

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful*

# Submitters Perspective

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## THE EGO AS A DRUG

I'm writing this article from a *Khutba* given a while ago by brother Faiz. It struck me as an excellent way to look at the concept of killing our egos, and something I hadn't really considered. But if we look at our ego as a mind-altering drug, just like alcohol and cocaine, it may help us find the strength and the tools to conquer it.

One of the first commandments God places in the Quran is in 2:54.

*...You must repent to your Creator. You shall kill your egos. This is better for you in the sight of your Creator.*

God tells us we must kill our egos. Yet in society today, we are encouraged to have a healthy ego. That it's good for us. Society says the same for alcohol—having a glass or two of wine is good for the heart. But it's not the wine that's healthy; it's a chemical in the skin and seeds of the grapes. We'd do much better to eat a healthy diet of fruits and vegetables, and stay away from the intoxicants. God acknowledges that there may be some benefit in intoxicants in 2:219 but He cautions: *their sinfulness far outweighs their benefit.*

It's the same with our ego. It is healthy to have some confidence as we face the challenges in our lives. But like drugs and alcohol, the ego alters reality. We quickly lose sight of the source of our confidence and begin to think that we ourselves are creating things and accomplishing things, instead of remembering that everything comes from God. Before long, we can drop God out of the equation altogether. We begin to see ourselves as clever and talented and wise. Then we begin to see ourselves as cleverer and more talented than another person and wiser than everyone else. We feel superior. And if you're superior what need have you for God?

As with intoxicants and gambling, Satan uses the ego as a means of division and strife, and worse, a way to draw us away from God.

*[5:91] The devil wants to provoke animosity and hatred among you through intoxicants and gambling, and to distract you from remembering GOD, and from observing the Contact Prayers (Salat). Will you then refrain?*

In order to resist the attraction of alcohol, an alcoholic will often turn to an agency with a proven track-record helping alcoholics, like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). He/she will use their resources, read the literature, go to meetings for support, and learn the skills needed to stay away from the poison.

We are all "egoholics." Our ego got us in trouble in our first life when we first failed to stand up for God against Satan and then refused to submit and come to earth as a dog or a tree or a slug. So the first step to recovery is admitting the problem. In AA, they stand up and say, "My name is .... and I'm an alcoholic." Everyone in the room acknowledges the person and understands where they're coming from. They all have the same problem. Well, my name is Lydia, and I'm an egoholic. What can I do to recover?

God has provided an abundance of tools for us to use in our fight to kill our egos. He doesn't just tell us to kill

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it and then leave us on our own. Just like AA, we have resources to help us in our struggle.

We have the Quran, our guide to salvation. We can go to meetings (studies) and gain support from other submitters. And it's important to turn to submitters for help. Every person on earth is an egoholic. Alcoholics learn that they must stay away from other alcoholics because it's easy to be dragged down. The same is true for submitters. We're told to ally ourselves with believers instead of disbelievers and "*You shall force yourself to be with those who worship their Lord day and night, seeking Him alone. Do not turn your eyes away from them, seeking the vanities of this world.*" [18:28]

God knows the help and support we require. And then he gives us the worship practices so we can find the skills needed to conquer our addiction. If we study the Quran, it gives us everything we need.

First we need to acknowledge that ego is a problem. In 2:87 God talks about people whose ego caused them to be arrogant toward the messengers.

*...Is it not a fact that every time a messenger went to you with anything you disliked, your ego caused you to be arrogant? Some of them you rejected, and some of them you killed.*

In 5:30 we learn that Cain's ego provoked him into killing his brother. So rejection, arrogance and killing are byproducts of ego. Not very healthy!

In 25:43 and 45:23 (same numbers in a different combination), God shows us that our ego can become our god, and once that happens we are lost.

*[25:43] Have you seen the one whose god is his own ego? Will you be his advocate?*

*[45:23] Have you noted the one whose god is his ego? Consequently, GOD sends him astray, despite his knowledge, seals his hearing and his mind, and places a veil on his eyes. Who then can guide him, after such a decision by GOD? Would you not take heed?*

God says: "Would you not take heed?" That means it's not too late. He could have banished us to hell after our first ego-driven offense of not upholding His absolute authority. He could have sent us to hell when we said we were strong enough to be human beings on earth. He could have thrown us away when Adam and Eve, representing us all, failed to obey His one simple order: "Don't approach this one tree." But God, in His infinite mercy, has given us one final chance for redemption. And the stumbling block to that redemption is still the same—our ego.

When we let our ego have control, we are diminishing our soul, our link to God. The practices that God has given us—prayers, charity, fasting—are all geared to diminish our ego and grow our soul. If we are reverent during our prayers, it means we're acknowledging that God is in full control and we want to submit our will to His. If we give charity cheerfully, with kind words and compassion, night and day, secretly and publicly, giving from the things we love, and giving during the good times, as well as the bad times, we recognize that what we have isn't ours—it's all from God. When we fast, especially on long hot days, we tell our body that it's not in control. We're doing this for God—not for God's benefit, but because God told us to and we submit to God's will.

