

EXCERPTS FROM

JULY - SEPT 1990

THE LINK

North Road Chapel (Evangelical)

BIDEFORD

Internet Edition

AFTER THIS MANNER....PRAY YE
(A Study in the Lord's Prayer)
PART 11

This is a continuation in the study of the sixth petition,
"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION." (Matt.6:13)

Following the last article, questions may well arise such as, "Why does God suffer His children to be buffeted by Satan?" Or, "Why does He allow them to be put to such risk?" Surely His own honour and glory is at stake! These are some of the points to be covered in this article.

First, we must understand that in ALL things God, in His infinite wisdom, always has holy ends in view.

Augustine said: "He who is not tempted is not tested." The word 'tempted' or 'temptation' in the Old and New Testaments in their original Hebrew and Greek mean, 'to examine', 'to try', 'to test', 'to prove'. Now as far as the Devil is concerned, he attempts to DECEIVE. His sole motive is to bring down, and to overthrow. However, God, who is SOVEREIGN and gives Satan this liberty, is examining, or trying us.

Thomas Watson the Puritan states: "Temptation is a touchstone to try what is in the heart." Temptation with all its subtlety and deception is of the great adversary, but the proving and examination aspect is of God. A most clear example revealing both these sides to temptation is given in the Scriptures. "Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face."(Job 1:9-11)

Job is a hypocrite says the Devil; self-interest and material possessions are the motives for his worship. See

how Thou hast blessed him, but take away those blessings, then see how he will react! "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord."(Job 1:12) This verse tells us that GOD GAVE SATAN THE AUTHORITY TO ASSAULT JOB. Every blessing which God had bestowed upon Job was now put into the power, or hands of Satan. He could do just as he pleased, even to attacking Job's health (cf. Job 2:1-6), but the Devil must not take his life; that was the one restriction.

In all this Satan had one objective, it was to bring Job down, and to cause him to curse God to His face. But why put Job at such risk? Indeed, why does the Almighty seem to put His own honour in jeopardy? The honour of Almighty God is NEVER imperilled. "The wrath of man shall praise Thee; the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." (Psa.76:10)

God sent the Devil from His presence with frightening power and authority to TEST Job, in order that PROOF might be given to both demons and men that here was a man of faith and true godliness. "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."(Job 1:20-22)

It was GOD WHO TESTED but He used Satan to TEMPT, and by it Job was PROVED and God was GLORIFIED. In addition, the apparent logic of the Devil stated in Job 1:9-11 was shown to be utterly false. This is always the case with him for he speaketh only a lie. He is the great deceiver, there is no truth in him.

The first two chapters of the book of Job give amazing insight into the unseen world, and what goes on behind the scenes. Here is revealed on one hand the ABSOLUTE

SOVEREIGNTY of God and on the other the DESTRUCTIVE MALICIOUSNESS of Satan. Though these be two quite distinct and diverse operations yet the Almighty, ALWAYS in control, has one objective in view: the EXAMINATION and TESTING of an individual.

In all this we have in mind particularly the temptations of the believer. None are exempt. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." (1 Cor.10:13) No one is unique, all suffer temptation in a common way. The best of men, or the strongest of characters cannot shut their hearts away from temptation. This is the way their faith is to be proved.

Let us ever remember that the emphasis of the word "temptation" in the sixth petition is upon enticement to sin. Elijah may have shut the heavens by prayer, but he could not shut himself away from the temptation to give up. Job was tempted to curse God; Peter to deny Christ. Let none be so foolish as to say I would never curse God, I would not deny Christ, for such temptation is COMMON to man, and such a day of testing may one day come to us. Was not Christ Himself tempted to deny His Father in the same way? The Devil saith unto Him: "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." (Matt.4:9) Yes! the Devil even endeavoured to persuade Christ to worship him, and so deny the God of heaven. If the old serpent hesitated not to approach the Incarnate Son on this issue, let us all banish from our minds the thought that we could never be tested on such a vital point.

