes enormous in no time at all.

So any deviation, however small, will rapidly take you a great distance from the Straight Path. That is why we pray to Allah to guide us to the Straight Path, the path on which there is no deviation at all. That is why believing human beings ask Allah Almighty to guide them to the shortest path to their hoped-for destination. What is that destination? It is Paradise and bliss in the Hereafter. Therefore we say, “O Lord, guide us and help us to travel the Straight Path!” It is the Path by which we will reach Paradise without any deviation in it which might distance us from arriving at that goal.

When you say “*Guide us to the Straight Path,*” you are asking Allah Almighty to put you with the Prophets, the truly sincere, the martyrs and the righteous. This means that you are asking Allah – glorified and exalted is He! – to make you travel the same way that those people travelled, so that you may be with them in the Next World. It is as if you were asking for the highest degree in the Garden, for all those mentioned have a high position in the Garden of Bliss. You are asking Allah to enable you to travel that Path on which there is no deviation and which will bring you most quickly to this high degree in the Next World.

The Almighty says:

“Whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger will be with those whom Allah has blessed: the Prophets and the truly sincere, the martyrs and the righteous. What excellent company such people are!” (4:69)

There are no companions more excellent than these. That is why Shaytan wants to stop us gaining this company. He threatens the sons of Adam when he says to his Lord:

“By Your misguidance of me, I will lie in ambush for them on Your straight path.” (7:16)

Iblis does not need to corrupt those who give themselves up to rebellion and who continue to oppose what Allah has commanded. The soul which commands to evil is already in Shaytan’s camp. It does not need to be corrupted, as it already commands the person to do evil. For that reason, Iblis does not go to pubs and brothels and other places of ill-repute and try to corrupt those who frequent them, because those who go to such places are counted among the human shaytans. Iblis goes instead to where good things are done and to places of worship. It is the people in those places on whom he expends all his efforts and tricks, attempting to divert them from the worship of Allah. That is why Iblis does not say, “I will lie in ambush for them on the *crooked* path.” By its very nature the crooked path is already heading towards Shaytan. Iblis desires to corrupt those who are obeying Allah. He makes disobedience to Allah seem attractive to them and deludes them with unlawful wealth.

Shaytan concentrates on corrupting human beings so that he may not be the only rebel. He has been cast from Allah’s mercy – but why should he be the only one? Why should everyone else not be rebels as well? The disobedience of Shaytan lay in the fact that he did not prostrate to Adam; so why should he not take the children of Adam to Hellfire with him? The enmity of Shaytan is the enmity of one who has already lost. Shaytan refused to prostrate to Adam on the assumption that he was better than him. Allah cautioned Adam and so Adam, peace be upon him, had to convey this warning to his descendants and inform them that Shaytan is their enemy.

When heedlessness overpowers someone, it provides Shaytan with an opportunity to reach right into his soul. Shaytan does not attack rebels whose lower selves have deluded them, since they

have made it unnecessary for him to do so. Shaytan comes only to those who are obeying Allah, in order to corrupt their obedience. That is why we find in Allah's Book:

"I will lie in ambush for them on Your straight path." (7:16)

Shaytan does not lie in wait in taverns or gambling dens. He sits at the door of the mosque to corrupt the obedience of anyone who is obedient to Allah. Shaytan does not appear on the crooked path because no one on the path of error needs him. Such people have done Shaytan's job for him and so they are already his friends. The friends of Shaytan are those who deviate from the Path. They are Shaytan's helpers.

This provides an answer for those who say, "Whispering sometimes comes to disturb us in the prayer." The prayer, as we know, is the noblest situation that anyone can occupy, because they are standing before their Lord. Shaytan therefore tries to distract human beings from it, in order to keep them from obtaining its reward. This whispering often occurs and is not a sign of lack of faith; but it does require one to be wide awake. When Shaytan provokes you, you should remember the words of Allah:

"If an evil impulse from Shaytan provokes you, seek refuge in Allah. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." (7:200)

Seeking refuge means asking for help, shelter and protection. You only seek help, refuge or protection with someone who is stronger than the one whose evil you want to escape. It is well known that Shaytan possesses nimbleness, power of penetration and great stealth. That is why we must seek refuge with one equal to him or greater than him. Yet people often seek refuge with creatures, human or jinn, when it is Allah alone who possesses the power to foil the stratagems of Shaytan.

Allah – glorified and exalted is He! – is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. When you truly seek refuge with Allah, are filled with faith, and rely on the One who created you and created Shaytan, then Shaytan must flee from your path, because he knows that you

are seeking refuge with the Infinitely Strong, All-Powerful Creator, and Shaytan has no power in the face of his Creator.

The Creator made both the path of guidance and the path of disobedience clear to us; then He allowed us freely to choose either obedience to Him and His mercy or, alternatively, disobedience to Him and His punishment. Allah – blessed and exalted is He! – only gave us this choice for a limited period in our life in this world. He has not given us any choice regarding any of the events of this world, He only gave us choice with respect to the path we may take: that of obedience or disobedience. Allah Almighty gave us this choice because He desires His creatures to obey Him while being able to disobey Him, and to believe in Him while being able to disbelieve.

Creation is completely subject to the power of Allah, Who could, if He wanted, compel it so that it would be unable to disobey. However Allah Almighty wanted creatures to come to Him through love. This love is Allah's gift in the Next World and His bliss and His Garden. Allah is not stingy towards His slaves in granting them.

This book by Imam ash-Sha'rawi is about obedience and disobedience, virtue and vice; and it shows us two opposing paths, one of which leads to Paradise and the other to punishment by Allah in Hellfire. The business is clear. So why do the rebels deceive themselves and surrender to their appetites and desires and to Shaytan? There is no doubt that this is heedlessness on their part which requires from them a new understanding by which they put an end to their indulgence in acts of disobedience and evil.

May Allah show mercy to the author, endowed as he was with the gifts of the Lord, and repay him with the best reward for his illuminations and luminous insights.

VIRTUE

Obedience

In the Name of Allah, and praise be to Allah, and prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah.

Allah Almighty says:

“You who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in command among you. If you have a dispute about anything, refer it back to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best thing to do, and gives the best result.” (4:59)

There are reasons why Allah Almighty instructs His slaves in this way. We notice that after a judge issues a judgement in court, he presents his reasons for making the judgement. These reasons are the legal justification for the ruling, whether it be a guilty verdict or a declaration of innocence. At the same time the judge judges by the facts according to the letter of the law. So the reasons for any ruling are also the legal justifications which support it.

Allah Almighty says: *“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger.”* We notice that Allah does not say: *“O mankind, obey Allah and obey the Messenger,”* but rather says, *“You who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger.”* Allah Almighty does not expect mankind as a whole to obey Him; He expects the believers to believe in Him. So the basis for obeying Allah and the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is belief in Allah Almighty and the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. This is justice on the part of the Creator – glory be to Him. The Almighty

does not oblige anyone to perform any action unless he believes in Him and in His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as a conveyer and legislator. Hence why we find that every command from Allah Almighty begins with His words, "*You who believe*". (4:59) So the basis for obeying Allah Almighty and obeying the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is faith.

That is why we always say: "Beware of approaching Allah's judgements by firstly investigating the reasons for them and then secondly believing in them. Rather make your first approach to Allah's rulings that of hearing and obedience and humility and fear. Once that has happened there is nothing to prevent the intellect from engaging in reflection in order to understand something of the wisdom behind the prohibition of this or that thing." I say "something of the wisdom", because the wisdom of Allah is infinite and cannot be totally comprehended or encompassed.

There is a difference between a command given by one human being to another and a command from Allah Almighty to those who believe in Him. Allah's command to mankind is preceded by a prerequisite, which is belief in Him. As for commands from a human being to another, some of them say, for example, "Persuade me to do what you say, because your intelligence is no greater than mine and you have no more understanding than I have." A human being will not do anything that he is told to do by another human being unless he is convinced it is right to do so and experience tells him that the person who orders him to do it is not deceiving him. If someone is your equal, you do not necessarily accept that it is mandatory to carry out what he has said.

It is different with the One God, Who created you and brought you into existence and gave you the things necessary to sustain your life. He is Allah, and He – glory be to Him! – and has no need of you or the entire universe. When Allah Almighty asks us to believe in Him and obey Him, this is not for His benefit: it is for the benefit of human beings. Allah created us and has no need of us and anything He asks us is not for His own benefit. Our obedience does not add anything to Him. Even His creation of us, does not add a new attribute to Him: He was the Creator before He created us.

Allah Almighty desires us to obey Him by our own choice, not through compulsion or force. A human being worships Allah Almighty because He alone is the One entitled to be worshipped. We worship Him to obey Him by our own choice. As is well known, all human beings are given by Allah the right to choose to believe or not believe in Him. When someone chooses obedience over disobedience, Allah loves what he does. There is a difference between someone whom Allah forces to obey and someone who obeys by his own choice.

Veiling People's Faults

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

“The guidance and knowledge Allah sent me with is like abundant rain which falls on the earth. Some land is fertile and accepts the rain and then grass and many plants grow there. Some is barren but holds the rainwater, and so people benefit from it and drink and water their animals. Some of the rain falls on land which neither holds the water nor gives rise to grass and other plants.”

So the Messenger of Allah likens people to the earth and divides them into three groups:

The first category are those who adopt guidance and benefit from it and then give what they have to others and so benefit them. They are like the fertile earth which is watered and then produces crops.

The second category are those who know the way but do not act by it, and yet convey it to other people. Allah Almighty says about these: *“You who believe, why do you say what you do not do? It is deeply abhorrent to Allah that you should say what you do not do.”* (61:2-3) These people are like land which retains water, so that people can drink from it, but does not benefit from it itself whereas others do.

When Muslims are like this, their knowledge should be taken but their actions ignored. They should not be exposed but should be left to Allah. Perhaps He will guide them and expand their hearts to act by the knowledge they possess. Exposing them will end up by diminishing their knowledge of the *deen* rather than revealing their wrong actions.

We read in a *hadith*: “If anyone veils a Muslim’s faults, Allah will veil his faults in this world and the Next.”¹ So anyone who knows something about a person should not disgrace them. There is no human being who is unblemished except for the Prophets and Messengers, and so every human being slips up. So if you see one of the scholars make a mistake, conceal it so that people may benefit from his knowledge, because if you make it public and people leave him, they will not take from his knowledge what will have possible benefit for them in this world and the Next World. A poet said in the past:

Take my knowledge but do not rely on my actions.
Leave the sticks for the fire.

The third category consists of those who do not benefit from the Path of Allah Almighty, and from whom people do not benefit either.

So the Path of Allah Almighty is like the rain which descends from the sky. Sometimes it falls on land which benefits from it and from which people benefit as well; sometimes on land that gives people benefit but does not benefit land itself; and sometimes on land which does not benefit from it and nor does anyone else.

1. Part of a *hadith* transmitted by Muslim (2699), at-Tirmidhi (1325), Abu Dawud (1455), Ibn Majah (225), and Ahmad in the Musnad (7118); from Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him.

Trusting in Allah

Allah Almighty says:

“Then when you have reached a firm decision, put your trust in Allah, Allah loves those who put their trust in Him.”
(3:159)

The benefit of faith lies in keeping this beautiful balance. The limbs act, using means supplied by Allah, while the hearts place their trust in Allah Almighty. So when a farmer wants to cultivate some land, he must select the seeds, fertilise the land well, plough the land properly, organise sources of irrigation, and protect the crop from frost, for instance, by covering it. All of this is done under the banner of actions of limbs. After that he puts his trust in Allah Almighty. Then the farmer will not make the mistake of saying, “The crop came because I employed good means.” A believer always remembers the truth of the situation. The reality is that above all means is the One Who created the means. So the farmer says, “I have done everything I can and employed all the best means of my profession, but the result is in the hands of Allah. May He decree good for me and bless me in my crop.”

