



IDOLATRY

(Gr. *eidololatria*).

Idolatry etymologically denotes Divine worship given to an image, but its signification has been extended to all Divine worship given to anyone or anything but the true God.

Idolatry is the worship of an image, idea or object, as opposed to the worship of a supreme being. It is forbidden by

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some major religions such as the Abrahamic religions. Some religious authorities and groups have used the term to describe other religions apart from their own.

Idols were either designated in Hebrew by a term of general significance, or were named

according to their material or the manner in which they were made. They said to have been placed upon pedestals, and fastened with chains of silver or nails of iron lest they should fall over or be carried off (Isa. 40:19, 41:7; Jer. 10:14), and they were also clothed and colored (Jer. 10:9; Ezek. 16:18).

At first the gods and their images were conceived of as identical; but in later times a distinction was drawn between the god and the image. Nevertheless it was customary to take away the gods of the vanquished (Isa. 10:10-11, 36:19, 46:1; Jer. 48:7, 49:3; Hos 1.0:5; Dan. 11:8), and a similar custom is frequently mentioned in the cuneiform texts.

IDOLATORS WORSHIP IDOLS?

America is becoming more pagan and heathen every day. These spirits are replacing our beloved Christianity. The marks of paganism are idol worship, ritualism—religious but lost, ignorance concerning God. Spiritual darkness is the mark of paganism, (Eph. 4:18).

Did the idolators of Biblical times believe that the idols they worshiped were actually gods or spirits, or did they believe that their idols only were representations of said gods or spirits? The Bible does not make this clear, and thus apparently outlaws such practices and beliefs in either form (according to some interpretations).

Yehezkel Kaufman (1960) has suggested that the Biblical authors interpreted idolatry in its most literal form: according to the Bible, most idolators really believed that their idols were gods, and holds that the Biblical authors made an error in assuming that all idolatry was of this type, when in fact in some cases, idols may have only been representations of gods. Kaufman writes that "We may perhaps say that the Bible sees in paganism only its lowest level, the level of mana-beliefs...the prophets ignore what we know to be authentic paganism (i.e., its elaborate mythology about the origin and exploits of the gods and their ultimate subjection to a meta-divine reservoir of impersonal power representing Fate or Necessity.) Their [the Biblical author's] whole condemnation revolves around the taunt of fetishism."

However, Kaufman holds that in some places, some Biblical authors did understand that idolators worshiped gods and spirits that existed independently of idols, and not the forms of the idols themselves. For instance, in a passage in 1 Kings 18:27 [8], the Hebrew prophet Elijah challenges the priests of Baal atop of Mount Carmel to persuade their god to perform a miracle, after they had begun to try to persuade the Jews to take up idolatry. The pagan priests beseeched their god without the use of an idol, which in Kaufman's view, indicates that Baal was not an idol, but rather one of the polytheistic gods that merely could be worshiped through the use of an idol.

Orestes Brownson affirms that the pagans in the Hebrew Bible did not literally worship the objects themselves, so that the issue of idolatry is really whether one is pursuing a false god or the true God. ¹

IDOLATRY ETYMOLOGY

The word *idolatry* comes (by *haplology*) from the Greek word *eidololatria*, a compound of *eidolon*, "image" or "figure", and *latreia*, "worship". Although the Greek appears to be a loan translation of the Hebrew phrase *avodat elilim*, which is attested in rabbinic literature (e.g., Chul.,

13b, Bar.), the Greek term itself is not found in the Septuagint, Philo, Josephus, or in other Hellenistic Jewish writings. It is also not found in Greek pagan literature. In the New Testament, the Greek word is found only in the letters of Paul, (1 Pet., and Rev.), where it has a derogatory meaning. Hebrew terms for idolatry include *avodah zarah* (foreign worship) and *avodat kochavim umazalot* (worship of planets and constellations). The Bible has many terms for idolatry, and their usage represents the horror with which they filled the writers of the Bible [Adherents of Jewish faith maintain that the Torah is the literal and eternally binding word of G-d]. Thus idols are stigmatized "non-God" (Deut. 32:17, 21 [1]; Jer. 2:11 [2]), "things of naught" (Lev. 19:4 et passim [3]), "vanity" (Deut. 32), "iniquity" (1 Sam. 15:23 [4]), "wind and confusion" (Isa. 41:29 [5]), "the dead" (Ps. 106:28 [6]), "carcasses" (Lev. 26:30; Jer. 16:18), "a lie" (Isa. 44:20 et passim [7]), and similar epithets. Pagan idols are described as being made of gold, silver, wood, and stone. They are described as being only the work of men's hands, unable to speak, see, hear, smell, eat, grasp, or feel, and powerless either to injure or to benefit.

