

attachment to all literality, a rigid adherence to preconceptions that exclude love.

In the City of Man, where we live only for the self, we become part of a mob. God's commandments, when followed, keep us in the City of God. When violated they exile us to the City of Man. Those who place their faith in idols seek to flee from the hard demands of the City of God. They seek a larger self, a way to rise above the ordinary, a way to defeat these uncertainties and insecurities. Idols create sacred space around them. They assume the mantle of the divine. They appear to be God. The follower of idols engages in worship that appears to be real and authentic. And this transgression has a huge impact on society.

The crowd is the tool all idols use to perpetuate themselves. Crowds are always dangerous, for they enforce conformity, impart a feeling of power and false equality, focus attention on an object or person, and do not tolerate dissent. Crowds seek out idols to venerate. Any attempt to defy the crowd, which takes on a life and identity, can be dangerous. Dissenters, rare and infrequent, are ruthlessly crushed. The crowd experience offers a transcendence that is powerful and attractive.

**“As for those who took the calf for worship, surely wrath from their Lord and humiliation shall overtake them, and thus do We recompense the devisers of lies.” (Quran 7:152)**

They sought the divine but they sought it through the worship of a concrete manifestation – through a visible, tangible object, an idol – one constructed of ornaments that were a symbol of worldly wealth, power, and pleasures. They engaged in idolatry or association. Through this desire of theirs for a worldly, visible, ostentatious representation of the divine, they became deceived.

This deception came about through the action of Samiri, a person who was endowed with a degree of knowledge & insight into religion, but who used that insight to falsify rather than clarify matters. Together with Samiri they became inventors of a counterfeit religion – a counterfeit belief – a belief that was a direct antithesis to the purity of the revelation that was simultaneously manifesting on Mount Sinai. They sought what all idols cannot give: permanent rather than transitory meaning. A life dedicated to transitory happiness is

poisonous and impossible to maintain.

Counterfeit belief is one that imitates real religion, but it exteriorizes and materializes that which is above and beyond matter, that which remains unseen and that which is only represented by abstract symbols in real religion. It takes something which is, in its essence, non-material, super-sensory (beyond the senses), spiritual, of a higher order – and converts it into something of a lower order, one that is nevertheless compelling because it is immediate, tangible, material, worldly, easily perceptible. It makes a solidified (but gross and distorted) image here in this lower world and in doing so attempts to kill deeper understanding.

In order to do this it imitates real religion but it is an imitation that is gross, materialistic, feeble, and low – a burlesque of traditional religion. But for this false religion to achieve acceptance, it must have some element of truth in it. For a deception in any realm to succeed, it must have some connection, however tenuous, with a true source – just as a counterfeit coin must be struck in the image of a real coin even while the substance it is made of is of lower value than the original. And just as a counterfeit currency creates confusion and mischief once it's in wide circulation, the same is true with a counterfeit or deluded belief.

Idols make us feel important. Our idols give us a larger identity, allowing us to define ourselves through the group. We are told we no longer need to be insecure, uncertain and afraid. Our idols lead to spiritual death, a life so devoid of meaning that only slavish devotion to the idol keeps us from having to face our caverns of emptiness.

Idols consume us. Only the small, mundane acts of life, of kindness for family, friends and neighbours can save us. Mothers and fathers, who have put their careers on hold, know this power, however hard it is to lose the idolatrous identity and status that come with work. Those who stop to care for a sick relative know this. Sacrifice gives us life. It frees us from idols. But we must accept that such sacrifice can be hard and lonely. Sacrifice for others gives life and makes community possible. Sacrifice for idols leaves us with hollow, empty lives. The great danger for family life, in the midst of any society whose idols are pleasure, comfort and independence, lies in the fact that people close their hearts and become selfish.

**“Say: Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished! Verily, falsehood is ever bound to vanish.”**

# Idols

You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them, or serve them.

There is **No** other deity but **Allah**

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*As you continue to read this you will require a type of self-confrontation.* The danger of idolatry runs through every Biblical commandment & is the root evil of eternal Quranic damnation. Not to be forgiven. Warding off the allure of modern idols is difficult. God is not like the tangible things we can have faith in, not like our idols. Cell-phones. Idols comfort us, reassure us and empower us. Computers. They can be understood. Idols appear, when we worship them, to give us what we want. Money. It is easier to have idols. It is harder to trust in the unknown, in the darkness, in the voice answering Moses’ request for revelation on Mount Sinai.

