

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSCIENCE IN THE QUR'AN

**They repudiated them [Our Signs] wrongly
and haughtily, in spite of their own
certainty about them. See the final
fate of the corrupters.
(Qur'an; 27:14)**

HARUN YAHYA

All translations from the Qur'an are from The Noble Qur'an: a
New Rendering of its Meaning in English by Hajj Abdalhaqq and
Aisha Bewley, published by Bookwork, Norwich, UK. 1420
CE/1999 AH.

Edited by:
Mona Abdulhaq

GLOBAL PUBLISHING
Gursel Mh. Darulaceze Cd. No: 9
Funya Sk. Eksioglu Is Merkezi B Blok D: 5
Okmeydani-Istanbul/Turkey
Tel:+90 212 3208600

PRINTED BY:
Kelebek Matbaacilik
Istanbul/Turkey

www.harunyahya.com

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author, who writes under the pen-name HARUN YAHYA, was born in Ankara in 1956. Having completed his primary and secondary education in Ankara, he then studied arts at Istanbul's Mimar Sinan University and philosophy at Istanbul University. Since the 1980s, the author has published many books on political, faith-related, and scientific issues. Harun Yahya is well-known as an author who has written very important works disclosing the imposture of evolutionists, the invalidity of their claims, and the dark liaisons between Darwinism and such bloody ideologies as fascism and communism.

His pen-name is made up of the names "Harun" (Aaron [as]) and "Yahya" (John [as]), in memory of the two esteemed Prophets who fought against their people's lack of faith. The Prophet (saas)'s seal on the cover of the books is symbolic and is linked to the their contents. It represents the Qur'an (the final scripture) and the Prophet Muhammad (saas), the last of the prophets. Under the guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the author makes it his purpose to disprove each one of the fundamental tenets of godless ideologies and to have the "last word," so as to completely silence the objections raised against religion. The seal of the final Prophet, who attained ultimate wisdom and moral perfection, is used as a sign of his intention of saying this last word.

All of the author's works center around one goal: to convey the Qur'an's message to people, encourage them to think about basic faith-related issues (such as Allah's Existence and Unity and the hereafter), and to expose the feeble foundations and perverted ideologies of godless systems.

Harun Yahya enjoys a wide readership in many countries, from India to America, England to Indonesia, Poland to Bosnia, and Spain to Brazil. Some of his books are available in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Urdu, Arabic, Albanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat (Bosnian), Polish, Malay, Uygur Turkish, and Indonesian, and they are enjoyed by readers worldwide.

Greatly appreciated all around the world, these works have been instrumental in many people recovering their faith in Allah and in many others gaining a deeper insight into their faith. The wisdom, as well as the sincere and easy-to-understand style, gives these

books a distinct touch that directly effects any one who reads or studies them. Immune to objections, these works are characterized by their features of rapid effectiveness, definite results, and irrefutability. It is unlikely that those who read these books and give serious thought to them can any longer sincerely advocate materialistic philosophy, atheism, or any other perverted ideology or philosophy. Even if they continue to do so, it will be only a sentimental insistence, since these books refute such ideologies from their very foundations. All contemporary movements of denial are now ideologically defeated, thanks to the collection of books written by Harun Yahya.

There is no doubt that these features result from the Qur'an's wisdom and lucidity. The author modestly intends to serve as a means in humanity's search for Allah's right path. No material gain is sought in the publication of these works.

Considering these facts, those who encourage people to read these books, which open the "eyes" of the heart and guide them to become more devoted servants of Allah, render an invaluable service.

Meanwhile, it would just be a waste of time and energy to propagate other books that create confusion in people's minds, lead them into ideological chaos, and that clearly have no strong and precise effects in removing the doubts in people's hearts, as also verified from previous experience. It is impossible for books devised to emphasize the author's literary power rather than the noble goal of saving people from loss of faith, to have such a great effect. Those who doubt this can readily see that the sole aim of Harun Yahya's books is to overcome disbelief and to disseminate the Qur'an's moral values. The success and impact of this service are manifested in the readers' conviction.

One point should be kept in mind: The main reason for the continuing cruelty, conflict, and all the ordeals endured by the vast majority of people is the ideological prevalence of disbelief. This state can be ended only with the ideological defeat of disbelief and by conveying the wonders of creation and Qur'anic morality so that people can live by it. Considering the state of the world today, which leads people into a downward spiral of violence, corruption and conflict, it is clear that this service has to be provided more speedily and effectively. Otherwise, it may be too late.

It is no exaggeration to say that the collection of books by Harun Yahya have assumed this leading role. By the will of Allah, these books will be a means through which people in the twentyfirst century will attain the peace, justice and happiness promised in the Qur'an.

TO THE READER

The reason why a special chapter is assigned to the collapse of the theory of evolution is that this theory constitutes the basis of all anti-spiritual philosophies. Since Darwinism rejects the fact of creation, and therefore Allah's Existence, during the last 140 years it has caused many people to abandon their faith or fall into doubt. Therefore, showing that this theory is a deception is a very important duty, one that is strongly related to religion. It is imperative that this important service be rendered to everyone. Some of our readers may find the chance to read only one of our books. Therefore, we think it appropriate to devote a chapter for a summary of this subject.

In all the books by the author, faith-related issues are explained in the light of Qur'anic verses, and all people are invited to learn Allah's words and to live by them. All the subjects that concern Allah's verses are explained in such a way as to leave no room for doubt or question marks in the reader's mind. The sincere, plain, and fluent style employed ensures that everyone of every age and from every social group can easily understand the books. This effective and lucid narrative makes it possible to read them in a single sitting. Even those who rigorously reject spirituality are influenced by the facts recounted in these books and cannot refute the truthfulness of their contents.

This book and all the other works of the author can be read individually or discussed in a group. Those readers who are willing to profit from the books will find discussion very useful in the sense that they will be able to relate their own reflections and experiences to one another.

In addition, it will be a great service to religion to contribute to the presentation and reading of these books, which are written solely for the good pleasure of Allah. All of the author's books are extremely convincing. For this reason, for those who want to communicate true religion to other people, one of the most effective methods is to encourage them to read these books.

It is hoped that the reader will take time to look through the review of other books on the final pages of the book, and appreciate the rich source of material on faith-related issues, which are very useful and a pleasure to read.

In these books, unlike some other books, you will not find the author's personal views, explanations based on dubious sources, styles that are unobservant of the respect and reverence due to sacred subjects, nor hopeless, doubt-creating, and pessimistic accounts that create deviations in the heart.

INTRODUCTION

In this book, we are going to talk about a voice that always inspires justice, good manners, humility, honesty, sincerity, and all that is most righteous. This voice, though you may be unaware of it, is always with you wherever you go.

'To whom does this voice belong?' you may then ask. Well, this voice belongs to you, it is within you, it is the voice of your conscience...

The word 'conscience' is very common and much used. However, the actual meaning of the word, its importance in the deen (religion), how a really conscientious person behaves and what separates him or her from other people are not so well known in general. Conscience is limited to the meaning acknowledged by society. According to popular belief, those who do not, for example, dump rubbish in the streets, who give money to beggars and take care of stray animals are shown as examples of conscientious people.

However, the actual meaning of the word 'conscience' is far more subtle and comprehensive than the meaning attached to it by society. The purpose of this book is to introduce the real meaning of conscience as exemplified in the Qur'an and to draw attention to how a conscientious person thinks, what kind of insight and understanding he or she possesses, and the importance of conscience in life after death. We will provide you with the necessary information to identify the voice of your conscience, and distinguish it from the other voices and suggestions coming from within you. We will also explain some of the things your conscience may make you think and do and how someone who acts upon his conscience can attain the purest state.

The main purpose of this book is not only to inform, but also to call out to people's conscience in order to spur them into action, encourage them to live the rest of their lives by their conscience, and show them how lost they will be if they fail to do so.

ALLAH'S INSPIRATION TO EVERY MAN: CONSCIENCE

Conscience is a spiritual quality that bids man good attitude and thought, and helps him think straight and tell right from wrong.

One of the important aspects of conscience is that it is common to all people. In other words, what feels right to the conscience of a man also feels right to the conscience of all others provided that the same conditions prevail. The conscience of one man never falls out with that of another. The reason lies in the source of conscience: it is the inspiration of Allah. Through the conscience, Allah lets us know the best and the most beautiful behaviour and manners which it will please Him for us to adopt.

That conscience is an inspiration from Allah is mentioned in the Qur'an, in Surat ash-Shams:

And the self and what proportioned it and inspired it with depravity or taqwa, he who purifies it has succeeded, he who covers it up has failed. (Surat ash-Shams: 7-10)

In the above verses, Allah declares that He has inspired the self with depravity (to act in a sinful manner, to disobey, to deviate, to lie, to turn away from righteousness, to stir up trouble, to decline in good manners). The opposite is taqwa (awe or fear of Allah which inspires a person to be on guard against wrong action and eager for actions which please Him). It is this very conscience that makes man guard against evil deeds and find the right way.

One of the most important aspects of conscience is that it helps man to find what is right of his own accord. This will be discussed in more detail in forthcoming chapters. Conscience will surely show man what is right, even if nobody else will. However, what matters for man is to take recourse to his own conscience, listen to what it says, and act upon it. For this reason, we can say that conscience is the main component of religion.

Above all, there is one point that must be borne in mind; every man, from the moment of gaining consciousness, is responsible for what Allah inspires him with and what his conscience tells him. From the moment he starts to conceive the events around him and becomes able to judge for himself, he is expected to possess and be able to exercise the ability to hear and distinguish the voice of his conscience, and to have the will to follow it. From this point forward, he will be questioned about the actions he takes in the course of his life. If he follows his conscience, he will be rewarded with an eternal life in Allah's heaven, but if he follows his self, he will meet an eternal sealed vault of fire.

EVIDENCE OF ALLAH'S EXISTENCE CAN BE SEEN THROUGH CONSCIENCE

The first thing that a man who follows his conscience will do is to question and explore the things he sees around him. A man who has developed a good sense of perception, will easily see that he lives in a world created flawlessly, contained within a perfect universe.

Let us ponder for a moment the environment and the conditions that we are living in. We live in a world subtly planned and designed with all possible details. Even the systems in the human body alone are overwhelming in their perfection. While reading this book, your heart beats constantly without fail, your skin renews itself, your lungs clean the air you inhale, your liver drains your blood, and millions of proteins are synthesised in your cells each second in order to secure the permanence of life. Man lives unaware of thousands of other activities taking place within him, even not realising how some of them take place.

And beyond there is the sun, millions of miles away from our planet, which provides the light, heat and energy that we need. The distance between the sun and the world is so finely adjusted that this source of energy neither scorches the earth, nor freezes it to death.

When we look at the sky, we learn that apart from its aesthetic appeal, the air mass surrounding the earth also protects man and all beings from possible external threats. Had the atmosphere not existed, there would not be a single living thing on the earth.

The man who considers these things one by one, will sooner or later question how he himself and the universe he lives in came into existence and how they are maintained. When he investigates it, two alternative explanations will present themselves.

One of these explanations tells us that the whole universe, planets, stars and all living things came into existence on their own as a result of a series of coincidences. It claims that freely floating atoms, which are the smallest units of matter, came together by chance to form cells, humans, animals, plants, stars, and all the flawless and extremely complex structures and systems which surround and amaze us.

The second alternative tells us that everything we see is created by a creator who has superior wisdom and power over everything; that nothing could possibly have come into existence by mere chance and that all the systems around us are planned and designed by a creator. This creator is Allah.

We must refer to our own conscience to decide. Is it possible that such perfect and detailed systems could be formed by accident and yet work in such perfect harmony?

Everyone who refers to his conscience can grasp that everything in the universe has a creator, and this creator is exalted in wisdom and has power over everything. Everything around us bears the evident signs of Allah. The perfect balance and harmony of the universe and the living beings within it, is the most powerful indication of a supreme consciousness. The evidence is plain, simple and indisputable. Our conscience has no choice but to acknowledge that all is the work of Allah, the one and only Creator.

However, someone who does not refer to his own conscience cannot have the same awareness. This awareness is achieved through wisdom, and wisdom is a spiritual quality that comes about only when one follows one's conscience. Any attitude displayed in accordance with conscience helps build up and develop wisdom. Here, however, special attention must be paid to the definition of wisdom. Contrary to its common use, wisdom is a different concept to intelligence. A man, no matter how intelligent and knowledgeable he is, will still be unwise if he does not refer to his conscience, and is unable to see or comprehend the facts that he comes across.

An example can elucidate the difference between intelligence and the wisdom attained through conscience. A scientist may carry out very detailed research about the cell for years. He may even be the best in his field. However, if he is lacking in wisdom and conscience, he will only retain fragments of knowledge. He will not be able to fit these fragments together to form a whole. In other words, he will not be able to draw correct conclusions from this body of information.

A man with wisdom and conscience, however, perceives the miraculous aspects and perfect details of a cell, and acknowledges the hand of a creator, a designer with a superior wisdom. If a man thinks with his conscience he will arrive at this conclusion: the power that creates a cell with such perfection must also be the creator of all the other living and non-living beings.

In the Qur'an, there is the example of Prophet Ibrahim (AS), who found Allah through listening to his conscience:

When night covered him he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord!' Then when it set he said, 'I do not love what sets.' Then when he saw the moon come up he said, 'This is my Lord!' Then when it set he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me, I will be one of the misguided people.' Then when he saw the sun come up he said, 'This is my Lord! This is greater!' Then when it set he said, 'My people, I am free of what you associate with Allah! I have turned my face to Him Who brought the heavens and earth into being, a pure natural believer. Never shall I give partners to Allah. (Surat Al-An'am: 76-79)

How Prophet Ibrahim found Allah through wisdom can be seen in the verses above. Through his conscience, he realised that all the things he saw around him could only be beings that are created, and that the Creator is far superior to the created beings.

Anyone who refers to his conscience will see this fact even if there is no one to tell him about it. Everyone who thinks sincerely, without involving his passions, and only by employing his conscience, can comprehend the existence and glory of Allah. If someone refuses to see the bare facts before his eyes, and acts as if they do not exist, then this man will become degraded despite his intelligence. The reason a person who knows the right in his conscience does not want to accept it is because this fact conflicts with his personal interests. A man's acceptance of Allah's existence means his acceptance of a being far superior to him to whom he must submit, whom he desperately needs, and to whom he is answerable.

Let us give a well-known example of how a covered conscience can deceive a man, in spite of his intelligence and knowledge. Francis Crick is one of the two scientists who discovered the structure of DNA during the 1950's. This was undoubtedly one of the major discoveries in the history of science; it required some painstaking work, considerable accumulated knowledge and, no doubt, intelligence. As a result of all the work he did, this 'scientist' was awarded the Nobel Prize.

During his research, Francis Crick became so amazed at the structure of the cell and its hidden design that, despite being an ardent evolutionist, he mentioned the following in his book:

An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going. (*Francis Crick, Life Itself: Its Origin and Nature, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981, p. 88*)

When Crick, who believed in evolution and the idea that life came about as a result of coincidences, saw the details in the cell, he wrote the above lines and stated that a cell could not possibly be formed by coincidence, but could only be a miracle. Evolutionists, however, do not believe in any explanation other than coincidence, for it would require them to accept the existence of Allah. Crick was so impressed with the perfection and intactness of the cell that despite advocating a different ideology, he had to confess his amazement. However, Crick could not follow his conscience for long and said that he could not accept the existence of Allah, so this whole design, which requires a superior wisdom and can by no means be explained by coincidences, was created not by Allah, but by 'aliens'. In other words, it was the aliens, not Allah, who created life. Aliens had brought the first DNA sample to the world and thus life had started! This is a typical example of what happens when a man, no matter how intelligent and knowledgeable he may be, imprisons and represses his conscience. This Nobel prize-awarded 'scientist' had covered his mind to such an extent that he did not even stop to think how an alien, who allegedly formed such a superior structure, was itself created.

A renowned American biochemistry professor Michael J. Behe explains, without using the word conscience itself, the situation of those scientists who cover their conscience:

Over the past four decades modern biochemistry has uncovered the secrets of the cell. The progress has been hard won. It has required tens of thousands of people to dedicate the better parts of their lives to the tedious work of the laboratory...

The result of these cumulative efforts to investigate the cell – to investigate life at the molecular level – is a loud, clear, piercing cry of "design!" The result is so unambiguous and so significant that it must be ranked as one of the greatest achievements in the history of science... This triumph of science should evoke cries of "Eureka!" from ten thousand throats, should occasion much hand-slapping and high-fiving, and perhaps even be an excuse to take a day off.

But no bottles have been uncorked, no hands slapped. Instead, a curious embarrassed silence surrounds the stark complexity of the cell. When the subject comes up in public, feet start to shuffle, and breathing gets a bit labored. In private people are a bit more relaxed; many explicitly admit the obvious but then stare at the ground, shake their heads, and let it go at that.

Why does the scientific community not greedily embrace its startling discovery? Why is the observation of design handled with intellectual gloves? The dilemma is that while one side of the elephant is labeled intelligent design, the other side might be labeled God. (*Michael J. Behe, Darwin's Black Box, New York: Free Press 1996, pp. 232-233*)

The signs of Allah's existence are very clear and manifest for all to see. It is an evident truth that the Creator of the design prevailing across the universe is Allah. Some of those who reject the existence of Allah do so not because they really do not believe in Him, but because they want to avoid the moral code they would have to observe as believers. Everyone knows the existence and eternal power of Allah in his conscience. However, someone who acknowledges the existence of Allah and perceives His power, also knows that he will be answerable to Him, and that he must obey His rules and live for Him. He who insists on rejecting despite his awareness of these facts, does so because accepting this great fact is not in compliance with his interests and the feeling of superiority inside him. In the Qur'an, these people are described in Surat an-Naml:

They repudiated them wrongly and haughtily, in spite of their own certainty about them. See the final fate of the corrupters. (Surat an-Naml, 14)

Events that took place between Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and his people told in the Qur'an, provide a very good example. The people of Prophet Ibrahim worshipped idols. It is important to note here that in the Qur'an, the term 'idols' implies all the powers people believe in other than Allah. It would be incorrect to think of idol-worshippers only as those who worship statues. As in the example of evolutionists, to look upon atoms, time and coincidence as the causes of life would simply mean to take atoms, time and coincidence as gods. However, neither time nor coincidence can possibly have enough power to create life. Only Allah can possess such power. According to the incident

mentioned above, Prophet Ibrahim destroyed the idols to show his people that the idols they worshipped were just objects having no power over anything. It is thus described by Allah in the Qur'an:

He said, 'Far from it! Your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He Who brought them into being. I am one of those who bear witness to that. By Allah, I will devise some scheme against your idols when your backs are turned. '

He broke them in piece, except for the biggest one, so that they would have it to consult!

They said, 'Who has done this to our gods? He is definitely one of the wrongdoers!' They said, 'We heard a young man mentioning them. They call him Ibrahim.' They said, 'Bring him before the people's eyes so that they can be witnesses.' They said, 'Did you do this to our gods, Ibrahim?' He said, 'No, this one, the biggest of them, did it. Ask them if they are able to speak!' (Surat al-Anbiya': 56-63)

Thus the unbelievers saw that the idols they had been worshipping could not answer their calls. They were impotent effigies lacking even the power to defend themselves, let alone create anything; so they turned to their conscience:

Then they turned to themselves and said (to the idols), 'It is you yourselves who are wrongdoers.' (Surat al-Anbiya': 64)

However, it was not long before they were restored to their old state. They haughtily and arrogantly denied what they had found in their conscience

But then they relapsed back into their disbelief: 'You known full well these idols cannot talk.' He said, 'Do you then worship, instead of Allah, what cannot help or harm you in any way? Shame on you and what you worship besides Allah! Will you not use your intellect? (Surat al-Anbiya': 65-67)

Their conscience having been exposed, the unbelievers fall into dismay, and strongly resist what their conscience has accepted. In order not to accept the truth, they feel an intense hatred against those who make the truth clear to them, and they even risk trying to murder the messengers to safeguard their false beliefs:

They said, 'Burn him and support your gods if you are resolved to do something.' (Surat al-Anbiya': 68)

The above situation applies not only to a certain section of society, but to many people at large. A man may be a distinguished scientist, with many discoveries to his name. He may be a successful businessman or an artist; he may also be rich, cultivated and intelligent. However, instead of employing his conscience to think of Allah, glorify His power and art, and thank Him for giving him the chance to see and understand these things, he only becomes proud and boastful of his intelligence and discoveries, and the money he has earned. He never thinks that none of these will be of any use to him after he dies.

