

Shirk and the Explanation of Related Terms

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There are some topics which sometimes perplex us, Muslims. This is the month of the birthday of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and we should know the message with which he came.

He came with rules. We know, and we should teach our children the same, that prayer, fasting, zakat, and pilgrimage do not constitute those rules; this is not Islam. These are *means* towards Islam. Islam is dealing with others; Islam is relationships. How you behave towards your brother, how you behave towards your father, how you behave towards your son, how to behave towards your wife, how to behave towards your neighbor, how to act in your daily dealings as a professional or as a businessman – that is Islam. The benefit of the prayer and fasting and all these pillars is to link you with God, so you can remember His rules and remember God, and remember that there is a power above you.

Sometimes we pronounce words and we don't know what they mean. Someone may say to another "*unta mulhid*"; someone says to another you are *mushrik*; a third will declare someone to be a *kafir*, while a fourth will pronounce someone as a *fasiq*. What do these terms mean? We hear them often, but we don't know exactly what they mean and, depending upon the context, they have several shades of meaning. Let me just read for you some of the terms which we will be dealing with in the coming weeks: *kafir*, *mushrik*, *fasiq*, *mulhid*. Some terms which are connected with the rules which the Prophet laid down include *Fard*, *Wajib*, *Sunnah Mu'akkadah*, *Sunnah Ghayr-mu'akkadah*, *Nafl*, *Fard Kifāya*, *Sunnah Kifāya*, *Harām*, *Makrūh Tahreeman*, *Makrūh Tanzeehan*, *Ja'iz*, and *Mubah*. What do these terms mean in the Islamic sense? At least we should know

how to distinguish between one and the other. Then, we can know where the mercy of God stands in regard to all these things.

Sometimes, you hear people quoting this "hadith": "On the Day of Judgment there will be people in Hell, especially women, hanging by their hair, and when they ask why, they will be told: 'Those are the women who were doing this, this, and this.'" But you never find anyone quoting any "hadith" saying that, in Hell, there will be *men* hanging by their ears! You don't hear this! So, what is the origin of such "hadith", and from where are we learning this? What is the authenticity of our books? We have thousands of junk books written by Muslims. And how – how are we to derive our pure Islam, free of any junk?

Mulhid is one who does not believe in God at all; he doesn't believe in anything. He is the person who says: it is this life only; we were born, we live our term, we die; there is no resurrection, there is no hell, there is no paradise; I don't believe in any God; there is no such word. That's a *mulhid* or atheist. The term *al-had* means atheism. So, according to such a one, we are here, on this earth, like any insect or animal.

Mushrik is taken from the verb *ashraka*, and from this word you have many modifications: *sharika*, *ishraak*, *shareek*, and every word has a meaning. So when I say: '*indi shirka*, it means "I have a *shirka*." *Shirka* means partnership. So it means I have someone who is my partner in a certain business. If we go into the business law, we could say: "I have *sharika musahima*" (public partnership). It means I have a business which is a partnership made up of different people, a business in which everyone has a share or stock. That is called *sharika musahima*.

“*Ashraka ma’ahu ghayrohu fil amal*” means “He has that person to be his partner in that work.” So, all of these words are derived from the word *shirka* or *shareek* or *ashraka*.

To relate the word *ishraak* to God, we say “*ja’ala lil-Lahi shareeka*” or “*ashraka ma’a-Allah ghayra*” which means, he made a partnership, or a partner to God in His ownership.

What is the ownership of God? The Qur’an states innumerable times: “To God belong all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth and all that is between them.” So, the universe is the ownership of God. Therefore, when someone says, “this person is *shareek* with God”, then, it means that he owns with Him the universe. The Qur’an refutes such a possibility when it says that if there was another god in addition to God this universe will be ruined.¹ In other words, when there is a ship with two captains, it will sink. So a *mushrik* is one who makes someone or something *shareek* with God.

