

WORSHIP

The Christian's Highest Occupation

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP - MEN, ANGELS, AND NATURE

Now let us consider some other things which we are specifically warned not to worship.

(2) *Men.*

“And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man” (Acts 10:25-26)

“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy . . . And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God” (Revelation 22:8-9)

Not only is the worship of idols prohibited, whether they be literal or figurative, material or immaterial, but we are also warned against the worship of men. Cornelius the Roman Centurion, was taught this lesson. When Peter, in response to his invitation, came to his house, we read that Cornelius made to worship at the feet of Peter. Peter, however, forbade him saying: **“Stand up; I myself also am a man.”**

There is always a subtle danger of taking one's eyes off God and getting them on man; of allowing the seen to obscure the unseen and of permitting the temporal to eclipse the eternal.

God's word to Israel was: **“Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?”** (Isaiah 2:22).

Our Lord's own words to His disciples were even more forceful: **“Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils,”** etc. (Matthew 10:17).

It is not for nothing that we are warned: **“The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe”** (Proverbs 29:25).

By nature man has ever been a hero worshipper. He has always been prone to give to man the titles, praise, honor, worship and glory which he denies to God Himself. Part of God's indictment of man is that he has **"changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever"** (Romans 1:25).

The day is coming when the world, which despised, rejected and crucified the Son of God, will welcome as its king, **"the man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all the is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God"** (II Thessalonians 2:3-4).

The number of this man of sin is deeply significant, for it is the number of a man, six hundred, three score and six, or 666.

In the meantime, man largely fills the horizon of the world's thought.

They think in terms of humanity: what man is, thinks, says and does: instead of in terms of Deity: what God is, thinks, says and does.

At the head of one huge religious system of Christendom is a person to whom the title of "holy father" is actually given. In other circles the titles of "reverend," "right reverend," "very reverend," and "most reverend" is commonly addressed to men. The title, **"reverend"** is only found once in the Authorized Version, and it is reserved for God alone. We read: **"He sent redemption unto His people. He hath commanded his covenant for ever: Holy and Reverend is his name"** (Psalm 119).

Elihu's words are particularly appropriate in this connection, for he said: **"Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away"** (Job 32:21-22).

One wonders what Elihu's reaction would be today when he heard men addressed as: "holy father," "reverend," "right reverend," "very reverend," and "most reverend!"

Neither do we have any warrant whatever for addressing prayers to men or women and, least of all, to a few so-called "saints," who have been dead for years. The believer is directed to pray to the living God alone, through the sole mediation of Christ, as guided by the Holy Spirit, through the Word. Our Lord addressed these words to His audience: **"How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"** (John 5:44).

Of these same people it is recorded: **"They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God"** (John 12:43).

The worship of men, whether alive or dead, is thus directly forbidden by God, as also undue reverence paid to man, together with the use of flattering titles, appropriate only to Deity. Like Peter, the Christian must firmly take his stand on the issue and boldly affirm: **"We ought to obey God rather than men"** (Acts 5:29).

(3) *Angels*

“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind”
(Colossians 2:18)

- Angels and spirit beings, created by God to fulfil His purposes and accomplish His service: **“Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:”** (Psalm 104:4).
- They are described as “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1:4).

As created and intelligent beings, they worship their Creator: **“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing”** (Revelation 5:11-12).

These angels are classified in various orders. We read of:

- **“Michael, the archangel”** (Jude 9);
- The **“angel Gabriel”** (Luke 1:19, 26);
- The **“cherubim and seraphim”** (Genesis 3:24; Isaiah 6:2);
- The **“host of angels”** (Revelation 5:11-12);
- The **“thrones, dominions, principalities and powers,”** all of which were created by Christ (Colossians 1:16).

The study of angels is most interesting and instructive, for they have played a large part in the Divine program in the past. Though unseen to human eyes, they are active now in the present, and shall be associated with God’s purpose in the future, as is clearly indicated in the Book of Revelation.

The apostle Paul had to combat the false philosophy of Gnosticism, which taught that Christ merely belonged to a higher order of angels, and was not the unique Son of God, equal and eternal with the Father and the Spirit. He wrote: **“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head [Christ]”**
(Colossians 2:18-19).

We must keep in mind that angels, however great, wise and powerful, are only created beings. The worship of them is absolutely forbidden by God. In the light of this, it seems strange to hear people addressing prayers to them and crying: “Michael, help us!” or: “Hear us, O Gabriel!”

Prayers addressed to angels are therefore a direct violation of the expressed will of God as seen in His Word.

(4) *Nature*

We hear a great deal today about certain people who are called: “nature worshippers.”

Such people affirm they do not desire to attend “Divine worship in a building made by human hands;” or to read and study a book called the Bible; but much prefer to take a walk in the country, in order to “worship the god of nature.”

As an aid to their devotions, many of these devotees take a fishing rod, others a set of golf clubs, etc. One may see these “worshippers” at their devotions by the hundreds each Sunday! In fact, to many, a “Sabbath day’s journey” seems to consist of going around the golf course three times!

While we may rightly admire the beauties of God’s handiwork in nature, which combines to reveal His wisdom, power and eternal Godhead; yet to worship His creation is folly in the extreme.

God has anticipated this tendency in sinful man to allow creation to obscure the Creator.

“And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto Heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of Heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole Heaven. But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day”
(Deuteronomy 4:14-20)

In spite of these plain words, we read that Israel turned aside from the God of Heaven to worship the sun god, Baal, and paid the price for its apostasy by being taken into captivity (I Kings 18).

Amongst the pagan people of the world today, there are still people who worship the sun, moon and stars. David had the right view point when he said:

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained: what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him? . . . O Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8:3-4, 9).

Job referred to the heathenish custom of nature worship that obtained in his day when people, on looking at the sun, kissed their hand as a token of their worship of it:

“If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much; If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above” (Job 31:24-28)

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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