Even the names of many people who were famous in their time for their discoveries, their wealth or the great states they governed, have long been forgotten. Even if they are remembered, it is of no benefit to a person who is dead. Those people paid no attention to the commandments of Allah, nor did they acknowledge His power or appreciate the favours He bestowed upon them. Such people went astray because their hearts were sealed and their consciences covered. In the Qur'an, Allah describes those who transgress in pursuit of their own interests and passions:

Have you seen him who takes his whims and desires to be his god - whom Allah has misguided knowingly, sealing up his hearing and his heart and placing a blindfold over his eyes? Who then will guide him after Allah? So will you not pay heed? They say, 'There is nothing but our existence in the life of this world. We die and we live and nothing destroys us except for time.' They have no knowledge of that. They are only conjecturing. (Surat al-Jathiyya: 23-24)

As can be seen in the above verses, those who put aside their conscience in pursuit of their own self and transgress because of the qualities they possess, are described as 'deaf and blind'. That their hearts are sealed tells us that they have no comprehension, that is, they can neither use their wisdom, nor distinguish between right and wrong. The only reason they get into such a state is because they do not use their conscience.

THOSE WHO QUESTION AND THOSE WHO IGNORE

So far, we have talked about how a conscientious man can build an awareness of the existence of Allah, even though he has not been taught anything about it. Someone who realises through his conscience that a creator exists will reach the conclusion that if Allah created such a flawless universe and provided man with a consciousness to comprehend it, then He would not have left him idle. He would definitely have established some sort of communication with these intelligent beings He created, and presented Himself to them. Furthermore, Allah, Who created everything, would definitely have created them for a purpose and let this purpose be known to them.

The person who employs his conscience, will feel a great desire to know about his Creator Who created himself and the entire universe. This desire even becomes the sole purpose of his life. He realises that he is in need of Allah, Who created him out of nothing and gave him life when he was nothing, and that all power lies with Him.

He also realises that Allah creates everything for a purpose. Everything has a duty. The sky is like a ceiling that protects the planet; cells are there to constitute life; rain brings bounty and the sun is the source of light and heat for the entire world. It is created for such a significant purpose that life would not exist without it. In short, man can see that everything we can and cannot count here is created for a special cause. Man then asks himself, 'If I am created into such a perfect and flawlessly planned world and I will die in a short while, then what is the purpose of my presence here?' And he seeks an answer to this question.

He is not satisfied by the pieces of information he has heard from other people. He wants to know Allah, to learn what He wants from him and the purpose of his creation. He understands through his conscience that information provided by people can be insufficient or misleading. Mostly, the statements of people contradict one another, and are full of inconsistencies. He naturally thinks that the best guide to reach Allah is the book He revealed. Consequently, he takes the Qur'an, the last book Allah sent and which He protected, as his guide.

Those who ignore the Qur'an do not follow their conscience:

How many people in the world have neither read the Qur'an nor even wondered about it?

Allah sends a book to guide people, warning them that they will be questioned after their death as to whether or not they heeded what was written in it. The result will send them either to paradise or hell. Even if people do not grasp this by referring to their conscience, they hear about it and are aware of it. However, in spite of this, they still do not read the Qur'an. They do not even barely wonder what is written in the book for which they will be held responsible on the Day of Judgement.

For example, a man receives a letter from his office or school in an envelope reading 'most important for your career/education'. He is asked to read this letter and completely fulfil its requirements by a certain date. What will he do? Will he hang it up on the wall without even reading it, just put it in the drawer, or read and disregard what is written in it? Or will he immediately start reading it with great excitement and attention as soon as he received it, and immediately act fully upon its contents?

His wisdom and common sense would definitely tell him to read this message. However, most people, due to the state of heedlessness they are in, do not lift a finger to read the most vital book in existence: the message of Allah to His people.

The fact that people have abandoned the book Allah sent is stated as follows in the Qur'an:

The Messenger says: 'My Lord, my people treat this Qur'an as something to be ignored.' (Surat al-Furqan: 30)

When a messenger comes to them from Allah confirming what is with them, a group of those who have been given the Book disdainfully toss the Book of Allah behind their backs, just as if they did not know. (Surat al-Baqara:101)

In the above verse, the expression 'as if they did not know' points out that although people know, they ignore the book of Allah. Everyone, deep in his conscience, knows that he must read and practise the Qur'an, but the majority ignores it. The reason for this is that people do not follow their conscience.

CONSCIENCE AND THE QUR'AN SHOW MAN THE REAL PURPOSE OF LIFE

'...Did you suppose that We created you for amusement and that you would not return to Us?' (Surat al-Mu'minun:115)

Someone who thinks through his conscience will ponder the purpose of his life and during his search for the answer, will naturally turn to the Qur'an, Allah's revelation. When someone intends to read the Qur'an, it is of the utmost importance that his conscience remains open, and that he reads every verse with great sincerity, with the intention to practise and live by them.

He who reads the Qur'an will find the answer for the purpose of his creation. In the Qur'an, this purpose is stated as follows:

I only created jinn and man to worship Me. I do not require any provision from them and I do not require them to nourish Me. Truly Allah, He is the Provider, the Possessor of Strength, the Sure. (Surat adh-Dhariyat: 56-58)

The purpose of man's life on this earth is his being tested:

He Who created death and life to test which of you is best in action. He is the Almighty, the Ever- Forgiving. (Surat al-Mulk: 62)

We made everything on the earth adornment for it so that we could test them to see whose actions are the best. (Surat al-Kahf: 7)

We created man from a mingled drop to test him, and We made him hearing and seeing. We guided him on the Way, whether he is grateful or ungrateful. (Surat al-Insan: 2-3)

He who reads the above verses will understand that Allah created life to test man. He will immediately think about his own life, as well as the life of others. Most of the people around him are constantly rushing and struggling for the life of this world. They have very detailed plans, all concerning worldly things: the school they will go to, the job they will get, their marriage, their children, the house they will live in, the car they will buy, how high their salary is, where to spend the new year, what presents they will get on their birthday, their retirement, the holidays they will go on, etc. Everyone has such plans and goals in mind, though interestingly enough, no one takes the time to think of

the real purpose of their presence in the world. The conscientious man witnesses this behaviour and understands it for what it is: heedlessness and folly.

It is Allah Who created man, gave him life and lets him live on. Allah made the purpose of creation very clear: 'To be a slave to Him.' The only thing that will make man happy is to bow in submission to Allah in accordance with the purpose of his creation, and to dedicate everything he owns to Him in order to gain His approval. Yet most people, as if they do not know this fact at all and as if they have come into this world only to enjoy it, live on heedlessly and greedily. On the other hand, a man thinking with his conscience sees that the majority of people are falling into a dangerous state of negligence. Thus he comes to realise that other people cannot be a reference for him, and that his following other people, saying, 'Most of them do this,' will prevent him from following the book of Allah and taking the Qur'an as his only guide.

BELIEVING IN THE HEREAFTER WITH CERTAINTY

The man who comes to realise that he was brought into this world to be tested by Allah, will then move on to another stage of thought. If we are tested in this life, then death cannot be the end. There must also be a result to this test. However, there is no result in the life of this world. Amongst all the people who have lived in the past, there were tyrants, dissolute people and murderers, as well as the messengers of Allah and other people of very high conscience who dedicated their whole lives to Allah. There were also poor and miserable people who were subjected to oppression. Those in the past are now all dead and gone; both the good and the bad are buried in their graves. Today, there is nothing left of them but some skeletal remains. Allah, the Owner of Eternal Justice, would not let the life of this world be resolved in this way.

In short, man's conscience will tell him that Allah's Eternal Conscience will pay every man in full for what he has done. Since the accounts are not completely settled in this world, then there must be a place to where this is deferred.

People who think through their conscience will also find the answer in the Qur'an. Allah states in the Qur'an that He has deferred the settling of the accounts until after death, when everyone will be fully paid for the things they have done in this world:

Each and every one of you will return to Him. Allah's promise is true. He brings creation out of nothing and then regenerates it so that he can repay with justice those who believe and did right actions. Those who disbelieve will have a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they disbelieved. (Surah Jonah: 4)

Your Lord will pay each of them in full for his actions. He is aware of what they do. (Surah Hud: 111)

Those who refer to the Qur'an through their conscience understand that everything they do is known by Allah, and every good and bad act will be repaid. No action is overlooked, as many people may wrongly assume. Allah makes known in the Qur'an the day of account and the real life that awaits everyone after their account is settled.

The life of this world is a temporary test ground and the real life is in the hereafter, in paradise or hell. After death, everyone will be questioned on a day determined by Allah about their actions. Those who lived according to Allah's wishes, will forever live in Jannah - the most marvellous abode possible for a human being. As for the others, they will forever live in hell where the most extreme forms of pain and distress prevail.

It is a fact communicated in the Qur'an and also through conscience and wisdom that the real life will begin after death, and everyone will meet different circumstances in the hereafter according to his or her conduct in this world. It does not suit people's purposes to follow their conscience in a life which they spend in joking and playing around, and by rote, without giving a thought to it at all. Everyone pursues plans they will benefit from in the life of this world, but none of these plans concern death or the hereafter. Death, however, is a reality far more absolute than all of these planned events. People, however, never take death into consideration. They try to live their lives as if they will never die.

What may then be the reason that the majority of people live by ignoring this important fact?

To answer this question, you must take a moment to think; how many times in your entire life have you thought about death? Have you ever thought that one day you will die, all your loved ones who buried you under the earth will then leave your grave and get on with their daily lives, and everything you ever had will be gone upon your death? Have you ever visualised how death takes place? Your flesh will rot under the soil, but what will your soul experience?

Man has a soul and the soul does not disappear. After man dies, a new life starts for his soul, but has he ever happened to wonder what kind of a new life awaits him? Like the majority of people, he, too, may have never thought about such things. This is because thinking about them makes people feel horrified. They try to avoid these facts as much as possible. When this subject is brought up, they try to dismiss its impact on them with jokes or flippant remarks.

Why, then, do almost all people try so strongly to escape this reality which is certain to happen one day? Will ignoring prevent it from happening? Of course it will not. The reason people avoid thinking about death and the hereafter is that it prods their conscience into action, reminding them that they are answerable to Allah and that they will give an account of their actions after death. At the moment the conscience awakes, everything that has been done until then loses its importance, and man comes to realise the subjects that are really important. When he thinks that he will die one day, what importance are the things he has done in the life of this world? Initially, it may perhaps be difficult for him to grasp this, but thinking of the exact moment of death in fine detail, will help him understand all the truths.

Death may come to you when you least expect it, and most likely you will have no chance to make any preparations. It could be now or in a few moments, or at a similar moment a few years hence.

Real conscience is felt at the moment the angels of death and the fire of hell are seen

You may have seen someone die, but what you have seen is the death of the body. There is also the experience that the soul goes through during death, which can only be witnessed by the person undergoing it. Onlookers will only see the dying of the body, which may appear very peaceful in the case of someone dying naturally in his bed, or indeed agonising in the case of a victim of a car accident or disease. However, the death of the soul, that is, what it goes through during death is very different from what it seems to be.

If the person who dies is a believer, then his soul is taken with ease and he is given the glad tidings by two angels that he will start his marvellous eternal life. This person is neither frightened nor grievous, for he possesses the immeasurable joy of knowing that he will be in happiness and peace for eternity. This fact is stated in the Qur'an as follows:

Those the angels take in a virtuous state. They say, 'Peace be upon you! Enter the Garden for what you did.' (Surat an-Nahl: 32)

The greatest terror will not upset them and the angels will welcome them: 'This is your Day, the one that you were promised.' (Surat al-Anbiya': 103)

In the case of a man who has not lived his life in accordance with Allah's approval, no matter how his body dies, what his soul experiences will be the beginning of a life full of torment. Allah warns these people in the Qur'an:

How will it be when the angels take them in death, beating their faces and their backs? (Surah Muhammad: 27)

For these reasons, trying to visualise the moment of death in your mind's eye will cause you to behave with one hundred percent sincerity and conscientiousness.

Death may come to you while driving, or doing something that you do routinely. Suddenly the sight in front of you will change and you will meet two angels of death. Angels of death may assume a horrifying appearance to those who have not lived their lives in accordance with Allah's good pleasure and ignored death and the hereafter. In the Qur'an, it is told that they stretch out their hands to the person whose life they have come to take away, pull him close to themselves and declare to him a degrading, endless torment, while beating his face and back. Separation of the soul from the body causes great pain. At that point, the man realises what is to happen next. This moment is described in Surat al-Qiyama:

Faces that Day will be glowering, realising that a back-breaking blow has fallen. No indeed! When it reaches the gullet and he hears the words, 'Who can heal him now?' And he knows it is indeed the final parting, and one leg is

entwined with the other: That Day he will be driven to your Lord. He neither affirmed the truth nor did pray. But rather denied the truth and turned away. (Surat al-Qiyama: 24-32)

You too will certainly experience the moment of death. What will become important, and what will become meaningless to you? What will you regret having done or not having done? Whose advice will you wish you had taken? Whom will you wish you had never met? How concerned will you be about the details of your job? Of what importance is a dress you will wear to a party, or other people's opinions about your appearance, in comparison to the fact of the hereafter?

Those who answer these questions in full sincerity can come to terms with what their conscience tells them. If a person has not heeded Allah's good pleasure throughout his life and has not done his best to gain Allah's approval, the greatest feeling he will experience in addition to the fear he will feel at the moment of death, will be an irrecoverable remorse. Statements of remorse such as 'I wish I hadn't listened to such and such a person, I wish I had kept regular prayers, I wish I had lived for Allah,' etc. will keep crossing his mind.

Meanwhile, the impact of the moment of death will become more intense, for these two angels will drag man to hell, as they humiliate him. Before entering hell, everyone is questioned one by one and they see why they are to enter hell. At this moment, man will feel unspeakable horror because all the things he has done and thought in his entire life will be displayed to him one by one. The thoughts he supposed no one knew, and many other events even he himself had forgotten will be brought in front of him.

That Day people will emerge segregated to see the results of their actions. Whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. Whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it. (Surat az-Zilzala: 6-8)

Think what will make you feel regret when your entire life in this world is brought right in front of you in such a manner. For what kind of things will you say 'I wish I had not done it' or 'I wish I had done it'? The irreparable regret on that day is expressed in a verse in the Qur'an:

That is the True Day. So whoever wills should take the way back to his Lord. We have warned you of an imminent punishment on the Day when a man will see what he has done and the unbeliever will say: 'Oh, if only I were dust!' (Surat an-Naba': 39-40)

Furthermore, people will feel great anger and repugnance against themselves for what they have done in the life of this world. Yet, the anger and resentment that Allah will feel for them will be even greater:

The unbelievers will be addressed: 'Allah's hatred of you, when you were called to faith but then chose to refuse, is even greater than your hatred of yourselves.' (Surah Ghafir: 10)

In the Qur'an, it is said that regret and remembrance on that day will be of no use. By that time, everything will have ended; no longer will it be possible to make up for what has been done in the past. The gates of hell will be locked behind man forever:

That Day Hell is produced, that Day man will remember; but how will the remembrance help him? He will say, 'Oh! If only I had prepared in advance for this life of mine!' That Day no one will punish as He punishes and no one will shackle as He shackles. (Surat al-Fajr: 23-26)

All men, even the most astray ones, will be able to see very clearly everything that their conscience tells them at the moment of death and while giving account, but since return is no longer possible, they will not be able to correct their situation by following their conscience. The purpose of this book is to reveal to people their conscience while there is still time, and to invite them to live a life by which they can make up for their past and feel no regret in the hereafter.

The difference between people who always follow their conscience and people who do not, is the power of faith the conscientious people have in Allah and the hereafter. A conscientious man always acts as if he is being questioned on the brink of hell. By example, Allah tells us about some of his messengers, who always remembered the hereafter:

And remember Our slaves Ibrahim, Ishaq, and Ya'qub, men of true strength and inner sight. We purified their sincerity through sincere remembrance of the Abode. (Surah Sad: 45-46)

LIVING THE QUR'AN BY FOLLOWING THE CONSCIENCE AT ALL TIMES

The sole purpose of a person who becomes aware of the existence of Allah and the hereafter, is to please Allah and to live eternally in paradise. It is impossible for someone who acts upon his conscience and wisdom, to set an objective other than this. Another great error of man is to think that religion is a belief that covers only a small portion of one's life; that it is something to be remembered only on certain days, and that nothing is related with it except some rites of worship. On the contrary, in the Qur'an, it is stated that man's whole life, along with all rites, must be for Allah:

Say: 'My prayer and my rites, my living and my dying, are for Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds.' (Surat al-An'am: 162)

This means that in all his words, decisions and actions, man must pay attention to whether Allah is pleased with him or not. If he thinks that something is not pleasing to Allah, then he must totally avoid it. There is no other choice for a man who will be called to account for the life he has led, and whose eternal abode will be decided by the result. Furthermore, someone who is not ungrateful and who thinks and comprehends the truth, will surely not consider anything more important than pleasing his Lord, Who created him out of nothing, gave him life when he was nothing and bestowed upon him the favour to live in the paradise forever.

He who decides to live all his life for Allah once again turns to his conscience in order to find out how to please Allah. In the Qur'an, Allah has made clear all His orders and the deeds that He forbids. First of all, one who acts upon one's conscience strictly observes these orders and forbidden deeds. He pays the highest attention to the deeds that are approved and forbidden, and practises all the orders he reads in the Qur'an. He takes the models of good behaviour communicated in the Qur'an as a guide to himself; he acts with extreme sincerity and fulfils everything written in the Qur'an to the best of his understanding and means.

He who reads the Qur'an will see that Allah orders people to carry out certain rites of worship. One of these is to practise regular prayers:

When you have finished the prayer, remember Allah standing, sitting and lying on your sides. When you are safe again keep up prayer. Prayer is prescribed for the believers at specific times. (Surat an-Nisa': 103)

This verse is a reminder that regular prayer is obligatory. The conscience of everyone who reads this verse will tell them to stand for prayers. The person may either

practise what his conscience and the Qur'an require of him, or he may avoid practising the commands of the Qur'an by making various excuses. It must, however, never be forgotten that whatever excuse one may find for not keeping up prayer, this excuse will not be accepted in the hereafter.

In another verse, Allah asks man to act justly whatever the conditions and circumstances may be:

You who believe! Be upholders of justice, bearing witness for Allah alone, even against yourselves or your patterns and relatives. Whether they are rich or poor, Allah is well able to look after them. Do not follow your own desires and deviate from the truth. If you twist or turn away, Allah is aware of what you do. (Surat an-Nisa': 135)

Performing Allah's commands meticulously even if they conflict with one's interests is only possible through listening to the voice of one's conscience. Let us think of some situations that one who is called to attention in the verse above, may face. It may be that a person's bearing witness with justice may possibly cause a relative of his to be convicted of some crime. Yet, even in such a situation, a person who knows that he will give account after his death, listens to his conscience and acts in accordance with the command in the Qur'an, for no benefit in this world can be greater than his benefit in the hereafter.

