

# Idolatry Condemned

**Charles Hadden Spurge**

On The Second Commandment, Graven Images, & Idolatry

Read C. H. Spurgeon's "Idolatry Condemned" [here](#). Also, read Spurgeon's "Idols Abolished" [here](#).

From Spurgeon's Puritan Catechism:

What is forbidden in the second commandment? A The second commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images (De 4:15,16) or any other way not appointed in his Word (Col 2:18).

1. And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, 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 wet not what is become of him.

What a terrible speech to be made by the people whom God had chosen to be his own! "Make us gods. Make our Creator." How could that be?

2. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

Poor Aaron! He never had the backbone of his brother Moses. He was a better speaker; but oh, the poverty of his heart! He yields to the will of these idolatrous people, and bows to their wicked behests at once.

3. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

Idolaters spare no expense; there is many a worshipper of a god of wood or mud who gives more to that idol than professing Christians give to the cause of the one living and true God. It is sad that it should be so.

4. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

This was an Egyptian idolatry, the worship of God under the fashion of an ox, the emblem of strength; but God is not to be worshipped under emblems at all. What a poor representation of God any emblem must be!

5. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD.

They were going to worship Jehovah under the emblem of an ox. This is what you will hear idolaters say; they do not worship the image, they say, but the true God under that image. Yet that is expressly forbidden under the second commandment.

6. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people eat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

Lascivious games were sure to accompany idolatrous worship, for idolatry always leads to filthiness in some form or other, as if it were inevitable.

Here is a section from Spurgeon's exposition of Isaiah 44. and 55; and 2 Samuel 23:1-5 (the text can be found here at The Spurgeon Archives; however, please note that I do not approve of the blatant popish idolatry used on the banner at the bottom of the website; I hope they consider Spurgeon's words):

20, 21. A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: You who fear God, remember these things, and keep clear of idolatry,—the setting up of crucifixes, the hanging up of crosses or any kind of symbol whatever. Even though it be merely the simple triangle, or the sacred Alpha and Omega, away with it, for the people of God must be clear from even the slightest traces of idolatry. See how many so-called Christian churches are nothing better than congregations of idolaters, such as the Church of Rome, and even the Greek Church the one with her images and her relics, and the other with her pictures and her icons. We must have none of these things, for the command still stands, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in the 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." In days like these in which we live, the people of God should be more particular than ever not to countenance any form of idolatry lest, by slow degrees, we come back to the old abominations which God abhors.

The following quote is from the sermon "A Jealous God" (No. 502). Delivered by C. H. Spurgeon, on Sunday Morning, March 29th, 1863, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington (the full text can be read here (Bible Bulletin Board)); note: The sermon is, for the most part, a good sermon; however, I abhor Spurgeon's idea of asking the question: "Can you put yourselves in God's place for a moment?" Although I understand his use of it, the answer is no, because that is what an idolater does. Idolaters change "God" into what they think He should be; idolaters attempt to make God a creation of man -- they attempt to put themselves into the place of the eternal uncreated Creator.):

Our text is coupled with the command—"Thou shalt worship no other God." When the law was thundered from Sinai, the second commandment received force from the divine jealousy—"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the 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." Since he is the only God, the Creator of

