

United Submitters International

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Happiness is Submission to God Alone

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Chief Seattle *continued*

shame, and after defeat they turn their days in idleness and contaminate their bodies with sweet foods and strong drink. It matters little where we pass the rest of our days. They are not many. A few more hours, a few more winters, and none of the children of the great tribes that once lived on this earth or that roam now in small bands in the woods will be left to mourn the graves of a people once as powerful and hopeful as yours. But why should I mourn the passing of my people? Tribes are made of men, nothing more. Men come and go like the waves of the sea.

Even the white man, whose God walks and talks with as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all, we shall see. One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover—our God is the same God. You may think now that you

own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the God of man, and His compassion is equal for the red man and the white. This earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator. The white too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Continue to contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

But in your perishing you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man. That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone. And what is it to say goodbye to the swift pony and the hunt? The end of living and the beginning of survival.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we agree, it will be to secure the reservation you have promised. There, perhaps, we may live out our brief days as we wish. When the last red man has vanished from this earth, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, these shores and forests will still hold the spirits of my people. For they love this earth as the newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. So if we sell you our land, love it as we've loved it. Care for it as we've cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you take it. And with all your mind, with all your heart, preserve it for your children, and love it... as God loves us all.

One thing we know. Our God is the same God. This earth is precious to him. Even the white man cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. We shall see.

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In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

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OUR GOD – ONE AND THE SAME

Those who disbelieved say, "If only a miracle could come down to him from his Lord (we will then believe)." You are simply a warner – every community receives a guiding teacher. (13:7)

We have sent you with the truth, a bearer of good news, as well as a warner. Every community must receive a warner. (35:24)

It is easy for many to overlook the full extent of what these verses mean. God gives everyone on earth some evidence that He exists or His system would not be just. With the communications networks and libraries that we have now, it is easy to forget that just a century or two ago there were a significant number of people who did not have access to the scripture.

The indigenous populations here in North America are an illustration of this case.

Some of what is known about Indian (Native American) beliefs echo verses from the Quran. The personification of inanimate objects such as the wind, the moon and the mountains that God ascribes to these entities in the Quran, is similar to the way Indians speak of the world around them.

We have offered the responsibility (freedom of choice) to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and were afraid of it... (33:72)

Do you not realize that to God prostrates everyone in the heavens and the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees, and the animals, and many people?... (22:18)

From the Quran, we understand that animals are much more complex than appearances would lead us to believe.

When they approached the valley of the ants, one ant said, "O you ants, go into your homes, lest you get crushed by Solomon and his soldiers, without perceiving." (27:18)

He did not wait for long. (The hoopoe) said, "I have news that you do not have. I brought to you from Sheba, some important information." (27:22)

And He created the livestock for you, to provide you with warmth, and many other benefits, as well as food. (16:5)

Indians have understood the interconnection between us and the animals for some time. To them, life is sacred, just as stated in Verse 25:68 of the Quran. Unlike their depiction in the entertainment industry, Indians are generally nonviolent, with noteworthy respect for other people and their surroundings.

He is the One who established gardens... Eat from their fruits, and give the due alms on the day of harvest, and do not waste anything. He does not love the wasters. (6:141)

Do not cheat the people out of their rights, and do not roam the earth corruptingly. Reverence the One who created you and the previous generations. (26:183-184)

However, most of what we are told about Indians is only second hand information. Many people of modern society know very little of the beliefs and history of the original occupants of this land. We do

know that these people, whom many consider to be polytheist, had the guidance to recognize the one great God who created all things. It is very likely that God sent messengers among the Indian nations at some point in time, but did not identify them in the Quran.

We have sent messengers before you – some of them we mentioned to you, and some we did not mention to you... (40:78)

The receiving of a messenger of God would explain the parallels between many of their beliefs and the Quran. As immigrants from European countries came to this land, they tried to convert the Indians without any acknowledgment of the truth among their existing beliefs.