We have two choices. We can allow our ego to control our lives and thus kill our soul. Or we can follow God's laws and do the practices that He has given us, and thus kill our ego. Satan works hard to encourage us to do the former. There are all kinds of instant gratifications

when we do. But the lasting benefits all come when we do the latter. When we recognize that the ego is a drug and therefore will provide temporary pleasure, we can resist its allure and look for the permanent happiness that God promises.

Drugs on this earth give a fleeting joy—a temporary sense of elation followed frequently by depression and a need for a bigger dose, more and more frequently. And because drugs, ego included, lead us away from God, they condemn us to spend eternity in the Hellfire. God, on the other hand, promises us joy in this world and eternal joy in the Hereafter. There's no drug that can come close to that.

*[10:63-4] They are those who believe and lead a righteous life. For them, joy and happiness in this world, as well as in the Hereafter. This is GOD's unchangeable law. Such is the greatest triumph.*

*[32:17] You have no idea how much joy and happiness are waiting for you as a reward for your (righteous) works.*

Lydia

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## Let the world know

### Quran placement project to libraries

By God's grace, we have placed over 2,000 English translation of the Qurans with public libraries across the United States, Canada and abroad. You can check the list of libraries the Qurans made available at the link below.

[http://www.masjiduntucson.org/let\\_the\\_world\\_know/](http://www.masjiduntucson.org/let_the_world_know/)

God willing, we are still looking for volunteers from the various communities to get in touch with the libraries to make sure that complimentary Qurans are placed with receptive libraries.

God willing, you can contact us by email at [info@masjiduntucson.org](mailto:info@masjiduntucson.org) if you are interested in contributing in any way.

## *Saving Paradise*

### *Art History in support of the truth*

*In fact, they never killed him, they never crucified him—they were made to think that they did. All factions who are disputing in this matter are full of doubt concerning this issue. They possess no knowledge; they only conjecture. For certain, they never killed him. (4:157)*

I am reading a book that is just wonderful. This book, called *Saving Paradise*, is more than just a book, it is an event. Its subtitle is *How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire*. Published by Beacon Press in 2008, it challenges the core of today's Christian faith that the crucifixion of Jesus saved the world.

The two authors, Rita Brock and Rebecca Parker, began traveling the Mediterranean world in search of art depicting the dead, crucified Jesus. In their Preface they share that they discovered that it took Jesus a thousand years to die—at least if early Christian art is any indication... Images of his corpse did not appear in churches until the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Why not? How could it be that images of Jesus' suffering and death were absent from early churches? What does this mean? It took them five years to find out.

Before the 10<sup>th</sup> century, depictions of Jesus are always of him alive in a beautiful world. The authors report finding his image as a shepherd, a teacher, a healer; and he is an infant, a youth, and a bearded elder, but he is never dead—not even once. Even when he appears with the cross, he stands in front of it, serene, resurrected. The world around him is ablaze with beauty. These are images of paradise—paradise in this world; not suffering.

The concept of an earthly paradise enjoyed here, in this life, matches very well with what we know from the Quran. For those who devote themselves to God, paradise begins in this world:

*Absolutely, GOD's allies have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve. They are those who believe and lead a righteous life. For them, joy and happiness in this world, as well as in the Hereafter. This is GOD's unchangeable law. Such is the greatest triumph. (10:62-64)*

But this concept is new to most Christians today, as is the thought that Jesus did not suffer for them. They have lost the teaching that those who devote themselves to God will not suffer:

*He said, "Go down therefrom, all of you. You are enemies of one another. When guidance comes to you from Me, anyone who follows My guidance will not go astray, nor suffer any misery. (20:123)*

For millennia Christians have been raised with the concept that Jesus Christ suffered horribly and died for their sins, and his sacrifice is their only means of redemption. This is at the very core of most Christian belief and is symbolized by the often very graphic agony of the crucifix. So for the authors of this book it was a tremendous surprise not to find this doctrine reflected in the very early art of Christianity.

They write:

We could not find a dead Jesus, not even one. It was just as the angel had said to the women looking for Jesus at his tomb, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead?' (Luke 24:5). 'He is not here' (Mark 16:6). He most certainly was not. (page x)

From Rome, we went to Istanbul and then to a remote part of northeastern Turkey where the crumbling remains of ninth- to eleventh-century monastery churches could be found upon high mountains. We failed to find even one dead Jesus. Returning to Italy, we lingered for several days in Ravenna to examine its beautifully restored fifth and sixth-century mosaics.