heaven and earth, he cannot endure that any creature of his own hands, or fiction of a creature's imagination should be thrust into his throne, and be made to wear his crown. In Ezekiel we find the false god described as "the image of jealousy which provoketh to jealousy," and the doom on Jerusalem for thus turning from Jehovah runs thus, "Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head." False gods patiently endure the existence of other false gods. Dagon can stand with Bel, and Bel with Ashtaroth; how should stone, and wood, and silver, be moved to indignation; but because God is the only living and true God, Dagon must fall before his ark; Bel must be broken, and Ashtaroth must be consumed with fire. Thus saith the Lord, "Ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves;" the idols he shall utterly abolish. My brethren, do you marvel at this? I felt in my own soul while meditating upon this matter an intense sympathy with God. Can you put yourselves in God's place for a moment? Suppose that you had made the heavens and the earth, and all the creatures that inhabit this round globe; how would you feel if those creatures should set up an image of wood, or brass, or gold, and cry, "These are the gods that made us; these things give us life." What—a dead piece of earth set up in rivalry with real Deity! What must be the Lord's indignation against infatuated rebels when they so far despise him as to set up a leek, or an onion, or a beetle, or a frog, preferring to worship the fruit of their own gardens, or the vermin of their muddy rivers, rather than acknowledge the God in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways! Oh! it is a marvel that God hath not dashed the world to pieces with thunderbolts, when we recollect that even to this day millions of men have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. With what unutterable contempt must the living God look down upon those idols which are the work of man's hands—"They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat." God hath long suffered toward men, and he patiently endureth this madness of rebelhon; but, oh! what patience must it be which can restrain the fury of his jealousy, for he is a jealous God, and brooks no rival. It was divine jealousy which moved the Lord to bring all his plagues on Egypt. Careful reading will show you that those wonders were all aimed at the gods of Egypt. The people were tormented by the very things which they had made to be their deities, or else, as in the case of the murrain, their sacred animals were themselves smitten, even as the Lord had threatened—"Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am Jehovah." Was it not the same with ancient Israel? Why were they routed before their enemies? Why was their land so often invaded? Why did famine follow pestilence, and war succeed to famine? Only because "they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was Froth, and greatly abhorred Israel." (Psalm 78:58-59.) How was it that at the last the Lord gave up Jerusalem to the flames, and bade the Chaldeans carry into captivity the remnant of his people? How was it that he abhorred his heritage, and gave up Mount Zion to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles? Did not Jeremiah tell them plainly that because they had walked after other gods and forsaken Jehovah, therefore he would cast them out into a land which they knew not?

Brethren, the whole history of the human race is a record of the wars of the Lord against idolatry. The right hand of the Lord hath dashed in pieces the enemy and cast the ancient idols to the ground. Behold

the heaps of Nineveh! Search for the desolations of Babylon! Look upon the broken temples of Greece! See the ruins of Pagan Rome! Journey where you will, you behold the dilapidated temples of the gods and the ruined empires of their foolish votaries. The moles and the bats have covered with forgetfulness the once famous deities of Chaldea and Assyria. The Lord hath made bare his arm and eased him of his adversaries, for Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

With what indignation, then, must the Lord look down upon that apostate harlot, called the Romish Church, when, in all her sanctuaries, there are pictures and images, relics and slivines, and poor infatuated beings are even taught to bow before a piece of bread. In this country, Popish idolatry is not so barefaced and naked as it is in other lands; but I have seen it, and my soul has been moved with indignation like that of Paul on Mars' Hill, when he saw the city wholly to idolatry; I have seen thousands adore the wafer, hundreds bow before the image of the Virgin, scores at prayer before a crucifix, and companies of men and women adoring a rotten bone or a rusty nail, because said to be the relic of a saint. It is vain for the Romanist to assert that he worships not the things themselves, but only the Lord through them, for this the second commandment expressly forbids, and it is upon this point that the Lord calls himself a jealous God. How full is that cup which Babylon must drink; the day is hastening when the Lord shall avenge himself upon her, because her iniquities have reached unto heaven, and she hath blasphemously exalted her Pope into the throne of the Host High, and thrust her priests into the office of the Lamb. Purge yourselves, purge yourselves of this leaven. I charge you before God, the Judge of quick and dead, if ye would not be partakers of her plagues, come out from her more and more, and let your protest be increasingly vehement against this which exalteth itself above all that is called God. Let our Protestant Churches, which have too great a savour of Popery in them, cleanse themselves of her fornications, lest the Lord visit them with fire and pour the plagues of Babylon upon them. Renounce, my brethren, every ceremony which has not Scripture for its warrant, and every doctrine which is not established by the plain testimony of the Word of God. Let us, above all, never by any sign, or word, or deed, have any complicity with this communion of devils, this gathering together of the sons of Behal: and since our God is a jealous God, let us not provoke him by any affinity, gentleness, fellowship, or amity with this Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth.