It is very frightening to think that we are exposed to such a monster. But this is not the complete picture. At the right hand of sovereign majesty, whence all TESTINGS issue, we have an Advocate and a Great High Priest. He was tempted in all points like as we are, (all that are common to man), yet without sin. (Cf. Heb.4:15) "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb.2:18)

"Touched with a sympathy within,
 He knows our feeble frame:
 He knows what sore temptations mean,
 For He has felt the same." Isaac Watts

"He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye." (Zech.2:8) Heaven is fully aware when Satan makes an approach to us. God is over and above him. The control and authority is in heaven, not the pit. Hence that word: "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." (1 Cor.10:13) As the Devil goes forth to do his foul work it is with the perfect knowledge of the Godhead, and immediately does HE, Who ever liveth there at the right hand of the majesty on high, commence to INTERCEDE FOR US. Part of His wondrous work is to SUCCOUR them that are tempted.

It is an interesting study to list the names given to Christ, and those given to Satan, and to mark in every instance the sharp contrast.

THE DEVIL

CHRIST

Apollyon or Devourer (Rev.9:11)	A Saviour (Lk.2:11)
The Strong Man (Matt.12:29)	The Mighty God (Isa.9:6)
The Accuser (Rev.12:10)	The Advocate (1 Jn.2:1)
The Tempter (Matt.4:3)	The Consolation (Lk.2:25)
The Prince of Devils (Mk.3:22)	The Son of God (Jn.10:36)
The Power of Darkness (Col.1:13)	The Son of Righteousness (Mal.4:2)
The Prince of this World (Jn.12:13)	The King Eternal (1 Tim.1:17)

These acute contrasting terms forcibly bring to us the truth: "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." (1 Jn.4:4) "If God be for us who can be against us? " (Rom. 8:31) However, this is a subject of great complexity, therefore it must be fully examined.

The Apostle John wrote: "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." (1 Jn.5:18) "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not." This statement

refers to verse 16 of that same chapter which speaks of 'a sin unto death'. Those born of God sin not in this way, 'but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.' How can this line up? What is the explanation? Precisely as it was with Job. Satan can only go so far. He cannot touch in a lethal way, he cannot destroy. His power is within limits appointed by God. Doubtless he would have ruined Simon Peter on that fateful night in the judgment hall, but no! for Christ had prayed for him. (Cf. Lk. 22:32) The Devil is in chains, he may have great power, but he can only go as far as his chain allows. If Satan's power was according to his malice not one elect soul would ever be saved. But praise God! great enemy though he is, he is a CHAINED enemy.

John Bunyan in his profound allegory of the Pilgrim's Progress, in the section where the two pilgrims, Mistrust and Timorous, had so recently turned back, depicts Christian approaching the PALACE BEAUTIFUL late one evening. Bunyan writes: "I saw in my dream that he (Christian) made haste and went forward, that if possible he might get lodging there. Now before he had gone far, he entered into a very narrow passage which was about a furlong off the porter's lodge, and looking very narrowly before him as he went, he espied two lions in the way. Now, thought he, I see the dangers by which Mistrust and Timorous were driven back. Then he was afraid, and thought also himself to go back after them, for he thought that nothing but death was before him. But the porter at the lodge, whose name is Watchful, perceiving that Christian made a halt, as if he would go back, cried unto him saying, 'Is thy strength so small? FEAR NOT the lions, for they are CHAINED, and are placed there for a TRIAL of faith where it is; and for discovery of those that have none: keep in the midst of the path, and no hurt shall come unto thee.' Then I saw that he (Christian) went on, trembling for fear of the lions, but taking good heed to the directions of the porter; he heard them roar, but they did him no harm."

The believer need not fear the roar of the tempter, frightening as these encounters might be, and very troublesome as it is to be constantly molested by such a foe. But temptation is NOT SIN and if the child of God, like Christian, keeps straight in the centre of the pathway, deviating neither to the left or the right, and certainly not stopping to dialogue with the adversary; rather with eyes fixed, 'Looking unto Jesus' (cf. Heb.12:2), 'Pressing toward the mark' (cf.Phil.3:14), that saint will discover that although the lion will roar, and indeed cone very near, yet God has anchored his chain just that little bit short, so that he can NEVER DESTROY. "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor.10:13)

To be continued

W.H.Molland.

