

United Submitters International

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Happiness is Submission to God Alone

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Conference Highlights

The eighth annual conference of the International Community of Submitters took place in Phoenix, Arizona from August 20th to August 22nd. The conference was attended by close to 200 people and there were more than 20 nations represented. The organizers of the conference are to be congratulated for the wonderful job they did, as well as the participants who made great efforts to come from places as far away as Switzerland and India.

The format of the conference was similar to previous years. At the beginning of the conference, representatives from each community gave brief reports on their communities and provided information about projects and activities that they are engaged in to spread the message of worshipping God alone, based on the Quran only.

There were talks given throughout the days by brothers and sisters with periodic short breaks. In the evening after the talks, there were informal group discussions covering a range of topics of interest and concern to the community.

Also, in the evening, brothers K. Emami and Milan Sulc provided extensive information about the miraculous numerical composition of the Quran. Sunday morning brother Milan Sulc gave a more comprehensive workshop regarding the discoveries based on prime numbers and their indices. Readers interested in these discoveries are referred to the newsletter, Journal of Submission, primarily devoted to this topic, edited by Dr. Ali Fazely. He can be contacted at P.O. Box 80333, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, USA.

Another highlight of the conference was the beautiful Quranic recitation of the sisters Parivash and Parisa of the Bay Area. In addition to reciting Quranic verses for us at various points during the conference, sister Parisa also performed the call to prayer throughout the conference. This undoubtedly marks the first time in the history of Islam that the call to prayer for a large gathering has been performed by a woman.

Towards the end of the conference there was some discussion about the site for next year's conference. The community in Vancouver, Canada, has offered to organize it if accommodations can be arranged. We will let you know the location and the date of the next conference as soon as they are finalized, God willing.

Announcement

God willing, there will be a general seminar on October 15, 1993 at the University of British Columbia in the Student Auditorium at 2:00 pm in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. The speaker is Dr. Ali Fazely. The topic of his talk will be on the mathematical miracle of the Quran. After the talk, a panel discussion will be held.

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Submitters Perspective

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Parent-Child Bond

Most human beings have been on one or both ends of a parent-child relationship. Each and every one of us has been affected by this relationship, whether strong healthy bonding was established with both our true parents or we lack parent-child bonding with anyone. Even the elderly still carry much of the learning that took place during their early childhood. The learning that takes place during our early development becomes so much a part of our psychological makeup that it is difficult to distinguish which behaviours are within our nature (instinctive) and which are behaviors learned as a result of our nurturing process.

Children are impressionable. Bonding begins as soon as we are born. We begin seeking comfort and avoiding uncomfortable situations. As babies, we begin learning and bonding with those that give care and provide for us on a regular basis. Therefore, it is possible to bond with a parental figure, instead of a true parent. The process of learning begins at this time while we are barely aware of the world around us. That may be the reason why some of our learning extends so deep into our subconscious.

Actions speak louder than words. Children begin learning from the actions of their parental figures before they can communicate. Even after language acquisition, we continue to observe our parents' behavior and learn more from that behavior than from what we are told. There is a saying "Do as I say, not as I do." The act of admonishing a child while continuing in the same bad behavior not only conveys the message that the bad behavior

is acceptable, but that hypocrisy is admissible as well. As parents, we should not do anything we would not want our children doing. We have a responsibility entrusted to us by God, to be good examples for our children as well as teaching them right and wrong (31:12-19).

Learning during the nurturing process We learn most of our survival and socialization skills from whoever we establish this parental bonding with. General attitudes, fears, values, eating habits, communication skills, and how we relate to other people (including generosity or stinginess) are some of the behaviors we first learn from our parents. We also learn attention-getting mechanisms and self-esteem from our interaction within our family. This learning takes place as we observe the adults closest to us, often within our family, during our early childhood.

Learning from our parents continues into our childhood, but on more than just a perceptual level. More complex reasoning patterns emerge, but we lack the social maturity to inquire very much outside the security of our family. As we develop in childhood, other sources begin to provide information; we come in contact with more adults and we are better equipped to interact with our environment. However, if new information received contradicts what has been learned from our parents, it is easily rejected. "Because my mommy told me" is valid reasoning. Socialization skills can be tested as we interact more with others.

As we move into adolescence, some of the ideas learned from our parents start to be

called into question and modified as peers have an influence in our lives. However, many of the learned behaviors and ideas go unquestioned because they are so ingrained in us at this point.

