

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 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 & 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** real & authentic. 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 & 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 & identity, can be dangerous. Dissenters, rare & infrequent, are ruthlessly crushed. The crowd experience offers a transcendence that is powerful & attractive.

“As for those who took the calf for worship, surely wrath from their Lord & humiliation shall overtake them. Thus do We recompense the devisers of lies.” (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 & 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 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 & impossible to maintain.

Counterfeit belief is one that imitates real religion, but it exteriorizes & materializes that which is above & beyond matter, that which remains unseen & 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 & distorted) image here in this lower world & in doing so attempts to **kill deeper understanding**.

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 uncertain & 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. Adrift in such a godless universe, man must necessarily become a god...the worst of all idols.

Only the small, mundane acts of life, of kindness for family, friends & neighbours can save us. Mothers & fathers, who have put their careers on hold, know this power, however hard it is to lose the idolatrous identity & 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 & lonely. Sacrifice for others gives life & 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 & independence, lies in the fact that people close their hearts, become selfish.

Muslims don’t need mind-altering substances because we don’t need to escape from anything when we have prayer, patience & the wine of natural beauty that surrounds us. “Say: Truth has come & falsehood has vanished! Verily, **falsehood is ever bound to vanish.**”

There is no one thing whatsoever more plain & manifest, and more demonstrable, than the being of God. It is manifest in ourselves, in our bodies & souls, and in everything about us – in the heavens, earth, the air or seas. Yet how prone is the heart to call this into question. So inclined is the heart to blindness & delusion that it is prone to idol worship. Consider your heart. Has your “idols” become a toxic compound that has displaced God? Even with your pompous show...you feel a heavy burden. There is only **One God** who can wholly satisfy your cravings – **NOW** is the perfect time to meet Him again, or for the first time.

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. **Biblical Warning!**

Lead to spiritual death

Idols

Idols are **not** made out of brick, wood & stone alone. Idols are **not** statues of foreign religions.

Often, they are **found in our heart**. Idols **deceive**. 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 (idol worship) 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 & mischief once it’s in wide circulation, the same is true with a counterfeit or deluded belief. **What then is an**

idol? It is **anything** more important to you than God, **anything** that absorbs your heart & imagination more than God, **anything** you seek

to give what only God can give. There are two ways to commit idolatry: To serve a **false god** or to serve the true God in a **false way**.

Living without **ONE** God is a **spiritual peril** one can dismiss for now – but **not** forever. Life isn’t intended to be centered on our own egos,

needs or modern counterfeit gods – **Money, Sex & Power** – which are empty & lifeless like wood/bricks/pics. It is intended to be centered

on the One, Unseen God. Many “godly persons” have a religious idol – **moral self-righteousness** – feeling superior to other humans. De-idolize your heart! For the one

who knows the **difference** between outward conformity & inward transformation is the one who is on the road to **freedom** from the

counterfeit gods that control them.

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

The definitive statement that breaks all idols

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 & purified."

Evil is very subtle. Anything can serve as a counterfeit god, especially the very best things in life. Satan's vendetta against humans is subtle.

Popular culture is the new Babylon, into which so much art & intellect now flow. It is our imperial sex theater, supreme temple of the western eye. We live in the age of idols. The pagan past, never dead, flames again in our mystic hierarchies of stardom. Loud Music. Sensual Music videos. Hours spent "worshipping" in front of the TV, portable dvds, the Net. MP3/MP4 silently driving their message shutting out the rest of the world. Or live. Pulsating rhythms, pulsating lights, gyrating bodies, sweat glistening...males & females locked in an idolatrous experience. Mostly teenagers "lost" to life...running from real life. The concert experience resembling a "pseudo-spiritual" encounter. Thrusting you into the present & at its most exalted moment is "rapturous." Feelings of "transcendence" – a fool's paradise...real hell. **While the music is performed, the cameras linger savagely over the faces of the young girls. What a bottomless chasm of vacuity they reveal! Dull & idle!**

Then there is drugs – a misdirected attempt to escape the reality of emptiness. All the mind-altering illusory states: drugs, wild & loud music, partying. The sex, illicit & ugly. Threesomes/groupies/orgies...disgusting "humans"...reducing themselves to the lowest of the low.

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, even though He is closer to us than our jugular vein, is not like the tangible things we can have faith in, not like our idols. **Cell-phones (competing with God for our jugular vein).** Idols comfort, reassure & empower us. **Computers.** Idols appear, when we worship them, to give us what we want. **Money.**

It is easier to have idols. Easier to have a wooden heart & head. It is harder to trust in the

unknown, in the darkness, in the silence, in the voice answering Moses' request for revelation on Sinai.

God cannot be summed up in a name. Not even in ninety-nine. 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. 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 & writers have struggled for centuries to express this mystery. It is what Prophets & religious thinkers, from Buddha to Moses, Jesus & Muhammad (peace), describe & 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.

Universal culture now produces the lowest of the low idols (stars, TV "personalities" & pin-ups). The idol is **superficially desirable**, spectacular, witty, happy. It merely supplies a context for fantasy & therefore, instead of inspiring, **lulls**. The idol is based on the appearance of perfection; but never on the striving towards it.

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

"Satan makes them promises. Creates in them false desires. **Satan's promises are nothing but deception.**"

The consumer goods we amass, the status we seek in titles & 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. Most of us tend

to overspend on clothing, or on our children, or on status symbols such as homes & cars. Our patterns of spending reveal our idols. We sell ourselves into bondage. Sell ourselves into the clutches of Satan.

Satan said: "Because You have thrown me out of the way, I will lie in **wait for them on the straight way**. I will assault them from the front & back, from their right & 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 tech idols to give us order & meaning. We depend on our idols to define our place in the world. Idols give us a world that appears logical & coherent. Idols free us from moral choice. Idols determine right & 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 & 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 & class are idols that demand exclusive & 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 & injustice, the respect that urges us to see the worth & 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 & 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, the love of status, of possessions, 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 & our security to conserve, preserve & 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 & sometimes painful

Satan's Promises are nothing but Deception

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