In another verse, Allah states the following about acting justly:

You who believe! Show integrity for the sake of Allah, bearing witness with justice. Do not let hatred for a people incite you into not being just. Be just. That is closer to taqwa. Have fear of Allah. Allah is aware of what you do. (Surat al-Ma'ida: 8)

In order for someone to act on this verse properly, he has to control his anger even when he is most furious, and give a just decision. The person he converses with may be someone whom he dislikes because of his manners and speech and even someone against whom he bears a grudge. Regardless of whom that person may be, it is a command from Allah to be just to everyone.

Another example is Allah's command to people to avoid suspicion and gossip:

You who believe! Avoid most suspicion. Indeed some suspicion is a crime. And do not spy and do not backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat his brother's dead flesh? No, you would hate it. And have taqwa of Allah. Allah is Ever-Returning, Most Merciful. (Surat al-Hujurat: 12)

In the above verse, Allah guards man against some bad character traits. Actually, the three specific manners mentioned in this verse are interrelated. Someone who backbites has some bad suspicions about the person he backbites. Similarly, someone who spies on someone else does so on the grounds of certain suspicions. Such types of behaviour are very common and somehow accepted by society, though they are definitely against conscience.

A good criterion for comparison would be to think of one's self in such a situation. No one would ever wish to be spied on and have his secrets and mistakes pried into and revealed. He would not wish to be gossiped about, or for other people to have bad and incorrect suspicions about him. Someone who discovered he was being talked about in this way would be greatly distressed and feel he was being treated unjustly. Subjecting someone to such pain and making him live in such circumstances is wicked and inexcusable. It is an indication of a man's conscience that he never subjects someone else to something which he himself would not like to be subjected to. For this reason, Allah compares these manners to 'eating the dead flesh of one's brother.' This is just as disgusting as backbiting, suspicion and faultfinding. Besides, Allah threatens those who engage in such acts with hell:

Woe to every faultfinding backbiter... No indeed! He will be flung into the Shatterer. And what will convey to you what the Shatterer is? The kindled Fire of Allah reaching right into the heart. It is sealed in above them in towering columns. (Surat al-Humaza: 1-9)

Backbiting, prying into the secrets of others, and accusing people on the basis of mere suspicion, are often products of jealousy, envy and grudges, and are directly opposed to Quranic morals. Such behaviour is absolutely incompatible with conscience even though it is not greatly renounced by society. When one considers how Allah will repay these actions, the most appropriate conduct in accordance with Qur'anic morals is not to do them even for a moment, and to strongly discourage others from doing them.

The behaviour and thoughts of someone who has grasped the essence of the Qur'an, will be based on the good morals prescribed by Islam in general. In other words, he who lives this good character will always think and act conscientiously. He will never forget death and the hereafter, and this will make all his actions be oriented towards the hereafter. Such a remarkable man will think about the hereafter not only for himself, but also for his loved ones and his whole community. All his efforts will be geared towards preparing for this eternal home. Even with regards to seemingly ordinary events, the conscientious person comments with reference not to the world, but to the hereafter. For example, if he has a very wealthy friend, he instantly thinks that his friend too will die one day and give account in the hereafter. He particularly avoids making speeches that might make his friend attached to this world. He encourages him to be generous, and

reminds him of paradise and hell. He prays for his good and peace both in the world and the hereafter, and that Allah will cause them to meet in a happy hereafter. A conscientious man displays his love for his friend by making efforts for his hereafter and by forbidding him the wrong and enjoining the right.

At first sight, someone who acts upon his conscience and always seeks Allah's good pleasure may seem to be no different to others. He too goes to work or school, does shopping, and enjoys himself. He, however, seeks Allah's pleasure in everything he does. In a verse Allah states:

...There are men, who proclaim His glory morning and evening, not distracted by trade or commerce from the remembrance of Allah and the establishment of regular prayers and the payment of regular charity; fearing a day when all hearts and eyes will be in turmoil. (Surat an-Nur: 37)

One may wonder how it is possible to seek Allah's good pleasure in the common, everyday actions one does, and how it is possible to remember Allah at every moment. Firstly, it must be stated that for someone who follows his conscience, the rites of worship and Allah's commands are above everything else. He never forgets that Allah is always watching him. In the trade he engages in, he does not become concerned with his benefits in the world, but his benefits in the hereafter. He never declines in honesty, and never stoops to commit any act for which he will not be able to give account, or be ashamed of in the hereafter. Even if he knows that he will lose income, he is not tempted to cheat in measure, weight or calculation. In every issue he is most reliable and trustworthy. He does not delay the paying of his debts when he has the means; or if someone who owes him is in difficulty, he may give up the debt. In the Qur'an it is advised thus:

If (the debtor) is in difficult circumstances, (let there be) a deferral until things are easier. But making a free gift of it would be better for you if you only knew. (Surat al-Baqara 2:280)

A believer never forgets that the only power that will give favour and prosperity is with Allah. He does not transgress by being spoiled with what he has, and on the contrary thanks Allah for every favour He grants him.

There are many other events which man meets in his daily life through which he can remember Allah and seek His good pleasure by relying on the truth and wisdom of His Word conveyed by His Messenger in the Qur'an. Everyone who wants to live by the deen should read the Qur'an by using his conscience and practise what he has read once again by employing his conscience.

The conscience looks for the manners that will please Allah most

Man's conscience takes great pains in working for the pleasure of Allah. It always thinks, 'How can I please Allah most?' It never seeks other people's pleasure, or worries about its position in their eyes. It turns only to Allah in penitence.

Some people live Islam not by using their conscience, but in a traditional and habitual way as they have seen from their ancestors. They perform certain rituals of worship that they have memorised and with this they are satisfied. They have chosen a lifestyle which pays lip service to Islam. The reason for doing this may be to avoid conflict with their associates or simply because they were raised that way. Rather than thinking what to do to please Allah most, they think, 'What is the minimum I should do to make people believe that I am religious?'

It is, however, impossible to live Islam without employing the conscience fully. A truly conscientious person thinks about how he can practise every act of worship in the best manner. He strives to ensure that neither his actions nor his speech will pose a risk on the Day of Account. He knows that he will be repaid in the hereafter for what he has done. Allah warns people with respect to this:

Establish regular prayers and regular charity. Any good you send ahead for yourselves, you will find with Allah. Certainly Allah sees what you do. (Surat al-Baqara: 110)

An example from the Qur'an to someone seeking to do something to the best of his ability, and in the most beautiful way is the command given to the believers about 'saying the best'.

Say to My slaves that they should only say the best. The shaytan wants to stir up trouble between them. The shaytan is an outright enemy to man. (Surat al-Isra': 53)

He who knows this command of Allah will find the best speech by referring to his conscience. He will not just say whatever comes into his mind. On the contrary, he makes the most beautiful and impressive speeches, and he takes great care not to hurt or dishearten the people he talks to. He chooses the speech which will please Allah most, and while doing it, he employs his conscience as a key reference.

In another verse, Allah categorises mankind in three groups in terms of their attachment to Islam:

Then We made Our chosen slaves inherit the Book. But some of them wrong themselves; some are ambivalent; and some outdo each other in good by Allah's permission. That is the great favour. (Surah Fatir: 32)

As stated in the verse, some people do not live by Islam at all. Others only follow a part of what their conscience bids them, and spend only some of their time and means for Islam, though not when it conflicts with their interests. They do not make a serious effort for Islam and good manners to be spread among the people. Thinking that they already pay attention to what is forbidden and permitted, they take it for granted that the acts of worship they practise make them morally competent.

In actual fact, what suits conscience most is to choose and practise the most morally correct and beautiful deeds of those which are permissible and acceptable. With relation to this, in the Qur'an, Allah refers with high regard to those who follow the best of what is said:

Those who listen well to what is said and follow the best of it, they are the ones whom Allah has guided, they are the people of intelligence. (Surat az-Zumar: 18)

The third group, who outdo each other in good, are those who act in full accordance with their conscience. They outdo each other to gain the highest reward from their Lord, and step forward willingly in every service and every act of goodness, without waiting for anyone else to do it. When there are better things that they can do, their conscience does not allow them to continue with the lesser, without striving for improvement.

As seen, conscience requires not only knowing Allah and accepting His existence, but also performing acts that will please Him and paying great attention to this. The majority of people assume that believing in Allah's existence alone is sufficient. In some verses of the Qur'an, these people are addressed thus:

Say: 'Who provides for you out of heaven and earth? Who controls hearing and sight? Who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living? Who directs the whole affair?' They will say, 'Allah.' Say, 'So will you not have taqwa?' That is Allah, your Lord, the Truth, and what is there after truth except misguidance? So how have you been distracted? (Surah Yunus: 31-32)

As seen in the above verses, such people believe in the existence of Allah, and even accept that Allah provides for them, that He gives life and death, and that He is the Creator and Owner of everything. They employ their conscience only so much as to have such an awareness, and see this sufficient for their faith. Someone who makes full use of his conscience, however, feels a fear full of respect towards Allah since he can grasp the

sublimity of Allah. This fear is different from other fears experienced; this is the fear of losing Allah's approval. The whole life of a person who feels this fear passes solely by seeking to gain his Lord's pleasure. He does not set a limit to himself in drawing near to Allah. In the Qur'an, Allah shows Ibrahim as an example and says:

Who could have a better religion than someone who submits himself completely to Allah and is a good-doer, and follows the religion of Ibrahim, a man of pure natural belief? Allah took Ibrahim as an intimate friend. (Surat an-Nisa': 125)

Someone who acts one hundred percent upon his conscience, will strive to reach the highest level of understanding possible for the human mind; he will labour day and night to grasp the might and majesty of Allah and to draw near Him and become His intimate friend. Since he can never be sure to have established the highest degree of friendship and nearness, his effort and willingness will continue until he dies.

One may wonder how it is possible to be near to Allah. The key to this is again our conscience, as explained in the following pages.

HOW DOES THE CONSCIENCE UNDERSTAND THAT IT HAS TO BE NEAR ALLAH?

If a man was asked about the most important thing in his life, what would his answer be? Would it be his house, his family, his job, or perhaps his ideals? Whatever the answer, he must not forget that there is a far more important subject which he might have forgotten.

The most important subject in a man's life is to know Allah Who created him and gave him everything he possesses and to toil to draw near to Him. The majority of people spend their lives by ignoring this fact. Ask this question to the first person you meet, or even ask everyone you meet the most important and urgent subjects in their lives. The answers you get will all be related to the life of this world.

Someone who employs his conscience, however, immediately realises the importance of nearness to Allah and looks for ways to draw near. For in the Qur'an, it is commanded:

You who believe! Have taqwa of Allah and seek the means of drawing near to Him, and strive in His way, so that hopefully you will be successful. (Surat al-Ma'ida: 35)

Everything around you is created according to the needs of mankind. Your body works perfectly without any thought from you. The heart does not forget to beat, nor do the nerves fail to transmit the necessary messages to your brain. All kinds of food necessary for your nourishment and survival are naturally present in the world, and the right amount of oxygen you need is present in the atmosphere. You have a muscular and skeletal structure that helps you move smoothly without giving it any thought at all. You can pick up and hold many items and walk or run great distances. In addition to the minimal functions for your survival, you can also feel very distinct senses for which you are given the required consciousness. The flavour of various kinds of food, the touch of fine material, the beauty of a view that you see, or the conversation of a friend can all please you. And you have a Creator with superior power Who has created all of these for you. He created you from nothing, when you were nothing. Had He not willed, you would have remained as nothing. Yet Allah willed and created you in the shape of a human being.

Only a few of the blessings Allah grants people can be mentioned here. To number all the favours of Allah would be impossible, as stated in the verse:

If you tried to number Allah's blessings, you could never count them... (Surat an-Nahl: 18)

Over and above these favours, Allah has promised those who follow His way in the life of this world the most beautiful reward: paradise forever, and every wish fulfilled.

In return for Allah's favours, the most important responsibility on your side is surely to thank Allah for all that He has given to you. In a verse it is said:

Allah brought you out of your mothers' wombs knowing nothing at all, and gave you hearing, sight and hearts so that perhaps you would show thanks. (Surat an-Nahl: 78)

All the blessings given to you throughout your life are from Allah alone:

Any mercy Allah opens up to people, no one can withhold, and any He withholds, no one can afterwards release. He is the Almighty, the All-Wise. Mankind! Remember Allah's blessing to you. Is there any creator other than Allah providing for you from heaven and earth? There is no god but Him. So how have you been perverted? (Surah Fatir: 2-3)

Man's continued existence is only possible through Allah's Will, so it stands to reason that the most important being will be Allah, and the most important subject will be to draw near to Him. However, more frequently than not, people are carried away by the day to day details of life and rarely spare a moment to think about this. They set great store by what other people think of them, and try hard to earn their admiration and respect, rather than thinking of ways to please their Lord and earn His love. Without doubt, this is the greatest ingratitude. Man should know that to earn Allah's pleasure is not only a duty, but also the only way to give himself happiness and peace. Those who forget Allah by looking for other people's pleasure or by getting carried away by other vain objectives, can never find satisfaction and be happy. Allah's pleasure is the greatest joy and happiness in which man's heart will find peace. As stated in the Qur'an, hearts find peace only with the remembrance of Allah:

Allah... guides to Himself all who turn to Him: those who believe and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah. Only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace. (Surat ar-Ra'd: 28)

People in general are not unaware of Allah and the hereafter, and when pushed will admit that they know this to be true. However, the reason they live far away from Allah is that they are forgetful and need to constantly remind themselves through dhikr (remembrance) and contemplation. One who truly remembers at all times the existence of Allah and the punishment of the hellfire will never grow lazy or heedless. Is there anyone who could stand to account on Judgement Day at the brink of the fire and think

of any being but Allah? At such a moment, can the pleasure of someone other than Allah be taken into account? Whose love and friendship would someone in that position like to win most? Will the opinion of a friend or relative bear any importance, or be of any benefit at all?

That possessions and close company have no importance for those who have seen the fire of hell is stated in the verses below:

(On the Day) no good friend will ask about his friend even though they can see each other. An evildoer will wish he could ransom himself from the punishment of that Day, by means of his sons, or his wife, or his brother or his family who sheltered him or everyone else on earth, if that only meant that he could save himself. But no! It is a Raging Blaze. (Surat al-Ma'arij: 10-15)

As we learn from the Qur'an and understand with our conscience, a man should live his entire life for Allah. If you want to lead your entire life in a way pleasing to Allah, it is enough for you to observe the Qur'anic commands, follow the example of the Prophet (SAW), and listen to your conscience when faced with life's events. Your following the voice of your conscience in every event you face, big or small, means your following the good pleasure of Allah. Therefore, by listening to the voice of the good within you, you please Allah in every act you do.

Is everyone's conscience the same?

People who do not strive to please Allah may well perform deeds that seem good to them. They can be inherently considerate, kind people. However, if the good deeds they do are not for the pleasure of Allah, they may not find favour and credit with Allah. These people do goodness not because they truly follow their conscience, but for the sake of personal interests, such as the feeling of satisfaction derived from the reputation of being a 'benevolent' person, or merely a sentimental satisfaction.

In other words, the intention to submit to conscience is more important than the action itself. If a man wants his whole life to be for Allah, he has to act according to this intention. For example, if he does a kind deed he should seek the good pleasure of Allah rather than the favour and appreciation of people, or a personal sense of satisfaction. This will help him to think of Allah continuously, and turn to Him for all his needs. In the Qur'an, Allah praises such people:

Be steadfast in the face of what they say and remember Our slave Dawud, who possessed true strength. He truly turned to his Lord. (Surah Sad: 17)

Allah states in the Qur'an some ways that will serve as a means to draw near to Him:

And the Forerunners, the Forerunners. Those are the ones brought near. (Surat al-Waqi'a: 10-11)

Among the desert Arabs there are some who believe in Allah and the Last Day and regard what they give as something which will bring them nearer to Allah and to the prayers of the Messenger. It does indeed bring them near. Allah will admit them into His mercy. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Surat at-Tawba: 99)

Every conscientious act performed for Allah is a means to draw near to Allah. It should not be forgotten that Allah gives the glad tidings of paradise to those who are near to Him:

But the truth is that if he (the person to die) is one of those brought near, here is solace and sweetness and a Garden of Delight. And if he is one of the companions of the right, 'Peace be upon you!' from the companions of the right. (Surat al-Waqi'a: 88-91)

THE NEGATIVE POWERS AGAINST CONSCIENCE

The self (An-nafs)

Conscience has been inspired by Allah, as stated in Surat ash-Shams:

And the self and what proportioned it and inspired it with depravity or taqwa, he who purifies it has succeeded, he who covers it up has failed. (Surat ash-Shams: 7-10)

In these verses, Allah states that He has inspired the self with depravity (fujoor) and taqwa, that is, with the conscience of what is right for it. The word 'fujoor' means 'to act in a sinful manner, to disobey, to be a deviator, to tell lies, to rise against, to turn away from righteousness, to stir up trouble, to decline in good manners, the opposite of taqwa'. The concept of fujoor contains all the negative aspects of man's self. There are two aspects of our self: fujoor, which is the source of evil, and conscience, which guards against evil.

'An-Nafs' is an Arabic term frequently used in the Qur'an. It has no direct connotation in English, but can be translated as 'the self'. It has the following implications in the Qur'an: 'the essence of something, its self, soul, heart, lust, the starting point and bed of desire and wrath, conscience, the commanding force in man'. Here, we will particularly concentrate on the commanding quality of the self. The spiritual force that prods man to commit a certain act or to take a certain decision, is the self. This aspect of the self is stated in many verses of the Qur'an. In these verses, the self is referred to as the source of the depravity and evil in people.

When the brothers of Prophet Yusuf (AS) wanted to get rid of him out of envy, their father Prophet Ya'qub (AS) said:

'It is merely that your lower selves have suggested something to you which you did...' (Surah Yusuf: 18)

The lower self can mislead people into believing that something which is bad is actually good.

Another event where the effect of the self is highlighted is related in Surah Taha. Samiri, one of the people of Prophet Musa (AS), led astray a whole nation of people during Prophet Musa's short absence, by making a statue of a calf from the gold medals he had collected from the people. When Prophet Musa returned and questioned Samiri, his reply was:

He said, 'I saw what they did not see. So I gathered up a handful from the Messenger's footprints and threw it in. That is what my inner self urged me to do.' (Surah Taha: 96)

Another event related in the Qur'an took place between the two sons of Prophet Adam (AS). One of them killed the other out of jealousy and then felt remorse. In the verse, Allah says:

So his lower self persuaded him to kill his brother. (Surat al-Ma'ida: 30)

Making a decision to kill someone never coincides with human nature. However, a quality in the self persuades some people and makes it appear attractive to them. The same holds true for such acts as theft, immorality, lying, jealousy and vanity.

The verse above shows how the negative indoctrination of the self steps in. Prophet Adam's son, Prophet Yusuf's brothers and Samiri committed different crimes. The common point in all these actions is that they were triggered by the selves of the perpetrators. Their selves persuaded them to commit these crimes by showing them as good, when in fact their selves misled them and dragged them to evil.

What is the source of the power of the self? The answer is evident in Surat ash-Shams where it is stated that fujoor (all evil) is inspired in the self. At this point, a question may come to mind; if people's selves are inspired with evil, does it not then follow that we have to expect corrupt and immoral behaviour from everyone?