"False teachers are men-pleasers. They preach more to please the ear than to profit the heart.
False teachers are notable in casting dirt, scorn and reproach upon the persons, names and credits of Christ's most faithful ambassadors.
False teachers are proclaimers of the devices and visions of their own heads and hearts.
False teachers easily pass over the great and weighty things both of law and gospel, and stand upon those things that are of the least moment and concernment to the souls of men.
False teachers cover and colour their dangerous principles and soul-postures with very fair speeches and plausible pretences, with high notions and golden expressions.
False teachers strive more to win men over to their opinions, than to better them in their conversations.
False teachers make merchandise of their followers."

Thomas Brooks

CRITICISM, CENSURE, CONTROVERSY!

There seems to be a growing tendency on the part of a good many Christians to shy-away from engaging in any of these exercises, and it has become an almost accepted fact that not to be critical, etc., is a mark of Christian maturity and spirituality. The truth of the matter is, it can be the very opposite, and a dangerous sign that our Christianity is more humanistic than Divine, and more rationalistic than Biblical. Let me hurriedly add, of course, that neither criticism, nor censure, nor controversy is to be "entered upon lightly or unadvisedly." Be that as it may, however, they can never be expelled from our Christian thinking or behaviour - nor must we ever be intimidated from exercising such things in the manner that the Word of God demands from us as believing men and women.

The very first consideration lies in the fact that the Word of God calls us to be "imitators of God as dear children." There are two facts regarding our relationship to Christ that are inescapable: the first is that He is our Saviour, and the second that He is our example. He can never be our example in any real meaningful way until He is first our Saviour. But once we have embraced Christ as our Saviour, we are automatically obligated to look to Him as our example in all things. This includes the above-mentioned areas of controversy, censure and criticism.

As far as our Saviour's life in this world was concerned, it would be no exaggeration to say that it was one, long drawn-out controversy, where He repeatedly censured and delivered numerous words of criticism. Even the most casual reading of the gospel accounts will bear this out. His woes on the Pharisees, His warnings against false doctrines, His purging of the Temple precincts with a whip and with all the words that accompanied that action. It is impossible to read the life of Christ without seeing this aspect as one of the chief characteristics of His life. It should also be noted that the bulk of the Lord's criticism, censure and controversy involved the issues of false religion and falsified truth! That is a very telling

fact. Indeed, our Lord spoke out against sin in all its forms and fashions, but nowhere more so than in those areas where sin masqueraded in the guise of religion. Our Lord took seriously the fact that false doctrine poisoned the souls of men, and so, He was quite willing to criticise and censure, and enter into controversy - not only with it, but with those who propagated and spread it. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees;" such words are the very hallmark of Christ's ministry; and they are words full of kindness and consideration for the souls of men and women. To be "Christ-like" is to be like the Christ whom the revealed Word of God sets before us, for we have no other guide whatsoever to show us what Christ on earth was like. We may not resort to our own interpretations or imaginations for an image of the Christ of Whom we are to be "imitators." The Scriptures are they "which testify" of Him, and the Scriptures show our Saviour plainly as One quite prepared and determined to speak and act in the way that the situation demanded. Until all heresy, false religion, and soul-destroying error is removed from the earth, we see little alternative for those who profess to be the children of God but to follow that path. We may not do it recklessly and without regard to the whole of the Word of God to our lives; but to imagine that we are NOT to do it is to indulge in a dangerous disregard of what Christ was, and to open the door to the vague possibility that perhaps Christ was wrong in what He did along those lines!

