

Idol Thoughts

Against the World – J. Johnson

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Bible Text: Exodus 20:5; Hosea 4:6

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In his "Institutes of the Christian Religion," John Calvin, the Geneva Reformer, made the observation that the mind of man was an idol factory. His point was simple: the first and great commandment which calls us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind is a commandment that we violate every second of every day because our minds continually pervert the true image of God as he is defined in Holy Scripture.

Hello, I'm Jerry Johnson and I welcome you to this edition of "Against the World."

This segment of "Against the World" is brought to by Kent and Ann Theland. They dedicate this segment to their son Murphy, his wife Alice and their new grandson Steven who just returned from China. Welcome home, guys. And by the Puritan Hard Drive. If you like reading the Puritans and would love to have a simple and easy-to-use tool at your fingertips, then visit my friends at puritandownloads.com.

Consider for a moment what you would do in the following scenario: you own a company and you have numerous employees. One day a man a man who works for you arrives three hours late. He then takes a 2 ½ hour lunch break and leaves an hour early. He no longer fulfills the task you've assigned him to do, the ones defined in his job description, but begins working on other things which he deems easier and less strenuous. He takes vacations without asking and returns when he's good and ready. Fed up with all the back-talk and disrespect and insubordination, you finally call him to your office to see just what's going on. You wait and wait but he never arrives so you track him down, finding him in the break room talking revolution to your other employees. As you listen from behind the door, you hear him tell the rest of your workers that he has decided all on his own that he felt working for you was simply not rewarding enough. He tells his coworkers that he acknowledges that there is a boss, one who owns the company, but it's not you. For him, the boss is kinder and gentler and one who allows him to come late, leave early, take extra long breaks, vacations whenever he wants and dip into petty cash without ever having to repay it. He tells them that for him, the boss is a kind, lovable, little man who bears a striking resemblance to himself. In fact, he even refers to this person as the true owner of the company and not once mentions your name or your

standards for the business. In fact, this rogue employee doesn't even acknowledge your existence.

Now remember, this man never claims to be the boss himself. He does acknowledge that there is a boss greater than he but as you and I know, his boss is a false boss, an image he created in his own mind and one after his own likeness. Well, what do you think you as the owner of the company would do? Of course, that's a no-brainer. You would fire him. You may have him arrested for stealing and I'm pretty sure you wouldn't write him a letter of recommendation when he applies for his next job. Now beloved, this scenario takes place a thousand, maybe a million times a day, billions of times a day by folks who claim to be Christian. Instead of perverting the image of an earthly boss, they pervert the image of the true and living God.

Perhaps the best example in recent history was the book "The Shack" by William P. Young. In this book, Young creates a god who suits the needs and reflects the worldview of the main character. The false god of Mr. Young bears little if any resemblance to the God of the Bible. Perverting the image of God, however, comes with this stern warning: "For I the Lord they God am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me." It is for this reason that Calvin warned the readers of his "Institutes" to always be on guard, guarding their hearts, making sure they are tearing down the false idols they have constructed.

A passage which I can never read without some fear and trembling speaks very loudly to this issue and is found in Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Notice it's not because of a lack of experience or feelings or emotions, it's knowledge. "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God." That's where the knowledge comes from. "I will also forget your children."

Beloved, let us be ever prayerful and embrace the God of Scripture asking him to help us identify and tear down every single idol like the one in the book "The Shack" which have been erected in the place of the true and living God.

Until next week, this is Jerry Johnson standing contra mundum, against the world.

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