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Series: The Book of Romans

Sin and Condemnation: The World's need to get right with God (41)

Pastor Eddie Idefonso

[Romans 1:18-3:20](#)

(Continuation from 08/14/16)

A. God's Case Against All Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men: Why God Shows Wrath, [Romans 1:18-23](#)

(Romans 1:18-23) Introduction: the message of this passage is perfectly clear: why God reveals and executes wrath upon men.

1. **The subjects of God's wrath (v.18).**
2. **Men reject that "within" them—conscience and thoughts (v.19).**
3. **Men reject that "without" them—the signs of creation (v.20).**
4. **Men do not honor God nor give thanks (v.21).**
5. **Men become prideful and turn away from God (v.22-23).**

5. **(Romans 1:22-23) Man, Depravity—Pride—God, Rejection of: God—the only living and true God—shows wrath because men become prideful and turn away from God.**

Romans 1:22-23 (NASB)

²² "Professing to be wise, they became fools,

²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."

This scene is one of the greatest tragedies in all of human history, and it is repeated every time a man turns away from God.

The scene is man rejecting God and claiming that he is...

- 1) too wise to believe in God.
- 2) too intelligent to depend upon the *fables* of the Bible.
- 3) too capable not to look to self.
- 4) too resourceful not to create his own world and future.
- 5) too masterful not to trust his own *humanistic* ideas.
- 6) too reasonable and rational not to create his own standards and laws to control life.

But note what Scripture says: in denying God, men make two gross mistakes.

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1. Men profess themselves to be wise, but in so doing they become fools.

Why? For one simple reason.

⇒ God does exist, and He has clearly revealed Himself both within men's thoughts and through creation. Therefore, when men's hearts and minds are emptied of God, men have to fill their hearts and thoughts with something else. They have to have some other god, some other *guiding light* or *principle* to give purpose and meaning and direction to their lives. They have to replace God with something else. They have to have something—some standard, some law, some rule, some person, some god—by which they can guide their lives.

Therefore, when men dethrone and erase God from their lives, they imagine and create their own *god* within their minds. Men reason and speculate about the ultimate source of life, and whatever they come up with is that to which they give their lives.

Isaiah 29:14 (NASB)

¹⁴“Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; And the wisdom of their wise men will perish, And the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed.”

Jeremiah 4:22 (NASB)

²²“For My people are foolish, They know Me not; They are stupid children And have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, But to do good they do not know.”

Romans 1:22 (NASB)

²²“Professing to be wise, they became fools.”

1 Corinthians 1:18-19 (NASB)

¹⁸“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

¹⁹ For it is written, “I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE.”

1 Corinthians 2:6-7 (NASB)

⁶“Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;

⁷ but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory.”

1 Corinthians 3:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, “*He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS*”;

²⁰ and again, “*THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS.*”

Colossians 2:8 (NASB)

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Colossians 2:23 (NASB)

²³ “These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.*”

2. Men exchange the incorruptible God for some corruptible idol.

Romans 1:22-23 (NASB)

²² “Professing to be wise, they became fools,
²³ and exchanged the glory of the **incorruptible** God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.”

Note four facts.

- a. God is said to be "incorruptible" (*aphthartou*), which means “non-decaying, imperishable, unchanging, and unaging.” Incorruptible means that God is not subject to passing away; He is eternal. God *always has been*, and *always will be: God will always exist*.
- b. Men swap and exchange God for “*corruptible man*,” that is, for the image, the idea, the thought that man is his own god. Men swap God for *humanism*.

They make themselves and mankind...

- 1) the god of life.
- 2) the master of the world.
- 3) the makers of their own destiny.
- 4) the law-givers of their own laws.
- 5) the determiners of their own morality.
- 6) the standard by which their lives are to be governed.

Note that *humanism* makes an idol out of man and worships man as the “god” of his own destiny. This is usually the sin of *scientific and industrialized societies*—societies where a healthy and strong man, both mentally and physically, is essential—societies where good self-images and healthy bodies are necessary for the advancement of society.