With what jealousy must the Lord regard the great mass of the people of this country, who have another God beside himself! With what indignation doth he look upon many of you who are subject to the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world! To you Jehovah is nothing. God is not in all your thoughts; you have no fear of Him before your eyes. Like the men of Israel, you have set up your idols in your heart. Your god is custom, fashion, business, pleasure, ambition, honor. You have made unto yourselves gods of these things; you have said, "These be thy gods, O Israel." Ye follow after the things which perish, the things of this world, which are vanity. O ye sons of men, think not that God is blind. He can perceive the idols in your hearts; he understandeth what be the secret things that your souls lust after; he searcheth your heart, he trieth your reins; beware lest he find you sacrificing to strange gods, for his anger will smoke against you, and his jealousy will be stirred. O ye that worship not God, the God of Israel, who give him not dominion over your whole soul, and live not to his honor, repent ye of your idolatry, seek mercy through the blood of Jesus, and provoke not the Lord to jealousy any more.

Read Spurgeon's sermon "The Ascension of Christ" (delivered March 26, 1871) [here](#) (I do not endorse the banner graphics). From the sermon:

Our Lord Jesus Christ has gone from us. We return again to the thought. We cannot speak into his ear and hear his voice reply in those dear accents with which he spoke to Thomas and to Philip. He no longer sits at feasts of love with favored friends, such as Mary and Martha and Lazarus. He has departed out of this world unto the Father, and what then? Why he has taught us by this the more distinctly, that we must henceforth walk by faith and not by sight. The presence of Jesus Christ on earth would have been, to a great extent, a perpetual embargo upon the life of faith. We should all have desired to see the Redeemer; but since, as man, he could not have been omnipresent, but could only have been in one spot at one time, we should have made it the business of our lives to provide the means for journey to the place where he might be seen; or if he himself condescended to journey through all lands, we should have fought our way into the throng to feast our eyes upon him, and we should have envied each other when the turn came for any to speak familiarly with him. Thank God we have no cause for clamor or strife or struggle about the mere sight of Jesus after the flesh; for though once he was seen corporeally by his disciples, yet now after the flesh know we even him no more. Jesus is no more seen of human eyes; and it is well, for faith's sight is saving, instructing, transforming, and mere natural sight is not so. Had he been here we should have regarded much more the things which are visible, but now our hearts are taken up with the things which are not seen, but which are eternal. This day we have no priest for eyes to gaze upon, no material altar, no temple made with hands, no solemn rites to satisfy the senses; we have done with the outward and are rejoicing in the inward. Neither in this mountain nor in that do we worship the Father, but we worship God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. We now endure as seeing him who is invisible; whom, having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In the same fashion as we walk towards our Lord, so walk we towards all that he reveals; we walk by faith, not by sight. Israel, in the wilderness, instructed by types and shadows, was ever prone to idolatry; the more there is of the visible in religion, the more is there of difficulty in the attainment of spirituality. Even baptism and the Lord's Supper, were they not ordained by the Lord himself, might be well given up, since the flesh makes a snare of them, and superstition engrafts on them baptismal regeneration and sacramental efficacy. Our Lord's presence might thus have become a difficulty to faith, though a pleasure to sense. His going away leaves a clear field for faith; it throws us necessarily upon a spiritual life, since he who is the head, the soul, the center of our faith, hope, and love is no more within the range of our bodily organs. It is poor believing which needs to put its finger into the nail-prints; but blessed is he that hath not seen and yet hath believed. In an unseen Savior we fix our trust, from an unseen Savior we derive our joy. Our faith is now the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Let us learn this lesson well, and let it never be said to us, "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Let us never attempt to live by feeling and evidence. Let us banish from our soul all dreams of finding perfection in the flesh, and equally let us discard all cravings for signs and wonders. Let us not be like the children of Israel, who only believed while they saw the works of the Lord. If our Beloved has hidden himself from our sight, let him even hide everything else, if so it pleases him. If he only reveals himself to our faith, the eye which is good enough to see him with is good enough to see everything else with, and we will be content to see his covenant

blessings, and all else with that one eye of faith, and no other, till the time shall come when he shall change our faith to sight.