Let me just mention the normal kind of response to the above statements before we take up smother one or two considerations. Once we begin to cite the Lord's behaviour along these lines, it is very often met with the argument that the Lord on earth was "perfect," therefore, although He did criticise, censure and enter into controversy on such matters, because He was perfect, then He would have done it in a perfect manner, which we cannot do. We are still sinners, therefore, we cannot criticise, judge censure - whatever - in that perfect manner, so we may not do it at all. The problem with that approach, of course, is that we are sinners in everything that we are called to

do as "imitators" of Christ. We are called to LOVE, even as Christ loved. But because our sinnership, of necessity, must keep us from loving perfectly, as Christ loves, does that mean that we are not to love? The same may be said of our service, our prayers, our worship - our everything. There is nothing that we can do perfectly as Christ did: yet, we are still called to do all things that Christ did. The imperfections of the performers are never to be made a reason for not endeavouring to perform in those things to which we are spiritually and Biblically obligated. The Lord's call to us embraces every facet of our lives: "Follow Me."

There are a few other considerations related to the whole question: considerations - apostolic, historical, and practical. Perhaps, the inescapable precedent that we see in our Saviour should say it all. At the same time, we can in no wise overlook the whole of the Word of God that follows on from the days of Christ upon earth, and again, the most casual reading of any of the epistles will show the continued stance that had to be taken by the Lord's servants. The epistles of Paul, the epistles of Peter; James, Jude - the epistles of John, "that disciple whom Jesus loved." It is John, by the Holy Spirit of God, who gives us the very directive we are to follow when it comes to those who deny "the doctrine of Christ;" "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." Can this be the apostle of love? If so, do we imitate his love, as he obviously imitated the Saviour's love? When we can obliterate from the apostolic writings all the warnings and anathemas contained in them against "damnable heresies," then we may think it safe and right to abandon this aspect of our duty and calling.

And what might we say with regard to the past history of the Church, and the present activity of the Devil? Like ourselves, those who went before us were fallible men, but for all that, we stand on many of the liberties and privileges which they dearly bought for us, and bought for us through entering into controversy with error, and

delivering their censures and criticisms against it. We may be eternally thankful, under God, that such as William Tyndale thought it worthwhile to be critical of that religious system that refused to allow the Bible to be given to men and women in their mother tongue, to deliver his censures against it, and to enter into controversy with all the powers that be, not counting his life dear.

And what of the Devil? Can you think of anything that would better suit the Devil than a situation where error is never exposed or heresy never criticised? One of the prophetic complaints of Isaiah 53 is contained in those searching words: "He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." Very simply, the eternal Saviour of our souls, "despised" through heresies and errors spoken and propagated about His glorious Person and Work, and yet the professing people of God found in that position where they cannot, or will not, stand forth to "esteem" His precious name. Surely "religious" voices crying out that Christ was never born of a virgin, that Christ was never such a One in Whom was no sin, the only exclusive Saviour of souls, that Christ, indeed, was only the figment of the imagination of a few deluded fishermen in Judea. All that clamour of voices, and more; so-called "religious" voices; voices from within denominational structures that are readily accepted as valid and efficient in the eyes of professed evangelical souls; the voices of Professors, Pastors and people of such. All those voices raised in criticism and censure of our Redeemer's name, and yet no voice to be raised in turn! Surely the Devil must be pleased enough with what has come to pass.

W.J.Seaton

"Controversy in fact is one of the conditions under which truth in every age has to be defended and maintained and it is nonsense to ignore it."

J.C.Ryle

FESTAL DAYS AND THE LAW OF GOD

PART 2

Is the celebration of Festal Days, such as Christmas and Easter, a violation of the law of God?