- c. Men swap God for *corruptible creatures*. This is usually the worship followed by non-industrialized and non-scientific societies—societies where grotesque images of men and animals are actually constructed out of wood, stone, or metal.

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Now note: men create their own humanistic gods, whether mental images and thoughts or some grotesque image, because of pride and conceit. Men want to control their own lives, to do as they wish, to be recognized and honored, and to receive the credit and acknowledgment themselves.

Therefore, they turn from God and make their own gods...

- 1) in their own image.
- 2) as they conceive and wish their god to be.

d. This is the fourth reason why God—the only living and true God—reveals and shows his wrath toward men.

Acts 17:29 (NASB)

²⁹“Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.”

1 John 5:21 (NASB)

²¹“Little children, guard yourselves from idols.”

Deuteronomy 11:26-28 (NASB)

²⁶“See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse:

²⁷ the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today;

²⁸ and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.”

Isaiah 42:8 (NASB)

⁸“I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.”

III. THE DECEPTION—[Romans 1:22](#)

Man was not an idolater at first. He knew God and refused to worship Him. This is the second indictment against mankind, his *insolence*. Man’s idolatry followed a psychological necessity to worship something. A person that rejects God’s truth does so, many times, because he believes that God’s truth is stupid, foolish, untrue, unauthoritative, inaccurate, irrelevant, or outdated for today.

Their reasoning has convinced themselves into thinking that there is nothing wrong with what they are doing and it will not hurt them at all. The decisions they make end up destroying their lives and prove that what they did was foolish.

Paul said they professed to be “**wise**.” They professed to be cultured and learned men. Paul continues and says, “**they became fools**.” The word “**fools**” is the Greek word *moraino* which forms our English word “**moron**.” It not only means “**foolish**” but was the word used

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to describe food or drink that was flat or tasteless or of salt that had lost its savor and strength.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in a 1983 address said, “While I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: ‘Men have forgotten God....’ Since then I have spent well-nigh fifty years working on the history of our revolution. I have read hundreds of books, hundreds of personal testimonies, and contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval.”

“But if I were asked today to formulate the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some sixty million of our people, I would repeat: ‘Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.’ I myself see Christianity today as the only living spiritual force capable of undertaking the spiritual healing of Russia.”

Reasons for the Wrath of God--part 2 ([Romans 1:22-23](#))

In [Romans 1:19-23](#) Paul describes the character of fallen man. He gives **four reasons** why *everyone* is born under God’s wrath and condemnation. The first **two reasons**, **1) God’s revelation** and **2) man’s rejection**, are presented in [verses 19-21](#) and were discussed in the [previous teachings](#). The third and fourth reasons, **3) man’s rationalization** and **4) man’s religion**, are presented in [verses 22-23](#).

Man’s Rationalization

[Romans 1:22 \(NASB\)](#)

²² “**Professing to be wise, they became fools.**”

In rejecting God’s clear revelation of Himself through His creation, men failed to honor and glorify God, failed to give Him thanks, became futile in their philosophical speculations, and became foolish and darkened in their hearts ([vv. 19-21](#)). Trying to justify themselves, they rationalized their sin, just as fallen mankind still does today. **Professing to be wise** about God, about the universe, and about themselves, **they became** still greater **fools** (see [v. 21d](#)).

Centuries earlier, David had declared that men who deny God and His truth are fools ([Psalm 14:1](#); [Psalm 53:1](#)), and it is that very foolishness that deludes them into thinking they are **wise**. The natural man cannot think perfectly about anything. But his thinking is perverted most severely in the spiritual and divine realm, because that is where his sinful rebellion is centered. These things are also beyond his human perception and since he rejects revelation, he has no hope of coming to truth in himself. His foolish speculations therefore go the furthest astray when he philosophizes about his origin, purpose, and destiny and about the origin and meaning of the universe in which he lives.

