

*“What is an Idol Continued?” from page 1*

someone has faith in its imagined power. That power could be most anything the mind can conceive. Common powers ascribed to idols are: powers of healing; protection from enemies; power for health and longevity; power to do exploits, especially in war; spiritual protection from evil spirits; the power to give financial success; the power of good luck and the power to save.

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5). Kittel defines *covetousness* as “increasing material possessions as a means of security.” This is consistent with Paul’s admonition to Timothy, “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17). The qualifier here is the element of trust. When one believes riches can bring security, he is an idolater. Peter recognized this problem among false teachers, “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2 Peter 2:3).

People get mired in numerous sins that gratify. All sins separate people from God, but human lusts are not idolatry until there is the element of trust. An idol is nothing, but throughout the centuries, great masses of people have trusted in “nothing.”

“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils” (1 Corinthians 10:20). While an idol is “nothing” the worship of “devils” is common in pagan cultures. Since paganism has no “bible,” there is no way to give a definitive description of paganism. Beliefs and rituals change from generation to generation; from one region to another; from one family to another; from one person to another. While true Christianity is a religion of boundaries, paganism is the absence of boundaries. The only fixed boundary in paganism excludes obedience to the plan of salvation. As long as one does not obey the plan of salvation, paganism can incorporate parts of scriptural truths, often using portions of Scripture in rituals. Satan seems to be content as long as one is lost.

We need to understand these principles when working with people of pagan cultures. Unfortunately, paganism is spreading in America. May the Lord give us wisdom and discernment as we labor in His Kingdom at home and abroad.

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**What is an Idol?—E. W. Wheeler**

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“As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”  
 —1 Corinthians 8:4-6

Thayer defines *idol* as “the image of a heathen god; a false deity.” This term is the root word for other terms—idolatry, idolater and meat offered to idols. The first rendering of the word idol in the Old Testament meant “good for nothing” which is probably what Paul referenced in the text. Therefore, there are two essential elements to be considered in studying this term. The first being that which an idol really is—nothing. The second element is the power worshipers ascribe to the idol, which is significant. Idol worshipers can be very devoted, believing particular idols can have great power. This belief that an idol has power is an essential element in understanding idolatry. Just as faith is an essential element in worshiping the One True God, faith is also an essential element in idol-worship.

A look at the pattern of usage for these terms is very instructive here.

We notice that none of the Gospels use this term. Jesus’ ministry was to the Jews, who worshiped the One True God. Neither the book of James, nor the book of Hebrews uses this term. Both of these books were addressed to people of a Jewish background. The ten tribes of Israel lost their homeland because of idolatry. The two remaining tribes seem to have learned their lesson quite well.

It is when the apostles took the message to the Gentiles that we see the use of the term idolatry which occurs thirty-three times, sixteen of which are in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians. The first ten chapters of Acts center primarily around the Jews and to a lesser degree, the Samaritans. In Acts 11:19 we read where the gospel was spread into Gentile areas. In the first ten chapters of Acts, the only usage of the term “idol” refers to Aaron’s golden calf as a historical fact (Acts 7:41). It is later in Acts, after the gospel spread into Gentile areas, that we see idolatry becoming an issue.

The case of Aaron’s golden calf serves as a good example of idolatry. In Moses’ absence, the people grew restless and told Aaron, “Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him” (Exodus 32:1). After making the idol, the people said, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (Exodus 32:4). The key element here is the fact that the people ascribed spiritual power to the golden calf, which, otherwise, would have been just an image. An image is just an image until

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**The Dangers of Pride—Thomas Weisser**

When we consider what displeases God we must not neglect pride. The Word says that God hates a proud look and that it is an abomination. Isaiah says plainly that, "the haughty shall be humbled." It is declared in Proverbs that, "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." In the New Testament it is reiterated that, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." In order to receive the grace of God we must humble ourselves.

The first thing that comes to mind when we think of the meaning of pride is the feeling of superiority in relation to others. This is definitely an aspect of pride based on a lie. The truth is that God is no respecter of persons. We all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Another aspect of pride is the feeling that we can do it on our own. This is also based on a lie because we are desperately in need of God. We also, in the church, are interdependent. We need the influence of the prayers, fellowship, teaching and preaching that comes from others in the body. We are not islands unto ourselves.

In human government the dangers of too much power given to an individual are evident. Examples are numerous in history of the destructive power of despotic rule. There is much truth in the saying: "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

The Roman Emperors were exalted so much that they were worshiped as gods. After Constantine the concept of the divine right of kings was promoted. Coins from this so-called Christian era many times depicted a hand coming down from heaven placing a crown upon an emperor's head. In theory the ruler was only answerable to God for his actions and decisions. This, of course, led to great injustices. Arbitrary rule by a leader filled with pride brings disastrous results.