But there is something we have to know. “Actions are to be judged by intentions” is what the Prophet said. So we have to look into the intention of the person who is, in our view, making *shareek* with God. When you go to Saudi Arabia for Hajj or Umrah, and you visit the grave of the Prophet, and you touch the bronze fence around the grave of the Prophet, a guard with a stick will come by and hit you on your hand and declare you to be a *mushrik*. Why? Because, according to him, you are trying to make Muhammad a partner to God by touching that fence. If someone with that kind of mentality [as the guard’s] should visit Ajmeer Sharif² in India, and see how the people put *nathr*³ for Mohiyuddin Chisti⁴, he will declare, “All those people are *mushrik* because they are making Mohiyuddin Chisti a partner to God.”

If you say “I swear by the grave of my father that I didn’t do such-and-such thing” and a certain kind of individual hears that, he will pronounce you a *mushrik* because you are swearing by the grave of your father, and, since swearing is supposed to be by God only, therefore, you are *mushrik*. And if we follow that line of thinking, there will be no believers on earth! Everyone is *mushrik*! And that is where intention is supposed to interfere. What’s the intention? Some people say,

or do such things out of ignorance. They don’t really know. Some uneducated people believe that visiting the grave of a saint or a shaykh will bestow some sort of *baraka*⁵ on them; their thinking is that he is a righteous man and maybe he will pray for them and his prayer will be accepted. They don’t think of it as *shirka* or making partnership with God, as we think it is. You know, the Arabs used to worship idols, and the Qur’an states in this regard: [Imam quotes Arabic verses. The translation is:]

“And thus it is: if thou ask them, ‘Who is it that has created the heavens and the earth, and subjected the sun and the moon to His laws?’ they will surely answer, ‘God’ . . .”⁶ not Hubal, or Al-laat, or Al-‘uzza⁷, or any of those other idols.

“They serve, besides Allah, things that hurt them not nor profit them, and they say: ‘These are our intercessors with Allah’” [10:18].

So, in the final analysis, those people⁸ were not making these idols a partner to God. When they used to write their letters at the time of the Prophet, they started the letter by *bismik allāhumma*.⁹ So the topic of *mushrik* is a very touchy one.

Today, it is very easy to say you are *mushrik*, you are *kafir*, you are... though, when you analyze these concepts, they have different connotations, and it depends mainly upon what is in your heart. Even the Christians and the Jews of nowadays are several denominations. There is a group of Jews who don’t believe in the Day of Judgment. They say Heaven and Hell are on this earth: if you have a very nice home, a very long car, a very beautiful wife, you are in heaven! If you cannot afford to buy even hamburger, you are in hell. That’s how a group of the Jews believe nowadays. Among the Christians, there are some who even believe Jesus was a prophet – a messenger – of God. I have entered several churches in South Korea where you won’t find any paintings, symbols, or icons on the walls. Such things are prohibited. You think you are in a mosque. Christians like that exist. There is another denomination of Christians who say Jesus is the Son of God. And when you sit with them and discuss that matter, and ask them what they mean by “son” – God married Mary, and Jesus came as the

¹ 21:22

² The grave shrine of Mohiyuddin Chisti

³ Putting money, or food, or candles etc. on the grave of a “saint” in the expectation that the saint will intercede with God on his/her behalf so his/her prayers will be answered.

⁴ The head of the Chisti Tareeqa

⁵ Blessing

⁶ 29:61

⁷ The names of some of the major idols worshipped by the Arabs in pre-Islamic times

⁸ The pagan contemporaries of the Prophet

⁹ In your name, O God

offspring? – they say, no; we don't mean it that way. We mean by "Son of God" that he is lovable to God as one loves his son. So that is another concept and perspective. There is another kind of Christian who says God came to earth in the form of a human being – God came as an incarnation of Jesus. So the idea of "Jesus, Son of God" has a variety of connotations. You cannot generalize, but you have to take every case on its merits and study it as a unique case.

How do we, human beings, take other human beings as gods? It is happening nowadays. If you go to the palace of the king in one of our Muslim countries, you will find the entourage bowing whenever the king is coming out, and bowing whenever the king is going in. That's worshipping. Look at the presidents in our countries: whatever the presidents say is considered a virtual "revelation" from God, and the radio and television will "reveal" it all day – all day repeating "The President said..." "His Excellency said..." "His Majesty said..." That's worshipping. (Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:)

"Say: 'O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside God'" [3:64].