Eventually the Indians, oppressed and defeated, were forced to turn over their land to the settlers. One such Indian tribe, the Suquamish tribe of the Northwestern United States (former Washington Territory), were forced to give up their land in 1854. Marking the occasion, Chief Seattle, the leader of the Suquamish tribe, delivered a speech which gives some insight into the Indians' beliefs.

The excerpts from Chief Seattle's speech on the next page show not only that the Indians may have had the belief in an Almighty Creator, but also that some had the wisdom to realize their God and the God of the "white man" was one and the same, a realization which many modern "whites" have not yet reached.

Donna Arik

Chief Seattle's Speech

[Chief Seattle was the leader of Indian (Native American) Suquamish tribe of the Northwestern United States. He gave this prophetic speech in 1854 to mark the transfer of their ancestral Indian lands to the federal government.]

The Great Chief in Washington sends words that he wishes to buy our land.

The Great Chief also sends us words of friendship and good will. This is kind of him, since we know he has little need of our friendship in return. But we will consider your offer. For we know that if we do not sell, the white man may come with guns and take our land.

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us.

If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man—all belong to the same family.

So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us.

So, the Great Chief sends word he will reserve us a place so that we can live comfortably to ourselves. He will be our father and we will be his children.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us.

This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you the land, you must remember that it is sacred,

and you must teach your children that it is sacred, and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lake tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. If we sell our land, you must remember, and teach your children, that the rivers are our brothers, and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother.

The red men has always retreated before the advancing white man, as the mist of the mountain runs before the morning sun. But the ashes of our fathers are sacred. Their graves are holy ground, and so these hills, these trees, this portion of this earth is consecrated to us. We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. He leaves his fathers' graves behind, and he does not care. He kidnaps the earth from his children. He does not care. His fathers' graves and his children's birthright are forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.

I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways. The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man. But perhaps it is because the red man is a savage and does not understand.

There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the unfurling of leaves in spring or the rustle of insects' wings. But perhaps it is because I am a savage and do not understand. The clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? I am a red man and do not understand. The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of a pond, and the smell of the wind itself, cleansed by a midday rain, or scented with the pinon pine.

The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath—the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same

breath. The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench. But if we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh. And the wind must also give our children the spirit of life. And if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where even the white man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we decide to accept, I will make one condition: The white man must treat the beasts of his land as his brothers.

I am a savage and do not understand any other way. I have seen a thousand rotting buffaloes on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them from a passing train. I am a savage and do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive.

What is man without beasts? If all the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected.

You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.

This we know. The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

But we will consider your offer to go to the reservation you have for my people. We will live apart, and in peace. It matters little where we spend the rest of our days. Our children have seen their fathers humbled in defeat. Our warriors have felt

God has made life sacred. From the very beginning, God told us that killing another human being is a gross offense. In the story of Adam's two sons given in the Bible and in the Quran, God informed us of the first murder known to a human being.

"His ego provoked him into killing his brother. He killed him and ended up with the losers" (5:30). "Because of this we decreed for the Children of Israel that anyone who murders a soul who did not commit murder or horrendous crimes, is as if he murdered all the people, and anyone who spares a life is as if he spared the lives of all the people..." (5:32).

God repeats His commandments for all the submitters in other verses also, 6:151 and 17:13-33.

"Say, come let me tell you what your Lord has really prohibited for you: You shall not set up idols besides Him. You shall honor your parents. You shall not kill your children from fear of poverty, we provide for you and for them. You shall not kill any soul—God has made life sacred—except in the course of justice. These are His commandments to you, that you may understand." (6:151)

Abortion as murder has been disputed among scholars who studied the scripture trying to identify the time when life begins, and also trying to divide pregnancy into periods when abortion may be acceptable and periods when it may not be acceptable. Before discussing the Quranic explanation of fetal development and the creation of a new human being, we must reflect on Verse 6:140:

"Losers are those who killed their children foolishly, due to their lack of knowledge, and prohibited what God has provided for them, and followed innovations attributed to God. They have gone astray, they are not guided."