In history we see this played out in politics and religion. Politically we see pride working in the persecution of Diocletian; the compromise of Constantine; the persecution of Theodosius; the ruthlessness of Phillip II in Spain; the terrible atrocities of Hitler; and numerous others. Religiously we see the misuse of power as exhibited by Innocent III as he introduces the Inquisition. Also, by Pius IX as he declares papal infallibility. This was declared while the papal states were removed from control of the pope by Italian nationalism. Pius IX was indeed humbled when his temporal power over many Italians was taken away from him.

The main lessons for us in keeping pride under control are these. We must realize that we are all of equal value in God's eyes. We must understand that we need God to help us. Also, we must acknowledge our need of one another in this walk with God.

## The Story of Teddy Stallard

The Apostle Paul, in I Timothy 4: 16 admonishes young Timothy: "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." There is no question that proper doctrine is important and that we must equip ourselves to teach the truths of God's Word. But it is interesting that Paul first tells Timothy to take heed unto himself! The Christian life is not just about doctrine and dogma—it's about character—Christ-like character. The goal of the Christian life according to Romans 8:29 is ". . . to be conformed to the image of his Son." That's why when Jesus called the Twelve, He didn't say, "Listen to me." He said, "Follow me."

*It is time for a paradigm shift in our thinking about what ministry is all about. It's more than neatly designed lesson plans, exegetically correct sermons, and smooth-running activities--it's about PEOPLE! People that God has entrusted to us to mentor.*

The following story illustrates well the challenge and joy of this momentous task:

Teddy Stallard certainly qualified as "one of the least." He was disinterested in school, musty, had wrinkled clothes, his hair never combed. He was one of those kids in school with a deadpan face, expressionless—sort of a glassy, unfocused stare. When Miss Thompson spoke to Teddy, he always answered in monosyllables. Unattractive, unmotivated, and distant, he was just plain hard to like. Even though his teacher said she loved all in her class the same, down inside she wasn't being completely truthful.

Whenever she marked Teddy's papers, she got a certain perverse pleasure out of putting X's next to the wrong answers, and when she put the F's at the top of his papers, she always did it with a flair. She should have known better; she had seen Teddy's records, and she knew more about him than she wanted to admit. The records read:

*1st Grade: Teddy shows promise with his work and attitude, but poor home situation.*

*2nd Grade: Teddy could do better. Mother is seriously ill. He receives little help at home.*

*3rd Grade: Teddy is a good boy but too serious. He is a slow learner. His mother died this year.*

*4th Grade: Teddy is very slow, but well behaved. His father shows no interest.*

Christmas came, and the boys and girls in Miss Thompson's class brought her Christmas presents. They piled their presents on her desk and crowded around to watch her open them. Among the presents was one from Teddy Stallard. She was surprised that he had brought her a gift. Teddy's gift was wrapped in brown paper and was held together with Scotch tape. On the paper were written the simple words, "For Miss Thompson from Teddy." When she opened Teddy's present, out fell a gaudy rhinestone bracelet with half the stones missing and a bottle of cheap perfume.

The other boys and girls began to giggle and smirk over Teddy's gift, but Miss Thompson at least had enough sense to silence them by immediately putting on the bracelet and putting some perfume on her wrist. Holding her wrist for the other children to smell, she said, "Doesn't it smell lovely?" And the other children, taking their cues from the teacher, readily agreed with "oohs" and "aahs."

At the end of the day, when school was over and the other children had left, Teddy lingered behind. He slowly came over to her desk and said softly, "Miss Thompson . . . Miss Thompson, you smell just like my mother . . . and her bracelet looks real pretty on you, too. I'm glad you like my presents." When Teddy left, Miss Thompson got down on her knees and asked God to forgive her.

The next day when the children came to school, a new teacher welcomed them. Miss Thompson had become a different person. She was no longer just a teacher; she had become an agent of God. She was now a person committed to loving her children and doing things for them that would live on after her. She helped all the children, but especially the slow ones, and especially Teddy Stallard. By the end of that school year, Teddy showed dramatic improvement. He had caught up with most of the students and was even ahead of some.

She didn't hear from Teddy for a long time. Then one day, she received a note that read:

*Dear Miss Thompson,  
I wanted you to be the first to know.  
I will be graduating second in my class.  
Love,  
Teddy Stallard*

Four years later, another note came:

*Dear Miss Thompson,  
They told me I will be graduating first in my class.  
I wanted you to be the first to know. The  
university has not been easy, but I like it.  
Love,  
Teddy Stallard*

And four years later:

*Dear Miss Thompson,  
As of today, I am Theodore Stallard, MD. How  
about that? I wanted you to be the first to know. I am  
getting married next month, the 27th to be exact. I  
want you to come and sit where my mother would sit  
if she were alive. You are the only family I have now;  
Dad died last year.  
Love,  
Teddy Stallard*

Miss Thompson went to that wedding and sat where Teddy's mother would have sat. She deserved to sit there; she had done something for Teddy that he could never forget.

*If I had my life to live over again, I would live it to change the lives of people, because you have not changed anything until you've changed the lives of people. —Missionary Warren Webster*

From the book: Mentoring and Modeling (Developing the next generation) by Dr. John Goetsch and Dr. Mark Rasmussen

## The Key of Truth—William Chalfant

The noted scholar, Fred C. Conybeare, discovered a Oneness document, hidden away in an Armenian monastery in Edjmiatzin in AD 1891.