Then, another verse says: [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

"... Judgment as to what is right and what is wrong rests with God alone – and He has ordained that you should worship nought but Him: this is the one ever-true faith; but most people know it not" [12:40].

The Qur'an informs us that many people were guilty of the sin of taking other human beings as gods in addition to God. Fir'awn¹⁰ – my grandfather in Egypt – used to say to his people: "O people, I know of no god other than me. I am your highest god." About the people of 'Ad, the Qur'an states: "The people of 'Ad were trespassing their limits and saying that there is no power on earth greater than their's. They forgot that God has more power than them." And the Qur'an says in another verse, "Verily, whenever kings enter a country they will corrupt it, and turn the noblest of its people to the most abject." So, sometimes, when he is healthy and wealthy, the human being thinks that there is no one better than him, or more powerful than him. These are the examples of gods on

earth, mentioned in the Qur'an, and the modern day kings and presidents fall within that description.

Islam came as, what we call, *thawratun inqilābiyyah* – a revolution – to change that situation and to establish worship to be only for God: it does not matter if you are Christian or Jew, worship God your own way; you are free. But, we have a kind of Muslim, nowadays, who says: "Tell the non-Muslims to say *La ilaha illa-Allah, Muhammad ar-rasoolullah*,¹¹ and if he will not say this, chop his head off." And they claim that this is "Islam". Of course, such a guy is giving a stick to his enemy to beat him with. The Qur'an says in a number of verses: "Let the people of the Bible judge according to the word of God in the Bible. O Muhammad, you judge among the people according to the revelation which was revealed to you."

Islam is very simple. [Imam quotes Arabic verse. The translation is:]

"Muhammad, say: 'The truth has now come from your God: whoever wants to believe let him believe in it; whoever wants to reject let him reject it' [18:29].

That is what the Qur'an says. Could there be anything simpler than this? If you reject God, He does not want you. If you thank Him, he will reward you for that. Simplicity! We complicate religion.

Kufr (denial).

We have to analyze this term "kufr" to see what the opinion of the Muslim scholars is, so, at least, we know where we stand. It's very difficult for people to believe this, but, if you would like to know the exact meaning of kufr, look up the Arabic dictionary *Lisan ul Arab* wherein there are *four pages* about the meaning of the word *kafir*.¹²

Linguistically speaking, the term "kafir" means innocent. The Qur'an, in a certain verse, describes a scene of the Day of Judgment, in which the devil or *Ash-Shaytān* is saying, "...for, behold, I have always refused to admit that there was any truth in your erstwhile belief that I had a share in God's divinity"¹³. So the word *kafir* – as in this verse – can mean "innocent", linguistically speaking.

Another meaning for the word "kafir" is "to cover up". The *kafir* is called *kafir* because *kufr* covers his heart¹⁴.

¹¹ There is no god but God and Muhammad is His prophet

¹² The one who practices kufr

¹³ 14:22

¹⁴ 2:7, 45:23

¹⁰ Pharaoh

Linguistically, the word kafir also means “a farmer”. Why is a farmer called kafir? Because kufr means “to cover up” and the farmer covers the seeds with the soil – this is why he is called a kafir: he covers up the seeds with the soil. And Al-Qur’an Al-Karim says in this respect: [Imam quotes Arabic verse. The translation is:]

“...Their similitude in the Gospel is: they are like a seed that brings forth its shoot, and then He strengthens it, so that it grows stout, and in the end stands firm upon its stem, filling the sowers with wonder and delight...” [48:29].

In the Qur’an, three successive verses state:

1. “They who do not judge according to what God has revealed are *kafir*” [5:44].
2. “...And those who do not judge in accordance with what God has revealed are *dhālim*” [5:45]. *Dhālim* means “a tyrant against oneself”, or “aggressing on oneself”.
3. “...For they who do not judge in the light of what God has revealed are *fasiq*” [5:47].