Now let us start with the question of when life really begins during pregnancy. While the answer is found in Verse 22:5, the confirmation comes from our achievements in medicine and biology, where IVF (In-Vitro Fertilization) has proved to us the statement in 22:5. During IVF, a living sperm and a living ovum are allowed to mingle together in a special culture media. This results in fertilization, producing a living fertilized ovum. This living fertilized ovum cannot grow on its own to become a human being. It has to be injected into the womb, and only if it attaches to the womb, and becomes a hanging embryo and starts

Abortion is Murder

its nourishment will it develop into a human being. If it does not attach to the womb, it will be expelled out and pregnancy will not take place. It is that hanging embryo that God creates into a full term human being or decides to abort in the middle of pregnancy. This is exactly what God says in 22:5

"O people, if you have any doubt about resurrection, we created you from dust and subsequently from a tiny drop which turns into a hanging (embryo), then it becomes a bite size fetus that is given life or deemed lifeless (created or not created). We thus clarify things for you. We settle in the wombs whatever we will for a predetermined period. We then bring you out as infants, then you reach maturity..."

The time between the ovum getting fertilized and becoming a hanging embryo is only six to eight days. Then God says this hanging embryo becomes a fetus that is given life or deemed lifeless. We have to realize that there is virtually no time lapse between the fertilized ovum becoming a hanging embryo and the beginning of the next stage. The importance of this hanging embryo has been conveyed to us in the Quran. Sura (Chapter) 96, the first sura ever revealed to prophet Muhammad, was named by God *Al-'Alaq*, the Hanging Embryo.

It has also been argued that the first three months of pregnancy are not important and do not represent a valuable or viable stage in the life of the human embryo, and therefore abortion in the first three months of pregnancy will not represent a murder. This assumption not only disregards the teaching in 22:5 but also was built on a miscalculation taken from 31:14 and 46:15. Verse 31:14 states "We enjoined the human being to honor his parents. His mother bore him, and the load got heavier and heavier. It takes up to two years (of intensive care) until weaning. You shall be appreciative of Me, and of your parents. To Me is the ultimate destiny."

It is the expression in 31:14 of "up to two years" that was missed by those who miscalculated and misunderstood this verse and 46:15.

God enlightens us further by specifically pointing out to us the importance of the first three months of pregnancy by revealing two verses to protect this baby and his/her rights. In 2:228 and 65:4, we find

that not only are the first three months of pregnancy very important, but this growing embryo has rights that supersede his/her mother's wishes.

"The divorced women shall wait three menstruations before marrying another man. It is not lawful for them to conceal what God has created in their wombs, if they believe in God and the Last Day. (In case of pregnancy) the husband's wishes shall supersede the wife's wishes if he wants to remarry her. The women have rights, as well as obligations, equitably. Thus the men's wishes prevail (in case of pregnancy). God is Almighty, Most Wise." (2:228)

Here God is protecting the right of the fetus to have a father and to have a family. Therefore, the wishes of the father to have the family back together supersedes the wishes of the wife. This is a protection for the fetus who is being created during the first three months of pregnancy, and not, as it may appear, a protection for the man's right to have his wife back. The man's rights in divorce did not need to be protected. If the life of the fetus during the first three months of pregnancy were not important, God would have allowed these pregnant divorced women to have an abortion during the first three months so that they could go ahead with their life plans.

God made life sacred, which starts during the pregnancy from the moment the hanging embryo starts growing into a fetus. This is six to eight days after ovulation, or more than one week before a woman may suspect she is pregnant. In other words, by the time a woman suspects that she is pregnant, the life of her fetus has already begun.

It is God's mercy to give us the knowledge that life begins with the hanging embryo stage. Therefore, birth control during the six to eight days after ovulation or fertilization is permitted because this ovum or fertilized ovum, if not given life by God, will naturally be expelled during the menstrual period which follows that ovulation.

The victims of rape or incest have six to eight days to seek medical interference to prevent unwanted pregnancy. Remember that expulsion of the ovum or fertilized ovum is not an abortion. Abortion happens if the hanging embryo is expelled from the uterus. In the case of elective (intentional) abortion, this constitutes taking the life given by God.

Atef Khalifa, M.D.

Continued in the last page