Learning from outside sources. With independence, social maturity and greater reasoning comes another type of learning. We take in more knowledge from other sources as we interact more with others and the environment outside the family. This knowledge we can choose to accept or refuse. We can experiment and test concepts to gain information. As we develop into adolescents, this learning plays a greater role in our lives. This is the learning we try to use to surpass our parents. We use this learning to modify and change the bad habits that were learned from our parents. Each generation thinks it can be better than the one before by using this knowledge. A simple example would be replacing nonstandard speech patterns learned in childhood, by more widely acceptable speech patterns for better communication.

Under stress we revert to old ways. However, when we become angry, we revert easily to our earliest learned speech patterns. Likewise, no matter how hard we try to be better parents than our parents, when under stress we go back to the way our parents raised us. Therefore, an abused child often becomes an abusive parent and it takes much work to overcome this cycle. Frequently, when we are sick we resort to mother's old home remedies for what ails us. The learning from parent to child runs deep.

continued

Parent-Child Bond *cont'd*

Learning about God. Many of our ideas about God begin with our parent-child bond. Unlike other concepts learned during that time, thoughts on God are not directly relevant to our physical well being or our relations with other people. Religious ideas deal with a relationship between us and an unseen, intangible entity. How can we question and test them in adolescence? We can only take in new information from others and refuse it based on what we have been taught by our parents or modify our beliefs based on others' beliefs. Yet as adolescents, we are still with our parents and generally continue the same religious practices even if we may not fully believe as they do. If a parental figure's value system has spiritual well being as a low priority, a child may neglect or reject religion entirely in lieu of materialistic goals.

It is not until young adulthood that we really get the opportunity to practice what we as individuals believe. Some may give up their parents' religious beliefs to share the beliefs of the people that they identify with as they move out of the "nest." Still, most adhere strictly to what their parents believe, without question, because their parents' beliefs have become part of their inherent nature.

Too many conflicting ideas. With so many existing religious ideas, is it any wonder so few people try to seek the truth? Anyone trying to examine other systems of belief opens himself or herself to be inundated with mounds of confusing information. We know from the scripture that Abraham examined belief in the idols, the moon, and the sun before he discovered the One who created all (6:76-79). On the other hand, we have access to much more information on religion to consider.

This makes the mathematical proof within the Quran based on the number 19 a mercy from God for those few who open their minds to learn about Him (74:30-31). We are promised in the Quran that *God guides those who seek the truth*, but we must be willing to break with all the falsehood that we have already learned (5:16, 22:54, 24:46).

Choice must be made. A conscious choice must be made to learn about God

and to read His scripture to attain knowledge. Children who have been fortunate enough to receive the truth about God from righteous parents have an advantage, but they too must examine their practices and beliefs (17:36). Following parents blindly is never a substitute for belief, and is a form of idol worship (2:170, 7:28, 173, 37:70).

We also should be aware that even if we change our beliefs, it is so very easy to revert to our original practices when we are tested, just as we revert, under stressful situations, to what we first learned during our childhood. This may explain why God promises twice the reward to converts (28:54).

Honor your parents. "Honor your parents" is a commandment often found in the Quran after "Worship God alone" (2:83, 6:151, 17:23). It is only after we become parent ourselves that we fully appreciate our own parents. Parents give their time, energy, provisions and independence to take care of a dependent child. They give their years to help in their children's lives even after they have left and had children of their own. God is in full control of everything, including the family we were brought into, and we should appreciate Him for putting us with parents that would take care of us. However, if they advocate idol worship, we should not follow them, but continue to treat them amicably (6:174, 9:114, 17:23). As worshipers of God alone, we can be examples for our parents too. They may yet learn from our example.

Children are blessings. Parents should also realize that they do make mistakes, and always retain honest communication with their children. Children's frank questions often point out the fallacies in our complex thinking. Children are often included in the list of blessings (18:46, 71:12). Nevertheless, we must be conscious that children can also become idols (7:190, 63:9). So we must take care of our responsibilities to them as children, without neglecting our duties and worship of God. We know we can teach them the ways of righteousness and pray for God to guide them (2:132). We can also set an example of virtuous behavior for them. The rest must remain between them and God.

The strongest bond. Choosing to make a bond with God and trusting in Him establishes a stronger bond than what we have

with any parental figure. As parents or as children, we can take advantage of the closeness between family members in order to lead them to the same bond with God (31:22). For most of us, our influence is greater on those closest to us and they are more likely to listen than others we give the message to.

For those who believed, and their children also followed them in belief, we will have their children join them. We never fail to reward them for any work. Every person is paid for what he did. [52:21]

Donna Arik

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MORAL RELATIVITY VS. GOD'S LAWS

Let there be a community of you who invite to what is good, advocate righteousness, and forbid evil. These are the winners. [Quran 3:104]

I am an American with Iranian heritage who has been living in the United States since the age of four. One of the most significant aspects of becoming a submitter for me was the struggle to come to terms with the huge difference between the Western philosophies and culture I had been raised with and that which I had learned through the Quran. Like it or not, the education system, the media, and of course, the people you encounter have a tremendous influence on a person's thinking, at least on a sub-conscious level.