Based on these three verses, some people, nowadays, declare all our Muslim governments to be *kuffar*.¹⁵ Why? Because they don’t rule by the Qur’an. Such people consider the first verse but ignore the second, and ignore the third.

Even those governments which claim that they rule by the Qur’an, don’t, in fact, rule by the Qur’an, because an Islamic government is not a government by rulers; an Islamic government is a government by Laws. For example, if the Qur’an were the Constitution of the United States, then you could call this country a Muslim country. Why? Because there is a system here. One president will go and another will come to abide by the law. The law is the law; under such circumstances, then, the system will be working and will be maintained. But in our Muslim countries, it is the individual rather than the law: if a ruler is assassinated or thrown out in a revolution, the next ruler will behead all those who supported the one before to finalize his system. This is not Islam.

Now let us consider some examples of ahadith: “I have seen most of the people of hell are women because they are *kuffar*.” What is the meaning of “*kuffar*” in this hadith? In this hadith, the word “*kuffar*” means “They deny their husbands’ goodness to them.” So what about those men who abuse their women? What about the man who breaks her ribs and sends her to the hospital? What about the men who deny

the goodness of their wives to them? Conversely, nowadays, you will find a type of woman who abuses her husband. Go to the emergency room in some hospitals and you will find a man stabbed, by his wife, with a knife. “If a man sleeps with his wife while she is in her monthly period, he is kafir.” That is a hadith. Another hadith says: “If you insult a Muslim you are kafir, and if you fight him you are kafir.” Then that means Iraq and Iran, and Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait and Egypt, and all those people who were fighting each other and fighting along with the Allies are *kuffar*. *Take it*. . . take it that way if you agree with that hadith! Another hadith says: “Anyone who will not satisfy his father is a kafir.” I think [Imam laughs] this will put us *all* in trouble – *everyone*, including me – we are in trouble. “Anyone who will not satisfy his father is a kafir.” Count with me all similar hadith in the context of kufr, and you will not find any Muslim at this time! So, don’t take things at face value.

The word *kaffāra* is taken from kufr also, and the word *kaffāra* means “a sort of penalty”. It is called *kaffāra* because it abolishes a certain type of sin such as the sin of making a false oath, or killing someone by mistake. In the case of a false oath, the person has to fast three days or feed ten poor people. That is called *kaffāra*. And it is called *kaffāra* because it “abolishes” the sin which he committed.

There are four types of kufr, as some Muslim scholars have said. *Kufr Inkār* and *Kufr al-Juhūd* both come under the category of the kufr of denial, *Kufr Mu’ānadah* which is the kufr of stubbornness, and *Kufr Nifāq* which is kufr of hypocrisy. What is the difference between these four?

Kufr Inkār is known as the kufr of denial, and it means that a person neither pronounces with his tongue, nor believes in his heart. He says there is no God; that is his open declaration. And in his heart, he doesn’t believe there is a God. This is the highest type of kufr and is the exact opposite of *īmān* (belief).

On the other hand, the Qur’an talks about another category of people as follows: “And thus it is: if thou ask them, ‘Who is it that has created the heavens and the earth, and subjected the sun and the moon to His laws?’ they will surely answer, ‘God’...”¹⁶ The Quran refers to these people as “*kuffar*” also, but this is not the highest type of kufr because they pronounce by their tongue that God is the Creator, and this is a manifestation of what is in their heart. So you cannot put this kind of people on an equal footing with that other type

¹⁵ Plural of kafir

¹⁶ 29:61

who deny the existence of God by their tongues, as well as in their hearts.

Kufr al-Juhūd. This is a type of denial, also. This type of kufr is a rejection or denial of the bounties of God and this is very prevalent. A lot of us do this. It is happening everywhere. If you have the bounty of sight, you have to be thankful for it, the bounty of hearing. . . . And you don't know the value of these things until you lose them. The opposite of this kind of kufr is showing gratitude and thanking God for His bounties which He has bestowed upon you. And the difference between this type and the first type is that the person admits in his heart that God granted him all these bounties, but he doesn't say it with his tongue. Instead, when he has achieved or accomplished something, he says: "I did this myself; no one else has a role in it; I worked very hard and, therefore, I made it." Imagine, if such a man had been blind, or deaf, or crippled and could not walk, how could he have achieved anything? So these are the bounties of God and it is hardly ever that a person truly recognizes the bounties of God which have been given to him.