God cannot be summed up in a name. Not even in ninety-nine. God cannot be described. Only idols provide this certitude. But watch...God seems to say, you will know me when you encounter me. You will see who I am in the profound flashes of self-knowledge that cut through darkness. In the hope that rises out of despair and suffering. In the loving touch of one whose heart is full of compassion. In a moral life where we resist the worship of ourselves so others can prosper.

God, the experience of God, is real. Poets, painters, composers and writers have struggled for centuries to express this mystery. It is what Prophets and religious thinkers, from Buddha to Moses, Jesus & Muhammad (peace), describe and revere. Those who sanctify their own power deny this mystery.

Like Pharaoh, claiming godhood. They promise that God can not only be known but also manipulated. False prophets, who say they can harness the power of God for us, lead us away from the worship of God into the corrosive idolatry of self-worship. Switch the channel from that TV evangelist who claims to speak on God’s behalf. And if the next channel carries more idolatry in the form of the opium of the times (movies & music videos), switch the TV O.F.F.

We are burdened, over-burdened, by household gods, no longer made of clay, but all promising to fulfill us. Our computer, with Yahoo chat, Live Chat, Meboo, Facebook, Twitter...endless chatter, little benefit. Our television, our job, our wealth, our social status, along with the brands we wear and the vehicles we drive, promise us contentment and inform our “identity.” These household gods seem to offer well-being, health and success. But all these gods create cults. And all these cults circle back to us, to a dangerous self-worship fed by forces who seek to ensnare us in idolatry.

The consumer goods we amass, the status we seek in titles and positions, the ruthlessness we employ to advance our careers, the ambitions we champion, the money we covet, the houses we build become our pathetic statements of being. We believe we need the idol to define ourselves, to determine our worth. We invest in the idol. We sell ourselves into bondage.

Listen to Satan’s vendetta against humans. Satan said: “O my Lord! Because You have put me in the wrong, I will make wrong seem good to them on the earth, and I will put them all in the wrong, except Your servants among them, sincere and purified.”

“Satan makes them promises, and creates in them false desires; but Satan’s promises are nothing but deception.”

Satan said: “Because You have thrown me out of the way, I will lie in wait for them on the straight way. Then will I assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left. You will not find in most of them, gratitude.”

We can see the idols others worship. It is hard to see our own. We depend upon our technological idols to give us order and meaning. We depend on our idols to define our place in the world. Idols give us a world that

appears logical and coherent. Idols free us from moral choice. Idols determine right and wrong. Idols render judgment. We follow. We conform.

When we see the hollowness of our idols, how they have led us to **waste** time & energy, when we smash these false gods and peer at the uncertainty of life, those who continue to revere the idol turn against us. We are expelled from the crowd/cult, stripped of its identifying power & left alone. It is easier to remain silent, to pay homage to a false god even after this god is exposed as a fraud. Those who worship idols deal harshly with those who become apostates.

The idols of nation, race, religion, ethnicity, gender and class are idols that demand exclusive and false covenants. These covenants exalt ourselves, as long as we only identify ourselves through these narrow definitions, and exclude others outside the circle. Idols are all about self-worship. The idols subvert the equality that protects us from tyranny and injustice, the respect that urges us to see the worth and dignity in all human life, even in those who oppose us. But fear of exclusion, of incurring the wrath of those who worship the idol, see us willing to justify the ostracism and even abuse of others.

We are joined together, Augustine wrote, as a community by our love of the same object. Human love, he wrote, is always directed either toward God or the self. There are no other choices. The other loves we have in life, the love of status, the love of possessions, the love of power, are always the love of self. We have two choices in life. We can embrace the City of God, where we struggle to love to the exclusion of self, a love that forces us to negate ourselves and our security to conserve, preserve and protect others, or we can embrace the City of Man where unbridled self-interest makes us all enemies. In the City of God, where we make hard and sometimes painful sacrifices for others, we become part of a whole. A vital step on this inner journey, is the smashing of idols. Idolatry, in this context, is not merely the worship of “graven images” but the blinding

**Satan’s Promises are nothing but Deception**