

IDOLATRY

Let us begin this publication by reflecting on some biblical texts, starting with the First Commandment, which is found in the Book of Exodus, chapter 20: 2 to 6, as follows: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing mercy to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."

In the Book of Leviticus, chapter 26:1, it is written: "You shall not make for yourselves any other idols, nor shall you set up for yourselves any carved image or pillar, nor shall you place any figured stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the LORD your God."

The following are the words spoken by Moses in his first speech in the plain of the Jordan River before the Israelite people entered the promised land, as described in the Book of Deuteronomy, in chapter 4: 14 to 19: "The LORD also commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might do them in the land which you are crossing to possess.

Therefore take heed to yourselves, for you saw no form on the day that the LORD your God spoke to you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you corrupt yourselves and make for yourselves a carved image, the likeness of an idol, the likeness of a man or a woman, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any bird that flies in the heavens, the likeness of any creature that creeps on the earth, or the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth.

Be careful that you do not lift up your eyes to the heavens and, when you see the sun, the moon and the stars—all the host of heaven—you are enticed to bow down to them and serve them, which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heavens.

Thus, only God, the Creator, is worthy of worship; we cannot worship the creation nor the images of created things; and furthermore, we cannot worship the images of things created by us, such as, for example, the image of a being half man and half fish, or half man and half horse, etc.

At the time described in the biblical books mentioned above, practically all people worshipped their idols, the false gods.

It is striking that men have always been involved with idols since ancient times.

Based on the Book of Genesis we learn that when man lost his innocence, in Adam, that is, from the moment he became aware of good and evil and began to practice evil consciously, sin was configured.

The translation we are using says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed," in the singular; that is, it specifies the "seed," which is Christ, who crushed the serpent's head on the cross.

Another detail of the serpent's condemnation is that it was determined that it would eat dust all the days of its life; we human beings were made from the dust of the earth.

Would man's flesh (soul and body) be Satan's food?

Isn't Satan's food in this case like that of our physical body, which contains nutrients such as proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, etc.; is Satan's spirit nourished by our physical death?

For example, our spirit is nourished by the Word of God; as the Lord Jesus taught, according to the Gospel of the Apostle Matthew, chapter 4: 4: "But Jesus answered, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Satan has the power over death, but the Lord Jesus delivers us, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us, in chapter 2: 14 to 15, as it is written: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to slavery."

And yet, as the Apostle Peter teaches us in his 1st Epistle, in chapter 3: 18 and 19: "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when the patience of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water."

The Creed also professes that the Lord Jesus "descended into hell."

The Lord Jesus Himself, already glorified, said to the Apostle John, according to what is written in the Book of Revelation, in chapter 1: 17 and 18: "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, Fear not: I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

Thus, if Satan still has power over death, Our Lord Jesus Christ has the keys of death and hell, which is His Word, which has the power to take us out of death, hell, and darkness, and bring us to life, to light; the Word of the Lord is the key capable of opening the bars of death and bringing us to life, just as He brought out those who died in the days of Noah.

Returning to the theme of idolatry, we can see that men, spiritually disconnected from God, spiritually dead, having their flesh enslaved by sin, "for he who is overcome becomes a slave to the overcomer" (2nd Epistle of the Apostle Peter, chapter 2: 19, final part), and suffering the consequences of their sins, having to provide their own food, having to

living with terrible wars, with the inclemencies of nature and life itself, with all its fragility, became easy prey for our enemies, or rather, for demons, who deceived them using idols to be served, worshipped as if they were gods; thus, in search of protection, a good harvest, health, victory, etc., men submitted themselves to these "gods" who demanded things from them such as, for example, human sacrifice, and even the sacrifice of their newborn children who were burned alive, etc.

For every situation there was a god; god of fertility, god of the harvest, god of weather, god of love, god of the seas, etc.

There were also probably those who kept the traditions, the teachings passed down orally by Noah and his sons, those who were monotheists, who did not bow down to idols.

Just for information, Abraham, until he was 58 years old, coexisted with Noah; Shem, son of Noah lived until the time when Jacob, son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham, reached 50 years of age. years.

Regarding images, we also have some examples in the Bible where God himself ordered them to be made; as in the case of the Cherubim, which were on top of the ark of the covenant (Book of Exodus, chapter 25; 17 to 21); in the curtains of the tabernacle, as it is written: "So all the skilled men among those who did the work made the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim; they were made by skilled workers."