Here we have to remember another quality of the self; negative inspiration is not the only power in the self. A second reading of verses 7-10 in Surat ash-Shams will make it clear that the self is also inspired into guarding against evil. This means that positive powers, as well as negative powers, are present in the self. The self of every human being possesses both a power that commands evil and presents it as good, and a positive power that commands guarding against evil, and choosing what is good and beautiful. This positive power is conscience. What distinguishes people from one another is their leading their lives either by following their conscience or the negative aspects of their selves.

The shaytan

For many people, the shaytan is a mythical notion. They do not realise the effect he has on people, and the role he plays in daily life. In this book, there is not sufficient time to do more than touch upon some qualities of the shaytan and the negative power he exerts against conscience. Even so, it should be sufficient to help one realise that the

shaytan is not an imaginary being, but a negative power who watches man minutely and tries to drag him to error.

The shaytan disobeyed Allah and did not prostrate to Prophet Adam. Because of his jealousy and arrogance, he decided to lead human beings, whom he considered to be inferior to him, astray from Allah's way. In the Qur'an, it is mentioned that the shaytan gives false desires to the hearts, tries to make people doubt the existence of Allah and the hereafter, and makes the life of this world seem attractive to people. In fact, the shaytan is the representation of the negative powers that are present in the self. While a man's conscience always directs him to the right, the shaytan always directs him to the wrong.

However, the shaytan does not do this self-evidently. He has various methods that he uses surreptitiously. For instance, he may whisper to someone: 'You are a good person; you say you are a Muslim; if paradise exists, you will go there'. Perhaps this person neither practises regular prayers, nor the other commands of Allah, but the shaytan makes him feel confident that saying 'I'm a Muslim' is sufficient. He does not make him deny the existence of the hereafter outright, but he makes him lead a life near to disbelief under the name of Islam. What is more important is that the person, unaware that this is a deliberate plan devised by the shaytan to drag him into hell, takes the shaytan's whispers as his own thoughts. Here, it should not be forgotten that conscience always tells one to live the real Islam, but most people follow the sayings of the shaytan instead of their conscience because it suits the purposes of their self.

This is where we understand the importance of conscience in the on-going test in this world. In every event, both conscience and the shaytan – the source of all personal interests, passions, and evil – show up. Both call the person to its own way. Those who can distinguish between these two sounds and follow their conscience gain the good pleasure of Allah.

Another vital point to be understood is that the shaytan will not leave man until death, or even beyond death to the point that the soul is led to hell. This should never be forgotten. Similarly, man's conscience will not leave him until he dies and will bid him every act he has to perform to enter paradise in the hereafter.

Someone who, despite his true conscience, chooses to follow his self, has become a friend of the shaytan, for he has chosen not Allah's but the shaytan's way. With relation to such people, Allah commands:

If someone shuts his eyes to the remembrance of the All-Merciful, We assign him a devil who becomes his bosom friend (Surat az-Zukhruf: 36)

How the shaytan approaches those who follow him, and the end of the shaytan and his comrades is announced in the Qur'an:

He said 'By Your misguidance of me, I will lie in ambush for them on your straight path. Then I will come at them, from in front of them and behind them, from their right and from their left. You will not find most of them thankful.' He (Allah) said, 'Get out of it, reviled and driven out. As for those of them who follow you, I will fill up Hell with every one of you' (Surat al-A'raf: 16-18)

The shaytan has no power whatsoever over conscientious people

From the foregoing, one may have gained the impression that the shaytan is an important power to be avoided. It should, however, be known that the shaytan's power is extremely weak. In a verse, Allah states:

Those who believe fight in the Way of Allah. Those who disbelieve fight in the way of false gods. So fight the friends of the shaytan! The shaytan's scheming is always feeble. (Surat an-Nisa': 76)

The shaytan is not a being who has power of his own to use against Allah's Will. The shaytan is a negative power that Allah has allowed to exist in order to test man. Allah has created the shaytan and the lower self, to distinguish those who believe from those who are in doubt. The shaytan himself knows that he is very weak and powerless against sincere and conscientious people. He can never take them under control and all of his schemes against them fail. This situation is mentioned in many verses of the Qur'an:

He (the shaytan) has no authority over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord. He only has authority over those who take him as a friend and associate others with Allah. (Surat an-Nahl: 99-100)

He (Allah) said, 'Go! And as for any who follow you, your repayment is Hell, repayment in full! Stir up any of them you can with your voice and rally against them your cavalry and your infantry and share with them in their children and their wealth and make them promises! The promise of the shaytan is nothing but delusion. But as for My slaves, you will not have any authority over them.' Your Lord suffices as a guardian. (Surat al-Isra': 63-65)

Following the conscience is the easiest way

The choice between the conscience and the self is by no means difficult for man. This is because Allah created man with a disposition to take pleasure in following the

voice of his conscience. For this reason, to follow the deen and to live by it complies with man's nature. In the following verse, Allah states:

Set your face firmly towards the deen, as a pure natural believer, Allah's natural pattern on which He made mankind. There is no changing in Allah's creation. That is the true Religion - but most people do not know it - turning towards Him. (Surat ar-Rum: 30)

Allah inspires all consciences with thoughts of this nature, so that every man's conscience wants to please Allah. It is difficult and distressful for man to commit acts conflicting with his conscience. Things that are done with no regard to conscience cause the heart to grieve. The heart finds ease only with the remembrance of Allah and the seeking of His pleasure.

The ease of following the conscience is stated in many verses of the Qur'an. It is also stated that Allah will show the easy way to those who pursue His pleasure.

...Allah desires ease for you; He does not desire difficulty for you... (Surat al-Baqara: 185)

...Whoever has taqwa of Allah - He will make matters easy for him... (Surat at-Talaq: 4)

As for he who believes and acts rightly, he will receive the best of rewards and we will issue a command, making things easy for him. (Surat al-Kahf: 88)

We will ease you the Easy Way. (Surat al-A'la: 8)

Allah makes known to His sincere slaves that seemingly difficult events will be followed by ease:

... Allah does not demand from any self more than He has given it. Allah will appoint after difficulty, ease. (Surat at-Talaq: 7)

For truly with hardship comes ease; truly with hardship comes ease. (Surat al-Inshirah: 5-6)

WHY DON'T PEOPLE FOLLOW THEIR CONSCIENCE IN SPITE OF KNOWING THE TRUTH?

At the core of a man's not following his conscience, lies the weakness of his faith in Allah and the hereafter. This weakness leads to many moral disorders which make the person even less inclined to follow conscience.

The conscience of those who resist faith also know righteousness and the existence of Allah, but for various reasons do not follow the things which they acknowledge to be right. In the Qur'an, Allah states in many verses that people reject knowingly even though they understand and their conscience is convinced.

For instance, the following is said in relation to the Jews who distorted the Torah, which is the revelation of Allah:

...A group of them heard Allah's Word and then, after grasping it, knowingly distorted it. (Surat al-Baqara: 75)

Many of the People of the Book would love it if they could make you revert to being disbelievers after you have become believers, showing their innate envy now that the truth is clear to them... (Surat al-Baqara: 109)

Those We have given the Book recognise it as they recognise their own sons. Yet a group of them knowingly conceal the truth. (Surat al-Baqara: 146)

How can someone recognise the truth but resist it so firmly and deliberately?

In the chapter 'Evidence of Allah's existence can be seen through conscience', we used evolutionist scientists as an example of those who reject Allah despite seeing the evidence of His being with their own eyes. Renowned British zoologist and evolutionist D.M.S. Watson explains why he and his colleagues have accepted evolution:

If so, it will present a parallel to the theory of evolution itself, a theory universally accepted not because it can be proved by logically coherent evidence to be true but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible. (*Watson, D.M.S. (1929), Adaptation. Nature: 124 pp. 231-4.*)

What Watson means by 'special creation' is the creation of Allah. This is what scientists find 'clearly incredible', and yet science proves the truth of creation. The only reason Watson considers this incredible is the way he has conditioned himself to think. This holds true for all other evolutionists. In the Qur'an, such people are referred to as follows:

They repudiated them wrongly and haughtily, in spite of their own certainty about them. See the final fate of the corrupters. (Surat an-Naml: 14)

Among the reasons for rejecting truth are vanity and arrogance, which are forms of 'ananiyyah'(self-conceit). The term 'ananiyyah' is derived from the word 'ana' which means 'I'. Someone's seeing himself and all the beings around him as independent from Allah, and his orienting all his manners and approach to this point of view is self-conceit. When someone sees himself as independent of Allah, he will think all his qualities are his own. However, all that he is and all that he possesses belong to Allah. Allah can take them away as He wills. In a verse, the following answer is given to the person who took all his possessions as belonging to himself:

He said, 'I have only been given it because of knowledge I have.' Did he not know before him Allah had destroyed generations with far greater strength than his and far more possessions? The evildoers are not called (immediately) to account for their sins. (Surat al-Qasas: 78)

Self-conceit prevents one from seeing clearly. A self-conceited person thinks that he does everything by his own power. He does not think of his weakness and that he needs Allah. Since he sees himself as a being independent of Allah, he does not feel a sense of accountability to anyone else, and this causes arrogance to grow.

This arrogance prevents him from accepting what his conscience knows to be true. His accepting Allah's existence would also mean accepting the dominance of a more superior being than himself, submitting to him and being His slave. By doing so, he will have confirmed that nothing is from himself and that he needs Allah's help in everything.

We have talked thus far about the dangers that can be present in everyone's self. It would be a great mistake for someone to think of the examples given here as if belonging to a third person, and not to take them upon himself. For instance, it is a great mistake to suppose that rejection in spite of the conscience being convinced is a quality peculiar to evolutionists. The evolutionists' disregard of science in order not to accept creation is only one type of self-conceit. There are other people who do not follow Allah's commands although they say that they accept His existence. They may think that their own thoughts and judgements are more correct for their particular situations than the guidance Allah sent to all people for all times. This is a different side of self-conceit. Self-conceit may reveal itself more openly in some people, and more covertly in others. Be it big or small, the same logic underlies it; the inability to grasp the power of Allah, His glory and our dependence on Him.

Those who do not follow their conscience because of their weak will

The number of weak-willed people in society is quite high. Since they do not think deeply and do not feel the need to use their reason, these weak people aim solely to meet the needs, pleasures and passions of the moment. Very few people exercise their capacity for deep thought or attempt to develop their characters. To display the good manners prescribed by the deen, and to live in accordance with Allah's good pleasure requires a serious effort of will. One must always think, 'How can I do better?' 'How can I be more humble, more forbearing, more affectionate, more concerned, more solicitous, to the believers?' 'What more can I do to explain Allah's religion to the people, to summon them to good behaviour, sincerity and honesty?' 'How can I avert them from their astray beliefs and actions?' 'How can I draw near to Allah?' Just thinking about these questions is surely not enough. What is important is one's exerting the effort of will to practise these things constantly. Someone who only worries about his own comfort, who never makes sacrifices and who does not take an interest in the condition of the people around him, will never make the effort necessary to practise what his conscience dictates. Such weak-willed people find it too difficult to make a real effort to live by Islam, so they ignore it or postpone it indefinitely. In the Qur'an, Allah states that a serious effort is favoured:

But as for anyone who desires the hereafter, and strives for it with the striving it deserves, being a believer, the striving of such people will be gratefully acknowledged. (Surat al-Isra': 19)

Those who do not follow their conscience because they are not steadfast

Following the conscience requires a profound steadfastness. Someone who has not firmly decided to follow his conscience in all circumstances may be discouraged after a few trials thinking that his interests were harmed because he made sacrifices, and he could not get the results he wanted and thought he deserved. Following his conscience therefore becomes difficult for him and he gives up.

Following the conscience will certainly involve sacrifices. For instance, it is by virtue of his conscience that a man who is hungry and in need does not steal, but takes recourse to legitimate ways to satisfy his need, even though this may be more difficult. Under these seemingly difficult circumstances, it may at first be considered a hindrance never to do something of which Allah would not approve. However, a conscientious

person acts for his eternal benefit in the hereafter, rather than the benefit of a few days, and behaves as Allah would approve.

It is important to understand that conscientious behaviour must be carried out purely for the sake of Allah. If someone does what he considers to be conscientious acts with the expectation of compensation from people, he will be often disappointed. On the contrary, a conscientious act performed with the expectation of a reward from Allah, brings an absolute gain to the person. In the Qur'an, this exemplary character of a believer is described:

They give good, despite their love for it, to the poor and orphans and captives: 'We feed you only out of desire for the Face of Allah. We do not want any repayment from you or any thanks. Truly we fear from our Lord a glowering, calamitous Day.' (Surat al-Insan: 8-10)

Living Islam inevitably requires some sacrifices. Since such sacrifices are not common in societies which have no fear of Allah, constant misery and distress prevail. On the other hand, those who follow their conscience by displaying strict resoluteness with fear of Allah constitute extremely safe, peaceful societies. Moreover, this is only the compensation they get in this world. Allah gives the good tidings of eternal beauties in the hereafter to those who make sacrifices despite the passions in their selves:

So Allah has safeguarded them from the evil of that Day and has made them meet with radiance and pure joy, and will reward them for their steadfastness with a Garden and with silk. Reclining in it on couches, they will experience there neither burning sun nor bitter cold. Its shading branches will droop down over them, its ripe fruit hanging ready to be picked. Vessels of silver and goblets of pure crystal will be passed round among them, crystalline silver - they have measured them very exactly. They will be given there a cup to drink mixed with the warmth of ginger. In it there is a flowing spring called Salsabil. Ageless youths will circulate among them, serving them. Seeing them, you would think them scattered pearls. Seeing them, you see delight and a great kingdom. They will wear green garments of fine silk and rich brocade. They will be adorned with silver bracelets. And their Lord will give them a pure draught to drink. 'This is your reward. Your striving is fully acknowledged!' (Surat al-Insan: 11-22)

It should not be forgotten that Allah promises to help His slaves who show steadfastness for His pleasure, and that He will pave their way to ease. In a verse, He states:

As for he who gives out and has taqwa and confirms the good, We will pave his way to ease. (Surat al-Layl: 5-7)

In the Qur'an, Allah refers to steadfastness as a good manner that He favours. An important trait of the young believers recounted in Surat al-Kahf is Allah's having 'fortified their hearts' (Surat al-Kahf: 14). In another verse, it is remarked that Allah 'made them (His Messenger and the believers) stick close to the expression of taqwa'. Also in other verses, it is commanded to display steadfastness in living the deen. In a verse it is said:

He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and everything in between them, so worship Him and persevere in His worship. Do you know of any other with His Name? (Surah Maryam: 65)

Those who do not follow their conscience because they think they are self-sufficient

One of the most important factors that people use to inactivate their conscience is their seeing themselves self-sufficient in everything. For instance, when asked about their observance of Islam, most people would say that it is enough not to harm anyone and to try to be a good person. However, this is pure self-deception. What is important is to be a slave to Allah and to live as He wishes. Unless man does this, everything else he does is meaningless and harmful. Allah says in the Qur'an:

And what of him the evil of whose actions appears fine to him so that he sees them as good? Allah misguides whoever He wills and guides whoever He wills. (Surah Fatir: 8)

What makes someone see his actions as good and attractive is the belief that his own judgement is flawless. Those who consider themselves to be kind-hearted and generous in the sight of Allah are such people. The truth is in fact quite different from what they assume. In a verse it is stated that one's seeing himself self-sufficient is the greatest reason for his deviation from the truth:

No indeed! Truly man is unbridled seeing himself as self-sufficient. (Surat al-'Alaq: 6-7)

The linguistic meaning of the word 'mustaghni' (self-sufficient) is 'without need, satisfied'. Its meaning as referred to in the Qur'an is someone's seeing his nearness to

Allah, his fear of Allah and the hereafter, his good actions and his piety as sufficient and therefore not striving for the better. Most people deviate from Allah's way for this reason.

Although people see themselves as self-sufficient, they actually know in their conscience how incomplete they are, and what they fail to do to please Allah. This is why they avoid talking about subjects such as death, doomsday and the hereafter. When one raises the subject, they try to close it because it is 'depressing'. The reason they become depressed is because they are resisting their conscience, and dwelling on the subject causes them to feel restless inside.

It is not possible for someone who listens to his conscience to feel self-sufficient. On the contrary, he looks for the better and tries to do the better in everything. For man's conscience always reminds him of the Day of Account. Someone who knows that he will give account to Allah about the life of this world will never see his deeds sufficient. He practises what he is commanded by his Creator with great attention. In the Qur'an, those who seriously strive for the good pleasure of Allah and the hereafter are referred to as follows:

As for anyone who desires this fleeting existence, We hasten in it whatever We will to whoever We want. Then We will consign him to Hell where he will roast, reviled and driven out. But as for one who desires the hereafter, and strives for it with the striving it deserves, being a believer, the striving of such people will be gratefully acknowledged. (Surat al-Isra': 18-19)

No doubt, as we have stated before, striving for Allah's way with the striving it deserves, is only possible by following the conscience. In the understanding of the ignorant, it is enough to display an 'average' character in accordance with the general trend in society. Many people think that they are sufficiently devout so long as they do not commit such crimes as murder, rape or theft. They do not think that there are hundreds of good actions and rites of worship that they postpone or disregard completely. Although it is forbidden, they gossip, they do not keep regular prayers, they do not try to improve their moral conduct and they do not thank their Lord for the favours He has bestowed upon them. They act unjustly when it suits their purposes, and lie to cover up their guilt. Their seeing themselves self-sufficient and not fearing the account in the hereafter is a sign of their ignorance and short-sightedness.

The prophets and the believers exemplified in the Qur'an provide the best examples of the highest levels of conscientiousness. Prophet Yusuf, for instance, prayed to Allah to **'take him as a Muslim at his death and join him to the righteous' (Surah Yusuf: 101)**. Even though he was Allah's chosen prophet, he referred to the hereafter with fear and hope. Ignorant people talk as if they are sure that they will go to paradise. If they continue to grow in blind arrogance, they are in danger of meeting an awful doom:

...lest anyone should say, 'Alas for me for neglecting what Allah was due, and being one of the scoffers!' or lest they should say, 'If only Allah had guided me, I would have had taqwa, or lest he should say, when he sees the punishment, 'If only I could have another chance so that I could be a good-doer' 'No, the fact is that My Signs came to you but you denied them and were arrogant and were one of the disbelievers. On the Day of Rising you will see those who lied against Allah with their faces blackened. Do not the arrogant have a dwelling place in Hell?' (Surat az-Zumar: 56-60)

The excuses put forward for not following the conscience

In fact, man will be clear proof against himself in spite of any excuses he might offer. (Surat al-Qiyama: 14-15)

Every person knows without doubt the right within his conscience; nevertheless, he continuously puts forward excuses for not practising these righteous acts. For this reason, he is always in a state of unease. Indeed, it is an intolerable burden for a person's conscience to commit evil acts while knowing that they are wrong. The shaytan, however, makes their deeds fair-seeming and shows them many ways to block their ears to the truthful voice inside them. While it is possible to lead an easy life in mind and soul by exercising the right, these people choose the difficult way by covering their conscience. While following the footsteps of the shaytan, they claim that they are on the right way, and put forward various excuses for behaving contrary to Islam. Some of the excuses are as follows:

'It's what's in your heart that matters.'

Many people have developed a form of defence mechanism; their conscience knows what is right, while the self draws them to the wrong side. When they hesitate in deciding whether to commit a wrongful act, the self immediately cuts in and puts forward various excuses. By listening to the self, the person feels relieved and convinces himself that he does not need to calculate so painstakingly: what he is doing is very trivial; nothing will come of it; his heart is so pure that it will not be affected and he will remain a good man, so long as he does not do anything 'serious' like murder or theft.

This is the reason why the majority of people easily lie, gossip, and make fun of others. Telling lies about a subject completely conflicts with one's conscience. However, people suppress the voice within themselves that bids righteousness, and they convince their conscience that these are 'innocent lies' and nothing will come of them. Despite neither performing the rites of worship, nor following the code of good manners and

behaviour prescribed by Islam, they believe themselves to be very good and righteous people. This approach is both insincere and false.