A section from "Scala Santa" by C. H. Spurgeon from the January 1874 Sword and Trowel (emphasis mine; note: Isaiah 42:8 and Isaiah 48:11):

Our abhorrence of Popery and everything verging upon it rose to a white heat as we saw how it can lower an intelligent nation to the level of fetish worship, and associate the name of the ever-blessed Jesus with a groveling idolatry. If our mild milk-and-water Protestants could see Popery with their own eyes, they might have less to say against Orange bigotry; and if those who play at ornate worship could see whither their symbolism tends, they would start back aghast, and adhere henceforth to the severest simplicity. Perhaps Luther would never have become a Reformer had it not been for his visit to Rome and his ascent of these very stairs. In the city where he expected to find the church of God in all its holiness, he found sin rampant beyond all precedent. "It is almost incredible," says he, "what infamous actions are committed at Rome; one would require to see it and hear it in order to believe it. It is an ordinary saying that if there is a hell, Rome is built upon it. It is an abyss from whence all sins proceed." Nor did he speak as an exaggerating enthusiast, for Machiavelli's witness was that the nearer you came to the capital of Christendom the less you found of the Christian spirit. "We Italians," said the great historian, "are chiefly indebted to the church and the priests for our having become a set of profane scoundrels."

Spurgeon's sermon "The Blind Befriended" (delivered on Thursday evening, March 9th, 1876, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington) can be read [here](#) (pdf.) and [here](#) (pdf.). Here is a quote from the sermon:

But I think I hear you say, "You are telling us rather of a blindness that we used to be afflicted with than of one from which we are now suffering." Well, the figure will not run on all fours. We must use it, however, to set forth the present truth and this is as it ought to be used. Surely, the description "blind" may well be applied to the Christian, for this reason — that now he does not expect to see that upon which he builds his hope. All that he sees is nothing to him. That which is to him substantial and real is that which he believes. If you ask any believer what he rests his hope upon, he will tell you that it is upon an unseen Christ, "whom having not seen we love." He will tell you that there is a promise, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;" and he has realised the sweetness of that word. He does not rest his confidence on a crucifix which he can see with his eyes, but on the Savior who is not here, for he is risen and ascended into heaven. He does not rest upon a priest whose voice he can hear — a man like himself; but his confidence is in another priest who has gone within the veil, and entered into the glory. He depends no longer now upon his own doings. These he can see, but what he sees of them makes him despond. He dares not rest in his own works, but he rests in the works of another who has gone up to the throne of God, and carried a matchless righteousness into Jehovah's presence. He will tell you that he does not even depend upon his own feelings; he is very conscious that they are fickle — they change like the weather. As one day we have a little bright sunshine, and perhaps in an hour we have a hailstorm, and by-and-by are brought back to the very cold of winter, so is it with our feelings. Our experience is always varying, and the man that knows himself aright dares not trust in

his feelings, nor rely upon his experience. No, he rests in the feelings of him who sweat great drops of blood in the garden. His confidence is in the anguish of one who was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and not in his own anguish. He rests in the death and resurrection — in the wounds and in the triumphs — not of himself, in any respect, but of Christ whom, having not seen, he nevertheless trusts and relies upon. Oh, it is a blessed thing to be thus blind, so that you cannot see any good in yourself, cannot see any good upon which you could rest; cannot discover, even in God's work, apart from Christ, any foundation on which to build; cannot find in heaven or earth any prop and pillar for the soul, save Jesus crucified. Ransack the universe, and where others can see grounds of confidence these truly blind men are unable to see anything, and only say, "These we count dross and dung that we may win Christ and be found in him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith." Oh, blessed blindness, never more to be able to see a solitary ray of hope except in Christ — never more to be able to find any confidence anywhere but in him whom God the Father hath set forth to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in his precious blood!