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The mind devoid of God's truth has no way to discriminate between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong, between the significant and the trivial, between the truly beautiful and the monstrous, or between the ephemeral and the eternal.

These dominating worldly speculations often infect the church. Because, for example, gifted and articulate unbelievers have so long and loudly touted evolution as scientific fact rather than philosophical theory, many Christians have been intimidated into accommodating their theology accordingly. In the name of theistic evolution or progressive creationism, they not only compromise scientific integrity but also, and infinitely more disastrously, compromise God's revelation. They accept the unfounded foolishness of unregenerate men above the flawless truth of God's Word.

In a similar approach, many Christians try to adapt God's revelation to men's speculations in the areas of the mind and soul. Intimidated by the ever-changing and mutually-conflicting theories of psychology; sociology and anthropology, they foolishly modify or exchange the truths of God's revelation about man in favor of man's absurd conjectures about himself.

The late **Martyn Lloyd Jones** perceptively wrote, "The whole drift toward modernism that has blighted the church of God and nearly destroyed its living gospel may be traced to an hour when men began to turn from revelation to philosophy." Thinking they are wise, they have become fools because their own speculations can't replace the revelation they reject.

Institution after institution that once firmly stood on God's Word has progressively accommodated itself to the intellectual foolishness of the world system. In the name of man's wisdom they come to reflect the foolishness, and inevitably the godlessness, of the world system of Satan.

Because he knew that **"the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness,"** that **"God [has] made foolish the wisdom of the world,"** and that **"the foolishness of God is wiser than men,"** Paul **"determined to know nothing among [those to whom he preached] except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"** ([1 Corinthians 1:18, 20, 25](#); [1 Corinthians 2:2](#)).

The greatest fool in all the world is the person who exchanges God's wisdom of truth and light for man's wisdom of deceit and darkness.

Man's Religion

Romans 1:23 (NASB)

²³**"And exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."**

The fourth reason why every person is born under God's wrath and condemnation is man-made religion, reflected in the countless systems he has devised to replace the truth and the worship of God.

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Yet although fallen man is not naturally godly, he is very much naturally religious. According to the *World Almanac*, approximately 2.6 billion people in the world have an identifiable religious affiliation of some sort. Many more are said to have some form of unidentified religion.

Hindus have some 330 million gods, which amounts to about eight gods per family. They also revere cows and countless other animals that they consider to be sacred. A two-inch-long discolored tooth, claimed to have belonged to Buddha and to have been retrieved from his funeral pyre in 543 B.C., is venerated by millions of Buddhists. The tooth is set in a golden lotus blossom surrounded with rubies and enshrined in the Temple of the Tooth in Sri Lanka.

The beliefs and practices of ritualistic Christianity differ little from such pagan superstitions.

Many humanistic sociologists, philosophers, and theologians maintain that religion is a mark of man's upward climb from primitive chaos and ignorance, ascending through animism to polydemonism to polytheism and finally to monotheism. But the clear testimony of Scripture is that human religion of every sort, whether simple or highly sophisticated, is a downward movement away from God, away from truth, and away from righteousness. Contrary to much thinking, men's religions do not reflect their highest endeavors but their lowest depravity. The natural trend of religion throughout history has not been upward but downward. It has, in fact, descended from monotheism.

That truth is attested even by secular history. **Herodotus**, the famous Greek historian of the fifth century B.C., said that the earliest Persians had no pagan temples or idols (*The Histories*, 1:31).

The first-century Roman scholar Varro reported that the Romans had no animal or human images of a god for 170 years after the founding of Rome (**Augustine**, *The City of God*, 4:31).

Lucian, a second-century A.D. Greek writer, made similar statements concerning early Greece and Egypt (*The Syrian Goddess*, 34).

The fourth-century Christian historian **Eusebius** declared that "the oldest peoples had no idols."