(Book of Exodus, chapter 36: 8); and in the veil, as follows: "They made the veil of blue and scarlet yarn and fine chapter twined linen; with cherubims they made it, the work of the skilled worker" (Book of Purple, Exodus, 36: 35); and again, in the case of the bronze serpent, made by Moses in the wilderness (Book of Numbers, chapter 21; 4 to 9).

King Solomon also decorated the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem with two wooden cherubim overlaid with gold (2 Chronicles 3:10); and the veil contained embroidered cherubim (2 Chronicles 3:14); and further, as it is written: "On all the walls, both inside and outside the house, he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers all around" (1 Kings 6:29); and he also made the twelve oxen that supported the sea that was in the courtyard, all of bronze (2 Chronicles 4:4).

The first Temple in Jerusalem was built by King Solomon, who received the plan from King David (1 Chronicles, chapter 28: 11), who in turn had received it from God (1 Chronicles, chapter 28: 12). Book of Chronicles, chapter 28: 19).

In these texts, we have examples of two-dimensional and three-dimensional images.

Thus, we can conclude that God ordered the people not to carve images or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth so that they would not worship them or give them service, not because the images themselves displeased him or were anything, but rather the worship or service to them, given that they are false gods, instruments of Demons.

The only one worthy of worship is God (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit).

The Lord God, besides being the Creator, is love; this love was manifested through the work of Christ, for us. For all these reasons, only God should be worshipped.

Here is a text from the Apostle Paul that is in his Epistle to the Romans, in chapter 8: 38 to 39, which says: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So, to correspond to this love of our God, we need the help of the Holy Spirit to be able to worship Him and love Him above all things.

Concerning the worship of the Lord Jesus, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in chapter 1:6, it is written: "And again, when he bringeth in the firstborn into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him."

Now, let us reflect on what the Lord Jesus himself taught, as reported by the Evangelist Mark, in chapter 2: 23 to 27, of his Gospel, as follows: "Now it happened that Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath day, and his disciples, as they passed by, were plucking heads of grain.

The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

But he answered them, Have you never read what David did when he and those who were with him were in need and hungry?

How he entered the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and gave also to those who were with him?

And he said, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;"

In this text, the Lord Jesus teaches us that the Law of God should not always be followed only in its literal sense; the Lord gives us the example of David and his companions who, in a moment of need, ate the showbread that, according to the Law, only the priests could eat; and also teaches us about how to keep the Sabbath, the third commandment.

Another fact that we cannot disregard was the struggle that the Apostle Paul had, at the beginning of the church, to teach Gentile Christians, or non-Jews, that it was not necessary to follow the customs of the Law, such as circumcising oneself, that our salvation is through faith in Christ; the Bible tells us about his trip with Barnabas to Jerusalem to explain to the leadership of the Church the gospel that he preached, which resulted in the opinion of James, which is contained in chapter 15: 13 to 21, of the Book of Acts of the Apostles, which we will transcribe below: "After they had finished, James spoke, saying: Brothers, listen to my words: Simon has explained how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

This is in keeping with the words of the prophets, as it is written:

After these things are accomplished, I will return and rebuild the tabernacle of David that has fallen down; and I will raise it up again. that of its ruins, I will restore it.

That the rest of mankind might seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles also, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, which maketh these things known for ever.

Therefore I think we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but should write to them that they abstain from pollutions caused by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals, and from blood.

For Moses has had in every city from ancient times those who preach him in the synagogues, and he is read there every Sabbath.”

At another time, on a new return of the Apostle Paul to Jerusalem, as reported in the Book of Acts of the Apostles, in chapter 21: 17 to 24, the following happened: “When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers received us with joy.

The next day Paul went with us to James, and all the elders came together.

And when he had greeted them, he recounted in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

When they heard this, they glorified God and said to him, “You see, brother, how many tens of thousands there are among the Jews who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law. And they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews among the Gentiles to reject the law of Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to the customs of the law.

What should we do then? They will certainly hear of your arrival.

Do, therefore, what we tell you: there are four men among us who have voluntarily accepted a vow; take them, purify yourself with them and pay the necessary expense to have their heads shaved; and everyone will know that what is said about you is not true; on the contrary, you yourself also walk in keeping the law.”