Islam upholds this balance so as to inculcate faith in the One God who has unlimited power and who can, if He wills, create through means or without means. The use of means is the province of a person's limbs; but above the means is One who is All-Powerful, All-Wise. So when any believer acts he uses the available means and then hopes for the gift of the Real, the Creator of means. So the limbs act and the hearts have faith. Every believer should always set up that beautiful balance in the centre of his consciousness.

No one should suppose that trust in Allah entails the limbs ceasing to act. That is false trust. Evidence for this sort of trust

being false is that someone like that stops doing actions which involve difficulty and claims that he is putting trust in Allah, whereas he does not say that regarding things which are easy to do. Such people may refuse to act in certain situations but when, for instance, food comes to them they do not refuse to reach out their hand to take it. We say to people like this, "If you were truthful in your claim to have trust without action, you would not reach out your hand to the food to put it in your mouth. You would expect your trust to bring the food to your mouth without the need for any action on your part."

It is known that Islam forbids false trust of this kind and the foolish sense of belief it involves. That is why Allah Almighty says, "*Then when you have reached a firm decision, put your trust in Allah.*" (3:159) Reflect on the words, "reached a firm decision" and "put your trust". You will see that reaching a decision requires resolving to use means whereas placing trust requires acknowledgement of lack of capacity because the meaning of trust in this context entails acknowledgement of one's own lack of capacity and reliance on someone who has the capacity which one lacks. We see a person saying, "I have trusted this matter to so-and-so because I cannot do it myself," thus showing his powerlessness. He goes to someone who has the power to do what he is unable to do.

The trust compatible with belief consists in surrendering the reins of human affairs to Allah Almighty with confidence in His excellent management. This is absolute trust. Since Allah is the one who gives man the means, man should not reject these means and just say to Him, "Help me, Lord," or "Do this thing for me." Alongside his reliance on Allah he must employ out all the means at his disposal. Allah Almighty says in the *Fatiba*, "*You only we worship and You only we ask for help.*" This means that we both act and also seek help from Allah. Allah Almighty says, "*Allah loves those who put their trust in Him.*" (3:159) Why does He love them? Because those who believe in Him have used His means and then put their trust in Him after that.

Trust in Allah means that a human being knows that every physical faculty has a duty imposed on it by faith based on reflection on Allah's rulings. So when the ear hears a command from Allah, that command must be carried out and likewise if it hears

people abandoning the Signs of Allah, it is incumbent to leave them. The action of the tongue is speech and that is why you should only speak good words. So every physical faculty has action attached to it and the action of the heart is certainty and trust in Allah. Beware of transposing the action of the heart to the action of the limbs by making trust a matter of the limbs, making you neglect to act. Running is done by the legs, grasping by the hands and trust is a matter of the heart. So do not transfer what belongs to the heart to the foot or hand or vice versa. How many there are who act without having trust in Allah and so their actions result in failure.

Believers must beware of neglecting the means. If you neglect the means, you are not putting your trust your Allah, you are in fact showing stupidity. As we have seen trust in Allah is an action of the heart and by neglecting means you have transferred an action of the heart to the limbs. Limbs should act and hearts should trust.

Doing Good

Good is what brings benefit but the gauge of benefit varies with different people. One person may look at immediate benefit and another at deferred benefit. An example of that – and Allah has the highest example – can be seen in two brothers. One is keen, wakes up early, goes to school, listens to his teachers, concentrates on his studies and grasps his lessons fully. The other only wakes up with great difficulty and does not go to school but loiters on the way and plays with this and that. Both desire good for themselves but the difference between them lies in their measure of good. One prefers ultimate good while the other prefers immediate good, even if he wastes his life getting it. One prefers to work hard for ten or fifteen years so as to be a person with position in society. The other prefers to play now even if that spells ruin for his future.

Another example is a farmer who cultivates his land and takes good care of it. He considers it to be a favour from Allah Almighty and observes the due of the Creator in respect of what He has given him. He irrigates his land and fertilises it. He hopes that Allah will bless his crop. Time passes and the crop ripens. He harvests it and fills his barns with the ample provision of Allah. He pays *zakat* on his wealth and crops and he and his children continue for many years to eat what Allah has provided for him through his labour. Another farmer does not observe the right of Allah in respect of the land He has given him and he leaves it and neglects it. He gives himself up to idleness and takes his provision from thievery or begging.

So there are different gauges of good. But why do we take it on ourselves to formulate the measure of good when Allah Almighty is the One who revealed the Mighty *Shari'a*, which contains all the gauges of good? The criteria of good which are formulated by creatures are bound to be defective but the criteria of good which Allah has formulated are infallible.

Truthfulness

Allah Almighty says: "*You who believe, be godfearing and be with the truthful.*" (9:119) This means: "If you believe in Allah, be godfearing" – in other words, place a screen of protection between you and Allah. But if it is assumed that the believer is in the company of Allah, how can Allah Almighty ask us to put a protective screen between us and Him? In fact what Allah Almighty is saying to us is "Put a protective screen between yourself and the Fire," the latter being one of the aspects of Allah's attributes of Majesty.

Then He says, "*Be with the truthful.*" This means: "Cling to them and be in the company of Allah." If someone comes after you, he will find you among the truly sincere. But who are the truthful (*sadiqun*)? The root of the word is the letters *sad*, *dal*, and *qaf* which means that there must be a real correspondence between an expression and what is expressed. When we speak, before we articulate a word, a mental image passes through our mind before the words emerge. When we want to say "Muhammad visited me," for instance, the idea behind the words passes through our minds before we articulate them but the listener does not know about that until they hear the words. When we say the words, the listener knows that the mental activity took place before they were uttered and was then translated through the tongue. Truthfulness occurs when the verbal expression corresponds to the facts expressed. When it does not correspond, it is a lie. All words spoken can either be truthful or untruthful.

There is a *hadith* about a desert Arab who came to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said to him: "There are three things I am incapable of resisting: the first is women, the second wine and the third lying. I have come to ask you which of those things I should relinquish." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told him, "Be truthful and then do not worry." When the urge to drink wine came over him, he said to himself, "If the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him

and grant him peace, asks me 'Have you drunk wine?', what will I tell him? I must tell him the truth," and so he refused to drink wine. When he went to a woman and desired her, he said, "If the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asks me, 'What did you do about women?', what will I tell him? I must tell him the truth," and so he refrained from women. So truthfulness kept him from acts of disobedience. That is why when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was asked, "Can a believer steal?" he answered, "Yes." To "Can a believer commit illicit sex?" he answered, "Yes." To "Can a believer lie?" he answered, "No."¹

Allah Almighty calls attention to the fact that your words must correspond to your actual deeds. Beware of saying words when you do something else. Therefore Allah Almighty says:

"You who believe, why do you say what you do not do? It is deeply abhorrent to Allah that you should say what you do not do." (61:2-3)

1. Imam Ahmad related in the *Musnad* (2:99) from Safwan ibn Sulaym who said, "Someone asked, 'Messenger of Allah, can a believer be a coward?' 'Yes,' he answered. He was asked, 'Can a believer be miserly?' 'Yes,' he answered. He was asked, 'Can a believer be a liar?' He answered, 'No.'" Al-Mundhir said, "Malik related it *mursal*." (See glossary)

Steadfastness

Steadfastness entails restraining the self so that it is content with anything unpleasant which happens to it. Unpleasantness comes from two directions. The first is when there is no adversary, as happens, for instance, when illness or incapacity afflicts you or you lose one of your children. You cannot do anything about it. The second is when there is an adversary, as when someone wrongs you, or steals your property, or does anything else of that nature.

You have no choice but to be patient in those situations when you have no adversary. When there is an adversary, however, the desire for revenge often enters the equation. Hence the need for steadfastness is greater, because your adversary is there in front of you and you want to take revenge on him. Allah Almighty therefore differentiates between those who are steadfast, by saying in one *ayat*, "*Be steadfast in the face of all that happens to you*" (31:18) and in another *ayat*, "*But if one is steadfast and forgives, that is the most resolute course to follow.*" (42:43) The second *ayat* shows us that we need to be patient in instances when we have an adversary and to have strength of will and resolve to prevent ourselves from taking revenge.

There can also be different motives for steadfastness. Someone may experience severe difficulties and seem to be to people equal to the events that have happened to him and to be staunch and steadfast. This steadfastness, however, is not for the sake of Allah. He is steadfast in order to show that he is above events or steadfast in the face of enemies, so that they do not gloat over him. The poet said:

I show gloaters my staunchness.

I will not fall apart because of misfortune.

But Allah Almighty desires us to be steadfast for His sake alone. If something bad happens to you, you should recognise that there is great good in it and know that Allah has placed wisdom in it. Someone who is steadfast for the sake of Allah looks for the wisdom in what Allah's decree has brought him. Such a man will say, "I praise You, my Lord, for everything You decree and everything You decide, with praise based on satisfaction with Your wisdom because of certainty of Your wisdom." Such a person is certain of Allah's wisdom and so does not merely look at the surface of events.

Steadfastness in hardship entails steadfastness in the face of hardship or poverty when they happen. Steadfastness in adversity entails steadfastness in the face of bodily pain because of illness, disease or decrepitude. Steadfastness in the face of force is the steadfastness which is applied to steadiness and endurance in fighting when encountering the enemy. So we have three types of steadfastness: steadfastness in the face of hardship or poverty; steadfastness in enduring trials to the body; and steadfastness in the face of the enemy.

It is related that the Noble Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, stated that Allah Almighty has said: "When I test My believing slave and he does not complain to his visitors, I release him from My shackle. Then I replace his flesh with better flesh and his blood with better blood, and then he can act anew." This means that when Allah afflicts a person with some affliction which causes pain but they do not complain, they can be said to be steadfast under the affliction. If they die, Allah will forgive them and show mercy to them, and if He heals them, then their well-being is without sin.

But we must not conclude that one should submit to such afflictions or trials without looking for help from doctors if he is ill, or making use of one of the means Allah provides to remove these disasters. We must understand that we should make use of the means which Allah makes available to us but refrain from being exasperated by things that happen to us.

Goodness (*Birr*)

Allah Almighty says:

Help each other towards goodness and taqwa Do not help each other in wrongdoing and enmity. (5:2)

What is goodness (*birr*)? Goodness is something with which your heart is at ease. Wrongdoing is something hatched in your heart which you fear someone else finding out about. If it was not wrongdoing, you would not mind other people seeing it while you are doing it.

His words “*Help each other to goodness and taqwa. Do not help each other to wrongdoing and enmity,*” mean that you should tell every group of people who come to seek your help in a prescribed good, “May Allah bless you and strengthen you in what you do!” But we caution you about one thing: that you do not establish organisations devoted to something other than your *deen*, such as those societies called Rotarians or other dubious names which have their origins in the West. Even if their activities are praiseworthy, you should not try to do good to yourself and your brothers in the name of anything other than Islam.

These societies do not have a monopoly in doing good. Even if there is apparent good in them, the evil they conceal is many times greater. If any of us has the ability to do good, he should do it within his *deen* and his own belief structure. Every human being should know that Islam desires us to devote all our lives to good. That understanding must be firm in our minds so that insecurity does not lead us to error when someone receives good from these organisations. and into thinking that good comes from anywhere other than the *deen* of Islam.

Every Muslim should know that the *deen* of Islam contains everything that any of us could possibly need and frees us from any need for those people. When we do good and offer people

social services, why do we not make use of our own names for that and take our goals from our own *deen*? Why do we run after all that is Western?