Below is a quote from Spurgeon's Lectures to my Students ([downloadable here](#)). Please note that an image made to represent God is forbidden whether or not it keeps us from God; however, it is an important point that such pictures don't bring people to Christ, rather they are 'teachers of lies' (ref. Habakkuk) and 'the stock is a doctrine of vanities' (ref. Jeremiah 10:8). Indeed, such images beget a false concept of God. We are to know God through His Word. Here is the quote:

"[...]the image with the Roman Catholic is intended to make him think of Christ, and in effect keeps him from Christ[...]"

Read Spurgeon's commentary on Psalm 78 (especially verses 58-59). Spurgeon's commentary is from his work called The Treasury of David. From the work:

Psa\_78:58

"For they provoked him to anger with their high places." This was their first error - will worship, or the worship of God, otherwise than according to his command. Many think lightly of this, but indeed it is no mean sin; and its tendencies to further offence are very powerful. The Lord would have his holy place remain as the only spot for sacrifice; and Israel, in wilful rebellion, (no doubt glossed over by the plea of great devotion,) determined to have many altars upon many hills. If they might have but one God, they insisted upon it that they would not be restricted to one sacred place of sacrifice. How much of the worship of the present day is neither more nor less than sheer will-worship! Nobody dare plead a divine appointment for a tithe of the offices, festivals, ceremonies, and observances of certain churches. Doubtless God, so far from being honoured by worship which he has not commanded, is greatly angered at it. "And moved him to jealousy with their graven images." This was but one more step; they manufactured symbols of the invisible God, for they lusted after something tangible and visible to which they could shew reverence. This also is the crying sin of modern times. Do we not hear and see superstition abounding. Images, pictures, crucifixes, and a host of visible things are had in religious honour, and worst of all men now-a-days worship what they eat, and call that a God which passes into their belly, and thence into baser places still. Surely the Lord is very patient, or he would visit the earth

for this worst and basest of idolatry. He is a jealous God, and abhors to see himself dishonoured by any form of representation which can come from man's hands.

Psa\_78:59

“When God heard this, he was wroth.” The mere report of it filled him with indignation; he could not bear it, he was incensed to the uttermost, and most justly so. “And greatly abhorred Israel.” He cast his idolatrous people from his favour, and left them to themselves, and their own devices. How could he have fellowship with idols? What concord hath Christ with Belial? Sin is in itself so offensive that it makes the sinner offensive too. Idols of any sort are highly abhorrent to God, and we must see to it that we keep ourselves from them through divine grace, for rest assured idolatry is not consistent with true grace in the heart. If Dagon sit aloft in any soul, the ark of God is not there. Where the Lord dwells no image of jealousy will be tolerated. A visible church will soon become a visible curse if idols be set up in it, and then the pruning knife will remove it as a dead branch from the vine.

Note that God did not utterly cast away his people Israel even when he greatly abhorred them, for he returned in mercy to them, so the subsequent verses tell us: so now the seed of Abraham, though for awhile under a heavy cloud, will be gathered yet again, for the covenant of salt shall not be broken. As for the spiritual seed, the Lord hath not despised nor abhorred them; they are his peculiar treasure and lie for ever near his heart.

Also, read Spurgeon's commentary on Psalm 106 (especially verses 19-22). From the work:

Psa\_106:19

“They made a calf in Horeb.” In the very place where they had solemnly pledged themselves to obey the Lord they broke the second, if not the first, of his commandments, and set up the Egyptian symbol of the ox, and bowed before it. The ox image is here sarcastically called “a calf”; idols are worthy of no respect, scorn is never more legitimately used than when it is poured upon all attempts to set forth the Invisible God. The Israelites were foolish indeed when they thought they saw the slightest divine glory in a bull, nay, in the mere image of a bull. To believe that the image of a bull could be the image of God must need great credulity. “And worshipped the molten image.” Before it they paid divine honours, and said, “These be thy gods, O Israel.” This was sheer madness. After the same fashion the Ritualists must needs set up their symbols and multiply them exceedingly. Spiritual worship they seem unable to apprehend; their worship is sensuous to the highest degree, and appeals to eye, and ear, and nose. O the folly of men to block up their own way to acceptable worship, and to make the path of spiritual religion, which is hard to our nature, harder still through the stumbling-blocks which they cast into it. We have heard the richness of Popish paraphernalia much extolled, but an idolatrous image when made of gold is not one jot the less abominable than it would have been had it been made of dross and dung: the beauty of art cannot conceal the deformity of sin. We are told also of the suggestiveness of their symbols, but what of that, when God forbids the use of them? Vain also is it to plead that such worship is hearty. So much the worse. Heartiness in forbidden actions is only an increase of transgression.