These last two texts teach us, very clearly, that fulfilling the customs of the law is specifically for Jewish Christians.

Concerning the sin of idolatry, the Apostle Paul, in his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, in chapter 10: 14, teaches us: “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry”; and also, the Apostle John, in the Book of Revelation, in chapter 22: 14 and 15, wrote what the angel told him, as follows: “Blessed are those who wash their robes (in the blood of the Lamb), that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”

We can understand that not only images, but everything that becomes an object of worship for us, becomes an idol, a false god.

For example: greed is idolatry; the love of money.

As the Apostle Paul taught in his Epistle to the Ephesians, in chapter 5: 5: “Now know this, that no immoral person, nor impure person, nor covetous person, which is idolatry, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

There are people we place above good and evil; there are things we have excessive love for; others give more priority to money, their bank account for example, than their own family, or even themselves; we consider some situations more important even than our commitments to God Himself; and, if the situation or what we want does not happen as we wish, we lose our appetite, become depressed, etc.; all of these are idols, false gods in our lives.

Being sad about a loss or defeat is normal; what is not normal is rebelling against God, becoming depressed, etc.

Regarding images, currently, we have Roman Catholic Christians who accept images in two-dimensional and three-dimensional form, Orthodox Catholic Christians who accept only two-dimensional images, and Protestant Christians for the most part, who do not accept any type of image; I mean, images related to saints, neither in their temples nor in their churches.
houses.

For Catholics, images, plaster dolls, wooden dolls, etc., represent people, without being such; they remind us of people, of the perfected righteous who are already in the Lord, however, they are not to be worshipped.

It is also necessary to emphasize that we must be very careful with images, because what is or was a blessing, as happened with Moses' serpent, which, in the desert, the Israelites looked at and were saved, prefiguring Christ himself, ended up becoming a curse; because centuries later, at the time of King Hezekiah, it needed to be destroyed (2nd Book of Kings, chapter 18: 1 to 4, as we will see below: "In the third year of Hoshea, son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign.

He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem; his mother's name was Abi, the daughter of Zechariah.

He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.

He removed the altars, broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah pole, and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until that day the Israelites had burned incense to it and called it Nehushtan.

We must never forget that the Comforter, the one who restores and renews the life of the church is the Holy Spirit, who is also the Father and the Son, with or without images.

The head of the body, the church, is Christ (Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Colossians, chapter 1: 18).

In the Church of Christ, the first images of which we have record date from the 2nd and 3rd centuries, and were found, where they still are, in the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome, a place where Christians met in secret to worship; they date back to the time when those of Christ were persecuted, had their possessions confiscated, were arrested and taken to the Colosseum in Rome to be devoured by wild beasts in a public spectacle; others were crucified, beheaded, stoned, burned alive, shot with arrows, run over with the sword, hanged, etc.; these Christians faced martyrdom without denying their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we want to draw our readers' attention to something very important.

The flag, or rather, the characteristic that will be the mark of the antichrist, the son of perdition, the wicked one who will be revealed to deceive those who will be lost before the Lord Jesus returns, in addition to the signs and wonders of deception performed by him, will be his fight, his ardent combat against "idolatry", as highlighted by the Apostle Paul, in his 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians, in chapter 2: 3 and 4: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, the

who opposes and exalts himself above everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God."

I believe everyone agrees that the phrase "everything that is called God or is worshipped" is directly related to "idolatry".

And what would be the argument used by the antichrist to attack "idolatry"? Answering: I think it would be the obvious argument that God is the only one worthy of receiving worship and adoration.

However, we can also observe that the word God in this text is written with a capital letter, referring to God himself, the one and only true one.

Let us try to understand what this "idolatry" would be that the antichrist seeks or will seek to combat, considering that his mission is, exclusively, to spread error and deception.

In the Book of Revelation, in chapter 13:5 and 6, the Apostle John, speaking about the beast that emerges from the sea, gives us the following revelation: "And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and authority to continue forty-two months: and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, that is, them that dwell in heaven."