What is interesting about these particular Oneness Christians (who eventually were dubbed “dynamic monarchians”) was that these Christians survived in their own congregations in eastern Europe down through the centuries in such modern countries as Bulgaria, Greece, and Armenia.

Conybeare had gone to Armenia searching for further evidence of these dynamic monarchian Christians. He knew that they had existed down through the centuries, being called such diverse names as “Thronrakians,” “Paulicians,” and “Paulinians” by the Catholics. The manuscript he found in the library of the Holy (Armenian) Synod was entitled *The Key of Truth*. This ancient manuscript had been written prior to AD 850 by monarchian Christians. The Armenian Catholics had confiscated it from a dynamic monarchian Christian named George Sarqisian of Arkhveli, when they arrested him at Tschevirme c. AD 1872. There were Oneness Christians surviving in eastern Europe up to the twentieth century!

The *Key of Truth* has been acknowledged by scholars to be “unitarian of the monarchian type.” This theology is acknowledged to harken back to Paul of Samosata and Artemon of the third century. Conybeare enthusiastically reported that the *Key of Truth* contained “the baptismal service and ordinal of the (dynamic monarchian) church, almost in the form in which Theodotus of Rome (late second century) may have celebrated those rites” (*The Key of Truth*, Conybeare).

The Scriptures used in the *Key of Truth* are taken from the Armenian Vulgate, which was completed soon after AD 400. The dynamic monarchians, in the *Key of Truth*, called themselves “apostolic.” They rejected Catholic teachings on the Trinity, purgatory, infant baptism, and sprinkling. Their baptismal formula was in the name of Jesus Christ. An excerpt from their document indicates this:

*We adore, we entreat and beseech of thee, Christ, Son of God, receive this one among the number of thy holy disciples, and send the Spirit of thy Father into their hearts, for thou didst promise them, saying: ‘If I go not, the Holy Spirit will not come unto you.’ But now with ardent love, falling on our faces, we beseech thee in behalf of thy servants, who now have been baptized into thy holy name. (Key of Truth, chap. 22)*

They also taught the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They stressed that repentance must be “with bitter tears.” Unfortunately, however, the manuscript, which fell into Conybeare’s hands c. 1891, had been mutilated, apparently by the Catholic priests, who possessed it. Entire chapters were torn out of the main manuscript. Sentences and paragraphs had been erased or deleted by zealous monks, who were apparently destroying what they thought to be evil “heretical” statements.

But the Thronrakians, like earlier dynamic monarchians, rejected the *in vitro* incarnation of Christ, and consider the *moment* of the incarnation to have occurred at the baptism of Christ. We cannot accept this, but we must consider that these Christians considered Jesus Christ to be God the Father (as to His divinity), that they baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and that they received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It is most exciting to find that insofar as they can be considered to be “apostolic,” that they were still found to be in existence at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I do not have precise evidence, but it seems that some of them, during the Armenian holocaust by the Turks at the beginning of the twentieth century, may have immigrated to California during the time of the Azusa Street Revival. The apostle Paul said that believers like himself would remain until the coming of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:15). It would be interesting to know more about the teachings of these Christians. Very little study has been done on the *Key of Truth*.

## The Authority of the Scriptures—D. S. Garza

The Bible begins with these powerful words: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This statement is profound beyond measure in that it also conveys a tremendous theme that is repeated throughout the Scriptures—that God's Word speaks in the affirmative. It not only tells you the truth, it asserts and affirms it!

God doesn't speak to convince the naysayer, the skeptic, or the fool. But He speaks to the believer! Over four hundred verses contain the phrase, "Thus saith the Lord." And He declares it emphatically, authoritatively, and without reservation. David picked up on this theme and was able to say with confidence, "Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalms 119:89).

For example, when we speak to those that do not understand the nature of God, we should not speak as though we have to prove what we believe. They bear the burden of proof. This is because those that are in false doctrine have the unenviable task of trying to prove the unprovable. We are in the affirmative. There is no need to be unsure of ourselves; we need to capture this theme, and be assured that the Scriptures are right.

The Bible affirms that God is the Holy One; there are no verses that speak of a trinity. The apostles of our Lord baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. We do not need to prove it. There is no need to take a defensive posture. It's already settled in heaven. David also said "Thy word is true from the beginning . . ." (Psalms 119:160).

The Bible affirms that, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). Another translation reads, "All Scripture is God-breathed." It is anointed so that it can "perfect" the man of God.

Paul speaks to Timothy and says, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Timothy 3:14). Timothy picked up on this theme early in life and he was firmly persuaded . . . "And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

The people who heard Jesus speak could tell the difference between the way He taught and the anemic delivery of the religious professors of that day, "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:28-29).

We too can speak with this type of authority and confidence because we understand that it is God's Word. We need men in this last hour to preach with the conviction that God's Word works! David wrote, "I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope" (Psalm 130:5).