We should all read the words of Allah Almighty:

“Who could say anything better than someone who summons to Allah and acts rightly and says, ‘I am one of the Muslims?’”
(41:33)

The Almighty also says:

“Help each other towards goodness and taqwa. Do not help each other in wrongdoing and enmity.” (5:2)

Allah Almighty wants us to augment the quantity of good in the world and prevent destructive evil. None of us can help each another to goodness on a full time basis, so we should all be well aware of the fact that none of us can establish all good on our own. If we ask someone where they bought the loaf of bread on their table, they will point to the grocer they got it from. This calls our attention to the fact that Allah has caused this seller to buy bread so that other people can buy it from him. If you were to ask the grocer where he got the bread, he would tell you that it came from a bakery. If you were then go to the bakery you would find some workers kneading dough and others baking. If you asked the owner of the bakery where he got the flour from to make his bread, he would tell you that it came from a mill. In the mill we may find a dozen or so workers and engineers working to grind the flour. This shows us the power of Allah Almighty, Who brought together some wealthy people to purchase these large machines which would be too expensive for one person on his own. These large machines are produced by large factories and plants, which employ design engineers who study mechanics and have the capacity to design this kind of equipment.

So when eating a loaf of bread, one should realise that there are a multitude of organisations and individuals who have worked to produce it. That is the will of Allah Almighty and the way He

orders every action of life. So the grocer who retails the bread helps people – and the same is true of the baker, the miller, the kneader, the supplier of the machines, the designer of the machines, and the college which taught the engineer who designed them. All these people help one another to enable the production of this one loaf of bread which appears to the eventual purchaser at the moment he is hungry. In the same way, the entire activity of life has its structure completed by mutual help between all creatures. All of us are at the service of everyone else.

Restraining Anger

Describing the godfearing, Allah Almighty says:

“...those who give in times of both ease and hardship, those who control their rage and pardon other people – Allah loves good-doers.” (3:134)

One of the attributes of the godfearing is that they control their rage. When news reached the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that his uncle Hamza had been killed and they told him, “Hind removed his liver and ate it,” the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked “Did she chew it?” “No,” they answered, “she spat it out.” The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, then said, “Allah would not have any part of Hamza punished in Fire.”

It was as if it would go to the Fire if she had eaten it since the cells of his liver would have been absorbed into her body. So if Hind went to the Fire, that would mean that part of Hamza would also enter the Fire. That is why it was as if the liver of Hamza was protected from her and she spat it out. However, when Hamza, may Allah be pleased with him, was killed in that battle, it caused immense pain to the Messenger of Allah said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and he said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: “When Allah gives me victory over them, I will kill seventy of them.” Then the words of Allah, *“those who control their rage”* were revealed.

Allah Almighty takes the most extreme possible occurrence in the case of the Messenger of Allah, making that one thing happen which would be certain to enrage him more than any other. Then Allah Almighty guided him, taught him and revealed to him the *ayat* in the Noble Qur’an which says: *“If you want to retaliate, retal -*

iate to the same degree as the injury done to you. But if you are patient, it is better to be patient." (16:126)

From this we learn that Allah does not react to anything, for reaction is one of the qualities of creatures. Allah Almighty revealed to His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "If you want to retaliate, retaliate to the same degree as the injury done to you." That entails controlling rage. These Divine directions to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, were revealed in the context of the specific events of Uhud. Later on, Allah made it known that the case was general so that it applied as much in times of peace as it did in war. This happened so that he would be a teacher and guide for people in their ascent through the degrees of certainty.

Conceptual matters are derived from sensory things. So the root of the word *kazm*, used for control in this *ayat*, comes from filling a waterskin. A waterskin is the vessel in which the Arabs carried water and is made from an animal skin. When it is filled with water, the mouth is bound securely so that nothing gets out. This filling and tying it up well is called 'controlling' the waterskin. Waterskins are by their nature soft. If you place one on the back of an animal or carry it without tying it up, then the water will gush out of it; but tying up the mouth of the waterskin stops the water from spilling out.

In the same way, controlling rage prevents the tumult in the human soul from spilling out. Allah does not forbid tumult in the self, because it is a natural reaction. If Allah did not desire these natural reactions, He could prevent their occurrence in human beings; but Allah desires them for particular reasons. An example is the sexual instinct: Allah desires it to ensure the continuation of the species, but at the same time places it within limits. It is the same with rage: it is part of human nature. Islam does not want a Muslim to have his emotions confined in an iron straitjacket, but it does desire believers to react to events in a manner appropriate to them with a fruitful, not a destructive, outcome.

The words of Allah "*those who pardon people*" (3:134) make it clear that there is a difference between the natural reaction of anger itself, which remains in the self and is controlled, and pardon. Pardoning is removing rage from your heart and effacing

every trace of what happened, so that it is as if the business had not occurred. That is a second degree. As for the third degree, it is that when you want to retaliate, you do good to the person instead.

So there are three stages outlined in the *ayat*: controlling rage; pardoning; and going beyond rage and pardon by treating well the person who mistreats you.

When you react without restraining your rage it is extremely difficult to restrain your reaction so that it remains equal to the reaction of the person who has provoked it – and the rage continues to grow on both sides. When you control your rage, the anger dies down in your opponent and that will be the end of the problem.

Correct Behaviour towards Parents, Relatives and Orphans

Parents

Allah Almighty commanded us to treat our parents well because they are the direct cause of our existence. Allah nurtures His creatures surrounded by His blessings, and one aspect of that is the responsibility of parents before Allah to look after their children when they are young. For this reason, Allah's command to treat our parents well must be greatly respected. But respect for our parents is not confined to the financial help which should be given them in their old age; it extends above and beyond that. Allah instructs every believer to treat all his fellow men in the best manner but three groups are given special emphasis.

Respect for our parents is an obligation which must not be observed with only its minimum requirements. It is recommended to go far beyond that so as to realise the true meaning of striving to excel. It is clear that someone who prays the five obligatory prayers has fulfilled his minimum duty; but if he adds to that and prays ten or twenty *rak'ats* at night, desiring an increased reward from Allah Almighty, that will lead to elevation above the rank of minimum action to the station of doing good. That is what opens the believer to the love of the All-Merciful – Glorified and Exalted is He! That is why we find that Allah Almighty says about the people of the Station of *Ihsan*:

“The godfearing will be among Gardens and Fountains, receiving what their Lord has given them. Certainly before that they were good-doers. The part of the night they spent asleep was small and they would seek forgiveness before the

dawn. And beggars and the destitute received a due share of their wealth." (51:15-19)

In this passage Allah Almighty clarifies the rank of doing good – *ibsan* – and then describes its people not only as undertaking the obligations incumbent on them, but also as adding to them so that they bring themselves into the station of true belief. Then they rise in degree by performing many voluntary good actions and by attentiveness to Allah Almighty in every matter, and enter the rank of *ibsan*.

They do not only perform the prayers at their set times, but also add supererogatory prayers to them. And they do not confine their action to the formal prayers alone, but also add to them by asking for forgiveness, *dhikr* and humble entreaty to Allah Almighty before dawn. They do not confine themselves to paying the obligatory *zakat* but consider themselves as mere trustees of any money that they have, so that beggars and destitute people really do have a right to it. That is the nature of *ibsan*.

Allah commands us to treat our parents well. To accomplish that we have to undertake what goes beyond what is obligatory for us and raise the treatment of our fathers and mothers to the station of *ibsan* and gaining the pleasure of Allah Almighty, thus fulfilling all the rights due to them.

Relatives

Allah Almighty encourages us to make every effort to seek our provision. He does so in order to bring benefit to society as a whole. When a person works they expect to have the fruits of their work to live on, and any surplus is usually spent on their parents and relatives. This is not enough. All weak Muslims and travellers must also be their concern when they strive for provision. If every man works with this in mind, all society will be elevated. We will find family circles rising in their standard of living, preventing the enormous disparities in living standards which at present characterise human society.

When this happens and human attachments flourish, people are cleansed of overwhelming greed for wealth, something which often causes suffering even to their closest relatives. Greed can destroy others. An example of that are those rows of residential buildings which collapse from time to time because of the skimping greed of their builders. Fatal greed overwhelmed their owners and so disaster strikes the entire society. Even if a financial cure is implemented, it will take time to treat the psychological effects of such events. That is because it is the lack of faith in the hearts of the people who build such buildings, and their lack of conscience, shown by their greed to realise a quick financial gain, which lead to the death of those who live in shoddily constructed housing.

Charitable treatment of relatives turns human society into mutually responsible and cohesive communities where there are very few people who suffer extreme poverty and you will rarely find anyone in a state of complete destitution. Allah Almighty only prescribed the institution of marriage and its openness in order to guarantee the happiness of individuals and the protection of lineage, and to ensure mutual social responsibility by making human beings see it as a duty of their faith to care for their parents and relatives. Consequently it is very rare to find among the circle of the relatives of any true believer who has been given great wealth anyone who complains of destitution; for desire for elevation to the rank of *ibsan* motivates wealthy believers to attend to their duty to Allah with respect to their relatives.

Orphans

An orphan is a child with no father to see to its financial and spiritual care. In the case of animals, an orphan is one with no mother, because the young of animals rely on their mothers for their growth, food, and training. Human children, on the other hand, are ascribed to their fathers. That is not the case with animals, since animals do not recognise the system of marriage with which Allah has honoured human beings.

In human society mothers care for and impart compassion and values to their children, whereas fathers provide a model in terms

of earning lawful provision. These days we see many women leaving their children to others and many fathers failing to provide for their children. In doing so they are following the way of Western civilisation, which we have taken as our model of behaviour. Yet we forget to take from the West what it does have to offer – the science which would elevate our societies to the level of the technologically advanced societies of the West.

A mother's work is difficult. It entails thirty months of pregnancy, suckling and nursing care for each infant. She bears her child for nine months and gives birth to it in pain. Then she works for it throughout its infancy and childhood with care and concern and physical attention until it reaches the age of maturity at which time it is able to receive from its father. In all of these things she gives herself to her child with compassion, love and tenderness.

Wisdom (*Hikma*)

The word "wisdom" (*hikma*) is derived in its root from *hakama*, the iron bit that is placed in the mouth of horses to curb them, so that a rider can control them. Horses are proud animals which need training, and the iron bit which is placed in the horse's mouth gives its rider control over it.

Wisdom is the opposite of foolishness. Foolishness, as we know, is to do something without comprehension. Wisdom is to put every action in its right place so that it harmonises with everything else that is going on. All existence is ordered (*mahkum*) by Allah Almighty, and He is the All-Wise, All-Knowing, Who gives every being its form and limits; and Divine wisdom regulates the entire process of existence.

In language, wisdom is shown in the form of grammar, whereby words are placed in their proper place and with proper syntax. In jurisprudence, wisdom is shown in the ability to prescribe and deduce sound judgements. In medicine, wisdom lies in recognising particular illnesses and applying the appropriate treatment to them.

In architecture, wisdom lies in designing a building to fulfil the purpose for which it is to be built. A hospital, for instance, will be designed according to the needs of its doctors and patients, with everything necessary for their treatment. It will include operating theatres, lighting, lifts, places for storage of medicines, kitchens, space for outpatient treatment and all the other facilities necessary for successful hospital care. This will all be very different from the architectural requirements of an ordinary domestic dwelling, which will in turn differ from the design of a palace or an office building. In each case the architect's task is to create an environment fit for a particular function depending on the brief he has been given.

Wisdom, then, lies in putting things in their proper place. That can be seen in machines. A machine is always made up of many

parts, each of which is connected to the others by bolts, screws or other means. As long as each part is in its proper place, the machine works well. If the machine stops working, owing to a piece ceasing to remain in its right place or when something breaks, we call an engineer to put every piece back in its correct place and then the machine starts working properly again.

In a similar way everything in existence is based on wisdom and functions well provided that no corruption occurs. Corruption, when it occurs, stems from actions which lack wisdom. Formerly, for example, we used to see power lines without insulators and people would get electric shocks from them. Then proper insulation was put in place and so now that danger no longer exists. When we find something wrong, we do everything we can to put it right. This is wisdom. Formerly all the wires in a car were of the same colour and so confusion would arise when repairs became necessary; but then each wire was given a specific colour and this has facilitated repair and prevented confusion. This too is wisdom.