In the early sections of this study the validity of the law is being emphasized, that the Decalogue of Exodus 20:1-17 is forever binding. The first and second commandments are particularly pertinent to this subject. "THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME. THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE." (Ex.20:3,4)

In Part 1 it was established that idolatry is A PRINCIPLE, it is the thoughts and ideas of man taking precedence over the mind of God. Consider this hypothetical illustration:- A man moves into a fresh area where he is a complete stranger. He wants a place of worship to attend and to become involved, and so he visits a number of places in the locality to test them out. After a month or so he is heard to say, "I like the Church in such and such a street, that is where I shall settle, they seem to be WITH IT. The people are jolly and friendly; the music is lively, and they have a good youth movement. The officers appear to be SWITCHED ON as to what the people want in this age, and the preaching is short and pithy. There is a light atmosphere about the place - nothing sombre or heavy." Such a man has disclosed at once that he is controlled by the principles of idolatry. He is not vitally concerned that the truth of Holy Scripture is preached and practised in all its FULNESS. His concern is for the inventions of man within the Church; it is the ADDED EXTRAS which are important to him. "OTHER GODS BEFORE ME."

It is because so many who profess to be Christians are looking for this kind of thing that more and more places of worship cater for them. In consequence keen competition is seen as to which Church can put on the best show. The reasoning and the motivation soon become - 'the Church down the road does it, so we must'. In fact, we must try and do

ONE BETTER or we shall not get the people. Indeed, we might well lose the ones we have if we do not move with the spirit of the age.'

This is the high road to Apostasy, in fact it IS APOSTASY because it is a violation of the very first commandment of God. Said our Lord concerning the Godward aspect of His holy law, this is the FIRST and GREAT commandment, cf. Matt.22:37-38.

In the final analysis concerning matters spiritual ALL must come under one of two headings. It is either, "GOD HAS SAID," or "I THINK." When a person takes the course of their OWN THOUGHTS, inevitably will they distance themselves from the Word of God. They will not WANT to consult the Scriptures, or to hear ministry on the subject concerned. If they do, they will put their own interpretation upon it in order to try to cover up the pre-determined choice and course of their own inclinations.

The subject of Election and Predestination will serve as a glaring example of this approach. How many are there who say they could never believe in a God Who chooses some, and passes by others. What is going on in that person's mind? Such a person is not concerned with what God has said in His Word, that person has his OWN IDEAS about the matter; his thoughts take priority over God's thoughts. This is the very principle of idolatry, it is most sobering and far reaching; and as we look more specifically into the second commandment it becomes more alarming.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments." (Ex.20:4-6)

Within these words is set out clearly one of the consequences of obedience and disobedience. Our attitude to the law of God not only affects us, it will also affect our children. Parents who have a high regard for the mandate of Holy Scripture and who train their children accordingly, must never be looked upon as hard or rigid, for they are doing them the greatest kindness they could possibly do upon earth. The future life and blessing of the child is crucially involved in this matter. More concerning this will come out later.

The first commandment binds us to the worship of the TRUE GOD - No other Gods before Me. The second commandment binds us to the worship of the true God in the TRUE MANNER - No graven image. It is no exaggeration to say that we live in a day when the second commandment is almost entirely overlooked. The next statement in all probability will startle the reader, nevertheless it is true. Most professing Christians today hold the ROMANIST view of the second commandment.

The Romanists believe that the Bible is the Word of God, yet in their places of worship one finds numerous images, crucifixes, statues of the virgin, and so on. If one asked a devout practising Romanist how they, who profess to believe the Bible, could bow before an image in worship, the reply would be: "Ah, but we do not worship the image. The image is but a HELP in the worship of God. There is a great ADVANTAGE in our having these things around us." In all fairness it must be said that many of these folk genuinely THINK this way. Notice the phraseology - they THINK this way.

The same could be said of the Buddhist, the Moslem, or any other religion; their images, idols, relics, and shrines, are but A MEANS which THEY have SET UP whereby they are

helped to worship their unseen supposed deities. However, let it be said the Romanists would not have a statue of Buddha before them. They would say that was ANOTHER god;

but to have a statue of Christ, the virgin, or a cross is not another God, it is all A PART of the Christian religion. In this way do they merge the first and second commandment into one. They claim to worship the God of heaven, they have no other gods before Him. All their paraphernalia is but helping them in the carrying out of their worship. This of course is wrong. The first two commandments are distinct, and their meaning cannot be blurred in this way.