GOD'S POSITION CONCERNING IDOLATRY

Many protestant churches in America are boldly choosing to select images of Jesus Christ and Angels in their churches. Christian television has not helped to display as a model for Biblical expression of Jehovah's view of idolatry. One television ministry has a giant statue of an angel on their land while another has a giant statue of Jesus that can be seen for miles. What does the Word of God say about these things. Will these type of infringements of God's will make an impression on the true spirituality of the Word of God? "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him," (2 Cor 11:4).

He that cometh - Christ's own title, arrogantly assumed by the false teachers [*ho erchomenos*, (Matt 11:3, and Heb 10:37), 'He that is coming.' Perhaps he was leader of the party which assumed peculiarly to be "Christ's," (2 Cor 10:7; 1 Cor 1:12).

Preacheth ... receive - is preaching ... ye are receiving.

Jesus - the "Jesus" of Gospel history. He does not say "Christ," which refers to the office.

Another ... another, [*allon - heteron - heteron*] - 'another Jesus ... a different Spirit ... a different Gospel.' Another implies a distinct individual of the same kind; different implies one distinct in kind.

Spirit ... received [*elabete*] ... gospel ... accepted [*edexasthe*]. The will of man is passive in RECEIVING the "Spirit;" but it is actively concurrent with the will of God (which goes before to give the good will) in ACCEPTING the "Gospel."

Ye might well bear with him, [B reads *anechesthe*, 'When anyone preaches to you another Jesus, etc., ye hear well with it.' The 'well' thus is ironical: covert censure. But '*Aleph* (<START HEBREW>a<END HEBREW>) Delta G f g, *Vulgate*, support the English version reading, *aneichesthe*]. There would be some excuse for your conduct, though a bad one (for ye ought to give heed to no gospel other than what ye have already heard from me, (Gal 1:6-7); but the false teachers do not even pretend they have "another Jesus," 'a different Spirit,' and 'a different gospel' to bring before you, they merely try to supplant me, your accredited Teacher. It therefore is inexcusable that ye not only "bear with" but prefer them. ²

The Apostle goes on to challenge the church of Galatians who had fallen under a bewitching spirit that had completely blinded them from the truth. (Gal 1:6-9), "I marvel that ye are so soon

removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel : 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

BEWITCHING SPIRITS TODAY

African Christians have great understanding concerning the powers of idolatry. They know that demonic forces are behind the spirit of idolatry. One of my African friends spent the night in my home. She told me. “Pastor, I dreamed all night long about baby angels. Why do you think that I was having such dreams?”

“Evelyn, the Bible does not teach that there are baby angels. Let’s pray to see what God is saying.”

After prayer, Evelyn said, “I just came from a pastor’s home in another state. She had a collection of baby angels. She had thousand of the idols.”

“Evelyn, you must tell her.”

Later that day, the pastor that we had the conversation concerning her baby angels, called Evelyn. “You must come. I feel like I am dying.”

Evelyn immediately left to pray for the pastor. When she returned, she told me the following story. “We threw away hugh garbage cans full of baby angels. Afterwards, we prayed for the pastor’s healing. Jesus immediately healed her.”

IDOLATRY CAUSES SICKNESS

After evangelizing in a church, the pastor asked if the author would go to a lady’s home to pray for her. I’ll call her Mary. She was in the final stages of cancer, weighing about sixty-five pounds. Mary’s eyes revealed the terror that she was facing. All hope was gone. The doctor said that she had a couple of months to live.

I stood by Mary’s bed ready to pray but I could not address God. Finally, I began to scan the room to see what was hindering the anointing of God. My eye caught a statue of Buddha that was on a table. “That’s it!” I exclaimed. “I thought you were a Christian.”