Wisdom, as we already said, consists of putting a thing in its proper place. As long as that happens every worker does his work properly, and evidence for that is found in the completed product. Since we human beings are created by Allah Almighty, He knows best our weak points and flaws and how to treat them. He – glorified is He – did not create us negligently or idly. Rather He sent Messengers and revealed Books to treat the ills and sicknesses of society. Then we turned away from them and legislated for ourselves according to our own whims – and so criteria vary, values are overturned, and useful traditions built up over generations are lost.

If we see flaws in any society, we should know that something in it is being conducted contrary to the wisdom of Allah. If a machine goes wrong, we bring an engineer to repair it. Likewise, if corruption arises in society we should return to the Creator of creation – glorified is He – and apply the Book of our Lord and the *Sunna* of our Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Justice

If everyone were to fulfil their responsibilities towards others, there would be no feuds and no litigation. In such a state there would be no need for courts and assemblies to settle disputes. But Allah, Who created creation, knows that human beings come in all shapes and sizes. Some of them neglect this matter – carrying out their duties – and the result is corruption in the earth. That is why Allah has demanded something else from us by His Name the Just. If people performed the duties they owe to others in full, there would be no need for courts because there would be no disagreements.

But Allah Almighty knows best those He created and He knew that His creatures would transgress against one another. He therefore introduced justice in the form of retaliation against anyone who transgresses against another, and gives everyone with a right his right. The Almighty says:

“When you judge between people, to judge with justice.”
(4:58)

The Almighty did not say, “When you are secure, pay,” but:

“Allah commands you to return to their owners whatever you hold on trust.” (4:58)

When there is negligence in returning a trust, helping it to be returned is a kind of justice. We know that fulfilling a trust constitutes carrying out a right or what is connected to a right that is owed to someone else for which you are responsible; but justice is more than that. It is requital for something perpetrated, and it is administered by way of judgement. In many cases, it is not someone else’s property for which you are responsible, but something written or to which there is testimony.

As the *ayat* of trust is of general application, there must also be an *ayat* of justice which is also general. Allah says, "*When you judge between people, to judge with justice*" (4:58). This *ayat* is addressed not only to judges but to every human being with responsibilities. If you are an arbitrator in any situation and people accept you as judge between them in a dispute, then you must judge fairly. You may have no real authority over those people; but those suffering the injustice or complaint have made you the judge of it and therefore you must judge between them fairly, acting according to the words of Allah Almighty:

"When you judge between people, to judge with justice."
(4:58)

That applies to any kind of matter, not just to financial problems. Imam 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, saw two lads asking his son al-Hasan to judge between them on this question: of the two, whose writing was the more beautiful? This is a matter which most people would think of no significance whatsoever. Of what benefit would it be to either of them to say that they were better than the other at handwriting? But Imam 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, saw something important in this question, because it really concerned the two boys and each of them wanted to know what distinguished him from the other in respect of their handwriting. So Imam 'Ali told his son al-Hasan, may Allah be pleased with him, "My son, be very careful how you judge in making this decision. Allah Almighty will ask you about it on the Day of Rising." This illustrates the vital importance of being just, even in the most apparently trivial situations.

In modern times we see that rules of the court are clearly set out for judges who render judgement. That even applies to referees in sports, whether of football, boxing or anything else. Every game has its rules, according to the skills and conditions which govern it. When any of us agrees to be a judge, even in a game, he must know how to judge justly. Thus we see the anger of the crowd when a referee makes a mistake and does not give the proper penalty to one of the teams or individuals involved. It is there-

fore very surprising when we see society as a whole remain silent in the face of the many glaring injustices which affect more serious matters in our lives. Where games are concerned we hold earnestly to the rules, but where the Laws of our Creator – Exalted is He – are concerned, we abandon His rules with very little compunction. If we were as concerned with what is truly serious as we are with games, then our affairs would be in a far better state than they are.

So justice is a right which some people expect from others. We are trustees of it and we must do our utmost to adhere to it. For the Almighty says:

“Allah commands you to return to their owners the things you hold on trust and, when you judge between people, to judge with justice. How excellent is what Allah exhorts you to do! Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.” (4:58)

The words *“How excellent!”* here mean that there is nothing better than these instructions. Trustworthiness and justice constitute blessings by which our lives in this world are protected and preserved. When people fulfil trusts, there is no dispute and no disagreement. When people try to do something and it is evident that it is contrary to justice, justice forbids it from being done. When there is justice in society, it guards people’s rights and the unjust are prevented from committing injustice.

Scrupulous justice encourages trust when people have neglected it. Injustice is encouraged by some secular laws which do not lead to justice and so it is said, *“So-and-so did the same as this before and no one forbade him to do it.”* Thus the enticement to injustice is instilled. But if, in everything great or small, we find judges preventing injustice and giving people their rights, then justice and trust will spread. That is the reason for the words of Allah Almighty, *“How excellent is what Allah exhorts you to do!”* This is called exhortation. Such exhortation is intended to affect the heart and make it incline to justice, because although Allah has no need of people acting by His commands and prohibitions, it is beneficial for people in their dealings with other people.

It is well-known that the best of type of command is one which does not bring any benefit to the one who gives it, because when the one who gives the command obtains some benefit there is always some suspicion about his motives. On the other hand, there may be someone who gives a command and whose command does not contain any benefit for himself, but who does not possess extensive knowledge or wisdom. Allah Almighty gains no benefit from His own commands, and He is vast in His knowledge and wisdom. Consequently, exhortation from Him is the greatest possible kind of exhortation because He is the All-Wise and gains no benefit whatsoever from His commands.

Allah's words "*How excellent is what Allah exhorts you to do!*" mean: "How excellent is that which Allah exhorts you to do regarding conveying trusts to their owners and judging between people justly." The fact that the command is in the plural means that everyone in the Muslim community is included in this instruction, and it does not stop there but extends to others as well. So the task is not confined to preserving the rights of the believing community alone but indicates that the believing community is responsible for safeguarding the rights of all people, both believers and unbelievers. The Almighty says, "*When you judge between people*" (4:58). This extends protection even to those who do not believe in the *deen* of Islam – and there can be no greater protection for someone who does not believe in the *deen* of Islam than this. Allah Almighty wants us to be guardians of justice for all people, whether they are believers or unbelievers.

The word "people" in the command of Allah Almighty indicates that the justice in the business comes from Allah Almighty, who is the Lord of mankind, both believers and unbelievers. No one is outside of the domain of Allah's dominion. Being responsible for providing for all, Allah has commanded the entire universe to give to one who receives things by secondary means so that he arrives at the ends by causes, be he believer or unbeliever. It is the gift of Lordship.

Allah – Glorified and Exalted is He – did not subjugate the universe to believers alone, but both to believers and unbelievers. That is why Allah commanded us to be just with believers and unbelievers and one must also be trustworthy towards both believ-

ers and unbelievers. It is mandatory in respect of both the pious and the impious. Similarly, both the pious and the impious are required to maintain ties of kinship. That indicates the vastness of the mercy of the *deen*, and Allah Almighty caused some cases to arise in the time of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, so as to make it clear to us by actual application, which is different from the matter being merely theoretical. The Almighty desires for it to be applied and practical.

Allah – Glorified and Exalted is He – created all mankind and knows their emotional makeup. Sometimes the emotions of a believer will make him partial towards a particular person. For this reason Allah Almighty included in the life-story of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, events concerning which Allah then revealed legislation to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, so that he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was the first to be responsible for applying it.

This happened in order to direct us to the fact that legislation regarding universal human concerns does not apply only to believers, but to both believers and unbelievers. That will be either an incentive for them to enter into this *deen*, or a cause of regret for them because they can see that the Muslims enjoy elevation in faith, justice and Divine support. If Muslims do wrong, the unbelievers say, “The Muslims have wronged us,” and find in that a justification for their unbelief.

The books of *hadith* and *tafsir* tell the story of Ta‘ima ibn Ubayraq, who stole some armour belonging to Rifa‘a, the uncle of Qatada ibn an-Nu‘man, both of whom were Muslims. Ta‘ima put the stolen armour in a sack containing some flour and was unaware that some of the flour was leaking out through the loose weaving of the sack. When Ta‘ima carried away the armour in the sack, some of the flour spilt out, leaving a trail on the path he followed from the house of an-Nu‘man to his own house. When Ta‘ima reached his house, he became anxious that the people there might find out about the armour, so he took the armour inside the sack to the house of a Jew, Zayd ibn as-Samin, and left it there. When Qatada ibn an-Nu‘man noticed that the armour was missing, he went out to announce that this armour had been stolen.

He and some companions followed the trail and found that it led Ta'ima ibn Ubayraq's house. Ta'ima said, "I did not steal it."

They followed the trail on and found the armour with the Jew, Zayd ibn as-Samin. As Ta'ima ibn Ubayraq was from the tribe of Zafar, when the matter was brought before the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, the elders of the tribe, went to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and spoke to him. They said, "If we are fair towards Zayd ibn as-Samin, Ta'ima ibn Ubayraq will be punished, and that will bring disgrace to us and the Muslims." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, heard what they said, and he was the most eager for no disgrace to come down on the Muslims and for there not to be a thief among them. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was silent until revelation came from his Lord regarding the case. Then the trustworthy Jibril descended with the words:

"We have sent down the Book to you with the truth so that you may judge between people according to what Allah has shown to you. But do not be an advocate for the treacherous. And ask Allah's forgiveness; Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Do not argue on behalf of those who betray themselves. Allah does not love any evildoing traitors." (4:105-107)¹

In this way Allah Almighty informed His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that a person in the right is most entitled to just treatment even if he is not a Muslim. He told him, "Ask Allah's forgiveness if you are tempted to prefer a perfidious Muslim to a Jew who is not perfidious." The embarrassment of the Banu Zafar because of the disgrace of Ta'ima ibn Ubayraq in the sight of others did not mean they should ignore a greater dis-

1. Related by at-Tirmidhi, 3036, as well as by at-Tabari in *at-Tafsir*. cf. *Tafsir at-Tabari*, edited by Shaykh Ahmad Shakir, pt. 9, Dar al-Ma'arif, p, 177, validated by al-Albani in *Sahih at-Tirmidhi*, 2432. The author of *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* has a commentary on this story of great interest which should be consulted. Dr. Muhammad Jamil Ghazi has a very valuable treatise in his book, *Mufradat al-Qur'an*, pt. 2, in which he discusses the Hypocrites.

grace: that is, disgrace in the sight of Allah. Ta'ima was not innocent in the sight of Allah, Who continues:

“Here you are arguing on their behalf in this world, but who will argue with Allah on their behalf on the Day of Rising?”
(4:109)

Then Allah Almighty says, “When you judge between people, judge with justice.” (4:58) This statement indicates that justice and trust are the right common of all people and not for the believers alone. Rather they must be applied to believers and unbelievers alike, as long as they are content to live in the domain of Islam.

Therefore the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, commanded those acting as judges to be unbiased when judging between two litigants and not to prefer one over another, in order that the two parties may be satisfied about equal treatment by the judge and have no fear that the judge will look at one party with kindness and compassion and at the other harshly. That is why we find that Imam ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, rejected a judge because he called him, “Abu’l-Hasan.” ‘Ali said to him, “You are not fit to judge between me and my opponent because you addressed me with my *kunya* but you did not use his.” The use of the *kunya* denotes love and respect. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told judges to be the same with regard to both their glance and their words,¹ so that every qadi may know that above him is Allah, Who sees His slaves.

1. Umm Salama, may Allah be pleased with her, said that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Whoever is tested by having to judge between people should be equitable between them with respect to his glances, his gestures, his seat and assembly.” Ad-Daraqutni, at-Tabarani in *al-Kabir*, and al-Bayhaqi related it.

As-Suyuti said in *al-Jami' as-Saghir* that its *isnad* is weak. His commentator, al-Manawi said in *Fayd al-Qadir* that adh-Dhahabi said in *al-Muhadhdhab* that its *isnad* is weak.