Those who dwell in heaven, besides God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ - God the Son, the Spirit and the angels, are all those who are united with Christ in spirit, and the spirits and souls of those who are already in the Lord; thus, those who take the name of God and are the temple, the tabernacle, are those who will suffer the fierce combat on the part of the antichrist spoken of by the Apostle Paul, and on the part of the beast that emerges from the sea, according to the vision of the Apostle John.

Here is another text for reflection: Psalm 82: 6 and 7:

"I said: you are gods, you are all children of the Most High.

Yet, like men, you will die, and like any of the princes, you will fall."

This Psalm is addressed to us who are still in this body, perfecting ourselves.

The Apostle Paul, in his 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, in chapter 1:8 and 9, wrote: "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the nature of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that it was beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life.

Yet we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead."

Regarding Psalm 82, the Lord Jesus taught us, as reported in the Gospel of the Apostle John, in chapter 10: 34 to 36, as follows: "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods?"

If he called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken, do you say of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, "You blaspheme, because I said, "I am the Son of God?"

So, if we, who are still incarnate, are called gods as it is in the Scriptures, what can be said of those who are already in the Lord, perfected?

We are called gods because we have the Spirit of God; that is, the divinity and glory of God is also manifested in us.

We can also reflect on the part of the priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus, as described by the Apostle John, in his Gospel, in chapter 17: 18 to 23: "As you sent me into the world, I also have sent you into the world.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me.

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one, so that the world may know that you sent me and have loved them, even as you have loved me."

What would be the glory of God, given to Christ, which he has transmitted to us? Answering: the glory of God that Christ transmits to us, reflects in us the attributes of God, his beauty, his love and his power; thus, the glory of God shines upon us because we are united with him; God is glorified through our lives.

The Father in the Son, and the Son in the church, in us.

In the Gospel of the Apostle John, in chapter 14: 12 to 14, the following words of the Lord Jesus are written: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father.

And whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."

All are one; the Father, the Son, and the church; this is the unity in which we are perfected; and, because of our works and our fruits, the world knows that we are loved by the Father as the Lord Jesus is, and that the Lord Jesus was sent by the Father.

Let us cite, as an example, a fact, among many others, where the Lord Jesus Christ, our God, was glorified through a man, the Apostle Peter, when he resurrected Dorcas (Acts of the Apostles, chapter 9: 36 to 46).

Here is another text that teaches us about the glory of God, reported by the Apostle John, in his Gospel, in chapter 13: 31 and 32, which contains words spoken by the Lord Jesus: "When he had gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him: if God be glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself; and he will glorify him immediately."

Regarding the word cult, this is defined in our Portuguese as being a set of rites that are linked to the worship or homage to divinities in any of their forms and in any religion, as well as to ancestors or other supernatural beings.

<https://www.significados.com.br/culto/>

This term has its origins in Latin, deriving from the word "cultu", which means worship or homage to God.

The spirits of the perfected righteous, saints, who are already in the Lord, are also worshipped by Roman Catholics and Orthodox Catholics; this worship is a form of gratitude to God, worship in thanksgiving, for having perfected them; and it is also a homage, and not an adoration of these saints.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, in chapter 13:7, its author instructs us: "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the outcome of their conduct, imitate their faith."

These guides, according to the text, had already passed away.

Thus, the spirits of the perfected righteous, holy ones, who have literally already put off the flesh, who are in the Lord, to whom we have access (Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 12: 22 and 23), can be remembered, honored, paid homage, revered, respected, which is the same as venerated, however, they cannot be worshipped, because we are all brothers; as the Apostle John reported to us in the Book of Revelation, chapter 22: 8 and 9: "I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed these things.

Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that; I am your fellow servant, and of your brothers the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

Here is a text describing the Lord Jesus Christ, which is in the 1st Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, in chapter 15: 25 to 28, as follows: "For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

For he hath put all things under his feet. And when he says that all things are put under him, he certainly excludes him who put all things under him.

But when all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all."

Thus, it will not be all of us who will be transformed into God the Father, but it is the Father who will be all in all; when death is defeated, Satan will no longer have a motive, a reason to exist.

Let us conclude with a text from the Apostle Paul that is in his Epistle to the Ephesians, in chapter 3: 14 to 19: "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

May the Lord also extend to us the response to this intercession made by the Apostle Paul.

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Biblical texts extracted from the JOÃO FERREIRA DE ALMEIDA translation – Revised and Updated.