Unless the person follows his conscience, it is impossible for him to hope for a good recompense in the hereafter. With the mentality of 'I have a pure heart' he may be recognised as a 'good man' in this world, but he may meet an unexpected repayment in the hereafter. Islam does not only command people not to commit murder, robbery, etc. There are many other good acts that have to be practised and bad ones that have to be avoided. Most important of all, Islam commands man to be a slave only to Allah and to live for Him. In the Qur'an, Allah defines the real 'good people':

It is not devoutness to turn your faces to the east or to the west. Rather, those with true devoutness are those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, the Angels, the Book and the Prophets, and who, despite their love for it, give away their wealth to their relatives and to orphans and the very poor, and to travellers and beggars and to set slaves free, and who establish regular prayers and pay regular charity; those who honour their contracts when they make them, and are steadfast in poverty and illness and in battle. Those are the people who are true. They are the people who have taqwa. (Surat al-Baqara: 177)

Instead of comparing themselves to the prophets or the real 'good people' depicted above, and trying to improve themselves, many people compare themselves to the evil oppressors throughout history, saying: 'I am not as bad as them, so I do not deserve the same penalty.' The cause of this lies in their ignorance – in their not knowing Allah and the hereafter. Allah has created hell in degrees. Therefore, everyone will be repaid in accordance with what he or she did. It is also a fact that even the highest storey of hell is a source of unbearable torment, which will continue for eternity.

Therefore, those who say 'nothing will come of this' or 'it's what's in my heart and not what I do that matters' should think again about hell, reconsider their decisions and listen to what their conscience tells them.

'The Qur'an does not mention it.'

There is a serious misconception prevalent among people to the effect that if a certain act is not specifically mentioned in the Qur'an, then it is all right to perform or neglect it at will. However, not performing something which is considered as right by the conscience because it is not mentioned in the Qur'an, is nothing but hypocrisy. The Qur'an provides us with all the basic knowledge to carry out the deen and gain Allah's good pleasure. Furthermore, the Qur'an commands us to follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). A wise and conscientious person will sincerely try to live his life according to this guidance.

For instance, in the Qur'an, Allah commands the believers not to waste time with vain pursuits:

When they hear worthless talk they turn away from it and say, 'We have our actions and you have your actions. Peace be upon you. We do not desire the company of the ignorant.' (Surat al-Qasas: 55)

Those (the believers) who turn away from worthless talk; (Surat al-Muminun: 3)

Even though the Qur'an may not specify exactly what pursuits are considered worthless, Allah has given conscience and wisdom to His sincere slaves to find out what vain things are and avoid them. Every person is individually responsible for this.

When in the company of people with limited knowledge of the deen, a conscientious person will not begin a mundane conversation, pushing aside such subjects as the glory of Allah and the beauty of Islam. His conscience will definitely bid him to converse with them in a way most beneficial for their hereafter and his own. A Muslim should never do anything he believes to be useless for his hereafter, such as reading useless magazines, watching pointless programmes, or being drawn away from the remembrance of Allah by idle talk.

During the day, one may frequently meet different alternatives between which one may have to make a choice. In such optional situations, the person decides with his conscience which is the most correct. Someone who does not follow his conscience may think it beneficial to act with the logic of 'this act is not forbidden in the Qur'an.' Such people, however, should know that unless they act upon what would please Allah most by listening to their conscience and emulating the Messenger (SAW), they may face a terrible fate in the hereafter. More importantly, these people will not be able to put forward the excuses they take refuge in here while giving account on the Day of Judgement. As stated in the verse, that day it will be said to every man:

'Read your Book! Today your own self is reckoner enough against you!' (Surat al-Isra': 14)

They will say, 'Our Lord, twice You caused us to die and twice you gave us life. We admit our wrong actions. Is there no way out?' That is because when Allah alone is called upon, you disbelieve, but if others are associated with Him, you believe. Judgement belongs to Allah, the All-High, the All-Great. (Surah Ghafir: 11-12)

It all but bursts with rage. Each time a group is flung into it its custodians will question them: 'Did no warner come to you?' They will say, 'Yes, indeed, a warner did come to us but we denied him and said, "Allah has sent nothing down. You are just greatly misguided.'" They will say, 'If only we had really listened and used our intellect, we would not have been Companions of the Blaze.' Then they will acknowledge their wrong actions. Away with the Companions of the Blaze! (Surat al-Mulk: 8-11)

'Everyone else does it.'

Following the majority is one of the greatest mistakes in life. In almost everyone's subconscious lies a belief that what the majority does is right.

However, the majority may happen to have a very superficial and distorted understanding of Islam. They may say that they believe in Allah and the hereafter but they do not reflect on the meaning of it. They respect religious values 'in their own understanding', but they express their respect not practically but verbally. They think that most of the commands of Islam were binding for the past times, but cannot be binding for today. According to this understanding, as we have mentioned before, someone's having a 'pure heart', and not harming anyone is enough for him to be 'religious', and the rites of worship can be postponed until old age.

Everyone around a person may have such a distorted understanding, so it would be nothing but self-deception to adopt it and not to think with the conscience. There is no evidence that the majority always holds the right view and makes the right decision. Contrarily, Allah states in the Qur'an:

If you obeyed most of those on earth, they would misguide you from Allah's Way. They follow nothing but conjecture. They are only guessing. (Surat al-An'am: 116)

Therefore, the only guideline for a person in the way he lives and practises the Qur'an, must be the conscience. Someone who acts upon the direction of his conscience never pays attention to what the majority says or does. Even if it means staying alone, he continues to listen to the voice of his conscience and follow the book of Allah.

The psychology of 'following the majority' represents a danger for everyone. Once someone has decided to practise what his conscience dictates, the attitude and viewpoint of those around him should never affect him or sway him from his purpose. Each and every one of us is responsible for practising what conscience and the Qur'an dictate. It should not be forgotten that Allah tests His slaves. Another person trying to convince us to give up a right decision we have taken may well be a close friend whom Allah has made us encounter to test our resolve. In the hereafter, however, people will say the following about such friends:

Alas for me! If only I had not taken so-and-so for a friend! He led me astray from the Reminder after it came to me. The shaytan always leaves man in the lurch. (Surat al-Furqan: 28-29)

'I'll do it in the future.'

For many people, the rites of worship such as going on Hajj and offering regular Salah (prayers) are postponed to old age. This is because, either consciously or subconsciously, they think that by devoting themselves to the Islamic way of life they will be deprived of all worldly pleasures. However, Allah states in many verses of the Qur'an that He offers favours to believers both in this world and the hereafter:

...There are some people who say, 'Our Lord, give us good in the world.' They will have no share in the hereafter. And there are others who say, 'Our Lord, give us good in the world, and good in the hereafter, and safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire.' They will have a good share from what they have earned. Allah is swift at reckoning. (Surat al-Baqara: 200-202)

In order for someone to fully appreciate the favours of Allah, he has to have peace in his heart. Someone whose heart is restless will not be able to take pleasure in or even recognise the countless blessings of Allah which he is surrounded with. People who say 'I'll do it in the future,' actually know the right guidance and know that if they start to follow what their conscience orders, they will have to rearrange their whole lives accordingly. They know that when they start performing Salah regularly, the voice of their conscience will start to weigh more heavily and they will start to feel ashamed of the evil acts they commit. In the verse, it is said that prayers guide people to the right:

Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish regular prayers. Regular prayers preclude indecency and wrongdoing. And remembrance of Allah is greater still. Allah knows what you do. (Surat al-Ankabut: 45)

Because people understand this, they try to escape the conscience-related responsibilities brought about by the rites of worship by finding excuses; 'When I get married, when I've made more money, when my children grow up,' etc. However, on the day of account Allah will make man face the things he put off:

That day the only resting place will be your Lord. That day man will be told what he did and failed to do. (Surat al-Qiyama: 12-13)

'Putting off' is a trait peculiar to those people who do not think of death and how close it is. We do not know when, where or how we will die. We all know that death does not only come to the old. Many people of all ages die from various causes, many of them sudden and unexpected. While reading this book in the privacy of your own home, you may feel very safe and secure; but a fall down the stairs, an accident in the house or a heart attack could cause your death at any moment.

In light of this knowledge, how is it possible to so freely put off what one's conscience commands? Allah states that every man seeing the angel of death will feel a great remorse for the things he put off and he will say, 'I wish I had done such and such'. This is an inconsolable remorse with no chance of return.

The day when a wrongdoer will bite his hands and say, 'Alas for me! If only I had gone the way of the Messenger! Alas for me! If only I had not taken so-and-so for a friend! He led me astray from the Reminder after it came to me.'... (Surat al-Furqan: 27-29)

That Allah does not punish evil acts immediately, also deceives people into thinking they will have lots of time to make atonement for what they have done or failed to do. If Allah punished every evil act at the very moment it was committed, no one would ever do wrong again. However, the penalty being deferred is a test to reveal who will follow righteousness, who will repent and reform, and who will continue in wrong-doing. Allah's giving us this chance to make amends in this life is a representation of His eternal mercy. In a verse it is said:

If Allah were to take mankind to task for what they have earned, He would not leave a single creature crawling on it, but He is deferring them until a specified time. Then, when their time comes, Allah sees His slaves! (Surah Fatir: 45)

People should not be deceived by the fact that Allah does not repay evil acts immediately, because it is a certainty that they will be thoroughly repaid in the hereafter. Allah says:

...and say to themselves 'Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?' Hell will be enough for them! They will roast in it. What an evil destination. (Surat al-Mujadila: 8)

People who avoid thinking about the hereafter may try to soothe their conscience with various excuses and lies, but no excuse will be acceptable on the day of account.

Lying to oneself may bring temporary peace, and help one escape reality, but only for a short time. There is, however, one thing they forget, which is stated in the Qur'an:

Those who have been given knowledge and belief will say, 'You tarried in accordance with Allah's Decree until the day of rising. And this is the day of rising, but you did not know it? On that day the excuses of those who did wrong will not help them, nor will they be able to appease Allah. (Surat ar-Rum: 56-57)

The end of those who silence their conscience with various excuses is stated as follows:

The day when the excuses of the wrondoers will not help them. The curse will be on them and they will have the most evil Home. (Surah Ghafir: 52)

THE ABODE OF CONSCIENTIOUS PEOPLE IN THE WORLD AND PARADISE

Most people hold the wrong belief that practising religious commandments, making sacrifices, being honest and following their conscience will cause them to lose certain benefits. This is a great misconception, since Allah has promised an endless life in paradise to those who observe His commands and live by them. This is the greatest of all gains. In addition to this magnificent life that will continue forever, Allah states that believers will also live a good life in the world:

Anyone who acts rightly, male or female, being a believer, We will give them a good life and We will recompense them according to the best of what they did. (Surat an-Nahl: 97)

When those who have taqwa of Allah are asked, 'What has your Lord sent down?' their reply is, 'Good!' There is good in the life of this world for those who do good, and the abode of the hereafter is even better. How wonderful is the abode of those who have taqwa. (Surat an-Nahl: 30)

Material and spiritual prosperity

In the world, Allah gives both material and spiritual prosperity to believers. There is a prevalent misconception that believers always live in poverty in the world. However, many verses of the Qur'an refer to the prosperity and power Allah has given to believers throughout history. For instance, He gave great kingdoms in this world to Prophet Sulayman, Prophet Dawud, Prophet Yusuf, Prophet Dhu'l-Qarnayn and Prophet Ibrahim, may peace be upon them all.

As for Allah's final messenger to mankind, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), Allah says:

Did He not find you impoverished and enrich you? (Surat ad-Duha: 8)

However, enrichment is not necessarily material. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was the best of human beings in his devotion to Allah and zeal for Islam, and as such his prosperity was greater than any material wealth, for it was a spiritual wealth that made him grateful for Allah's blessings, hopeful for paradise and fearful of the punishment, to

the exclusion of all other thoughts and considerations. In other words, his heart was so pure that he never felt the loss of worldly benefits or pined for them.

Prosperity, glory and beauty are characteristics of paradise. In order to remind them of paradise and to increase their desire for it, Allah gives people a certain amount of prosperity and splendour in the world. It is equally true that Allah may test others by withholding prosperity. True believers know that Allah gives as much favour as He wills to whom He wills, and they are pleased with what they have. Because they think of the hereafter, nothing makes them worried in the short life of this world. Under all circumstances, they thank Allah and are covetous of the hereafter. Allah says in the Qur'an:

Allah expands provision to anyone He wills and restricts it. They rejoice in the life of this world. Yet the life of this world, compared to the hereafter, is only fleeting enjoyment. (Surat ar-Ra'd: 26)

The most important blessing Allah bestows upon His true believers is spiritual well-being. In return for using their conscience and striving for Allah's good pleasure, these people feel no distress in their hearts. They feel the peaceful and secure aspects of honesty and sincerity. Since they fear and revere no one but Allah, they do not experience feelings such as distress, worry and fear. Their not having worldly ambitions, jealousies and selfish feelings, makes them happy, relaxed and joyful.

In many of His verses, Allah refers to those who are successful:

...It is the people who are safe-guarded from the avarice of their own selves who are successful. (Surat al-Hashr: 9)

He who has purified himself will have success, He who invokes the Name of his Lord and prays. (Surat al-A'la: 14-15)

Then when the prayer is finished spread through the earth and seek Allah's bounty and remember Allah much so that hopefully you will be successful. (Surat al-Jumu'a: 10)

Conscientious people can feel at ease only in the company of those with similar attitudes. In order for one to be friends with someone, one has to like his manners and character. Conscience takes pleasure only from conscientious acts. The decisions, manners and conversations of those who follow the desires and passions of their nafs are always removed from Allah. Someone who strives to draw near to Allah avoids such an atmosphere and wishes to be in such environments with which Allah will be pleased. This is the command of Allah:

Restrain yourself patiently with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, desiring His face. Do not turn your eyes from them, desiring the attractions of this world. And do not obey someone whose heart We have made neglectful of Our remembrance and who follows his own whims and desires and whose life has transgressed all bounds. (Surat al-Kahf: 28)

Since the conscientious person feels a great aspiration for paradise, he tries to establish a similar setting in the world to that in the paradise. He talks with the believers as he would talk with those in paradise; he looks at them as though looking at the blessings in paradise; he does not say something he would not say in paradise, nor does he think evil thoughts. And in the same way that paradise has a perfect cleanliness both materially and spiritually, he maintains the highest level of cleanliness possible in the world. He tries to eliminate all of the factors that would not exist in paradise – factors that are peculiar to hell.

By following his conscience, one is meant to prepare himself for his life in paradise and educate himself to be worthy of paradise. In a verse, Allah states that those who do right actions prepare their place in paradise:

Those who reject faith will find that their rejection was against themselves. Those who do right make the way easy for themselves (for heaven). (Surat ar-Rum: 44)

Allah gives to those conscientious people whom He has furnished with physical and spiritual beauties in the world, the good news of paradise, their real home after their death. Paradise is a place where those people with the highest level of conscience, who have always followed the voice that directed them to right throughout history come together. In paradise, no speech, look or manner contrary to conscience will take place. The atmosphere in paradise will be ruled by the joy and happiness of those who have been recompensed according to the best of what they did and this atmosphere will last forever. The beauty of paradise is recounted in Surah Ya Sin:

Today no self will be wronged in any way. You will only be repaid for what you did. The Companions of the Garden are busy enjoying themselves today, they and their wives reclining on couches in the shade. They will have fruits there and whatever they request. 'Peace!' A word from a Merciful Lord. (Surah Ya sin: 54-58)

THE ABODE OF THOSE WHO DO NOT FOLLOW THEIR CONSCIENCE

We have stated that there is a conviction prevalent in society that following the conscience will harm one's interests. Those who believe this think that by not following their conscience, they can satisfy their wishes and desires, guard their interests, and thus profit. This is one of their biggest misconceptions, as they in fact lose both the world and the hereafter because of this perverted belief.

Conscience is under the command of Allah and is totally out of man's control. Whatever decision a person may make, his conscience never leaves him and always tells him the truth. Hearing the truth on the one hand, and not following it on the other, causes a great 'twinge of conscience'. This 'twinge of conscience' is not like any other form of distress. It is a distress Allah has given people in return for what they have done and also as an opportunity to correct their mistakes. In the Qur'an, Allah mentions the three men who suffered because they did not follow their conscience. Their worldly concerns prevented them from accompanying the Muslims on a campaign. They deeply regretted their negligence, could hardly endure the distress, and subsequently repented with all sincerity.

(Allah has turned) also towards the three who were left behind, so that when the earth became narrow for them, for all its great breadth, and their own selves became constricted for them and they realised that there was no refuge from Allah except in Him, He turned to them so that they might turn to Him. Allah is the Ever-Returning, the Most Merciful. (Surat at-Tawba: 118)

In the Qur'an, one of those whose twinge of conscience has been quoted as an example is Prophet Yunus (AS), a praised messenger of Allah. Prophet Yunus left his people when they did not listen to him. A while later, after suffering great distress, he understood that it was wrong to have abandoned them; he felt great remorse and repented to his Lord. Allah accepted his repentance and sent him to a new community as messenger. This is described in different verses of the Qur'an:

And Dhu'n-Nun (Yunus) when he left in anger and thought We would not punish him. He called out in the pitch darkness: 'There is no god but You! Glory be to You! Truly I have been one of the wrongdoers.' We responded to him and rescued him from his grief. That is how We rescue the believers. (Surat al-Anbiya': 87-88)

So wait steadfastly for the judgement of your Lord. Do not be like the Companion of the Fish (Prophet Yunus) when he called out in absolute despair. Had a blessing from his Lord not overtaken him, he would have been thrown up on the naked shore, for he was at fault. (Surat al-Qalam: 48-49)

It should be stated that both of the examples above are about believers who repented because of the twinge of their conscience, and were saved. These examples show us that in order for a man to find peace, it is imperative that he follow his conscience and turn to Allah in repentance when he makes a mistake. Those who do the opposite will be full of grief and anxiety throughout their lives.

Nevertheless, there are many who, despite the twinge of conscience they feel, carry on their resistance against righteousness. They try to silence the voice inside them by deferring, putting forward excuses or 'talking themselves round'. In the Qur'an, Allah describes the inner distress and spiritual void felt by those who do not follow their conscience, and whose hearts are insensitive to Islam:

...As for anyone who associates others with Allah, it is as though he had fallen from the sky and the birds had seized him and carried him away or the wind had dropped him in a distant place. (Surat al-Hajj: 31)

When Allah desires to guide someone, He expands his breast to Islam. When He desires to misguide someone, He makes his breast narrow and constricted as if he were climbing up into the sky. That is how Allah defiles those who have no belief. (Surat al-An'am: 125)

In addition to this inner distress, their souls can never be satisfied. Even if they acquire the greatest benefit they can have in worldly terms, they are not satisfied with it. They always feel incomplete and unfulfilled. For Allah has created man's soul in such a way as to be satisfied only by following his conscience and earning the good pleasure of Allah. A verse reads:

Those who believe and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah. Only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace. (Surat ar-Ra'd: 28)

In the same way that a conscientious person is always surrounded by conscientious people, an evil person is condemned to be surrounded by evil people, following in the footsteps of the shaytan. Those who do not practise the truth despite their knowledge of it, who are averse to making sacrifices, who act unjustly, who envy, who ridicule others, who are arrogant and who practise all kinds of similar bad habits will receive the same

treatment in return. Such behaviour creates an atmosphere of great restlessness in everyone. People cannot know what treatment to expect from one another. There cannot be real friendships, loyalty or understanding, and self-sacrifice is never displayed.