Even many ancient unbelievers recognized the absurdity of worshiping something fashioned by man's own hands. **Horace**, the Roman poet of the first century B.C., satirized the practice when he wrote, "I was a fig tree's trunk, a useless log. The workman wavered, 'Shall I make a stool or a god?' He chose to make a god, and thus a god I am."

The Apocrypha tells of a woodcutter felling a tree, stripping off its bark, and skillfully fashioning the wood into useful utensils and pieces of furniture. But the same woodcutter would take a gnarled leftover, of no practical value, and fashion it into the likeness of a man

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or animal, filling in defects with clay and painting over blemishes. After securing the figure to a wall or setting it in a niche so that it would not fall, he would then bow down and worship it, asking protection and health for himself and his family (see [Wisdom 13:11-19](#)).

Even after the Fall, at first “**men began to call upon the name of the Lord**” ([Genesis 4:26](#)), because He was the only deity of which they had any knowledge. The next two chapters of Genesis make clear, however, that merely calling on the name of the true God did not prevent men from falling progressively into worse and worse sin.

As ancient Israel proved repeatedly throughout her history, merely knowing about and claiming the true God did not protect her either from sin or from spiritual unbelief and divine judgment. As Jesus clearly asserted in the Sermon on the Mount, simply claiming allegiance to the Lord does not guarantee entrance into His kingdom ([Matthew 7:21](#)).

Yet despite the rebellious and unrepentant wickedness of the world before the Flood, there is no evidence that men at that time were idolatrous. The earliest instance of idolatry mentioned in the Bible is that of Abraham’s family in Ur ([Joshua 24:2](#)). Idolatry had developed sometime previously among some of the descendants of Noah. There is no indication, however, that Noah and his family, as the only survivors of the Flood, even knew of the concept of idolatry when they began to replenish the earth.

But as mankind again turned away from the true God, they began to create substitute gods, probably first only in their imaginations and later with their hands. By the time God brought His people back into the land of Canaan, they discovered idolatry had become as rife there as it was in Egypt. The idolatry of the pagan inhabitants they had disobediently failed to destroy was a continuous threat to Israel until God allowed them to be taken captive to Babylon. Remarkably however, by His sovereign protection, from that time until now even unbelieving Jews have never again manufactured idols in any significant numbers.

Before the Exile, Isaiah scathingly mocked the wicked foolishness of idolatry that had so corrupted his people:

[Isaiah 44:9-17 \(NASB\)](#)

⁹ Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.

¹⁰ Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit?

¹¹ Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame.

¹² The man shapes iron into a cutting tool and does his work over the coals, fashioning it with hammers and working it with his strong arm. He also gets hungry and his strength fails; he drinks no water and becomes weary.

¹³ Another shapes wood, he extends a measuring line; he outlines it with red chalk. He works it with planes and outlines it with a compass, and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of man, so that it may sit

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in a house.

¹⁴ Surely he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak and raises *it* for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow.

¹⁵ Then it becomes *something* for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it.

¹⁶ Half of it he burns in the fire; over *this* half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire."

¹⁷ But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god."

Along with the rebellious, proud, vain, foolish, and darkened Gentiles, many Jews had also **exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for** that which is inglorious, shameful, and **corruptible**. They substituted the reality of the holy **God** for the vain **image** of every sort of His creatures.

In their spiritual blindness, intellectual darkness, and moral depravity, men are by nature inclined to reject the Holy Creator for the unholy creature. Because something even in their fallenness demands a god, but one they like better than the true God, they devise deities of their own making.

It is not incidental that the **Ten Commandments** begin with the admonition: "**You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them**" ([Exodus 20:3-5](#)). Yet at the very time those and the other commandments and ordinances were being given to Moses, the children of Israel were making a golden calf to worship ([Exodus 32:1-6](#)).