It must be plainly stated that the Romanist is in no way alone in this. The invention of anything which a MAN may THINK to be helpful in worship, if it is not found in the Scriptures is a transgression of the second commandment. The first commandment is concerned with WHO; the second with HOW.

It is important that the wording of the second commandment be carefully registered. The majority of people seem to think that an idol, or idolatry, centres around wood, stone, or metal images. The Scripture is not worded in this way, it says: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any GRAVEN image."

We must not forget that the Decalogue but summarizes broad Divine principles which are given throughout the Bible. The word PRINCIPLE meaning, a rule of ACTION, - that which is firmly established in the MIND; a tenet on which CONDUCT is founded. Men and women act according to principles established in the mind. The operative question is - where did these tenets come from?

The important word in the second commandment is GRAVEN - a "graven image." The basic underlying thought is, anything which man has CARVED OUT. The Christian is not to use anything in worship which he or she has carved out.

A sculptor is one who chisels and carves, and so moulds an image. There is an art involved in this work. The sculptor is EXPRESSING HIMSELF in that which he is doing. The same

applies to an artist; as he paints so he puts his IDEAS and his THOUGHTS into a tangible form. Now a heathen image is nothing more than the work of a human sculptor. Die man responsible chisels and moulds his image according to what he THINKS his god R3, or OUGHT to be like.

That is sheer idolatry, says the reader! Yes, but wait! Many who profess the name of Christ are no different, for they have carved out in their minds, and built up an image of God which is totally different from the God of Holy Scripture. In consequence their understanding and concept of the Almighty is according to the IMAGE which has been moulded by their own thoughts - that which they THINK God is, or ought to be. This is termed in the Scriptures VAIN IMAGINATIONS, which we are commanded to cast out. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor.10:5)

The word 'imagination' is derived from the word 'image.' It is defined as "a fanciful opinion;" "the mental faculty that forms images from impressions." The definition given by Alexander Cruden in his concordance is "corrupt reasonings," that is, the THOUGHTS of corrupt minds rather than the Divine revelation of Holy Scripture.

The Christian is never to go outside Holy Writ. If we do, we shall use our own imaginations. By doing this we invent our own God - one that is different from the God of the Bible. We have carved out an IMAGE. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." (Rom.1:21-23)

The depraved mind of man can think up the most grotesque things, so that his appreciation of God is completely different from the God Who is revealed in Scripture. Our THOUGHTS can so change the glory of the uncorruptible God that we have an image of Him in our minds which is not unlike to a corruptible man. This is all too common today. Men think they are clever when they bring the eternal God down to a human level. Many preachers do it, they over simplify, bringing profound truth down to little more than a spiritual nursery rhyme. They argue that God must be so presented that the natural man can understand and appreciate Him. This is a nonsense. Man, apart from regenerating power will never understand spiritual truth. Man has to be lifted - yea RAISED UP, not the Almighty God brought down!

Men who profess themselves to be wise in their modern approach, are fools. What is more, they have CHANGED the GLORY of the uncorruptible God. They have created in their own minds, and in the minds of those they teach, AN IMAGE. What has happened is, they have left the REAL TRUTH and turned to their own THINKING; by so doing their foolish hearts are darkened. True light is then shut out.

This is a tragedy, for when the light is excluded, people just cannot SEE the truth. The image in THEIR MINDS holds sway - they worship and serve the creature more than the Creator. The creature being that image which THEY have CARVED OUT - their thoughts, and not God's Word. Instead of "Thus saith the Lord" they have said, "But I THINK." In a nutshell, they have designed their own god.

The second commandment binds men to a prescribed worship. Nothing is left to the imagination, or to further invention. All such is idolatry, although people may still claim to be worshipping the true God. Israel did this at the foot of Mount Sinai.

The Golden Calf was an AID to worship, an advantageous EXTRA as they thought. It would draw the people together,

it was something which they would enjoy. Before that molten image Aaron built an altar and made a proclamation saying, - To-morrow is a feast unto the LORD, cf. Ex.32:5. Incredible we say! Yes, but we have the self-same thing all around us today.