Thus, they live in an atmosphere of hell both physically and spiritually. Sometimes they cannot even understand the reason for the distress they are in. As a penalty from Allah for not following their conscience, they live an unsatisfactory, restless and displeasing life. This is only the grief they suffer in this world. The eternal grief they may meet in the hereafter will be too horrible and dreadful to be compared to the one in this world. The recompense that will be given to those who act out wickedness in the world is stated as follows in the Qur'an:

That day no one will punish as He punishes and no one will shackle as He shackles. (Surat al-Fajr: 25-26)

Just as conscientious people prepare their places in paradise, so do wicked people prepare their places in hell, but they are unaware of it:

They ask you to hasten the punishment. If it were not for a stipulated term, the punishment would have come to them already. It will come upon them suddenly when they are not expecting it. They ask you to hasten the punishment but Hell already encircles the disbelievers. On the day the punishment envelops them from above them and from underneath their feet, He will say, 'Taste what you were doing!' (Surat al-'Ankabut: 53-55)

EXAMPLES OF THE RIGHTLY-GUIDED IN THE QUR'AN

If asked, most people would define themselves as highly conscientious people. However, on the issue of conscience, just as in all other issues, the only criterion is the Qur'an. In the Qur'an, Allah relates many events and conversations from past communities. In each of these are warnings and examples for people. The best example for people who use their conscience fully is from the Messenger of Allah (SAW). In His verses, Allah states:

You have an excellent model in the Messenger of Allah, for all who put their hope in Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah much. (Surat al-Ahzab: 21)

In other verses, Allah gives Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Isa as an example:

He (Isa) is only a slave on whom We bestowed Our blessing and whom We made an example for the tribe of Israel. (Surat az-Zukhruf: 59)

You have an excellent example in Ibrahim and those with him... (Surat al-Mumtahana: 4)

Allah states in Surah Yusuf that the stories of the messengers are a warning to people:

There is instruction in their stories for people of intelligence. This is not a narration which has been invented but confirmation of all that came before, a clarification of everything, and a guidance and a mercy for people who believe. (Surah Yusuf: 111)

For this reason, everyone reading the Qur'an must compare their attitudes and actions with those of the messengers and make a serious effort to emulate them.

It must be made clear that the sayings and actions of the messengers were due to Divine revelation, not conscience as such. However, one can make an analogy between the Divine revelation of the messengers and the conscience in ourselves. Both are divinely inspired and cannot be disobeyed or ignored. However, it is essential to understand that our conscience can never go against revelation.

In the Qur'an, people other than messengers are also given as examples of conscientious people who have taqwa. Maryam, the mother of Prophet 'Isa, Asiya the

wife of the pharaoh of Egypt and the magicians who obeyed Prophet Musa despite Pharaoh's oppression, are some examples of righteous people whom we should imitate.

Prophet Nuh's summons to Islam

The prophets spent their lives explaining the true religion with great patience and perseverance, without compromising under any circumstances. In the Qur'an, it is stated that Prophet Nuh (AS) called his people day and night to Allah's way, warning them of His penalty. He did not falter in the face of their ridicule and oppression.

He said, 'My Lord, I have called my people night and day but my calling has only made them more evasive. Indeed, every time I called them to Your forgiveness, they put their fingers in their ears, wrapped themselves up in their clothes and were overbearingly arrogant. Then I called them openly. Then I addressed them publicly and addressed them privately. I said, "Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Truly He is Endlessly Forgiving."' (Surah Nuh: 5-10)

Prophet Nuh did everything Allah and his conscience ordered him to do. His inviting his people to Islam day and night, secretly and publicly shows his serious and sincere commitment. The answer his people gave is stated in the Qur'an:

Before them the people of Nuh denied the truth. They denied Our slave, saying, 'He is a madman,' and he was driven away with jeers. (Surat al-Qamar: 9)

In reply to his people's transgression, Allah revealed to Prophet Nuh:

None of your people are going to believe except for those who already believe, so do not be distressed at what they do. Build the Ark under Our supervision and as We reveal and do not address Me concerning the wrongdoers. They shall be drowned. (Surah Hud: 36-37)

Prophet Nuh communicated the message to his people until Allah's help arrived. He never gave up explaining the deen in spite of all the difficulties he met. This surely required great patience. All the prophets mentioned in the Qur'an summoned their people to Islam with the same determination and patience. Allah gave these righteous slaves of His wisdom and decisive speech and knowledge. While the communication of the message by each of them has been the means for the guidance of believers, it has also served to reveal the lies of the disbelievers. Through His messengers, Allah has hurled the truth against falsehood and made it cut right through it. In a verse, this Divine rule is explained:

Rather We hurl the truth against falsehood and it cuts right through it and it vanishes clean away! Woe without end for you for what you portray! (Surat al-Anbiya': 18)

Prophet Ibrahim was a 'community in himself'

Ibrahim was a community in himself, exemplary, obedient to Allah, a man of pure natural belief. He was not of the idolaters. He was grateful for His blessings. Allah chose him and guided him to a straight path. We gave him good in the world and in the hereafter he will be among the righteous. (Surat an-Nahl: 120-123)

While struggling with the disbelievers, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was alone. There was no one around him to help and support him physically or spiritually. However, he persisted to such a degree that the wicked transgressors wanted to burn him alive, just for preaching the truth to them. Allah in his infinite power saved Prophet Ibrahim from such an agonising death, and protected him against his enemies.

They said, 'Burn him and support your gods if you are resolved to do something.' We said, 'Fire, be coolness and peace for Ibrahim!' They desired to trap him but We made them the losers. (Surat al-Anbiya': 68-70)

Prophet Ibrahim is an example of the prophets' devotion to Allah and their resolution in the way of Allah. Allah describes him by the verse 'Ibrahim **was tender hearted and forbearing**' (Surat at-Tawba: 114). He was an extremely considerate, conscientious person, and Allah will definitely help his slaves who display such qualities.

All of Allah's messengers have displayed the most excellent and sublime qualities. About Prophet Yahya (AS), Allah says in the Qur'an:

[We gave him] ...tenderness and purity from Us; he had taqwa and devotion to his parents; he was not insolent or disobedient. (Surah Maryam: 13-14)

These attributes are implications of Prophet Yahya's high conscience that does not tend to any rebellion against Allah.

Maryam

Maryam (RA), who gave birth to Prophet Isa without a father with the '**Be**' command of Allah, is a righteous believer given as an example in the Qur'an to all women in the world. Maryam was raised with great care and attention, and '**grew in health and beauty**' (Surat Al 'Imran: 37). She had a superiority of manner

and character rarely seen in our day. In the Qur'an, it is stated that Allah chose Maryam over all other women:

And when the angels said, 'Maryam, Allah has chosen you and purified you. He has chosen you over all other women. Maryam, obey your Lord and prostrate and bow with those who bow.' (Surat Al 'Imran: 42-43)

One of the most remarkable aspects of Maryam in the Qur'an is her concern for her chastity. This was not due to the tradition, customs or rules of society, but because of her devotion to Allah and her meticulousness about His commands.

Maryam's becoming pregnant with Prophet Isa (AS) and her giving birth to him is told in detail in the Qur'an. Angel Jibril came to Maryam with the glad tidings of a son in whom Allah had blown from His spirit. This was a great gift for her from Allah, because this boy was to be a prophet.

Giving birth on her own by Allah's help and protection, Maryam set an example to the world when she returned to her community, by displaying a strong character. She and her family were known as devout, chaste and faithful people in the city they lived in. When Maryam, after a long time, returned to her community with a baby, she found all her countrymen against her. There were some who did not believe that Prophet Isa was a glad tidings for her from Allah, and they slandered her and tried to harm her.

Since Maryam acted according to the good pleasure of Allah, and not for the approval of people, she was not affected by popular opinion. In societies of ignorance, however, there are many people who, just because of the possible reaction they may trigger from other people, become removed from their conscience, do not perform regular prayers and other acts of worship, and disregard what is forbidden and allowed.

Allah commanded Maryam not to speak with anyone so that she would not be exposed to the accusations of her community, and to state that she had made a vow of abstinence. Right after that, He created a miracle that would cause all slander to cease. Prophet Isa, who was but a baby in the cradle, started to speak and explain on behalf of his mother.

She pointed towards him. They said, 'How can a baby in the cradle speak?' He said, 'I am the slave of Allah, He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet. He has made me blessed wherever I am and directed me to do regular prayers and give regular charity as long as I live, and to show devotion to my mother. He has not made me insolent or arrogant. Peace be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die and the day I am raised up again alive.' (Surah Maryam: 29-33)

Thus, Maryam was supported in the best manner against her community with a miracle by Allah. Her story shows the strong and courageous character of someone wholeheartedly devoted to Allah.

Pharaoh's wife

Asiya (RA) was the wife of the pharaoh who reigned over the children of Israel in Egypt during Prophet Musa's time. This righteous woman who was married to a man who has gone down in history as one of the most oppressive people in the world, has the honour of being remembered among the most superior Muslims in history. Her character is given as an example to the believers in the Qur'an:

Allah has made an example for those who believe: the wife of Pharaoh... (Surat at-Tahrim:11)

As wife of the pharaoh she would have enjoyed the highest status and had access to unlimited wealth and prosperity, while those who opposed him lived in wretchedness and fear of severe punishment or death. Yet Asiya was neither lured by the comfort of riches nor afraid of her husband's wrath. The Qur'an tells us:

None believed in Musa except for a few of his people out of fear that Pharaoh, and the elders, would persecute them. Pharaoh was high and mighty in the land. He was one of the profligate. (Surah Yunus: 83)

Asiya shared the same house with this cruel person and his close circle. She also knew how he oppressed those who said they believed in Allah. In such an atmosphere, when believers were so exposed to oppression, she submitted to the righteous religion communicated by Prophet Musa. Her conscience confirmed Allah's existence and that all the beliefs prevailing across Egypt were false. It must not be forgotten that she possessed limitless wealth and possessions. However, she turned away from such distractions and submitted to Allah's religion. Too frequently we see those who own only a fraction of her wealth and possessions exceeding in arrogance and transgression. Their behaviour provides a good comparison to help us understand the worth of this righteous woman.

The prayer of Pharaoh's wife in the Qur'an as communicated by Allah is an expression of her sincerity. She asked Allah of His paradise by completely dismissing the prosperity she owned:

Allah has made an example for those who believe: the wife of Pharaoh when she said, 'My Lord, build a house in the Garden for me in Your presence

and rescue me from Pharaoh and his deeds and rescue me from this wrongdoing people...' (Surat at-Tahrim: 11)

It is important to bear in mind that in the Qur'an, there is no discrimination between men and women. All messengers and all people with taqwa who are quoted as examples by Allah possess the same superior qualities. The common characteristic of these people is their wholehearted obedience to Allah. As a result, good manners and character are displayed which are given as an example to the world.

EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO WERE ASTRAY

In addition to these people who have an exalted place by Allah's side due to their sincerity, the Qur'an also tells us about those who did not follow their conscience. It is important when reading these examples to be aware that such behaviour is as much in evidence today as it was in the past.

Pharaoh

Pharaoh lived at the time when Prophet Musa (AS) was sent and is much referred to in the Qur'an as a great disbeliever. We have chosen to use him as an example because the qualities he possessed and the attitude and behaviour he displayed are very commonly practised in today's society. The most sincere approach will be to look for these traits in ourselves as well as in the people we know or hear about or see on the television. Above all, we should try hard to correct these negative traits.

The cruelty of Pharaoh

One of the basic traits of Pharaoh related in the Qur'an is his cruelty. He brought great pressure to bear on a certain group (particularly the children of Israel) among his people, even going so far as killing their children.

Pharaoh exalted himself arrogantly in the land and divided its people into camps, oppressing one group of them by slaughtering their sons and letting their women live. He was one of the corrupters. (Surat al-Qasas: 4)

With the sole purpose of maintaining his authority and forestalling all possible future movements of opposition, Pharaoh not only slaughtered boys but also male babies.

The order Pharaoh built on cruelty, is nothing but a historical example of a type of conduct we are accustomed to in our day. All mentalities based on rejection and transgression may, if necessary, slaughter women and children, start wars and drop bombs on thousands of innocent people just to maintain their state. Their purpose is to protect their own interests and power, by any means, regardless of the consequences.

If man lives without considering Allah's judgement of his actions, there is nothing to stop him crossing the borders of cruelty, wronging people, and making decisions that cost the lives of many. The example of Pharaoh is one that presents the most extreme ends of cruelty, but which is still practised today, though with different methods.

Pharaoh's arrogance

Pharaoh had grown arrogant because of the power and glory he held, and on top of completely transgressing the limits of Allah, he even went so far as to declare himself a god. He made his people suffer unbearable agonies, and went to extravagant ends to protect his power, which was the only important thing to him. At that point, Allah revealed to His messenger Prophet Musa, **'Go to Pharaoh. He has overstepped the bounds.'** (Surah Ta Ha: 24), and He sent him to Pharaoh as a warner.

Pharaoh's growing haughty and his resulting transgression are told in the following verses:

'Go to Pharaoh; he has overstepped the bounds. But speak to him with gentle words so that hopefully he will pay heed or show some fear.' They (Musa and Harun) said, **'Our Lord, we are afraid that he might persecute us or overstep the bounds.'** He said, **'Have no fear. I will be with you, All-Hearing and All-Seeing.'** (Surah Ta Ha: 43-46)

Thus Pharaoh was invited to the right way personally by the messenger of Allah. However, instead of reforming him, this increased his rage and transgression. The underlying reason for such rage was his arrogance because of the political and military power he wielded and his fear of losing his position. In the Qur'an, Pharaoh's admiration for himself and derision for Allah's messenger are described:

Pharaoh called to his people, saying, 'My people, does the kingdom of Egypt not belong to me? Do not all these rivers flow under my control? Do you not then see? Am I not better than this man who is contemptible and can scarcely make anything clear?' (Surat az-Zukhruf: 51-52)

An important psychological tactic lies behind this speech. First, he asks his people some questions that would make them acknowledge his power. The statement 'Does the kingdom of Egypt not belong to me? Do not all these rivers flow under my control? Do you not then see?' shows that the main reason for his arrogance is his possessions. In the rest of the verse, Pharaoh refers to Prophet Musa, who is the messenger of Allah, as 'this man' and describes him as 'contemptible'. An interesting comparison can be made here between Pharaoh and the shaytan. When the shaytan was ordered to prostrate before Prophet Adam (AS), he rebelled against Allah's command and declared himself superior to Prophet Adam.

He (Allah) said, 'What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you to?' He replied, 'I am better than him. You created me from fire and You created him from clay.' (Surat al-A'raf: 12)

This shows how arrogance completely covers consciousness. The shaytan had direct contact with Allah and understood His oneness and sole right to be worshipped and obeyed, yet in spite of this he denied the command to prostrate to Adam. Similarly, Pharaoh's illimitable transgression was a result of his pride in the possessions and favours Allah granted him, and it led him to see himself as superior. After refusing to listen to Prophet Musa, Pharaoh asked a question to his people, which has been asked about almost all prophets throughout history:

Why have gold bracelets not been put upon his arms and why is there not a train of angels accompanying him? (Surat az-Zukhruf: 53)

This question shows a very significant point. Disbelievers cannot accept that a common person may be assigned as messenger. Since the measure of disbelievers is not their conscience, what they want to see in a messenger is not sincerity, wisdom and humble submission to Allah. Disbelievers expect to see extraordinary wealth and supernatural events for them to believe. This is one of the main reasons why disbelievers cannot be guided to the right. The arrogance inside them prevents them from following and obeying someone who looks just like themselves. Instead of following their conscience, they prefer to protect their short-sighted interests by following the orders of their nafs.

Pharaoh's asking irrational questions

After receiving the revelation from Allah, Prophet Musa went to Pharaoh with his brother Prophet Harun and started to communicate the message as he was ordained.

Upon hearing this, Pharaoh took recourse to a tactic which disbelievers often employ. He lined up his irrational and satanic questions, which he thought would confound the prophets. His objective was not to learn or even try to understand, but merely to look for fault and ridicule. Pharaoh actually knew the answer to each of his questions in his conscience. For instance, the first question he asked was: 'Who then is your Lord, Musa?' (Surah Ta Ha: 49)

The answer of Prophet Musa was simple and wise.

He said, 'Our Lord is He who gives each thing its created form and then guides it.' (Surah Ta Ha: 50)

In the face of this extremely reasonable and sincere answer, Pharaoh could find no defence, so he asked another illogical question:

He (Pharaoh) said, 'What about the previous generations?' (Surah Ta Ha: 51)

With this question he tries to divert attention from the 'here and now' and side-track the prophet.

Disbelievers often take recourse to similar 'distracting' questions. Such questions will not save them from the eternal wrath of hell. Advice and warnings are made to them at the time in which they live; they are not asked to investigate the state of the people who lived previously. The state of those people is something that is known by Allah, the Lord of all worlds, the Owner of eternal justice, Who does not forget anything. Accordingly, the answer of Prophet Musa reveals this fact quite explicitly:

He (Musa) said, 'Knowledge of them is with my Lord in a Book. My Lord does not misplace nor does He forget.' (Surah Ta Ha: 52)

Then Prophet Musa reminded Pharaoh of the blessings Allah has bestowed upon people, and presented evidence of His existence:

It is He Who made the earth a cradle for you and threaded pathways for you through it and sent down water from the sky by which We have brought forth various different types of plants. (Surah Ta Ha: 53)

Acting upon the sole purpose of protecting his position and looking for a discrepancy, Pharaoh completely changed the course of the conversation when faced with such clear truths. He stopped asking questions about Allah and started to make political accusations against Prophet Musa.

He resorted to such tactics because he was pushed into a corner and could not get the better of Prophet Musa through fair and rational means. He accused Prophet Musa of making magic:

We showed him all of Our signs, but he denied and spurned them. He said, 'Have you come to us to expel us from our land by means of your magic, Musa?' (Surah Ta Ha: 56-57)

In our day, too, there are many people who do not refer to their conscience to grasp the eternal power of Allah, and grow arrogant by displaying the character of Pharaoh. These people do not necessarily have to rule a country, or be at the head of a dictatorship like Pharaoh. The examples quoted here are some of the insincere questions Pharaoh asked to try to mock and deny the power and oneness of Allah. In modern day societies, such questions are frequently voiced, though with different words. Briefly, every age sees the same disbelieving philosophy insisting on employing wickedness and

deviousness. However, it should not be forgotten that Allah made Pharaoh's end an example to people by drowning him and all the forces behind him. Those who display the character of Pharaoh will one day also face the wrath of Allah.

His distorted thoughts about Allah

As far as we learn from the Qur'an, Pharaoh did not have an atheist creed in the fullest sense. His claim that he was a god was intended for the people he reigned and this claim implied that he was the one to be obeyed and submitted to unconditionally across the land.

In other words, like many disbelievers, he too knew about the existence of Allah but failed to comprehend His true might. Intoxicated with the worldly position he held, he thought of Allah as a god ruling not on the earth but in the heavens and he saw himself as the 'lord' of Egypt, over which he reigned. A typical attitude of many pagan religions is that the 'gods' existed in another realm and did not concern themselves with life on earth. In line with this belief, Pharaoh utters the scornful words:

Pharaoh said, 'Council, I do not know of any other god for you apart from Me. Haman, kindle a fire for me over the clay and build me a lofty tower so that perhaps I may be able to climb up to Musa's god! I consider him a blatant liar.' (Surat al-Qasas: 38)

It is possible to see the deviant logic of Pharaoh still in evidence today. Because of their distorted and inadequate education, many people think that God is 'up in the sky'. This is a result of conditioning from an early age, where they are accustomed to seeing paintings supposedly depicting God and heaven. Many have been misguided into believing that God created the whole universe and all life within it and then left it to its own devices. They think that He does not interfere with worldly affairs. This nonsensical belief is due to man's not allowing himself to reflect deeply and listen to his conscience, and not allowing himself to accept his Lord Who has bestowed endless favours upon him. Allah is All-Powerful; His being encompasses the heavens and the earth; He is the Lord of them and everything in between.