“I am a Baptist.” She responded.

“What is that Buddha doing on your table?”

“Oh, that,” she said. “I just like it. I use it for decoration and I have five more in the house.”

“Well, I can’t pray for you, unless you remove them all.”

“Why?”

“The Bible warns believers to flee from idolatry. ‘For admonish is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry . Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king,’ (1 Sam 15:2). It was a very serious sin of iniquity in the Old Testament. God demanded repentance and that idol be destroyed. The Word of God says, ‘And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol , and burnt it by the brook Kidron,’ (1 Ki. 15:13). You cannot look at this transgression lightly. It is an abomination to the Lord and can bring a curse upon your household. The Bible discourages, ‘Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an

abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen,' (Deut 27:15).”

Mary gave instructions to her son to get rid of the idols. Then I led her in a prayer of repentance. She ask God to forgive her for having those idols in her home. To be honest, I did not feel anything unusual after praying for her.

However, several months later, ministering in the same church on the subject of idolatry. A lady came into the church and walked down to the front of the church. “Do you remember me?” she asked.

“Well, I don’t think I do remember you.”

“I’m Mary. About six months ago, I was dying of cancer. You and the pastor came to house to pray for me. You told me to remove all the idols of Buddha from my house. I had them removed and then you prayed for God to heal me. When I went back to my doctor, I was totally healed.”

You see, as Christians, you cannot afford to take part of having idols in your homes. These things bring sickness, confusion and spiritual blindness into your homes. Idolatry is still an abomination to God.

REBELLION AND IDOLATRY

“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king,” (1 Sam. 15:22).

[For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.] This is no translation of those difficult words, *kiy chaTa't- qecem meriy w^aaawen uwtraapiym hap^ttsar*. It appears to me that the three nouns which occur first in the text refer each to the three last in order. Thus, *cha Ta't-*, TRANSGRESSION, refers to *'aawen*, INIQUITY, which is the principle whence transgression springs. *Qecem*, DIVINATION, refers to *teraphiym*, consecrated images or telesms, vulgarly talismans, used in incantations. And *meriy*, REBELLION, refers evidently to *hap^ttsar*, STUBBORNNESS, whence rebellion springs. The meaning therefore of this difficult place may be the following: As transgression comes from iniquity, divination from teraphim, and rebellion from stubbornness, so, because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. All the versions are different,” (1 Sam 15:23).³

THE WICKEDNESS OF IDOLATRY

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” (Gal 5:19-21).

THE DECEITFULNESS OF IDOLATRY

One of the most serious sins in America is the wickedness of Idolatry. Americans

do not seem to be aware of the dangers of Idolatry. Idols have such oppressive powers over the minds of people that fall under the sway of the objects. There are idols made of wood, stone and today, plastic. However, television and movies have also created human idols. The human idols are most dangerous because they can talk and teach false doctrines under the inspiration of Christians are suppose to worship Jesus Christ and noone, or anything else. Christians only follow a person as she or he follows Jesus.

Recently, when several powerful Christian television stars fell into deep sexual sins, millions of disappointed Christian followers fell away from the Church. We are certainly required to respect our leaders but the Bible never instructed us to place them on pedestals above Jesus or obeying His Word. These are truly dangerous, perilous times.

THE POWER OF HUMAN IDOLS

Elvis lives though he is dead. Also, Marilyn Monroe has had a hard time dying. Some people seem to want to worship idols. But what about Christians? Do Christians worship Christian idols? What about young people and hard rock Christian bands? Think about children being subjected to fantasy movies?

The Word of God explicitly warns that just prior to the return of Jesus Christ, great apostasy, or “falling away” from the true Gospel, will occur on an unprecedented scale with the Christian Church.

Jesus also prophesied that many false prophets, such as those that plagued the Israelite nation would arise, men commissioned by Satan himself to seduce the unwary into the worship of false gods.