Kufr Mu'ānadah or the kufr of stubbornness. Someone admits, "Yes, I know that you are right; I'm sure you are right, but I'll not abide by what you say." Abu Jahl knew in his heart that Muhammad was a truthful man, but he said he would not believe him. But, in his heart, he believed. That is called Kufr Mu'ānadah. Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle, believed in Muhammad and protected him, but, at least, as far as what is known to us through history, he did not declare or pronounce this at any time. But, deep within himself, he believed in Muhammad, otherwise why would he protect him? Why would he stand up for him against the kuffar or the Qurayshites? The reason is only because of stubbornness. And the Qur'an states that they know and recognize Muhammad as they know their own children, but some of them knowingly suppress the truth.¹⁷ This is Kufr Mu'ānadah.

Kufr Nifāq is the kufr of hypocrisy: One does not believe, in his heart, what he says with his tongue. It is stated in the Qur'an very simply and clearly: [Imam quotes Arabic verse. The translation is:]

"O Prophet! Be not grieved by those who vie with one another in denying the truth: such as those who say with their mouths, 'We believe', the while their hearts do not believe" [5:41]. This is called kufr, also.

These are the four types of kufr; so, as soon as you hear the word kufr, don't automatically construe it to mean someone who does not believe in God at all. It *could* mean that, or it could mean something else. This is the beauty of the Arabic language; it is like clay, you can shape it. There is no single word which has only one meaning. Sometimes one word has several meanings and every meaning in a certain context will be completely different. These are the four types of kufr; as the ulama¹⁸ have classified them, and this classification is reasonable and my reason accepts it.

Al-Fisq

The term *al-fisq* is a verbal noun. The substance of that term is *fa-sa-qa* – past tense; *yafsuqu* is the present tense. *Fāsiq* is the present participle. *Fusūq* is also a verbal noun from the same root. The general meaning is disobedience. So *fusūq* means disobedience and, normally, when it is related to God – a person is disobedient to God – then, that person is called *fāsiq*.

Again we come to those three Qur'anic verses I mentioned before:

"... They who do not judge according to what God has revealed are kafir" [5:44].

"... And those who do not judge in accordance with what God has revealed are *dhālim*" [5:45].

"... For they who do not judge in the light of what God has revealed are *fasiq*" [5:47].

These are three successive verses saying you are kafir, you are *dhālim*, you are *fasiq*; so what does each mean? And how can a person be all three at once? It will show you how the terminology in the Arabic language intermingles. "Fusūq" means that a person is disobedient; he does not obey the rules of God. When he exhibits disobedience to the rules of God in front of other people – since they don't know what is in his heart and because no one knows what is in the heart except God – the people judge him by appearance, so they may judge him as kafir: he is *fasiq* and kafir. He is also *dhālim* because he is a tyrant to himself and aggressing on himself by being disobedient. The three concepts intermingle. Some ulama of the Arabic language are of the opinion that "al-fusūq" means, in

¹⁷ 2:146

¹⁸ Scholars

its generality, to abandon the Law of God, or to deviate from the Truth.

Fusūq could mean *shirk billah*¹⁹ also. If you slaughter a cow and, instead of saying *Bismillā-hir Rahmān-ir Rahīm*,²⁰ you say “In the name of So-and-So king”, or something similar, then, that is the meaning of *أَوْ فَسَقًا أَهْلًا لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ*²¹. So, if you do not mention the name of God, but you mention the name of something other than God while slaughtering an animal, then it is *harām*,²² and because the Qur’an states, in this verse, that by so doing you are making a partner to God, so, therefore, the word *fisq* here carries the meaning of *shirk*.