In the sixth-century St. Apollinare Nuovo Church, at the edge of the old city, we found the earliest surviving life story of Jesus depicted in images. Near the ceiling on both sides of the basilica nave, 13 rectangular mosaics marched from the chancel toward the main door. We examined each of the 26 panels closely. On the right wall near the chancel, an image of the Last Supper began the thirteen scenes of his Passion. At panel ten we encountered Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross for Jesus to Golgotha. We expected to see the crucifixion on panel eleven. Instead, we were confronted by an angel who sat before a tomb. The apparition spoke to two women swaying forward like Gospel choir singers. We too leaned forward in astonishment and remembered what the angel had said: "I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here" (Matt. 28:5-6). The remaining panels showed the risen Christ visiting his followers in the stories of doubting Thomas (John 20:19-29) and the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-43).

We found no Crucifixions in any of Ravenna's early churches. The death of Jesus, it seemed,

was not a key to meaning, not an image of devotion, not a ritual symbol of faith for the Christians who worshipped among the churches' glittering mosaics. The Christ they saw was the incarnate, risen Christ, the child of baptism, the healer of the sick, the teacher of his friends, and the one who defeated death and transfigured the world with the spirit of life. Why were we looking for the living among the dead?...[because] we were told that the crucifixion of Jesus saved the world. (page xi)

Of course the Quran makes it very clear that indeed no one can redeem us but God, and no one else can bear our sins:

*No soul bears the sins of another soul. Every human being is responsible for his own works. (53:38-39)*

As this belief is one of the defining doctrines of Christianity, not finding it depicted by initial Christians was truly astonishing:

After we investigated early Christian art, we stepped back, astonished at the weight of the reality: Jesus' dead body was just not there. We could not find it in the Catacombs or Rome's early churches, in Istanbul's great 6<sup>th</sup> century cathedral Hagia Sophia, in the monastery churches in northeastern Turkey, nor in Ravenna's mosaics. The mystery of its absence deepened. We searched as many sources of early Christian art as we could find; we studied with an expert on first-millennium art at the University of California in Berkeley, and we consulted several times with a distinguished scholar of Christian art [Professor David Wright]. After we realized that the Crucifixion was absent, we began to pay attention to what was present in early Christian art (page xii). . . . Paradise, we realized, was the dominant image of early Christian sanctuaries. . . . Not just paradise after death, but also paradise on earth. . . . Our modern views of heaven and paradise think of them as a world after death. However, in the early church, paradise—first and foremost—was this world, permeated and blessed by the Spirit of God. It was on the earth. (pages xiv-xv)

After 30 years of working in religion and theology, they say, "nearly everything we had previously understood about Christian history, theology, and ritual began to shift as we delved deeper into the meaning of paradise."

If a defining doctrine of Christianity is shifting might we not hope sometime soon to see Christians focus on the true teachings of Jesus?

I am so excited about this book, and I pray that the truth prevails in our lifetime.

*Laleh*

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## Anecdote

### A Little Boy's Temper

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the fence.

The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily, gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence. Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper.

The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone. The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said "you have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one."

You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there.

Make sure you control your temper the next time you are tempted to say something you will regret later.

*Author Unknown*

One of the traits of the believers is that they control and suppress their anger. Anger is part of our ego that we should learn how to tame in order to attain righteousness.

*[3:133] You should eagerly race towards forgiveness from your Lord and a Paradise whose width encompasses the heavens and the earth; it awaits the righteous,*

*[3:134] who give to charity during the good times, as well as the bad times. They are suppressors of anger, and pardoners of the people. GOD loves the charitable.*

*[42:37] They avoid gross sins and vice, and when angered they forgive.*

Awareness of our ego and how we feed it is very important. God willing, as long as we are aware of the anger as it arises, and let it go, consciously, in every moment, we have control of it. If we can't do this, we become a slave to our own ego. We should always ask help from God, like Prophet Moses did:

*[20:25] He said, "My Lord, cool my temper.*

Also, we should ask forgiveness from God when we forget and err.

*[3:135] If they fall in sin or wrong their souls, they remember GOD and ask forgiveness for their sins - and who forgives the sins except GOD - and they do not persist in sins, knowingly.*

*God Willing*

*24<sup>th</sup>*

## United Submitters Annual Conference

**July 31— August 2, 2009**

**Sacramento, California**



God willing, mark your calendars and start making plans for attending the Annual Conference of the Submitters.

God willing, the registration forms and hotel information are being mailed out to the subscribers of Submitters Perspective. In case you don't get the forms, or misplace them, you can find the information on the internet:

[www.masjiduntucson.org/conference](http://www.masjiduntucson.org/conference)

If you have any specific questions regarding the conference, email us at [info@masjiduntucson.org](mailto:info@masjiduntucson.org)

God willing, we are looking forward to seeing you all again and to meet new submitters.