These deceivers, as we have already seen, will not only look like true believers, but even the message they bring will superficially sound like that of the Bible. And yet, as the Apostle Paul stated so clearly in (II Cor. 11:4), theirs is a “different Jesus . . . a different gospel . . . and a different spirit.”⁴

JOEL OSTEEN CHRISTIAN IDOL

When Joel Osteen, pastor of the largest Christian church in America, appeared on “Larry King live,” program that was aired June 20 2005, millions were shocked at Osteen’s weak testimonial concerning Jesus as the only way back to the Father. In fact, he openly revealed that he did not believe that Jesus as the only way to the throne of God. This is the most dangerous heresy to be unleashed upon the Church to date. That is, all pathways lead back to God. All religious people are equal. Yet,

this major denial of the Christian Faith by Osteen did not even seem to cause a small wink of the eyes of leaders in the Charismatic Church.

Here's a small sample of his interview with Larry King, **(Joel Osteen, "Larry King live," Aired June 20, 2005).**

Larry King: "Because we've had ministers on who said, your record don't count. You either believe in Christ or you don't. If you believe in Christ, you are, you are going to heaven. And if you don't know matter what you've done in your life, you ain't."

Joel Osteen: "Yeah, I don't know. There's probably a balance between. I believe you have to know Christ. But I think that if you know Christ, if you're a believer in God, you're going to have some good works. I think it's a cop-out to say I'm a Christian but I don't ever do anything . . . "

Larry King: "What if you're Jewish or Muslim, you don't accept Christ at all?"

Joel Osteen: "You know, I'm very careful about saying who would and wouldn't go to heaven. I don't know . . . "

Larry King: "If you believe you have to believe in Christ? They're wrong, aren't they?"

Joel Osteen: "Well, I don't know if I believe they're wrong. I believe here's what the Bible teaches and from the Christian faith this is what I believe. But I just think that only God with judge a person's heart. **I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don't know all about their religion. But I know they love God. And I don't know. I've seen their sincerity. So I don't know. I know for me, and what the Bible teaches, I want to have a relationship with Jesus."**

Absolutely astounding! This supposed to be a man sent to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Here he is on an international television program, boldly denying his call of evangelization of Jesus Christ, thinking his job on this earth is just to make people "feel good" about themselves.

Note: Joel Osteen has just denied his calling as a pastor and a minister of Christ. A man that cannot bring himself to say that Jesus is the only way to heaven should resign from the ministry (Jn. 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Acts 4:12).

The unbeliever, Larry King seemed to be amazed by Osteen's answers, so he pushed on to see how far Osteen would go. Osteen's denial went all the way. It was not an accident. His words came from a man devoid of the truth of the Christian faith.

Larry King: "But don't you think if people don't believe as you believe, they're somehow condemned?"

Joel Osteen: "You know, I think that happens in our society. But I try not to do that. I tell people all the time, preached a couple Sundays about it. I'm for everybody. You may not agree with me, but to me it's not my job to try to straighten everybody out. The Gospel called the good news. My message is a message of hope, that's God's for you. You can live a good life no matter what's happened to you. And so I don't know. I know there is condemnation but I don't feel that's my place."

INCREDIBLE! Notice, he preaches "that's God's for you." Who is the One that is missing from this man's message of "hope?" This interview shows a very confused "preacher" who thinks he's called not to tell people that Jesus is the only way back to God but to make them "feel good about themselves. How many will raise their hands in hell and shout his name as the gravest lie that they ever followed?"

Note: Jesus taught: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," (Jn. 3:18-19).

I could go on, but I won't. I believe that this interview with the pastor of the largest Christian Church is a spiritual barometer of the sick soul state of the Christian Church. Pastors world-wide should sink to their knees in repentance and ask God to

forgive us. However, recently when Osteen came to our town, the TICKETS WERE SELLING FOR \$18.00 TO GO SEE HIM. The event was sold out! However, you could go up on E-bay and get tickets that were being auctioned for \$500.00 per ticket! The local news cast described him as a preacher who was more like a rock star! This is truly human idolatry. May God have mercy.

The Bible says, (Matt. 10:33), “But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”

1. Brownson, Orestes Augustus (March 2004). Saint Worship and the Worship of Mary, 116, Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press. ISBN 1928832881.

2. (from Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved).

3. *ibid*, (from Adam Clarke's Commentary

4. Transference of Spirits, Dr. Pat Holliday, Ph.D.