Although the Lord continued to warn Israel and Judah, through all His prophets and every seer, saying, "**Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets,**"... they rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers, and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the Lord had commanded them not to do like them. And they forsook all the commandments of the Lord their God and made for themselves molten images." ([2 Kings 17:13-16](#))

Man's rejection of God and embracing of idols can be compared to a son who murdered his father and then made a dummy figure that he introduces to the world as his father. Yet what sinful mankind has always done and continues to do with God is infinitely more wicked and senseless than that.

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The first creature man substitutes for God is himself, **an image in the form of corruptible man**. Instead of glorifying and worshiping God, he attempts to deify himself. Although he doubtlessly made this alleged statement in derisive sarcasm, **Voltaire** was correct in observing: **“God made man in His own image and man returned the favor.”**

Every form of idolatry is a form of self-worship, just as every form of idolatry is a form of demon, or Satan, worship. Whether his idols are fashioned out of his own depraved thinking or are inspired by Satan, every false god appeals to man’s fallen nature and entices him to glorify and indulge himself. In one way or another, all idolatry is worship of self and service of Satan.

The epitome of human self-worship will be that of Antichrist, who will demand that all the world worship him in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem ([2 Thessalonians 2:3-4](#)). As Satan’s supreme emissary on earth in the last days, Antichrist’s demand of worship will also testify that, despite his self-glorification, his real god will be Satan—just as every idolater’s real god is Satan.

“The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons,” Paul declared ([1 Corinthians 10:20](#)). In other words, even though a person may make an idol of his own design and for his own purposes out of wood, stone, or metal, demons take advantage of that ungodliness by impersonating the characteristics the man-made god is supposed to have. Supernatural happenings have been reliably reported in pagan cultures throughout history and into modern times.

Although Satan is limited in his power over nature and even in his own supernatural realm, Scripture makes clear that he is able to produce his own kinds of miracles, as Pharaoh’s sorcerers did before Moses and Aaron ([Exodus 7:11, 22](#); [Exodus 8:7](#)). Just as Pharaoh’s satanically-empowered sorcerers demonstrated enough supernatural ability to keep that ruler’s heart hardened, Satan allows enough astrological predictions to come true and enough supernatural events to be manifested to keep his followers deluded (cf. [2 Thessalonians 2:9](#)).

Nebuchadnezzar was perhaps the greatest monarch of the ancient world. But he became so enamored of his accomplishments that he ignored Daniel’s warning and arrogantly declared, **“Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?”** As Daniel goes on to report, while the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, **“King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.”** Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws. ([Daniel 4:31-32](#); cf. [vv. 19-27](#))

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By exalting himself virtually as a god, the proud king exceeded the limits of God's patience, and in an instant both his power and his sanity were forfeited for **"seven periods of time"** (see [vv. 25, 32](#)), meaning perhaps seven months or even seven years.

"At the end of that period," the king himself reported, **"I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever"** ([v. 34](#)). It would seem that his chastisement brought him to believe in God, and he ended his confession with the words, **"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride"** ([v. 37](#)).

Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's successor, learned nothing from his predecessor's experience. One night he gave a lavish banquet for his noblemen, and under the influence of much wine he ordered that the sacred gold vessels that his father had confiscated from the Temple in Jerusalem be used to drink from at the feast. As the revelers drank from those vessels, they **"praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace."**

When the conjurers and diviners of the terrified king could not decipher the message, he appealed to Daniel. After reminding him of Nebuchadnezzar's punishment by God, Daniel told the king, **"Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven.... But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified.... This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE'—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. 'TEKEL'—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. 'PERES'—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians"** ([Daniel 5:1-29](#)).

Belshazzar deliberately and openly sinned against the knowledge of God that he had. He even flagrantly blasphemed God by profaning the sacred vessels from His Temple and worshipping man-made idols instead of God. Typical of all sinful men, the king's natural inclination was to turn from the knowledge he had of the true God and to turn to false gods of his own choosing.