When I began attending university three years ago, I took advantage of the resources around me to help me understand and resolve the internal conflicts which had been occupying my mind. I read the classics, the works of great social scientists, books on women's studies, anything I could get my hands on. I started to develop a sense of isolation and frustration as I noticed that most of the intellectuals whose books were major influences on our present culture and ways of thinking seemed to completely ignore the soul in their research, analyses, and philosophies. Twentieth century science and the reason and rationality behind it found the soul a meddlesome and annoying thorn in its side. And so, they just ignored its existence.

In the 1880's, a philosopher by the name of Nietzsche changed the course of modern thought when he proclaimed to the world that "God is dead." With the burden of dealing with God and His mysterious ways off their shoulders, the wheels of intellectual thought began turning towards a more pragmatic and rational approach to explaining human nature and man's social structure. Sigmund Freud, whose theories are the basis of modern pop-psychology, was a great fan of Nietzsche. Psychology became a science where all aspects of human behavior would be understood and explained by man himself. The physical and mental regions of our mind would supposedly provide all the answers to the mysteries of human behavior. The soul and God did

not fit into the equation very well, and so, they were simply disregarded. Nietzsche's "discovery" that God no longer existed brought about a revolution in how we dealt with morality, ethics, and values. Without a God, there was no longer any absolute truth. Without truth, there was no good or evil. Without evil, there was no Satan. Everything became relative. We entered a period where nothing was black or white, but rather, various shades of gray. The way we were educated, the way social issues were dealt with, and the way standards were set in society were all becoming very vague and unstable. Without a social base of truth to rest upon, our society began to collapse.

The primary building block of any social structure is the family. The family begins with two: a man and a woman. Therefore, how the initial pair create their bond will manifest the growth and development of the family structure as well as the social structure. Unfortunately, when Nietzsche destroyed God and absolute truth, he also destroyed the concept of unconditional love and commitment. Without the shackles of religion to get in the way, so to speak, contemporary society proclaimed a new breed of sexual freedom never before present so visibly in man's history. Although there have been periods of great sexual promiscuity in the past, our modern media magnifies the impact it has on the society in a way that was not possible before. The sixties and the women's movement just made this sexual freedom more equal among the genders. Ironically, however, the outcome of women's sexual liberation only made it easier for men to get what they wanted from women while devaluing the woman's worth at the same time.

Today in society, a lot of issues deal with the idea of sex, yet none of the issues deal with the question of the morality of sexual activity out of a marriage. All we talk about is abortions, contraceptives, AIDS, venereal disease (VD), and teenage pregnancy, all physical by-products of our society's obsession. Where would Oprah or Donahue be without all the problems, misery, and wasted energies that they present on their talk shows? What amazes me is the amount of money and time dedicated to informing the public about the wide variety of social problems facing our

nation, yet so little is done to prevent these problems from occurring in the first place. But, let us remind ourselves that school teachers, politicians, and opinion leaders are afraid to take a stand for things such as abstinence from sex, saying no to alcohol, and obeying God's laws in a society where there is no tolerance for people with firm and absolute beliefs. In other words, free speech is encouraged as long as what you say has no spiritual, religious, or absolute morality connected to it. It is okay if you sit in class and expose in minute detail your physical urges as a homosexual, but God forbid you speak up about God or morality! After all, nobody likes a party pooper.

It is sad for me to observe my peers struggle through unnecessary hardships because they insist upon having casual sex, drinking, and focusing all their attention on how to gain the most pleasure in this life with the least amount of pain. When bad things happen to them, like getting in a wreck due to drunk driving, or getting pregnant, they do not look at their actions to see what they did wrong. Instead, they only reconfirm in their own minds how unjust God is and how they are just victims of society.

I have presented just one example of how disregarding the existence of God and our soul is destroying a potentially wonderful civilization. When economic analysts wonder why the U.S. workers are so unproductive, why our students are falling behind, and why top research positions are held by foreigners, we should remind them that it is hard to have an efficient and productive community when everyone is so wrapped up in their personal problems. Which brings me back to a single pair: a man and a woman. An act as seemingly insignificant as casual sex can add up to the decline of an entire civilization. I am not being dramatic. I just have eyes to observe the consequences around me every day. God knows us better than we know ourselves. Thus, we should take heed of even the most seemingly trite or irrelevant commandments in the Quran, because they are actually very profound words of guidance from God.

Parisa Parnian