In the Qur’an, sometimes, we think there are some perplexing verses. For example, who is *Iblees* – the one who refused to obey God? We normally talk about *Iblees* as if he has a special, separate identity. And what is *Ash-Shaytān*? What is their role? Was *Iblees* an angel or not?

One Qur’anic verse states: “We ordered the angels to prostrate before Adam. All of them prostrated except *Iblees*.”²³ This Qur’anic statement, from the point of view of the Arabic language, is *al musthna juz’ min almusthnamin*. *Al musthna* means “the excepted”, and, in this case, refers to *Iblees*. *Juz’ min almusthnamin* means “the other group, or the larger group, from which the exception is made”, and, in this case, refers to the angels. It means that “the excepted one” is a part of the whole from which the exception is taken. That would mean that one of the angels disobeyed God and became *fasiq*. But the angels are described elsewhere in the Qur’an as beings that never disobey God; they will carry out whatever order is given to them.²⁴ Therefore, it is impossible that *Iblees* is one of the angels. The latter part of this same Qur’anic verse [18:50] clearly states that *Iblees* was not one of the angels:

كَانَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ – he was one of the jinn. The jinn are a different kind of creation from the angels. Among the jinn are believers and disbelievers. So they are exactly like human beings, in this respect. And the Prophet, peace be upon him, was sent not only to the human beings but to the jinn also:

[Imam quotes Arabic verse. The translation is:]

“Say: It has been revealed to me that some of the jinn gave ear to this Qur’an and thereupon said to their fellow-beings: ‘Verily, we have heard a wonderful Qur’an, guiding towards a consciousness of what is right; and so we have come to believe in it. And we shall never ascribe divinity to anyone beside our Sustainer...’;²⁵ this shows that the message of Muhammad is not limited to humankind, but includes the jinnkind, also.

The jinn are a kind of beings of which we don’t know too much, except what we read in the Qur’an. In the Qur’an, there is a whole chapter called Sura Al-Jinn,²⁶ and in that chapter there is a verse which says: “Yet it is true that among us are such as have surrendered themselves to God – just as there are among us such as have abandoned themselves to wrongdoing...” So there are believers and non-believers among the jinn.

Nowadays, especially in our villages, they “use the jinn”, or, at least, that is what they say; they claim that they use the jinn. But, these things, in fact, are more psychological. There is no man who has power over the jinn. And I’ll tell you, forget about the religion, forget about the Qur’an, forget about the hadith, and let us talk logic. If man could utilize the jinn to get information, then George Bush²⁷ will be the first one to disband the CIA and utilize one of the jinn. He could just get two or three of those people who know how to utilize the jinn, and have them command the jinn to go to Saddam Hussain and get all his scud missiles. And the jinn have that ability because Sayyidna Sulayman²⁸ said to his soldiers: “Who among you can bring me the throne of the Queen of Sheba before she comes as a Muslim before me?” One of the jinn responded: “I am capable of bringing it ere you sit and stand up.” But, the idea is that if *any man* can utilize the jinn now, as some claim, then we need not spend all these billions on spy planes, and spy satellites, and all that business. We can get two, three of those people who can utilize the jinn to get us whatever we want. Logically speaking! And that will eliminate the deficit in the budget of the United States. But the idea that the power of the jinn can be harnessed is prevalent among the ignorant people who believe such things to be true.

¹⁹ Making partner with God

²⁰ In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace

²¹ 6:145

²² Prohibited [to eat that meat]

²³ 18:50

²⁴ 16:49-50

²⁵ 72:1-2

²⁶ Chapter 72 in the Qur’an

²⁷ The 41st president

²⁸ The Prophet Solomon

[Some one from the audience says, “What about Sulayman?” Imam responds:] Sulayman²⁹ – his was a unique case, because he was a prophet, and the fact that he had power over the jinns was one of his miracles. You cannot compare normal people to prophets. Sulayman could use the jinn because they were *taskheer*.³⁰ [Imam quotes Arabic verse. The translation is:]

“And unto Solomon We made subservient the wind: its morning course covered the distance of a month’s journey, and its evening course, a month’s journey. And we caused a fountain of molten copper to flow at his behest; and even among the jinn there were some that had been constrained to labor for him by his Sustainer’s leave. . . .” [34:12].