The people of God must be alert to this. It may not be a Golden Calf but we have the self-same principle of MAN'S THOUGHTS and INVENTIONS in worship, which is IDOLATRY. There are plenty of modem Aarons. The big names not only in Christendom at large, but also in many evangelical and reformed circles, building their altars around extra Biblical inventions which they have allowed into their Churches. All these idolatrous practices they pretend to sanctify by proclaiming that it is in honour of Christ and for the furtherance of His cause.

There are many ministers and Churches whose practices prove that they have idolatry right in their own camps. Whilst this remains the case preaching on the Golden Calf, or mention of the Regulative Principle, is to their own condemnation.

IDOLATRY IS A PRINCIPLE. It is anything which is of man's invention or imagination. Indeed, it is anything which is not according to the Word of God.

To be continued.

W.H.Molland

"There is no fool that saith in his heart there is no God, but he sets up something in his heart as a god.

There are as many carved images of God as there are minds of men, and as monstrous shapes as those corruptions into which they would transform Him.

Men do not conceive of God as He would have them, but He must be what they would have Him, one of their own shaping."

Extracts from 'Practical Atheism'

S. Charnock

ZEAL

Zeal is a subject, like many others in religion, most sadly misunderstood. Many would be ashamed to be thought "zealous" Christians. Many are ready to say of zealous people what Festus said of Paul: "They are beside themselves, - they are mad." (cf. Acts 26:24)

What is zeal in religion? It is a burning desire to please God, to do His will, and to advance His glory in the world in every possible way. Zeal was pre-eminently the characteristic of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself. Of Him it was written hundreds of years before He came upon earth, that He was "clad with zeal as with a cloke," and "the zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." His own words were: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." (cf. Isa.59:17; Psa.69:9; Jn.4:34) Read all the history of what He was from the beginning of His ministry to the end. Surely if there ever was one who was all zeal, it was our great Example - our Head - our High Priest - the great Shepherd of our profession, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If zeal be true, it will be a zeal according to knowledge. It must not be a blind, ignorant zeal. It must be a calm, reasonable, intelligent principle, which can show the warrant of Scripture for every step it takes. The unconverted Jews had zeal. Paul says, "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." (Rom.10:2)

Zeal will make a man hate all those practices which God hates. Is not this what you see in Phinehas, the son of Eleazar? (cf. Num.25:6-13) Zeal will make a man hate unscriptural teaching, just as he hates sin. It will make him regard religious error as a pestilence which must be checked, whatever may be the cost. It will make him scrupulously careful about every jot and tittle of the counsel of God, lest by some omission the whole Gospel should be spoiled. Is not this what you see in Paul at

Antioch, when he withstood Peter to the face, and said he was to be blamed? (cf.Gal.2:11)

Seek after zeal. Encourage zeal. But see that your own zeal be true. See that your zeal is "according to knowledge," a zeal from right motives, and a zeal that can bring chapter and verse out of the Bible for its foundation. Any zeal but this is false fire. It is not lighted by the Holy Ghost. Heed not if you are sometimes called bigot, enthusiast, fanatic, madman, and fool. There is but one question worth asking about our actions: "How will they look in the Day of Judgment?"

J.C.Ryle

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION

On Lord's Day 1 April Mrs.V.Robertson confessed her faith in the Lord Jesus in the waters of baptism and has been received into the membership of the Church. We pray God's rich blessing to be upon our sister, and rejoice in these additions which are of the Lord's ordering. The "Drive-in" Church services commence D.V. at the river bank car park on Lord's Day 15 July at 6.30 pm and continue up to and including 2 September.

VISITING PREACHERS D.V.

LORD'S DAY	22 July	Mr.N.Porter	(Belfast)
" "	12 August	Mr.J.Roberts	(Morden)

ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION
SATURDAY 21 JULY 1990 D.V.

3.30 pm AFTERNOON SERVICE
5.00 pm TEA
6.00 pm EVENING SERVICE

SPEAKER: MR.N.PORTER (BELFAST)