Pharaoh's hypocrisy and untrustworthiness

Pharaoh and his associates were condemned to suffer various long-lasting torments, such as plagues and sicknesses, because of their disbelief. When they could not stand any more, they turned to Prophet Musa, although this was hard on their pride and arrogance. They promised him that they would believe if he removed the torments from them:

Whenever the plague came down on them they said, 'Musa, pray to your Lord for us by the contract He has with you. If you remove the plague from us, we will definitely believe in you and send the tribe of Israel away with you.' (Surat al-A'raf: 134)

Allah responded to Prophet Musa's prayer and removed the punishment from them for a certain time so that they would keep their promise. However, they displayed the untrustworthy and flighty character adopted by all corrupt disbelievers, and when the punishment was removed from them, they betrayed their word by returning to their old ways.

Finally, Allah took revenge on these people for their constant denial of His signs in spite of the many chances He had given them to believe. He manifested His attribute of 'al-Muntaqim' (one who punishes):

But when We removed the plague from them - for a fixed term which they fulfilled - they broke their word. Then We took revenge on them and drowned them in the sea because they denied Our Signs and paid no attention to them. (Surat al-A'raf: 135-136)

Deep within themselves, Pharaoh and those who followed him were aware of Allah's power, in spite of their denial and transgression. In their greatest hours of need, they turned to Prophet Musa to ask help from Allah for them. In those moments of pain and despair they knew that no one could help them but Allah the Almighty.

Nowadays when faced with disaster from which there appears to be no escape, such as a plane crash or a hurricane, many people who do not consider themselves religious will start praying, then when the danger is passed they forget and return to their old ways. The true believer worships Allah in times of hardship and fear and equally in times of happiness and security.

Pharaoh's oppression of the believers and their steadfast conviction

Pharaoh tried various ways to overcome Prophet Musa. One of these was the contest he organised to make Prophet Musa compete with the magicians he trusted most. He thought to humiliate Prophet Musa with a deceitful trick dressed up as a just and fair contest.

When the appointed day came, Prophet Musa and the magicians faced each other in a field where people had gathered. The magicians threw down their sticks to show their power. On account of their magic, the sticks seemed to be slithering about like snakes. When Prophet Musa threw his stick, by

Allah's will it swallowed up the sticks of the magicians. The magicians were amazed and immediately realised that Prophet Musa was telling the truth and that he was the messenger of Allah. Pharaoh's own magicians then testified that there is no god and power but Allah. Seeing his scheme backfire on him, Pharaoh flew into a rage. He was humiliated in front of his people, and Prophet Musa, whom he considered to be so far beneath him, had won a great victory. He reacted violently against the magicians who believed, and ordered that they have opposite arms and legs amputated, then be executed by crucifixion (See Surat al-A'raf: 120-124).

The extreme cruelty of this punishment would be more than enough to silence a weak conscience, but amazingly the magicians who saw the truth, persisted in following their conscience despite such torture. Their conduct was a measure of the strength of their conviction, and is an example to all Muslims. After Pharaoh gave the orders for their torture and execution, they said:

'We will never prefer you to the Clear Signs which have come to us nor to Him who brought us into being. Decide on any judgement you like. Your jurisdiction only covers the life of this world.' (Surah Ta Ha: 72)

Pharaohs are rulers who lived thousands of years ago. The pharaoh related in the Qur'an, represents the character of hundreds of leaders preceding and succeeding him. The common quality of all these leaders is their summoning to the Fire. And the leader of these leaders is the shaytan. By not following their conscience and even more, waging a war against their conscience, these people have followed the orders of the shaytan out of greed for the world.

However, the counterparts of Pharaoh are not always rulers. The character of Pharaoh can be observed in all disbelievers who deny Allah as he did. With their absolute persistence in denial and their greed for rank and riches, even to a lesser degree thousands and millions of pharaohs will always exist on the earth. They will all end up in the same place in the hereafter: hell, the place of eternal disgrace and the wrath of fire.

Another example from the Qur'an

In Surat al-Kahf, Allah relates the example of two men. One of them was unable to fully comprehend the might of Allah. He was spoilt by his prosperity and achievements, and did not think about the hereafter. His friend was a sincere Muslim who understood Allah's power and spoke with humility and wisdom. Their conversation is related thus:

Make an example for them of two men. To one of them We gave two gardens of grape-vines and surrounded them with date-palms, putting between them some cultivated land. Both gardens yielded their crops and did not suffer any loss, and We made a river flow right through the middle of them. He was a man of wealth and property and he said to his companion, debating with him, 'I have more wealth than you and more people under me.' He entered his garden and wronged himself by saying, 'I do not think that this will ever end. I do not think the Hour will ever come. But if I should be sent back to my Lord, I will definitely get something better in return.' (Surat al-Kahf: 32-36)

The words of the owner of the vineyard represent a very common belief; many people 'believe' but do not understand the implications or responsibilities of belief. It is possible to hear someone who has prospered say, 'God didn't give me this, I worked hard for it', or someone who is persistent in wrongdoing say, 'God will forgive me'. The basis of this wrong belief is arrogance, self-delusion and believing in self-subsistence.

However, no matter how self-sufficient one may believe oneself to be, death is a fact that cannot be disputed. For those who believe that this life is everything, death represents the end: darkness, nothingness, no consciousness. This is terrifying for them, so they construct a picture of 'a happy afterlife' to console them and help them cope with death. On the one hand they do not believe in resurrection and judgement, while on the other hand they deceive themselves into believing that they will live a better life after death.

They are deceived by the gain they achieve in the life of this world. As shown in the above verse, the owner of the vineyard had almost attributed endlessness to his wealth, and thought that no power could destroy it.

In reply to the arrogant speech of the owner of the vineyard:

His companion, with whom he had been debating, said to him, 'Do you then disbelieve in Him who created you from dust, then from a drop of sperm, and then formed you as a man? He is, however, Allah, my Lord, and I will not associate anyone with my Lord. Why, when you entered your garden, did you not say, "It is as Allah wills, there is no strength but in Allah"? Though you see me with less wealth and children than you possess, it may be that my Lord will give me something better than your garden and send down on it a fireball from the sky so that morning finds it a shifting heap of dust, or morning finds its water drained into the earth so that you cannot get at it.' (Surat al-Kahf: 37-41)

A conscientious person practises and says what his conscience orders him under all circumstances. A true friend is not someone who remains silent for fear of offending his friend, but someone who cares about his friend's hereafter to such an extent that he

cannot remain silent when he sees him doing something wrong. He speaks out and advises his friend with sincerity and good counsel, and warns him of Allah's penalty.

However, there will always be people who will not take counsel despite all the reminders. When it is time for Allah to punish such people, no friend can help them:

The fruits of his labour were completely destroyed and he woke up wringing his hands in grief, ruining everything that he had spent on it. It was a ruin with all its trellises fallen in. He said, 'Oh, if only I had not associated anyone with my Lord!' There was no group to come to his aid, besides Allah, and he was not given any help. In that situation the only protection is from Allah, the Real. He gives the best reward and the best outcome. (Surat al-Kahf: 42-44)

PARTING THOUGHTS

Death is not distant from any one of us. It is perhaps even closer than we think. That Allah did not create the life of this world for a vain purpose and that death is not the end is an undeniable fact. We all have to organise our life according to this great truth, because after death we will be judged according to the life we lived, and we will either be welcomed in paradise or thrown into hell. Even if one is not convinced by the truth of this, can he really afford to risk so much and not work for his life in the hereafter? The only solution is to obey the commands of Allah by listening to the conscience. If someone does not follow his conscience or use it fully, when he meets the angels of death, he will be plunged into an agony of remorse and hopelessness, which he will suffer for eternity.

Someone who has employed his conscience while reading this book will strive to put into practice what he has read. Someone who has not used his conscience may form good intentions for a period of time, but eventually he will forget what he read here and carry on with his worldly life. In a few years time, he may not even remember the name of the book. But Allah forgets nothing, and everything is recorded in His exalted presence. Whether a person follows his conscience or not is recorded by two angels sitting on his right and left who do not leave him throughout his life. This is related in the Qur'an:

And the two recording angels are recording, sitting on the right and on the left. He does not utter a single word, without a watcher by him, pen in hand! (Surah Qaf: 17-18)

On the Day of Account, the recordings of these angels will be placed on balanced scales. On one side will be conscientious, god-fearing acts, and on the other side evil acts. The person may have long forgotten the evil that he did, or the good he postponed, but Allah will make him face every single word and every single action, no matter how minute. Certainly the words he read in this book will be remembered and he will be questioned about it. In truth, people are aware of these facts and can, with reference to their conscience, more or less understand what is right and what is wrong. However, as we have mentioned throughout the book, they turn their back on the truth and ignore it for the sake of their worldly interests.

Whatever we do, our conscience will not leave us until we die. Conscience is a power that works totally out of our will. It is Allah's voice. We will all continue to hear this voice until we die, but those who do not follow this voice will taste the intense regret of it after they die. Accordingly, in the Qur'an, many examples are given from the conversations in the hereafter in which those in hell confess what they failed to do in life.

Therefore, in truth, everyone knows what he must and must not do and evading the conscience does no good.

'What caused you to enter into Hell Fire?'

They will say, 'We were not among those who prayed, and we did not feed the poor. We plunged with those who plunged, and denied the Day of Judgement, until the Certain came to us.'

The intercession of the interceders will not help them. What is the matter with them that they run from the Reminder like panicked donkeys fleeing from a lion?

In fact each one of them wants to be given an unfurled scroll.

No indeed! The truth is they do not fear the hereafter.

**No indeed! It is truly a reminder to which anyone who wills may pay heed.
(Surat al-Muddaththir: 42-55)**

If you do not want to make the above speech, listen to your conscience, follow the Qur'an, follow the Messenger (SAW) and follow the rightly-guided people. Do not turn your back on the truth once it has been shown to you, and do not try to turn off the voice of righteousness within you.

THE EVOLUTION DECEPTION

In the present day, there are people who live in a manner far removed from Allah, and who even reject faith and deny the existence of Allah for their own ends. On account of their blindness and mindless fearlessness, they try to influence others and turn them away from Allah. They have put forward a whole range of inconsistent ideas and twisted ideologies by which to do this. One of these is the theory of evolution.

The Ideological Collapse Of Darwinism

The aspect of Darwinism that stops it from being a claim of interest only to the scientific world and makes it of great importance to society as a whole is its ideological dimension. The answer it gives to the question of how living things, including mankind, came into existence makes Darwinism the basis of a number of philosophies, worldviews and political ideologies.

Here, we shall consider the relationship between Darwinism and materialist philosophy. Materialist philosophy, or "materialism," is a system of thought going as far back as ancient Greece. Materialism rests on the assumption that matter is the only thing that exists. According to materialist philosophy, matter has always existed, and will continue to do so for all time. Again according to this philosophy, nothing exists beyond matter.

Naturally, materialism is also reflected in the political arena, with communism indisputably taking pride of place in this regard. Karl Marx (1818-83) and Friedrich Engels (1820-95), regarded as the founders of communism, were also the founders of dialectical materialism. In any case, communism is nothing more than materialist philosophy adapted to the social sciences by Marx and Engels.

Communism is today regarded as an ideology consigned to the wastes of history, whereas the fact is that it is still exceedingly influential. The destructive effects of this ideology can still be felt in many countries.

This is where Darwinism assumes great importance. Since Darwinism, or the theory of evolution, maintains that living things were not created but came into being by chance, it has received a wide acceptance among materialist ideologies, and has been adopted as the "basic foundation" of communism in particular. All the main communist ideologues have accepted the theory word for word, and have based their ideologies upon it.

In a letter to Friedrich Engels in 1860, for instance, Karl Marx said of Darwin's book that "This is the book which contains the basis in natural history for our view."¹ In

another letter the following year, this time to Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-64), Marx said: "Darwin's book is very important and serves me as a basis in natural science for the class struggle in history."² Similarly Mao Tse Tung, the founder of Chinese communism, openly stated that "The foundations of Chinese socialism rest on Darwin and the theory of evolution."³

Thus the intellectual struggle against communism must be aimed at materialist philosophy and, therefore, the theory of evolution. It is also clear that the wide acceptance of the theory of evolution in society will further nourish materialism as well as communism.

The Scientific Collapse of Darwinism

Although this doctrine goes back as far as ancient Greece, the theory of evolution was advanced extensively in the nineteenth century. The most important development that made it the top topic of the world of science was Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859. In this book, he denied that God created different living species on Earth separately, for he claimed that all living beings had a common ancestor and had diversified over time through small changes. Darwin's theory was not based on any concrete scientific finding; as he also accepted, it was just an "assumption." Moreover, as Darwin confessed in the long chapter of his book titled "Difficulties of the Theory," the theory failed in the face of many critical questions.

Darwin invested all of his hopes in new scientific discoveries, which he expected to solve these difficulties. However, contrary to his expectations, scientific findings expanded the dimensions of these difficulties. The defeat of Darwinism in the face of science can be reviewed under three basic topics:

- 1) The theory cannot explain how life originated on Earth.
- 2) No scientific finding shows that the "evolutionary mechanisms" proposed by the theory have any evolutionary power at all.
- 3) The fossil record proves the exact opposite of what the theory suggests.

In this section, we will examine these three basic points in general outlines:

The First Insurmountable Step: The Origin of Life

The theory of evolution posits that all living species evolved from a single living cell that emerged on the primitive Earth 3.8 billion years ago. How a single cell could generate millions of complex living species and, if such an evolution really occurred, why traces of it cannot be observed in the fossil record are some of the questions that the

theory cannot answer. However, first and foremost, we need to ask: How did this "first cell" originate?

Since the theory of evolution denies creation and any kind of supernatural intervention, it maintains that the "first cell" originated coincidentally within the laws of nature, without any design, plan or arrangement. According to the theory, inanimate matter must have produced a living cell as a result of coincidences. Such a claim, however, is inconsistent with the most unassailable rules of biology.

"Life Comes from Life"

In his book, Darwin never referred to the origin of life. The primitive understanding of science in his time rested on the assumption that living beings had a very simple structure. Since medieval times, spontaneous generation, which asserts that non-living materials came together to form living organisms, had been widely accepted. It was commonly believed that insects came into being from food leftovers, and mice from wheat. Interesting experiments were conducted to prove this theory. Some wheat was placed on a dirty piece of cloth, and it was believed that mice would originate from it after a while.

Similarly, worms developing in meat was assumed to be evidence of spontaneous generation. However, it was later understood that worms did not appear on meat spontaneously, but were carried there by flies in the form of larvae, invisible to the naked eye.

Even when Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species*, the belief that bacteria could come into existence from non-living matter was widely accepted in the world of science.

However, five years after the publication of Darwin's book, Louis Pasteur announced his results after long studies and experiments, that disproved spontaneous generation, a cornerstone of Darwin's theory. In his triumphal lecture at the Sorbonne in 1864, Pasteur said: "*Never will the doctrine of spontaneous generation recover from the mortal blow struck by this simple experiment.*"⁴

Advocates of the theory of evolution resisted these findings for a long time. However, as the development of science unraveled the complex structure of the cell of a living being, the idea that life could come into being coincidentally faced an even greater impasse.

Inconclusive Efforts in the Twentieth Century

The first evolutionist who took up the subject of the origin of life in the twentieth century was the renowned Russian biologist Alexander Oparin. With various theses he

advanced in the 1930s, he tried to prove that a living cell could originate by coincidence. These studies, however, were doomed to failure, and Oparin had to make the following confession:

Unfortunately, however, the problem of the origin of the cell is perhaps the most obscure point in the whole study of the evolution of organisms.⁵

Evolutionist followers of Oparin tried to carry out experiments to solve this problem. The best known experiment was carried out by the American chemist Stanley Miller in 1953. Combining the gases he alleged to have existed in the primordial Earth's atmosphere in an experiment set-up, and adding energy to the mixture, Miller synthesized several organic molecules (amino acids) present in the structure of proteins.

Barely a few years had passed before it was revealed that this experiment, which was then presented as an important step in the name of evolution, was invalid, for the atmosphere used in the experiment was very different from the real Earth conditions.⁶

After a long silence, Miller confessed that the atmosphere medium he used was unrealistic.⁷

All the evolutionists' efforts throughout the twentieth century to explain the origin of life ended in failure. The geochemist Jeffrey Bada, from the San Diego Scripps Institute accepts this fact in an article published in *Earth* magazine in 1998:

Today as we leave the twentieth century, we still face the biggest unsolved problem that we had when we entered the twentieth century: How did life originate on Earth?⁸

The Complex Structure of Life

The primary reason why the theory of evolution ended up in such a great impasse regarding the origin of life is that even those living organisms deemed to be the simplest have incredibly complex structures. The cell of a living thing is more complex than all of our man-made technological products. Today, even in the most developed laboratories of the world, a living cell cannot be produced by bringing organic chemicals together.

The conditions required for the formation of a cell are too great in quantity to be explained away by coincidences. The probability of proteins, the building blocks of a cell, being synthesized coincidentally, is 1 in 10950 for an average protein made up of 500 amino acids. In mathematics, a probability smaller than 1 over 1050 is considered to be impossible in practical terms.

The DNA molecule, which is located in the nucleus of a cell and which stores genetic information, is an incredible databank. If the information coded in DNA were written down, it would make a giant library consisting of an estimated 900 volumes of encyclopedias consisting of 500 pages each.

A very interesting dilemma emerges at this point: DNA can replicate itself only with the help of some specialized proteins (enzymes). However, the synthesis of these enzymes can be realized only by the information coded in DNA. As they both depend on each other, they have to exist at the same time for replication. This brings the scenario that life originated by itself to a deadlock. Prof. Leslie Orgel, an evolutionist of repute from the University of San Diego, California, confesses this fact in the September 1994 issue of the *Scientific American* magazine:

It is extremely improbable that proteins and nucleic acids, both of which are structurally complex, arose spontaneously in the same place at the same time. Yet it also seems impossible to have one without the other. And so, at first glance, one might have to conclude that life could never, in fact, have originated by chemical means.⁹

No doubt, if it is impossible for life to have originated from natural causes, then it has to be accepted that life was "created" in a supernatural way. This fact explicitly invalidates the theory of evolution, whose main purpose is to deny creation.

Imaginary Mechanisms of Evolution

The second important point that negates Darwin's theory is that both concepts put forward by the theory as "evolutionary mechanisms" were understood to have, in reality, no evolutionary power.

Darwin based his evolution allegation entirely on the mechanism of "natural selection." The importance he placed on this mechanism was evident in the name of his book: *The Origin of Species, By Means of Natural Selection...*

Natural selection holds that those living things that are stronger and more suited to the natural conditions of their habitats will survive in the struggle for life. For example, in a deer herd under the threat of attack by wild animals, those that can run faster will survive. Therefore, the deer herd will be comprised of faster and stronger individuals. However, unquestionably, this mechanism will not cause deer to evolve and transform themselves into another living species, for instance, horses.

Therefore, the mechanism of natural selection has no evolutionary power. Darwin was also aware of this fact and had to state this in his book *The Origin of Species*:

Natural selection can do nothing until favourable individual differences or variations occur.¹⁰

Lamarck's Impact

So, how could these "favorable variations" occur? Darwin tried to answer this question from the standpoint of the primitive understanding of science at that time. According to the French biologist Chevalier de Lamarck (1744-1829), who lived before Darwin, living creatures passed on the traits they acquired during their lifetime to the next generation. He asserted that these traits, which accumulated from one generation to another, caused new species to be formed. For instance, he claimed that giraffes evolved from antelopes; as they struggled to eat the leaves of high trees, their necks were extended from generation to generation.