In another variant, “Whoever is tested by having to judge between people should not raise his voice over one of the two opponents when he does not raise it over the other.” This is also much weaker than the one before it.

See *al-Jami' as-Saghir* and its commentary, *Fayd al-Qadir*, Dar al-Ma'rifa, vol. 6, pp. 21-22. See also *Nihaya al-arab fi funun al-adab* by an-Nuwayri, vol. 6, p. 263.

Man's Acceptance of Allah's Trust

When Allah created man, He drew up a contract and covenant with him that He was his Lord and Creator and that he must worship Him alone and not associate anyone with Him – and man agreed to it. Then Allah Almighty gave him a trust to preserve this voluntarily and out of love. If he wished, he could renege on it. Look at the words of the Almighty:

“When your Lord took out all their descendants from the loins of the children of Adam and made them testify against themselves ‘Am I not your Lord?’, they said, ‘We testify that indeed You are!’ Lest you say on the Day of Rising, ‘We knew nothing of this.’” (7:172)

Allah has deposited a trust with man. If he wishes, he can fulfil it or indeed he can do the opposite. Allah Almighty therefore says:

“We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to take it on and shrank from it. But man took it on. He is indeed wrongdoing and ignorant.”
(33:72)

All beings refused to bear the trust because they could not guarantee that they would make the right choice, and so they asked Allah to create them without will or choice. That is why we find that water, earth and sun and other such things have no choice in anything. They are compelled to act as they do and did not want to have any choice.

There is a difference between someone who says, “Can I take on the trust?” and someone who says, “I will carry out the trust as Allah desires.” As long as anything in existence carries it out as Allah demands, why does man not do what Allah desires in His

Path? Man only took on the trust of freedom of will out of the desire to be free, so that he was free to fulfil it or not fulfil it. If man did not take on freewill in order to carry out properly the things which Allah desires, why did he not say, "Lord, I do not want to have choice; make me compelled!"? That shows that man must have had another aim in choosing free will.

The heavens and earth, the mountains and everything else in existence refused to take on the trust for fear of not of fulfilling it properly. We are well aware that there is a difference between taking something on and actually doing it. When one person says to another, "I have a hundred pounds. Keep it for me so that I do not squander it," no one suspects the person who receives the trust. There is no doubt that he intends to keep it for the person and to give it back to him when he asks for it. A person has control of himself when he takes on such a trust; but will he still have control of himself when he is asked to hand over the trust if his circumstances have changed for the worse and he has spent the trust on his necessities or those of his household?

So there is a difference between a person having control of himself at the moment he takes on a trust and having control at the moment when he is supposed to hand it over. That is why beings like the mountains, the heaven, the sun and other beings said, "We can bear the trust but we lack the power to fulfil it." That is why:

"We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains but they refused to take it on and shrank from it. But man took it on. He is indeed wrongdoing and ignorant."
(33:72)

He was a wrongdoer because he rashly assumed the trust while ignorant of what he would have to do to fulfil it.

The trust, as we have said, is a charge for which one person is responsible to another and which he should be able to discharge when requested. When one man gives another man something to keep for him, the recipient is given a trust. If he wishes, he gives it back; if he does not so wish, he does not. But there is another kind

of trust which is not given by one man to another but which the Lord of mankind gives it to all people.

One such trust, which is a gift from Allah, is the knowledge which Allah gives people. It too is a trust. Do not say that what you teach others is a debt they owe. It is a trust from Allah to you to give to His creatures who do not know. Similarly forbearance is a trust. You must pay its due to the creation of Allah Almighty.

Where property is concerned, a trust is clear. Regarding everything else, a person must acknowledge that he has been entrusted with it because the owner of such a trust is Allah and He created it in us. Allah entrusted mankind with different gifts so that they might give them to others for the benefit of all of human society.

Divinity is the right of Allah alone. You must proclaim His unity and not associate anyone with Him; this is a trust for you. Your holding to the commands of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is a trust, and your concern for your *deen* and your society is also a trust. The gifts which Allah has given are a trust. Every human being is a trustee of the gifts he has been given and must in turn hand them on to others. Allah has given physical strength to one person, power to a second, forbearance to a third, and knowledge to a fourth, and there are other gifts as well. Each of these has been entrusted by Allah to His creation so that conveying them may achieve integral perfection within creation. When each person discharges his trust to another, everyone enjoys the gifts of others.

The apex of the trust is that a human being should worship his Creator and not associate anyone with Him, maintaining the responsibilities which Allah has imposed on us. So every human being is obliged to fulfil that for which Allah has made him responsible. We should know that these responsibilities are a trust. When Allah obliges us not to steal, He simultaneously obliges all others not to steal from us. In this way every trust held by someone else is a trust that we ourselves hold. When we discharge the demands of the trust that we hold, society, which includes us, fulfils the trust it owes us.

If the trust is squandered, then there must be redress, for if we lived in a society in which everyone discharged what they owed to someone else, there would be no need to judge between people;

the need for arbitration only arises from opposition and differences. The necessity of judging between people results from one person denying the right of another, causing two people go to court to have justice done. If each of us fulfilled what they owed to others, there would be no need to judge between people and no disputes. In such circumstances there would be no need for courts to dispense justice.

Accepting Allah's Decree

Allah Almighty is the One who has created harm, just as He has created benefit. Harm calls man's attention to the blessings of Allah Almighty in this world. If one is content and steadfast, Allah will remove harm from him. One only suffers persistently if one fails to be content with Allah's decree.

Allah – glorified and exalted is He! – does not change a decree which He has destined for His creation until creation is content with it. Someone who does not accept the decree of Allah with regard to afflictions, for instance, will continue to suffer afflictions. If one wishes Allah to remove the decree from him, they should say, "I am pleased with the decree of Allah Almighty," and praise Allah for all that befalls them.

Allah Almighty has given us models to show us how to behave in the face of such afflictions. There is the Close Friend, Ibrahim, peace be upon him, who accepted the order to sacrifice his only son Isma'il, peace be upon him. This order may be seen by a non-believer as a terribly harsh decree from Allah. That is not the case at all. Ibrahim had to sacrifice his son himself, which is an extreme trial. Ibrahim did not look for an excuse to flee from Allah's testing of him. He did not say that it was merely a dream and not revelation. The command came in a dream which Allah showed Ibrahim, peace be upon him.

Let us reflect on the immensity of his contentment in accepting the commands of Allah. Allah revealed that his son Isma'il would share in obtaining the reward of contentment. The Noble Qur'an recounts to us what he said:

"When he was of an age to work with him, he said, 'My son, I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you. What do you think about this?' He said, 'Do as you are ordered, father. Allah willing, you will find me resolute.'" (37:102)

When Isma'il reached the age of being able to help his father carry out everyday tasks, the command to slaughter his son came to Ibrahim while he was asleep. Isma'il's heart was filled with contentment at the decree of Allah and he did not resist or try to argue. Instead he said, "Do as you are ordered." Isma'il received Allah's command with acceptance and contentment. That is why Allah Almighty says about both of them:

"Then when they had both submitted and he had laid him face down on the ground, We called out to him, 'Ibrahim, you have fulfilled your vision.' That is how We recompense good-doers. This was indeed a most manifest trial. We ransomed him with a mighty sacrifice." (37:103-107)

Both of them shared in their acceptance of the decree of Allah with contentment and each of them submitted to Allah's command. Ibrahim submitted to being the sacrificer and Isma'il submitted to being the sacrificed. Allah saw the confirmation of both of them in their acceptance of His command. At this point Allah called to His friend Ibrahim, peace be upon him, "You and Isma'il have responded to My decree. This obedience is enough for you, and so alleviation has come to you and your son."

We mortals prolong the trials of destiny for ourselves by our lack of acceptance. If something befalls somebody without there being a reason for it but he resigns himself before the One who made it happen to him – who is his Lord – in the station of contentment, Allah Almighty will remove that decree from him. If you see anyone suffering the trials of fate for a long time, know that he may be lacking in contentment.

Spending out of desire to please Allah

Allah Almighty says:

“The likeness of those who spend their wealth, desiring the pleasure of Allah and firmness for themselves, is that of a garden on a hillside. When heavy rain falls on it, it doubles its produce; and if heavy rain does not fall, there is dew. Allah sees what you do.” (2:265)

Seeking the pleasure of Allah in spending means avoiding showing off when you do it. The first condition of spending is that it should be for the sake of Allah, which means having the firm belief that Allah Almighty is the one who gives the believer his wealth and life – which is why everything is easy in the cause of pleasing Him.

The word “garden” (*janna*) is applied linguistically to a place in which there are many plants, with abundant greenery which conceals anyone who enters it. Part of that is *jann*, meaning “veil”. Anyone who enters this garden is veiled.

Allah – glorified is He – wanted to make a simile for us which describes the second category of those who spend in the Way of Allah desiring to please Him, and strong belief for themselves. Such a person is like someone who enters a garden with dense foliage. This garden is situated on top of a high hill surrounded by lower places. What does the rain do to the garden on this hill? In the case of a garden which is on a high hill, water in the form of rain that falls on it drains to the lower slopes around it. It is as though it were watered by the most recent knowledge that reaches it. It takes water from the highest level of the rain; the water falls onto the leaves and first washes the leaves of the plants. These leaves are like the lungs of a human being who must breathe.

When rain falls on these leaves, it washes them to enable them to perform their role in what we know as "photosynthesis". After that the water flows to the roots so they can extract the elements in the soil that nourish plant life. The roots take the liquid nutrients they need and any excess water descends to lower drainage. This is the latest discovery about the watering of agricultural land. The crop is doubled as a result when it is watered appropriately.

Then Allah Almighty tells us that all who spend from their wealth desiring to please Allah Almighty and to make themselves firm resemble this garden which is watered by the Lord's method. When abundant rain falls on it, it takes what it needs from it and the rest of the rain drains away. If abundant rain does not come to it, then dew does. Dew is a light moisture which is enough for it. It gives twice its produce. "Twice" is the double of the thing. So two doubles is four times as much.

But Allah Almighty wanted to make clear that someone who spends his wealth desiring the Face of Allah is not the same as someone whose spends his wealth to show off to people. Allah wants to make a simile for us, to describe the situation of someone who spends his wealth to show off to people. He says:

"Would any of you like to have a garden of dates and grapes, with rivers flowing underneath containing all kinds of fruits; but then to be stricken with old age and have children who are weak, and then for a fierce whirlwind containing fire to come and strike it so that it goes up in flames? In this way Allah makes His Signs clear to you, so that perhaps you will reflect."
(2:266)

Allah questions us with this parable, as if He wanted clear testimony from us. Would any of you want to have a garden of dates and grapes with rivers flowing underneath which contains all sorts of fruits? Of course you would. Such a garden contains abundant good. But then suppose that old age befalls its owner but he had made no preparation for it when he was healthy and in the flower of youth. He is surrounded by assets but is more in need of those assets because now he is old and does not have the strength to

work on them. That is the link between the self and the gift of this garden, which belongs not to himself alone, but also to his weak offspring.

This is the summit of depicting the need for good, not for oneself alone, but for one's helpless offspring. We have, then, a man who faces three circumstances: a garden which contains all good; old age and weakness, and inability to work; and young children.

What attacks the garden is a whirlwind containing fire, and so the garden is burned up. What regret does this man have for it? He has intense regret which is like the regret of someone who does good just to show off to people.

As we know, a whirlwind is a severe wind that is sometimes accompanied by thunder and lightning containing fire, when electrical charges form from the collision of clouds or carry fiery lava from a volcanic eruption. That is the same as the state of someone who spends his money to show off to people. It is a hopeful beginning but a despairing end.