This is a special case because Sulayman was a prophet; but, not any normal person can claim to utilize the jinn.

What is Shaytān, or Iblees, who refused to obey God? Although we talk about Iblees as if he is a special entity, Iblees or Shaytan is a *description* – a *symbol* for evil. But see how we, the Muslims, think, nowadays, and, sometimes, we hear such things from the highest religious authorities: for example, when people stand up for prayer in a row, their foot should touch the foot of the one praying next to them. Therefore, if you pull your foot away, the person praying next to you will spread his feet further apart, or he will pull your leg back again. When you ask him why he did this, he replies “We don’t like the devil to stand up between us in that space.” Logically speaking, I should encourage that! If the devil is going to pray, that’s a fantastic thing! We should allow the devil to pray! But this will show you how the Muslims are thinking: the devil would occupy that space, and to deny him that space is the reason we should stand in prayers with toe touching toe. Okay. But he can stand on our foot! I am giving that example to tell you that there are a lot of books about Islam in which you will find something like that. I have heard a highly authoritative shaykh explaining Chapter Al-Jinn, verse number 8 which says, “And so it happened that we [the jinn/Shaytān] reached out towards heaven. . . .”: when he was asked how the Shaytān goes up to such a high place he said: “One Shaytān stands up on the shoulders of another Shaytān, upon the shoulders of another Shaytān, until he reaches up there.” That was his explanation! I have that tape – it is on a tape! But it shows you that not every word on a tape, not every word uttered by a shaykh, and not every book that you read should

be taken as Islam. Ar-Rasool, ‘*alayhi-s-salātu wa-s-salām*,³¹ put it very clearly: “Islam is what is acceptable to your heart and manifested in your action.” That is Islam. So, when it comes to Islam, use your brain. See if it is logical or not; see if it is acceptable or not.

A lot of people have come to me and said, “Oh, when I read hadith, and even. . . . Suppose that hadith does not make logical sense, but it can. . . . Still, it *could* be right and. . . . It could be having some other interpretation. . . .” I say, yes, the least you should do, when you come across a hadith that does not sound sensible or logical, is not to support it, or deny it. Stand up in the middle – just stand up in the middle – don’t support it, don’t reject it. But there are plenty of false hadith in our books, also. And believe me, the only thing preserving Islam is the Qur’an. There are no two Muslims who will differ with each other about the Qur’an, and that has preserved Islam and kept it intact. Otherwise what is happening in Christianity and Judaism will happen to us, also. We have 256 churches, nowadays. Everyone says I am saved and the rest are going to hell. And you know, I had a group here last night from Ada, Ohio, and it happened, by chance, that there were some Muslims students among them in that group, and that question was raised. The Muslim students asked: “Is it correct that the Prophet said: ‘The Jews split into seventy-one sects (*firqa*); the Christians split into seventy-two. My community will split into seventy-three,³² and all but one, will go to hell.’” This hadith. . . let me assume the Prophet said it, but every hadith was said in a certain context which is not necessarily applicable in all times. Which is that *firqa* (sect) that is supposed to be saved among the 73? Of course, everyone will claim *his* group; everyone claims that he is right and the rest are not. And that is why we have to be tactful when it comes to such things, because it results in one sect condemning another, and a third condemning the fourth, and that is, what I call, disorganization. Religion is a relationship between man and God. You worship God the way you see fit; I’ll never interfere with you. My role here is to say what I know, and what I am saying now could be right, or could be wrong; also, I could be influenced by a wrong book. And I leave it for you to use your logic to accept what I am saying, and mainly, “Actions are to be judged by your intentions.”

²⁹ The Prophet Solomon

³⁰ “Harnesses” [for him]

³¹ Upon him be prayers and peace

³² The “two-and-seventy or three-and-seventy creeds” is used as a metaphor for all heterodox and heretical sects.