A. W. Tozer wisely observed that idolatry begins in the mind when we pervert or exchange the idea of God for something other than what He really is (*The Knowledge of the Holy* [N.Y: Harper & Row 1961], pp. 9-10).

An even more ludicrous form of idolatry noted by Paul is the worship **of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures**. Among the many **birds** worshiped in the ancient world were the eagle in Rome, and the stork and hawk in Egypt. It was because eagles were often deified by Romans that the Jews so vehemently opposed their being displayed in any form in Israel, especially in the holy city of Jerusalem. Some American Indians still worship various birds, as seen in their totem poles. The stylized Indian thunderbird has become a popular symbol in modern society.

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Ancient idols in the form of **four-footed animals** were almost too numerous to count. The Egyptians worshiped the bull-god **Apis**, the cat-goddess **Bubastis**, the cow-goddess **Hathor**, the hippopotamus-goddess **Opet**, and the wolf-god **Ophis**.

As already noted, even the ancient Israelites were guilty of fashioning and then worshiping a golden calf, which was intended to represent the true God! Many Egyptians and Canaanites worshiped bulls, some of which were buried with great riches just as were the pharaohs. **Diana**, or **Artemis**, a popular Greek goddess in New Testament times (see [Acts 19:27](#)), did not have the form of a beautiful woman but rather that of a gross, ugly female beast with countless nipples hanging beneath her, supposedly enough to suckle the world. Other ancient idols were in the form of such diverse objects as mice and rats, elephants, crocodiles, monkeys, and the sun and moon.

We also know from secular sources and well as from Scripture about many kinds of **crawling creatures** that were worshiped, many of which are still deified in parts of the world today. Among their many idols, the ancient Egyptians worshiped the scarab beetle, likenesses of which are sold as souvenirs in that country today. The insect lives in manure piles and is commonly referred to as the dung beetle. The Assyrians became fond of worshiping snakes, as did many Greeks.

The name of the **Canaanite god Baal-zebub** ([2 Kings 1:2](#)), or **Beelzebul** ([Matthew 10:25](#)), means “**Lord of the flies.**” Because so much pagan worship was associated with flies, many superstitious Jews believed that no fly would dare enter God’s Temple in Jerusalem (cf. [Avot 5:5 in the Talmud](#)).

Modern Hindus refuse to kill or harm most animals and insects, because the creatures might be either a deity or the reincarnated form of a human being who is transmigrating from one stage of his karma to another.

Lest we think that contemporary sophisticated man has risen above such crude foolishness, we have only to consider the monumental increase in astrology and other occultic practices during the last few decades in the United States and western Europe. Many leading world figures, including noted scientists, are said to consult their horoscopes or occult advisers for information from star movement or tea leaves before making major decisions or taking extended trips.

There have always been people who worship the idols of wealth, health, pleasure, prestige, sex, sports, education, entertainment, celebrities, success, and power. And at no time in history have those forms of idolatry been more pervasive and corrupting than in our own day.

Countless books, magazines, games, movies, and videos glorify sexual promiscuity, incest, rape, homosexuality, brutality, deceit, manipulation of others to one’s own advantage, and every other form of immorality and ungodliness.

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Many of those things are specifically occultic—involving magic, spell casting, witchcraft, sex rites, human sacrifice, and even demon and Satan worship. Moral and spiritual pollution is pandemic in modern society and is a degenerative and addictive form of idolatry. Tragically, it is being packaged and marketed to reach younger and younger ages.

Many years ago **J. H. Clinch** wrote the provocative and powerful lines,

And still from Him we turn away,
And fill our hearts with worthless things;
The fires of greed melt the clay;
And forth the idol springs!
Ambitions flame, and passions heat,
By wondrous alchemy transmute earth's dross
To raise some gilded brute to fill Jehovah's seat.

When man rejects God's revelation, whatever the form of that revelation might be, he regresses through rationalization and false religion ultimately to reprobation, which, in [Romans 1:24-32](#), Paul proceeds to relate.