So every believer must remember, at the time when he spends, that a beginning provoked by greed has an end filled with despair. It is a misfortune described by the poet's words:

Next morning, I am like someone clutching at water
that runs away from between his fingers.
Whenever a cloud flashes for thirsty people,
while they see it, it scatters, then blows away.

Vice

*In the Name of Allah and praise be to Allah,
and peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah.*

Envy

The modern world shows us that the more we know, the deeper we have to think about what we know, and the more subtle or small the subject, the more precise and difficult our task becomes. Suppose, for example, someone builds a house in the countryside and a friend visits him and says "Didn't you know that there are wolves around here?" The friend advises the owner of the house to install barred windows to keep the wolves from getting in. Then a second friend visits and tells him that the bars are too widely spaced to keep out bats and advises the owner of the house to narrow the spaces between the bars. Then a third friend comes and tells the owner of the house that there are deadly mosquitoes spreading malaria in the locality and that he must install netting in his windows. So the smaller and more subtle a thing is the more difficult it is to deal with.

Difficulty is not, therefore, necessarily according to large size. Every day the science of medicine tackles new fatal illnesses and these illnesses are caused by the tiniest possible organisms. Similarly, minute laser rays are now used to carry out surgical operations without any need for a scalpel and without shedding a drop of blood. These rays can penetrate the finest and hardest of substances. Such is the nature of envy, which is a well-recognised phenomenon. Although it is not physically measurable, that is no reason to deny that the eye of one who envies may emit rays even finer and more subtle than those of a laser.

The Almighty says, "*From the evil of the envier when he envies,*" (113:5) showing that envy truly is a destructive force when people have it. Therefore when anyone sees Allah's blessing in the possession of another person, he should recite *Surat al-Falaq* (113) and should say, "It is as Allah has willed it. There is no power nor strength except by Allah," and should not harbour any rancour towards the person with that blessing. Otherwise a door will open in his heart for the emission of envy, because this penetrating dis-

charge only comes from a heart in a state of rancour and anger. When someone says, "It is as Allah has willed it. There is no power nor strength except by Allah," he protects his own soul from being envious and protects others by the power of Allah – Glorified and Exalted is He! – from his envy. Envy and magic are evils which are not visible but are as great as any visible evil.

An envious person is someone who is so preoccupied with the disparity of talents that rancour appears and it is as if he were consuming himself. Rancour is the psychological state which leads to the appearance of envy. It is said that rancour is a crime whose punishment precedes its occurrence, the reverse of what normally happens. The punishment for crimes is delayed until after they occur, except in the case of rancour, because the punishment for rancour reaches the person before he can show it. Someone with rancour is only so because his heart and his feelings are torn to pieces when he sees the object of his rancour enjoying good fortune. That is why Tradition says: "It should enough for you that the envier be tortured by the moment of your happiness."

Prodigality

If Allah Almighty forbids something, that confirms that it is defined in relation to what He has made lawful. Forbidden things are few; the remainder are things which Allah has not prohibited, are many. Read the words of Allah Almighty:

“Say: ‘Come and I will recite to you what your Lord has commanded you’: that you not associate anything with Him; that you be good to your parents; that you not kill your children because of poverty – We will provide for you and them; that you not approach indecency – outward or inward; that you not kill any person Allah has made inviolate – except with the legal right to do so. That is what He instructs you to do so that perhaps you will use your intellect. And that you not go near the property of orphans before they reach maturity – except in a good way; that you give full measure and full weight with justice – We impose on no self any more than it can bear; that you be equitable when you speak – even if a near relative is concerned; and that you fulfil Allah’s contract. That is what He instructs you to do, so that perhaps you will pay heed.”

(6:151-152)

Allah Almighty here informs us of forbidden things, which are defined and definite. As for blessings, they are vast in number, too many to be enumerated or counted. It is important that we acknowledge the vastness of the mercy of Allah to creation. He created many blessings and has only forbidden a few things. When the Almighty prohibits something, He prohibits it so that every blessing may continue in its field. When a person comes and says, “Allah has forbidden this thing because it is harmful,” we tell him, “What you say is possible, but that harmfulness is not the reason for the prohibition of all forbidden things. Allah may forbid something in order to discipline certain people. In our own lives, for

instance, we may find that a father, who is responsible for the upbringing of his children, will forbid one of the children a certain type of food or their pocket money in order to punish them.

Similarly we see that the Tribe of Israel merited the punishment of the prohibition of certain things because they left the path of Allah and made lawful for themselves things which Allah had forbidden. It is as if Allah were saying to them, "You were bold enough to ignore what I made unlawful and make it lawful. I have therefore made unlawful for you what was previously lawful for you."

One should not think that by making lawful for himself something Allah has made unlawful he outmanoeuvres Allah. No one can overcome Allah – glorified is He! Allah may then forbid something that was previously lawful and that can happen by the imposition of a prohibition which occurs through natural means. We may find that a man harms himself by using forbidden things like wine, for instance, finds that it has a destructive effect on his body. So he goes to the doctor, who tells him, "If you drink again it will destroy your liver and kill you." He forbids him several types of food and drink. This is man's wronging of himself, which results in things becoming forbidden to him by nature. The *sunna* of Allah in existence is that they were things which were previously lawful for him.

Another man harms himself by consuming a certain type of food, such as sugar, for instance, beyond what he needs. So the *sunna* of Allah in existence is that he is told, "You have taken more than you need. Because of that you are ill, and therefore you must not eat any more sugary things." The person made ill by sugar continues to desire sweets and has the power to buy them; but they are forbidden to him. It is as if Allah Almighty told him, "Because of your wronging yourself, I have forbidden you what I had previously made lawful for you."

Another person may have wealth, servants and extensive estates, and others who mill his flour for him. He orders bread to be prepared for him from the finest flour free from any bran. They make white bread and he eats it, while his retainers prepare bread for themselves from flour that is less refined. So the *sunna* of Allah in existence is that he is told, "For the sake of your health

you must now eat bread made with bran because you overindulged yourself by eating bread prepared from the best flour, and your dependants and workers can eat bread from the best of type of flour. It is as if Allah Almighty were telling him: "Because your overindulging yourself, I have forbidden you what I had made lawful for you."

So when someone like us sees another person who is forbidden the blessings of Allah which are in fact lawful, they should know that that person has already allowed something which Allah had made unlawful for him, or overindulged himself in something, and nature demands the balance to be restored. None of us can escape from the watchfulness of Allah. Prohibition may come about through legislation since the punishment comes from the Legislator, or by natural means. This is what happens when self-indulgence occurs on the part of the self. Let us read the words of Allah Almighty:

"Because of wrongdoing on the part of the Jews, We made unlawful for them some good things which had previously been lawful for them; and because of their obstructing many people from the Way of Allah." (4:160)

The same applies when someone gains wealth by means of usury. He takes it in order to increase his wealth. The question he must answer is: "Why do you want wealth? Do you want it for its own sake, or to ruin someone else?" Wealth is provision – but is a kind of provision which is a means because it is used to purchase things which people use, which are their direct provision. Suppose a man in a desert has a mountain of gold but no access to food or water: in such circumstances, the mountain of gold is worthless. In that situation a loaf of bread and bottle of water are far more precious than the gold.

So wealth is provision, but not direct provision: it is used to obtain direct provision. If someone augments his wealth with usury, does he desire that increase simply for the sake of self-gratification? He should know that Allah Almighty will wipe the augmentation out and may remove that wealth through disasters. If

one wishes to have what Allah made lawful for him last until the end of his life, he must not permit himself anything that Allah has forbidden. Acting in that way, he will continue to enjoy the blessings Allah has given him.

Wrongdoing

Allah Almighty says:

“Your Lord does not wrong His slaves.” (41:46)

It is rather people who wrong themselves. Allah says:

“Allah does not wrong people in any way: it is people who wrong themselves.” (10:44)

Beware of supposing that when you wrong someone by planning to do evil to him you have gained anything in this world. This is not true. If a wrongdoer knew what Allah has prepared for anyone who is wronged, he would be very sparing in his wrongdoing towards him. Imagine, for instance, that a man has two children and then one of the children comes and hits his brother or snatches something from him. When the father learns of that, which child occupies the heart of this father? Naturally his heart is with the child who has been wronged and so he tries to placate him. If the brother who wronged him has taken something from him worth ten pence, the father replaces it with something worth a pound. The wronging son lives in regret because had he known before that his father would be generous to his wronged brother, he would never have wronged his brother in the first place.

Wrongdoing will appear as darkness on the Day of Rising. There is an aphorism that says: “If you must slander someone, slander your parents.” Anyone who hears that may well ask, “How can someone advise me to slander my father and mother?” The answer is that a slandered person receives nothing but good and your parents are the people most entitled to good from you, so instead of giving good to your enemy, you should seek those you love and give it to them instead! It is related that al-Hasan al-Basri heard that someone had slandered him and then sent someone to

the slanderer with a plate of fresh dates, telling him, "Take this plate to so-and-so and tell him: 'Al-Hasan was told that you slandered him yesterday. That means that you have given him your good actions. Your good actions are without doubt more valuable than these dates.'"

Wrongdoing means any kind of injustice: a type of transgression, coercion, force, or lessening of value or worth. The opposite of injustice is justice. Wrongdoing, then, means doing people down. So what do you think about someone who does himself down by wronging himself? Wronging oneself is the worst type of injustice. Allah has created and honoured the human self. So it behoves a human being to preserve his self, care for it, fulfil what Allah desires of it, and deny it its persistence in greed that angers Allah. Allah Almighty says:

"Those who, when they act indecently or wrong themselves, remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their bad actions (and who can forgive bad actions except Allah?) and do not knowingly persist in what they used to do. Their recompense is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly for ever. How excellent is the reward of those who act!" (3:135-136)

Wronging oneself means a person selling his *deen* in order to try and obtain the worldly portion of another. He does not deserve any benefit for himself, either sooner or later. It has been said that the worst of people is the one who sells his *deen* to obtain this world; but even worse than them are those who sell their *deen* to obtain the worldly portion of someone else. For both of these Allah has prescribed a path to salvation: that they remember Allah and ask for forgiveness. Otherwise, they will return to lewd acts or wrongdoing of the self unless Allah forgives them and admits them to Paradise. For "Allah does not wrong anyone but it is people who wrong themselves" by disparaging their own true lasting worth and falling captive to what is passing and ephemeral.

Mockery and Making Light of People

Making light of people or mocking them is a fault which is evidence of firm belief in one's soul that Allah created all mankind. A person who has a physical defect had nothing to do with the defect he has. It is the will of Allah, Who created this creature in that form by a wisdom which only Allah knows. When one person mocks some defect in another, that means that the mocker is mocking the handwork of Allah. Mockery of this sort is a sign of the soul's lack of faith in the fact that every human being was created by the same God.

So anybody who searches out the defects of human beings is searching out defects willed by Allah Almighty because of some wisdom in His Universe. Because there is a wisdom behind their existence, they are not in reality defects. For example, when a human being finds fault with the construction of a chair or a table, that is not in fact a judgement on the chair or table, but about the person who made that chair or table. Likewise, anyone who mocks a human being for a defect should know that the human being concerned had no hand in producing himself.

Mockery of this kind is mocking Allah's creation. This is a form of stupidity because the one who mocks someone's defect does not value the praiseworthy qualities which Allah has bestowed on this human being whom he mocks. So Allah says:

"You who believe, people should not ridicule others who may be better than themselves; nor should any women ridicule other women who may be better than themselves. And do not find fault with one another or insult each other with derogatory nicknames. How evil it is to have a name for evil conduct after coming to faith! Those people who do not turn from it are wrongdoers." (49:11)

Allah Almighty instructs all believers not to mock another. That is because everyone has praiseworthy qualities to which the mocker is blind. The mocker himself contains some of the bad qualities for which no one likes to be mocked.

Mockery entails leaving the demands of perfect faith as well as injustice to others and to oneself. We must recognise that Allah has distributed among us different attributes and varying degrees, but in the end the sum of the qualities of a person are the same as the sum of every other person's attributes.

