

## Worshipping the Creation Instead of the Creator!

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*“Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever, Amen,”* Rom. 1:25. The Weymouth English translation, translated this part of the verse in these words, *“offered divine service to created things, rather than to the Creator.”* The New International Version renders it: *“worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator...”*

It is noteworthy that the above Scripture belongs to a much larger context in which the inspired writer outlined the process which takes one from genuine faith to the worst forms of immorality. For example, in verse 20 the sacred writer said of God, that *“His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”* Please note that in this verse he reasoned from the effect back to the **cause**. He mentioned *“the things that are made,”* (*“the creation”*) that they necessarily infer the existence of the **Maker**; that is, *“the creation”* affirms the existence of **the Creator**, namely *“God,”* as He is referred to in the preceding verse. Even as the existence of a house affirms the existence of its builder (cf. Heb. 3:4), *“the creation”* affirms the existence of the Creator. The inspired writer in our beginning text acknowledged that the people therein referred to initially recognized this simple truth; hence, he said in verse 21 that they *“knew God.”* However, he further stated that *“they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”* Hence, professing themselves *“to be wise, they became fools”* (v. 23). Then idolatry set in as they *“changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things”* (v. 23). Then things really began to deteriorate as they began *“to dishonor their bodies among themselves,”* v. 24), they *“worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator”* (v. 25), resulting in God giving *“them up to vile passions,”* with both women and men exchanging *“the natural use of that which is against nature”* (lesbianism and homosexuality), v. 27-28), and lapsing into all the sordid sins mentioned in verses 29-32. It is inevitable — once God, and faith in God, is eliminated within a given culture, human depravity sets in! This fact is clearly outlined in the Bible, and it has been repeatedly illustrated throughout human history.

Sadly, in today’s world, even among religious groups, there are many who are now worshipping the creature rather than the Creator (cf. Rom. 1:25). For example, the Sept. 18, 2019 issue of **the Washington Examiner** mentioned an incident which occurred at the Union Theological Seminary in New York (a Presbyterian Seminary founded in 1836). The article stated that *“students at Union Theological Seminary prayed to a display of plants set up in the chapel.”* Quoting from Twitter, the person explaining these actions, said this: *“Today in chapel, we confessed to plants.”* He further stated that *“together, we held our grief, joy, regret, hope, guilt and sorrow in prayer,*

offering them to the beings who sustain us but whose gift we too often fail to honor.”

A spokesman for the Seminary further explained that confessing to plants was “just one expression of worship here at Union.” Further alluding to “the incredible diversity of our community,” the spokesman said “One day, you may come in to find a traditional Anglican communion, another day you may enter into a service of Buddhist meditation or Muslim prayer, ... another, you may find a Pentecostal praise service of a silent Quaker meeting. We create a home where people can worship side by side, in traditions similar to and very different to their own. Through this process, we learn from our neighbors and discern our own faith more deeply.”

Keep in mind that Union Theological Seminary is a place where many are trained to be preachers, or clergymen, or reverends, or doctors, or whatever religious title they might choose to wear. Can you imagine being taught religion by so-called preachers who confessed their sins to plants, voicing to these plants their “grief, joy, regret, hope, guilt, and sorrow in prayer,” and praising these plants as “the beings who sustain us??” Frankly, I would expect permanent residents of an insane asylum to show more sense than this! But such is what happens when people try to reason God out of existence, which inevitably results in their replacing the true God of the Bible with their own gods, whether it be plants, idols of their own creation, or whatever else comes to their imagination.

Other examples of such nonsense could be cited. For example, we now have in existence the **Birth Strike** Movement, which is endorsed by some modern Millennials who “don’t want to reproduce because we know that the earth can’t handle it.” Such individuals are very vocal about standing for the “rights of mother earth,” while denying any sense of responsibility to “*our Father in heaven*” (Matt. 6:9), from Whom comes “*every good gift and every perfect gift*” (Jas. 1:17), and to Whom they must “*give account*” (Rom. 14:12) in that last day! They thus seek to honor *the creation*, while completely ignoring any obligation to **the Creator**, and often even denying His very existence!

Idolatry is another example of people giving honor to the Creation, or to created things, rather than worshipping, honoring, and serving the **Creator**. For example, while Moses was in the Mount receiving the ten commandments from God, the children of Israel approached his brother, Aaron, saying “*make us gods,*” at which time Aaron said to them “*Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me,*” Ex. 32:1-2. They responded accordingly and Aaron took an engraving tool and made a molded calf, and they began worshipping and offering sacrifice to the molten calf, praising it and saying “*This is your god, O Israel, that brought you up out of the land of Egypt,*” Ex. 32:3-8. They were worshipping a “*god*” which a human being (Aaron) had fashioned from the earrings they formerly wore! But they were not praising Jehovah God Who had miraculously delivered them from the land of Egypt. Is it any worse for people today to pray to a growing plant than for Israel to worship a lifeless god of their own making? Then, too, we think about the futility (and stupidity) of idol worship when we read Isaiah 44:14-17. In these verses, describing the foolishness of idolatry, the prophet mentioned a person who cuts down a tree, and takes some of it to “*warm himself,*” and some of it to bake bread to eat, and takes another portion of the tree he cut down to make “*into a god, his carved image,*” and falls down “*before it and worships it, prays to it and says, ‘Deliver me, for you are my god!’*” How utterly foolish! Sadly, to a large degree,

the history of the Israelite people is a history of a people caught up in idolatry — idolatry which often plunged them into gross immorality and captivity. Perhaps one of the benefits of the 70-year Babylonian Captivity is the fact that they were largely (and finally!) cured of idolatry.

God had warned Israel not to “*go after other gods,*” declaring that He is “*a jealous God,*” and that any tendency toward idolatry would cause His “*anger*” to be “*aroused*” against them (Deut. 6:14-15). But they ignored His warnings and suffered the dire consequences. But God is infinite in all His attributes, and He does “*not change,*” Mal. 3:6, which means that he is still a “*jealous God.*” Hence, any attempt to enthrone self and to dethrone God incurs His wrath. The only place He will accept in our lives is **first** place (Matt. 6:33)! To attempt to worship the creation, a plant, money, or any god of our own making is nothing short of idolatry.

One of the sad lessons we learn from history is that, generally speaking, we **don't** learn from history! We often ridicule the idolatry of previous generations, while in different ways (but in principle) we could be repeating the same mistakes! Perhaps a good question which each of us should ask ourself is this: “is the person I see in a mirror when I first get up in the morning an idolater?” Remember this: Nothing in all of God's creation should take priority over the Creator!

\*\*\* —B. Witherington