Darwin also gave similar examples. In his book *The Origin of Species*, for instance, he said that some bears going into water to find food transformed themselves into whales over time.¹¹

However, the laws of inheritance discovered by Gregor Mendel (1822-84) and verified by the science of genetics, which flourished in the twentieth century, utterly demolished the legend that acquired traits were passed on to subsequent generations. Thus, natural selection fell out of favor as an evolutionary mechanism.

Neo-Darwinism and Mutations

In order to find a solution, Darwinists advanced the "Modern Synthetic Theory," or as it is more commonly known, Neo-Darwinism, at the end of the 1930's. Neo-Darwinism added mutations, which are distortions formed in the genes of living beings due to such external factors as radiation or replication errors, as the "cause of favorable variations" in addition to natural mutation.

Today, the model that stands for evolution in the world is Neo-Darwinism. The theory maintains that millions of living beings formed as a result of a process whereby

numerous complex organs of these organisms (e.g., ears, eyes, lungs, and wings) underwent "mutations," that is, genetic disorders. Yet, there is an outright scientific fact that totally undermines this theory: Mutations do not cause living beings to develop; on the contrary, they are always harmful.

The reason for this is very simple: DNA has a very complex structure, and random effects can only harm it. The American geneticist B.G. Ranganathan explains this as follows:

First, genuine mutations are very rare in nature. Secondly, most mutations are harmful since they are random, rather than orderly changes in the structure of genes; any random change in a highly ordered system will be for the worse, not for the better. For example, if an earthquake were to shake a highly ordered structure such as a building, there would be a random change in the framework of the building which, in all probability, would not be an improvement.¹²

Not surprisingly, no mutation example, which is useful, that is, which is observed to develop the genetic code, has been observed so far. All mutations have proved to be harmful. It was understood that mutation, which is presented as an "evolutionary mechanism," is actually a genetic occurrence that harms living things, and leaves them disabled. (The most common effect of mutation on human beings is cancer.) Of course, a destructive mechanism cannot be an "evolutionary mechanism." Natural selection, on the other hand, "can do nothing by itself," as Darwin also accepted. This fact shows us that there is no "evolutionary mechanism" in nature. Since no evolutionary mechanism exists, no such any imaginary process called "evolution" could have taken place.

The Fossil Record: No Sign of Intermediate Forms

The clearest evidence that the scenario suggested by the theory of evolution did not take place is the fossil record.

According to this theory, every living species has sprung from a predecessor. A previously existing species turned into something else over time and all species have come into being in this way. In other words, this transformation proceeds gradually over millions of years.

Had this been the case, numerous intermediary species should have existed and lived within this long transformation period.

For instance, some half-fish/half-reptiles should have lived in the past which had acquired some reptilian traits in addition to the fish traits they already had. Or there should have existed some reptile-birds, which acquired some bird traits in addition to the reptilian traits they already had. Since these would be in a transitional phase, they

should be disabled, defective, crippled living beings. Evolutionists refer to these imaginary creatures, which they believe to have lived in the past, as "transitional forms."

If such animals ever really existed, there should be millions and even billions of them in number and variety. More importantly, the remains of these strange creatures should be present in the fossil record. In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin explained:

If my theory be true, numberless intermediate varieties, linking most closely all of the species of the same group together must assuredly have existed.... Consequently, evidence of their former existence could be found only amongst fossil remains.¹³

Darwin's Hopes Shattered

However, although evolutionists have been making strenuous efforts to find fossils since the middle of the nineteenth century all over the world, no transitional forms have yet been uncovered. All of the fossils, contrary to the evolutionists' expectations, show that life appeared on Earth all of a sudden and fully-formed.

One famous British paleontologist, Derek V. Ager, admits this fact, even though he is an evolutionist:

The point emerges that if we examine the fossil record in detail, whether at the level of orders or of species, we find – over and over again – not gradual evolution, but the sudden explosion of one group at the expense of another.¹⁴

This means that in the fossil record, all living species suddenly emerge as fully formed, without any intermediate forms in between. This is just the opposite of Darwin's assumptions. Also, this is very strong evidence that all living things are created. The only explanation of a living species emerging suddenly and complete in every detail without any evolutionary ancestor is that it was created. This fact is admitted also by the widely known evolutionist biologist Douglas Futuyma:

Creation and evolution, between them, exhaust the possible explanations for the origin of living things. Organisms either appeared on the earth fully developed or they did not. If they did not, they must have developed from pre-existing species by some process of modification. If they did appear in a fully developed state, they must indeed have been created by some omnipotent intelligence.¹⁵

Fossils show that living beings emerged fully developed and in a perfect state on the earth. That means that "the origin of species," contrary to Darwin's supposition, is not evolution, but creation.

The Tale of Human Evolution

The subject most often brought up by advocates of the theory of evolution is the subject of the origin of man. The Darwinist claim holds that modern man evolved from ape-like creatures. During this alleged evolutionary process, which is supposed to have started 4-5 million years ago, some "transitional forms" between modern man and his ancestors are supposed to have existed. According to this completely imaginary scenario, four basic "categories" are listed:

1. *Australopithecus*
2. *Homo habilis*
3. *Homo erectus*
4. *Homo sapiens*

Evolutionists call man's so-called first ape-like ancestors *Australopithecus*, which means "South African ape." These living beings are actually nothing but an old ape species that has become extinct. Extensive research done on various *Australopithecus* specimens by two world famous anatomists from England and the USA, namely, Lord Solly Zuckerman and Prof. Charles Oxnard, shows that these apes belonged to an ordinary ape species that became extinct and bore no resemblance to humans.¹⁶

Evolutionists classify the next stage of human evolution as "*homo*," that is "man." According to their claim, the living beings in the *Homo* series are more developed than *Australopithecus*. Evolutionists devise a fanciful evolution scheme by arranging different fossils of these creatures in a particular order. This scheme is imaginary because it has never been proved that there is an evolutionary relation between these different classes. Ernst Mayr, one of the twentieth century's most important evolutionists, contends in his book *One Long Argument* that "particularly historical [puzzles] such as the origin of life or of *Homo sapiens*, are extremely difficult and may even resist a final, satisfying explanation."¹⁷

By outlining the link chain as *Australopithecus* > *Homo habilis* > *Homo erectus* > *Homo sapiens*, evolutionists imply that each of these species is one another's ancestor. However, recent findings of paleoanthropologists have revealed that *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis*, and *Homo erectus* lived at different parts of the world at the same time.¹⁸

Moreover, a certain segment of humans classified as *Homo erectus* have lived up until very modern times. *Homo sapiens neandarthalensis* and *Homo sapiens sapiens* (modern man) co-existed in the same region.¹⁹

This situation apparently indicates the invalidity of the claim that they are ancestors of one another. A paleontologist from Harvard University, Stephen Jay Gould, explains this deadlock of the theory of evolution, although he is an evolutionist himself:

What has become of our ladder if there are three coexisting lineages of hominids (*A. africanus*, the robust australopithecines, and *H. habilis*), none clearly derived from another? Moreover, none of the three display any evolutionary trends during their tenure on earth.²⁰

Put briefly, the scenario of human evolution, which is "upheld" with the help of various drawings of some "half ape, half human" creatures appearing in the media and course books, that is, frankly, by means of propaganda, is nothing but a tale with no scientific foundation.

Lord Solly Zuckerman, one of the most famous and respected scientists in the U.K., who carried out research on this subject for years and studied *Australopithecus* fossils for 15 years, finally concluded, despite being an evolutionist himself, that there is, in fact, no such family tree branching out from ape-like creatures to man.

Zuckerman also made an interesting "spectrum of science" ranging from those he considered scientific to those he considered unscientific. According to Zuckerman's spectrum, the most "scientific"—that is, depending on concrete data—fields of science are chemistry and physics. After them come the biological sciences and then the social sciences. At the far end of the spectrum, which is the part considered to be most "unscientific," are "extra-sensory perception"—concepts such as telepathy and sixth sense—and finally "human evolution." Zuckerman explains his reasoning:

We then move right off the register of objective truth into those fields of presumed biological science, like extrasensory perception or the interpretation of man's fossil history, where to the faithful [evolutionist] anything is possible – and where the ardent believer [in evolution] is sometimes able to believe several contradictory things at the same time.²¹

The tale of human evolution boils down to nothing but the prejudiced interpretations of some fossils unearthed by certain people, who blindly adhere to their theory.

Technology in the Eye and the Ear

Another subject that remains unanswered by evolutionary theory is the excellent quality of perception in the eye and the ear.

Before passing on to the subject of the eye, let us briefly answer the question of how we see. Light rays coming from an object fall oppositely on the eye's retina. Here, these light rays are transmitted into electric signals by cells and reach a tiny spot at the back of the brain, the "center of vision." These electric signals are perceived in this center as an image after a series of processes. With this technical background, let us do some thinking.

The brain is insulated from light. That means that its inside is completely dark, and that no light reaches the place where it is located. Thus, the "center of vision" is never touched by light and may even be the darkest place you have ever known. However, you observe a luminous, bright world in this pitch darkness.

The image formed in the eye is so sharp and distinct that even the technology of the twentieth century has not been able to attain it. For instance, look at the book you are reading, your hands with which you are holding it, and then lift your head and look around you. Have you ever seen such a sharp and distinct image as this one at any other place? Even the most developed television screen produced by the greatest television producer in the world cannot provide such a sharp image for you. This is a three-dimensional, colored, and extremely sharp image. For more than 100 years, thousands of engineers have been trying to achieve this sharpness. Factories, huge premises were established, much research has been done, plans and designs have been made for this purpose. Again, look at a TV screen and the book you hold in your hands. You will see that there is a big difference in sharpness and distinction. Moreover, the TV screen shows you a two-dimensional image, whereas with your eyes, you watch a three-dimensional perspective with depth.

For many years, tens of thousands of engineers have tried to make a three-dimensional TV and achieve the vision quality of the eye. Yes, they have made a three-dimensional television system, but it is not possible to watch it without putting on special 3-D glasses; moreover, it is only an artificial three-dimension. The background is more blurred, the foreground appears like a paper setting. Never has it been possible to produce a sharp and distinct vision like that of the eye. In both the camera and the television, there is a loss of image quality.

Evolutionists claim that the mechanism producing this sharp and distinct image has been formed by chance. Now, if somebody told you that the television in your room was formed as a result of chance, that all of its atoms just happened to come together and make up this device that produces an image, what would you think? How can atoms do what thousands of people cannot?

If a device producing a more primitive image than the eye could not have been formed by chance, then it is very evident that the eye and the image seen by the eye could not have been formed by chance. The same situation applies to the ear. The outer ear picks up the available sounds by the auricle and directs them to the middle ear, the middle ear transmits the sound vibrations by intensifying them, and the inner ear sends these vibrations to the brain by translating them into electric signals. Just as with the eye, the act of hearing finalizes in the center of hearing in the brain.

The situation in the eye is also true for the ear. That is, the brain is insulated from sound just as it is from light. It does not let any sound in. Therefore, no matter how noisy is the outside, the inside of the brain is completely silent. Nevertheless, the sharpest sounds are perceived in the brain. In your completely silent brain, you listen to symphonies, and hear all of the noises in a crowded place. However, if the sound level in your brain was measured by a precise device at that moment, it would be seen that only a complete silence prevails there.

As is the case with imagery, decades of effort have been spent in trying to generate and reproduce sound that is faithful to the original. The results of these efforts are sound recorders, high-fidelity systems, and systems for sensing sound. Despite all of this technology and the thousands of engineers and experts who have been working on this endeavor, no sound has yet been obtained that has the same sharpness and clarity as the sound perceived by the ear. Think of the highest-quality hi-fi systems produced by the largest company in the music industry. Even in these devices, when sound is recorded some of it is lost; or when you turn on a hi-fi you always hear a hissing sound before the music starts. However, the sounds that are the products of the human body's technology are extremely sharp and clear. A human ear never perceives a sound accompanied by a hissing sound or with atmospherics as does a hi-fi; rather, it perceives sound exactly as it is, sharp and clear. This is the way it has been since the creation of man.

So far, no man-made visual or recording apparatus has been as sensitive and successful in perceiving sensory data as are the eye and the ear. However, as far as seeing and hearing are concerned, a far greater truth lies beyond all this.

To Whom Does the Consciousness That Sees and Hears within the Brain Belong?

Who watches an alluring world in the brain, listens to symphonies and the twittering of birds, and smells the rose?

The stimulations coming from a person's eyes, ears, and nose travel to the brain as electro-chemical nerve impulses. In biology, physiology, and biochemistry books, you can find many details about how this image forms in the brain. However, you will never come across the most important fact: Who perceives these electro-chemical nerve impulses as images, sounds, odors, and sensory events in the brain? There is a consciousness in the brain that perceives all this without feeling any need for an eye, an ear, and a nose. To whom does this consciousness belong? Of course it does not belong to the nerves, the fat layer, and neurons comprising the brain. This is why Darwinist-materialists, who believe that everything is comprised of matter, cannot answer these questions.

For this consciousness is the spirit created by Allah, which needs neither the eye to watch the images nor the ear to hear the sounds. Furthermore, it does not need the brain to think.

Everyone who reads this explicit and scientific fact should ponder on Almighty Allah, and fear and seek refuge in Him, for He squeezes the entire universe in a pitch-dark place of a few cubic centimeters in a three-dimensional, colored, shadowy, and luminous form.

A Materialist Faith

The information we have presented so far shows us that the theory of evolution is incompatible with scientific findings. The theory's claim regarding the origin of life is inconsistent with science, the evolutionary mechanisms it proposes have no evolutionary power, and fossils demonstrate that the required intermediate forms have never existed. So, it certainly follows that the theory of evolution should be pushed aside as an unscientific idea. This is how many ideas, such as the Earth-centered universe model, have been taken out of the agenda of science throughout history.

However, the theory of evolution is kept on the agenda of science. Some people even try to represent criticisms directed against it as an "attack on science." Why?

The reason is that this theory is an indispensable dogmatic belief for some circles. These circles are blindly devoted to materialist philosophy and adopt Darwinism because it is the only materialist explanation that can be put forward to explain the workings of nature.

Interestingly enough, they also confess this fact from time to time. A well-known geneticist and an outspoken evolutionist, Richard C. Lewontin from Harvard University, confesses that he is "first and foremost a materialist and then a scientist":

It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, so we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.²²

These are explicit statements that Darwinism is a dogma kept alive just for the sake of adherence to materialism. This dogma maintains that there is no being save matter. Therefore, it argues that inanimate, unconscious matter created life. It insists that millions of different living species (e.g., birds, fish, giraffes, tigers, insects, trees, flowers, whales, and human beings) originated as a result of the interactions between matter such as pouring rain, lightning flashes, and so on, out of inanimate matter. This is a precept contrary both to reason and science. Yet Darwinists continue to defend it just so as "not to allow a Divine Foot in the door."

Anyone who does not look at the origin of living beings with a materialist prejudice will see this evident truth: All living beings are works of a Creator, Who is All-Powerful, All-Wise, and All-Knowing. This Creator is Allah, Who created the whole universe from non-existence, designed it in the most perfect form, and fashioned all living beings.

The Theory of Evolution is the Most

Potent Spell in the World

Anyone free of prejudice and the influence of any particular ideology, who uses only his or her reason and logic, will clearly understand that belief in the theory of evolution, which brings to mind the superstitions of societies with no knowledge of science or civilization, is quite impossible.

As explained above, those who believe in the theory of evolution think that a few atoms and molecules thrown into a huge vat could produce thinking, reasoning professors and university students; such scientists as Einstein and Galileo; such artists as Humphrey Bogart, Frank Sinatra and Luciano Pavarotti; as well as antelopes, lemon trees, and carnations. Moreover, as the scientists and professors who believe in this nonsense are educated people, it is quite justifiable to speak of this theory as "the most potent spell in history." Never before has any other belief or idea so taken away peoples' powers of reason, refused to allow them to think intelligently and logically and hidden the truth from them as if they had been blindfolded. This is an even worse and unbelievable blindness than the Egyptians worshipping the Sun God Ra, totem worship in some parts of Africa, the people of Saba worshipping the Sun, the tribe of Prophet Ibrahim (as) worshipping idols they had made with their own hands, or the people of the Prophet Musa (as) worshipping the Golden Calf.

In fact, Allah has pointed to this lack of reason in the Qur'an. In many verse, He reveals in many verses that some peoples' minds will be closed and that they will be powerless to see the truth. Some of these verses are as follows:

As for those who do not believe, it makes no difference to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe. Allah has sealed up their hearts and hearing and over their eyes is a blindfold. They will have a terrible punishment. (Surat al-Baqara: 6-7)

... They have hearts with which they do not understand. They have eyes with which they do not see. They have ears with which they do not hear. Such people are like cattle. No, they are even further astray! They are the unaware. (Surat al-A'raf: 179)

Even if We opened up to them a door into heaven, and they spent the day ascending through it, they would only say: "Our eyesight is befuddled! Or rather we have been put under a spell!" (Surat al-Hijr: 14-15)

Words cannot express just how astonishing it is that this spell should hold such a wide community in thrall, keep people from the truth, and not be broken for 150 years. It is understandable that one or a few people might believe in impossible scenarios and

claims full of stupidity and illogicality. However, "magic" is the only possible explanation for people from all over the world believing that unconscious and lifeless atoms suddenly decided to come together and form a universe that functions with a flawless system of organization, discipline, reason, and consciousness; a planet named Earth with all of its features so perfectly suited to life; and living things full of countless complex systems.

In fact, the Qur'an relates the incident of Prophet Musa (as) and Pharaoh to show that some people who support atheistic philosophies actually influence others by magic. When Pharaoh was told about the true religion, he told Prophet Musa (as) to meet with his own magicians. When Musa (as) did so, he told them to demonstrate their abilities first. The verses continue:

He said: "You throw." And when they threw, they cast a spell on the people's eyes and caused them to feel great fear of them. They produced an extremely powerful magic. (Surat al-A'raf: 116)

As we have seen, Pharaoh's magicians were able to deceive everyone, apart from Musa (as) and those who believed in him. However, his evidence broke the spell, or "swallowed up what they had forged," as the verse puts it.

We revealed to Musa, "Throw down your staff." And it immediately swallowed up what they had forged. So the Truth took place and what they did was shown to be false. (Surat al-A'raf: 117-119)

As we can see, when people realized that a spell had been cast upon them and that what they saw was just an illusion, Pharaoh's magicians lost all credibility. In the present day too, unless those who, under the influence of a similar spell, believe in these ridiculous claims under their scientific disguise and spend their lives defending them, abandon their superstitious beliefs, they also will be humiliated when the full truth emerges and the spell is broken. In fact, Malcolm Muggeridge, an atheist philosopher and supporter of evolution, admitted he was worried by just that prospect:

I myself am convinced that the theory of evolution, especially the extent to which it's been applied, will be one of the great jokes in the history books in the future. Posterity will marvel that so very flimsy and dubious an hypothesis could be accepted with the incredible credulity that it has.²³

That future is not far off: On the contrary, people will soon see that "chance" is not a deity, and will look back on the theory of evolution as the worst deceit and the most terrible spell in the world. That spell is already rapidly beginning to be lifted from the shoulders of people all over the world. Many people who see its true face are wondering with amazement how they could ever have been taken in by it.

**Glory to You, of knowledge We have none,
save what You have taught us: In truth it is You
Who is perfect in knowledge and wisdom.
(Surat al-Baqara, 32)**

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