Corruption

Corruption comes about when people improperly move from the arena of action to the arena of inaction or from the arena of inaction to the arena of action. For example, the Divine Path requires mankind to bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger. All who affirm that must undertake responsibility for doing certain actions imposed by Allah. Anyone who denies that moves from the arena of action to that of non-action. The first action concerned is to say, "I testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger." This statement renews the contract between the slave and His Creator. Consequently it entails complete adherence to the Path of Allah Almighty.

The same applies to anyone who recognises that the prayer is a basic pillar on which a believer's life is based. When this believer is sincere in performing the five prayers, it protects him from slips induced by Shaytan and from following his lower desires. The same is true of fasting and *zakat*. Again, when Allah commands His slaves not to drink wine, for instance, the believer is the one who follows the Way of Allah, which is to stop drinking wine immediately. Anyone who continues to drink wine thereby contravenes the Way of Allah with respect to action and non-action.

So corruption in the earth is brought about by people who prefer following their own desires to following the Guidance of Allah; for instance, those who falsely usurp other people's property and exploit the sweat and toil of others. Such a man does not conform to the Way of Allah and he is someone who corrupts the earth. So there is a rule by which the conduct of every human being must be measured, which is that he who conforms to the Way of Allah benefits himself, lives in harmony with the commands of His Creator, and obtains the pleasure of Allah after shouldering responsibility by his own choice, fulfilling it as he is obliged to do. Anyone, however, who does not follow the Path of Allah corrupts

himself and corrupts his conduct, because he takes a negative position regarding the Path of Faith, fails to carry out the command of Allah, and breaks his contract with Allah.

Thus we see that when a human being does certain things, he leaves one position for another with respect to the prescriptions of Allah. Three elements are involved which Allah outlined in His description of the impious. They are breaking a contract; severing what Allah has commanded to be maintained; and corrupting existence.

When the individuals in society are not in harmony with the Laws of Allah, we find that that society is corrupted because people do what gratifies them and we find conflict in the behaviour of people and their desires. We will find contracts broken, the severing of what Allah has commanded be maintained, and corruption in the earth.

Corruption mars the beauty of existence, because a person who causes corruption in the earth thereby deprives something of the natural balance it normally maintains by fulfilling its proper role in existence. Anyone can recognise that the act of corrupting the earth breeds ugliness and discord in existence.

Corruption in the earth, for instance, is perpetrated by someone who exploits people's need for housing for his own gain. Another example is someone who hoards staple necessities so as to increase prices beyond people's ability to pay. This is corruption in the earth because it is force exerted by someone with power over someone without power. It spreads antipathy among people and departs from what is demanded by the Path of Allah. This ugliness and corruption is also caused by someone who spoils his work, like an unqualified builder who installs a window in a new building. Being unable to do this work properly, he ruins the entire building.

An engineer or contractor who does not build his building on sound foundations endangers the lives of the human beings who live in it. Such a person corrupts the earth. But in a society of believers, the demands of faith require that everyone be attentive to Allah as regards both their work and their wealth. They should recognise that there is a contract between them and Allah to follow His Way in justice and perfection. They should completely

establish criteria for their actions so that they do not exploit others and do not behave in a manner which will stop a Muslim observing the right of his brother Muslim. They should hold to Allah's command to maintain social ties of all kinds. And they should act sincerely for the sake of Allah and be godfearing in all that they do.

When someone sees work done well by another human being, that person, being aware of the beauty involved, says, "It is as Allah has willed it!" This expression is used to describe the action which the person has done so well. When someone sees work which is imperfect done by another artisan, he makes supplication for the maker with a harsh supplication, "May Allah repay you according to your work." Allah does not repay the negligent except with a penalty. Someone being negligent or corrupting things precludes people repeating the first expression, which is an acknowledgement of gratitude for a job done well. Someone who is negligent or corrupts things spreads ugliness in existence, but he who works well is someone who increases people's cry of amazement when they say the words: "It is as Allah has willed it!" The Name of Allah is a refrain that all existence should hear.

What do you think is the repayment of a believing human being who does his work well? He is repaid with blessing in his provision, blessing in his life, an easy conscience, contentment, and strong bonds with his brothers in faith. On the other hand, someone who acts corruptly lives a life of constriction; Allah does not bless his provision, he goes against his own conscience, and he weakens his links with his brothers in faith.

When we find someone negligent or corrupting things, or even charging excessive prices, we hear the excuse that the manufacturer or employee is not responsible, and the spirit of egotism and individualism, which does not recognise the brotherhood of faith, spreads in society. So we find that a single corrupter, or a few corrupters or exploiters, can spread vice throughout an entire society. What, then, is the situation if people actually help others to do wrong? If they do that, they destroy all goodness. Helping people to do wrong starts when anyone promotes something that is contrary to Allah's command with respect to action or non-action.

Anybody who advocates the implementation of Allah's commands with respect to action or non-action and forbids actions which Allah has prohibited is one of those who help one another to piety and fear of Allah (*taqwa*). Anybody who acts contrary to that is one of those who help one another towards wrongdoing and enmity. Why? Because he moves prescribed actions from the sphere of action to the sphere of inaction, and moves prohibited actions from the sphere of inaction to the sphere of action. An example of that is someone who writes wanton, provocative verses which arouse sexual feelings. That is the first brick. Then a composer puts them to music which augments it. That is the second brick. Then they are sung in a suggestive way which takes the whole thing a step further. That is the third brick in the wall of mutual encouragement to do wrong. A person who then applauds the song is also helping in that. Therefore Allah Almighty says:

“Help each other in goodness and taqwa Do not help each other in wrongdoing and enmity.” (5:2)

The same applies to people who accept bribes, anyone involved in bribery, anyone who brings wine to people, anyone who drinks it and anyone who swindles others. All these people help one another in wrongdoing and enmity. Even a doorman who sits at the entrance of a building and knows that there is a room there in which dubious actions like gambling, prostitution or similar corruption take place, and accepts money to turn a blind eye to it, is one of those who help in wrongdoing.

Treachery

Allah Almighty says:

“Do not argue on behalf of those who betray themselves. Allah does not love any evildoing traitors.” (4:107)

Allah Almighty forbids arguing on behalf of those who betray themselves. Arguing (*mujadala*) comes from the root *ja-da-la*, which means tight plaiting. When someone plaits something, like hair, wool or fibres, he does so in order to make rope from it. He twists it in order to strengthen it and enable it to support weight. That is why one says about such an operation: “We plait the rope to give it strength.” The same can be said of two litigants: each of them wants to strengthen his argument against the other by spinning it through whatever logical or eloquent means he finds effective.

Treachery means taking what one does not deserve without any right to do so. A person may talk himself into betraying another, but how can one betray oneself? Somebody may betray another for the sake of some benefit for himself – but what can he gain by betraying himself? When a person gives in to a lust for which there is punishment, this is betrayal of himself, because in such circumstances he has ignored the penalty in favour of the lust. The lust is passing, but the punishment endures. This is betraying the self.

One who betrays others also betrays himself. When people betray themselves, it is an activity which is not to be taken lightly but demands reaction. Hence the Almighty says, “*who betray themselves,*” because there is always a reaction to treachery. That is why the Almighty says:

“Do not argue on behalf of those who betray themselves. Allah does not love any evildoing traitors.” (4:107)

Then after that the Almighty says:

“We have sent down the Book to you with the truth so that you may judge between people according to what Allah has shown to you. But do not be an advocate for the treacherous.”
(4:105)

The word used in the Qur'an suggests habitual treachery rather than a single instance. A woman whose child had been arrested for stealing went to the Khalifa, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him. 'Umar wanted to impose the *hadd* punishment for theft on that child. The woman came weeping and said, "Amir al-Mu'minin, by Allah, he only did it this once." 'Umar said, "You lie, by Allah! Allah would not seize someone the first time!" That is why they say, "When an evil is known in a man, disclosed and becomes clear, know that there were earlier acts like it. It is not possible for a servant of Allah to be disgraced by the first evil he does, because Allah Almighty loves to veil His servants. That is why He veils people once or twice, but then if the servant continues and persists in that evil, Allah disgraces him and removes His veil."

Scheming (*Kayd*)

Scheming is when a person tries to undermine another person or persons. There are those who try to undermine people and then, when someone tries to stop them, say, "No, I was not doing anything." This is *kayd*, or scheming. Only the weak resort to scheming because a strong person will confront others directly and not resort to scheming. A weak person, for instance, will poison someone secretly in an attempt to destroy him. A strong person will not act like that, but he will confront the other person directly.

The Almighty says about the scheming of Shaytan:

"Shaytan's scheming is always feeble!" (4:76)

The scheming of Shaytan is feeble because he does not possess physical strength which would enable him to compel people by force nor does he possess a valid argument by which he can overcome man's heart to persuade him. Scheming entails resorting to tricks and only the weak resort to tricks. Whenever someone is weak in achieving his aim, his scheming has to be great. That is why it is said that women are worse than men in that respect. That is based on the words of Allah: "*Their (females') scheming is great*" (12:28). We say to those who say this, "If the scheming of women is great, the weakness of women must be still greater." That is why an Arab poet, who wanted to bring out this meaning clearly, said:

Weak: when she has a chance she kills.

That is how it is with the power of the weak.

When someone weak seizes an adversary or circumstances give him power over him, he does not let him escape. A weak person fears the revenge of his adversary; but a strong person may seize his adversary and then let him go, telling himself, "I will take him

and punish him again, if he does that again.” That is how we know that whenever scheming is great, weakness is still greater.

Demands of gratitude for *sadaqa*

Allah Almighty says:

“You who believe, do not nullify your sadaqa by demands for gratitude or insulting words, like him who spends his wealth, showing off to people and not believing in Allah and the Last Day. He is like a smooth rock coated with soil, which, when heavy rain falls on it, is left stripped bare. They have no power over anything they have earned. Allah does not guide unbelieving people.” (2:256)

Anyone who gives *sadaqa* and then follows his *sadaqa* with demands for gratitude and insults invalidates his *sadaqa*. His loss is actually twofold: he loses his money, because Allah will not replace it for him since he followed his *sadaqa* with something which invalidated it; and he is deprived of the reward from Allah for giving that *sadaqa*.

Anyone who spends his money so that people will say that he is generous or that he is a good-doer must know that Allah Almighty makes it clear to us that one is only paid a wage if he has done the work for which the wage is due. People have limited power to pay those who work for them and those who work for wages tell people that they are working in order to earn a wage from the limited capacity of human beings. That is why the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, tells us that anyone who does a good action or gives *sadaqa* so that people may say that he did it will be told, “You did tht so that it would be said, and it has been said.” Such a person will come on the Day of Rising to find that he has no reward.¹

1. Hadith transmitted by Muslim [no. 1905/152) from Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: “I heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace say, “The first of mankind to be judged on the Day of Rising will be a man who was martyred. He will be brought and will be

Beware of saying, "I spent but Allah did not expand my provision," because Allah will test you and try you. So do not give *sadaqa* for the sake of the expansion of your provision, for Allah's giving to the believer is not limited to this world. It may well be that Allah desires not to give you what is ephemeral, and that His gift will appear for you in the Next World instead. So reflect on the words of Allah regarding him who spends, then follows up what he spends with demands for gratitude and insults: "*He is like a smooth rock coated with soil.*" (2:256) If a rock is smooth, soil may cover it, but when rain comes and falls on the soil, no soil at all remains on it. Someone who spends money to show off to people is just like that smooth stone with a little soil covering it which is washed off when rain falls: no sign of their action will remain. Allah's words "*They have no power over anything they have earned*" mean that they lack the ability to earn any reward, because Allah will have made whatever actions they like scattered dust.

informed of the blessings he received, and will acknowledge them. Allah will ask, "What did you do with them?" He will reply, "I fought for You until I was martyred." Allah will say, "You lie. Rather you fought so it might be said, 'A brave man!' And so it was said." Then the command will be given and he will be dragged on his face until he is thrown into the Fire. There will also be a man who studied knowledge and taught it and recited the Qur'an. He will be brought and informed of his blessings, which he will acknowledge. Allah will ask, "What did you do with them?" He will say, "I studied and taught knowledge, and I recited the Qur'an for You." He will say, "You lie. Rather you studied so that it might be said, 'A scholar!' and you recited so that it might be said, 'He is a reciter!' And so it was said." Then the command will be given and he will be dragged on his face until he is thrown into the Fire. There will also be a man to whom Allah gave a lot of wealth and all sorts of property. He will be brought and informed of his blessings, which he will acknowledge. Allah will ask, "What did you do with them?" He will say, "There was no way in which You like spending to be done but that I spent in it for You." He will say, "You lie. Rather you did it so that it might be said, 'He is generous,' and so it was said." Then the command will be given and he will be dragged on his face until he is thrown into the Fire."

Pride

Only Allah is entitled to have the quality of pride, and so human beings, who are not Allah, are not. A strong person may be afflicted by weakness and a wealthy one by poverty. Someone with knowledge can lose his knowledge for some reason. All who claim superiority over others should therefore try to seek out something essential in themselves which really entitles them to be proud, something which cannot be removed from them. Thus any believer who is honest with himself will recognise that true greatness and pride belong only to Allah the One, the Compeller, and no one may contend with Him in that.¹

So a believer must not cause his actions to come to nothing by exalting himself over other creatures because of any wealth that Allah has given him or any talent in which he excels. For he should know that all of this comes from Allah Almighty and that Allah oversees what he does with it. He should realise that each of us should desire that which his Lord loves and is pleasing to Him.

1. Abu Dawud (Hadith no. 4090) related from Abu Hurayra that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "Allah, Exalted and Majestic is He, says, "Pride is My cloak and Immensity My waist wrapper. If anyone contends with Me for either of them, I will cast him into the Fire."

Vanity and Boastfulness

Allah Almighty says:

“Allah does not love anyone vain or boastful.” (4:36)

What is vanity? What is boasting? The root meaning of vanity (*ikhtiyaḥ*) is related to arrogance in movement, which is why the most excellent steeds among horses are called *khayl* because they strut in their gait. When a horseman rides them, they prance. The word *khuyala'* (conceitedness) comes from this. So vanity is an aspect of arrogance which can be seen. Boasting, on the other hand, is an aspect of arrogance which can be heard.

Allah Almighty forbade believers to imitate the boaster who is full of self-importance and considers himself to be a source of blessing for others. It is him that the words of the Almighty describe:

“...turning away arrogantly, to misguide people from the Way of Allah. He will be disgraced in this world; and on the Day of Rising We shall make him taste the punishment of the Burning: ‘That is for what you did before. Allah does not wrong His slaves.’” (22:9-10)

Boasting occurs when a person brags about himself using words which are not true or which are excessive, and so he reports about what he has done, glorifies it and exalts himself for it, as if he were the source of every gift to humanity.

Miserliness

Allah Almighty says:

“As for those who are miserly and direct others to be miserly, and hide the bounty Allah has given them, We have prepared a humiliating punishment for those who disbelieve.” (4:37)

Miserliness means finding giving difficult. When a miserly person is asked to give something, he finds it hard to do so. A believer is described as being open-handed, and is happy to give. As for the miser, his miserliness makes him tight-fisted with a thing which it would not harm him to give and which he derives no benefit from refusing to give. A miser is reluctant to give, even to himself! Read the words of a poet describing miserliness and avarice. He described the miser being miserly towards himself. When someone is miserly to himself, how can he be generous to anyone else? The poet criticises a person called ‘Isa, who was miserly even to himself when spending something would not harm him and refusal to spend would not benefit him:

‘Isa was stingy to himself and did not last long.

So stingy was he that he had been able

He’d have only used one of his nostrils to breathe.

The man was so miserly with himself that he did not want to breathe through two nostrils, but would have breathed through only one if he could.

The Almighty says:

“Those who are miserly with the bounty Allah has given them should not suppose that that is better for them. No indeed, it is worse for them! What they were miserly with will be hung around their necks on the Day of Rising. Allah is the Inheritor

of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is aware of what you do.” (3:180)

Allah Almighty will make what he has been miserly with into a torque around the miser's neck. If a miser spends a little, then the torque will be lighter around his neck on the Day of Rising, but every time the miser refuses to give, the torque becomes heavier. Therefore Allah Almighty also says about those who hoard gold and silver:

“As for those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the Way of Allah, give them the news of a painful punishment on the Day it is heated up in the fire of Hell and their foreheads, sides and backs are branded with it: ‘This is what you hoarded for yourselves, so taste what you were hoarding!’” (9:34-35)

That means that all the gold and silver they hoarded will be heated up in the Fire on the Day of Rising and will be used to brand their brows and sides.

Those who are too miserly to give to people from what Allah has given them are not made content by what they are miserly with. It is a base characteristic in themselves which they want to transfer to others. It is as if they love miserliness and it pains them to see a generous person. So a miser will say to someone who spends in the Way of Allah, “Do not spend,” because he is pained at seeing generosity. He thinks that all people should be misers, in order that no one may be better than him. A miser recognises that generosity is better than miserliness. The proof is that he demands that all people be misers. They are those about whom Allah Almighty says:

“As for those who are miserly and direct others to be miserly, and hide the bounty Allah has given them, We have prepared a humiliating punishment for those who disbelieve.” (4:37)

Miserliness does not manifest itself only in reluctance to spend money. It may occur with respect to any gift that Allah gives to

any of His creation. Anyone who is stingy with what he has been given has lapsed into miserliness. One who is miserly with his strength, by refusing to help another who lacks that strength, is a miser. One who is miserly with knowledge he possesses towards someone who does not have that knowledge is also a miser. One who has the ability to be forbearing and then shows unnecessary impatience towards a simpleton is also a miser.

So part of miserliness is a person refusing to give something Allah has given him to a creature in need of it, whatever that thing is. Take, for example, someone who is skilled in a craft but niggardly about imparting its secrets to his students: that is a form of miserliness. Allah Almighty says, "*As for those who are miserly and direct others to be miserly.*" (4:37) He also says, "*... and who hide the bounty Allah has given them, We have prepared a humiliating punishment for those who disbelieve.*" (4:37)

Hiding in this instance is refusing to give something which by its nature wants to emerge and so the one who withholds it strives to conceal it. When a person is wounded, he tries to staunch (lit. cover) the blood because unless he does so he may bleed to death. It is as if wealth, knowledge and every gift which Allah has created wants to appear and spread among people. The natural form of every material or spiritual provision is that it wants to spill out and be shared among people, so that it may be seen that every thing is created to serve mankind.

If one tries to conceal something which has been created to serve his fellow human beings, he belies its true nature and prevents it performing its role in existence. Since Allah created everything in order to serve human beings, no one should hinder anything from fulfilling that function. And provision, whether material or spiritual, can become angry or sad. A believer should realise that even inanimate things can become angry or sad and will testify against those who prevent them doing what they were created to do. Read the words of the Almighty:

"Neither heaven nor earth shed tears for them, and they were granted no reprieve." (44:29)

Allah clearly conveys in His words, "*They hide the bounty Allah has given them*" (4:37) that every created thing is in reality the property of Allah, its Creator and the One Who brought it into existence. Essentially nothing belongs to any human being. Let us look at the universe around us. We will find that all of it consists of others. In our lives we see that the powerful may become powerless and the rich may become poor: fortunes fluctuate. As a result, things do not endure as we look and everything that passes before our eyes, which we read of in history and hear about, first was and then became something else. Since that is how things are, why do we not reflect?

When a miser hoards the wealth Allah has given him, he deprives himself of it – but then his wealth goes to his children or heirs and they spend it in a way he would have detested. No one can ever deceive his Creator. A miser makes the way easy for others and deprives himself and hoards. For whom does he hoard? He hoards for other human beings. This means that the provision of the miser is constricted and the provision of those who will take it from him is expanded. When a miser withholds wealth from anyone else, he makes it easy for whoever is going to take it in the future. He manages his wealth for those who are going to spend it after he has gone.

Evildoing

Allah Almighty says:

“If anyone among you does evil out of ignorance and then afterwards repents and puts things right, He is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (6:54)

Doing evil is something which is forbidden by Allah. There are those who do evil in ignorance. Ignorance is usually understood by people to mean lack of knowledge. This is an erroneous understanding. An ignorant person is in fact someone with an empty mind. Ignorance is affirming something opposite the reality, like a believer who believes a creed contrary to the truth. The treatment for such ignorance requires firstly the removal of this erroneous belief which is the opposite of reality and then its replacement with a creed in conformity with the truth.

Those who cause hardship for people are ignorant, because an ignorant person believes something and gives it credence although it is not true. Ignorance is foolishness and thoughtlessness. Thoughtlessness is lack of consideration for the results of one's actions, and foolishness is the failure to realise the worth of the reward one has missed and the punishment which will afflict him. A person may be a believer but still commit evil because he does not bear in mind the penalty and punishment which inevitably result from such actions. So he commits an evil action which may gratify his appetite in the short term but shows no concern for its inevitable future consequences. If the person concerned had recalled the penalty and punishment, he would not have committed that evil.

One of the meanings of doing evil unwittingly is committing some evil without devising it or planning it. Allah Almighty says:

Allah only accepts the repentance of those who do evil unwittingly and then quickly repent afterwards. Allah relents towards such people. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (4:17)

Allah Almighty accepts the repentance of those who commit wrong actions if they commit them while in a state of foolishness or thoughtlessness and then turn in repentance to Allah Almighty. Allah accepts the repentance of such people, but Allah says about those who do not regret doing evil:

There is no repentance for people who persist in doing evil until death comes to them and who then say, 'Now I repent,' or for people who die as unbelievers. We have prepared for them a painful punishment. (4:18)

Glossary

Amir al-Mu'minin: "Commander of the Believers," the title of the Caliph.

ayat: verse of the Qur'an.

deen: the life-transaction – in this usage, between the Creator and created.

dhikr: remembrance, mention.

Fatiha: "the Opener", the first *sura* of the Qur'an.

hadd: Allah's boundary between the lawful and unlawful. The *hadd* punishments are specific fixed penalties laid down by Allah for specified crimes.

hadith: reported speech or actions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Hijra: emigration for the Cause of Allah. The Islamic calendar begins with the Hijra of the Prophet Muhammad from Makka to Madina in 622 CE.

Iblis: the personal name of the Devil. He is also called Shaytan or the "Enemy of Allah".

isnad: a *hadith's* chain of transmission from one individual to the next.

jinn: inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, made of smokeless fire, who are usually invisible.

kunya: a respectful but intimate way of addressing people as "the father of so-and-so" or "the mother of so-and-so."

mursal: a *hadith* which a man in the generation after the Companions quotes directly from the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, without mentioning the Companion from whom he received it.

qadi: a judge.

rak'at: a unit of the prayer consisting of a series of standings, bowing, prostrations and sittings.

sadaqa: charitable giving in the Cause of Allah.

Shari'a: The Sacred Law of a people based on the revelation given to their Prophet. The final *Shari'a* is that of Islam.

shaytan: a devil, particularly Iblis.

Sunna: the customary practice of a person or group of people. It has come to refer almost exclusively to the practice of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

sura: chapter of the Qur'an.

tafsir: commentary and explanation of the meanings of the Qur'an.

taqwa: awe or fear of Allah, which inspires a person to be on guard against wrong actions and eager for actions which please Him.

Uhud: a mountain just outside Madina where, five years after the Hijra, the Muslims lost a battle against the Makkan idolaters. Many great Companions, and in particular Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet, were killed in this battle.

zakat: a wealth tax, one of the five pillars of Islam.