Psa\_106:20



“Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.” They said that they only meant to worship the one God under a fitting and suggestive similitude by which his great power would be set forth to the multitude; they pleaded the great Catholic revival which followed upon this return to a more ornate ceremonial, for the people thronged around Aaron, and danced before the calf with all their might. But in very deed they had given up the true God, whom it had been their glory to adore, and had set up a rival to him, not a representation of him; for how should he be likened to a bullock? The Psalmist is very contemptuous, and justly so: irreverence towards idols is an indirect reverence to God. False gods, attempts to represent the true God, and indeed, all material things which are worshipped are so much filth upon the face of the earth, whether they be crosses, crucifixes, virgins, wafers, relics, or even the Pope himself. We are by far too mealy-mouthed about these infamous abominations: God abhors them, and so should we. To renounce the glory of spiritual worship for outward pomp and show is the height of folly, and deserves to be treated as such.

Psa\_106:21, Psa\_106:22

“They forgot God their Saviour.” Remembering the calf involved forgetting God. He had commanded them to make no image, and in daring to disobey they forgot his commands. Moreover, it is clear that they must altogether have forgotten the nature and character of Jehovah, or they could never have likened him to a grass-eating animal. Some men hope to keep their sins and their God too - the fact being that he who, sins is already so far departed from the Lord that he has 'actually forgotten him. “Which had done great things in Egypt.” God in Egypt had overcome all the idols, and yet they so far forgot him as to liken him to them. Could an ox work miracles? Could a golden calf cast plagues upon Israel's enemies? They were brutish to set up such a wretched mockery of deity, after having seen what the true God could really achieve. “Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea.” They saw several ranges of miracles, the Lord did not stint them as to the evidences of his eternal power and godhead, and yet they could not rest content with worshipping him in his own appointed way, but must needs have a Directory of their own invention, an elaborate ritual after the old Egyptian fashion, and a manifest object of worship to assist them in adoring Jehovah. This was enough to provoke the Lord, and it did so; how much he is angered every day in our own land no tongue can tell.

Also, THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST NO. 2553 A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 23, 1898. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER. 26 1884:

I. First, let us enquire, WHAT IS THIS CROSS OF CHRIST to which some men are sadly said to be enemies?

Of course, it is not the material cross. It is not anything made in the shape of the cross. There are some who can fall down and adore a cross of wood, or stone, or gold, but I cannot conceive of a greater wounding of the heart of Christ than to pay reverence to anything in the shape of a cross, or to bow before a crucifix! I think the Savior must say, “What? What? Am I the Son of God and do they make even Me into an idol? I who have died to redeem men from their idolatries, am I, Myself, taken and carved, and chiseled, and molten, and set up as an image to be worshipped by the sons of men?” When God

says, "You shall not make unto you any graven 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 yourself to them, nor serve them," it is a strange fantasy of human guilt that men should say, "We will even take the image of the Son of God, or some ghastly counterfeit that purports to be His image, and will bow down and worship it, as if to make the Christ of God an accomplice in an act of rebellion against the commandment of the holy Law." No, it is not the material cross to which Paul alludes—we have nothing to do with those outward symbols! We might have used them much more, but they have been so perverted to idolatry that some of us almost shudder at the very sight of them!

Below is a section from "A Portrait No Artist Can Paint" (No. 2498), intended for reading on Lord's-day, January 3, 1897. Delivered by C. H. Spurgeon, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, on Lord's-day evening, April 26, 1885 (the full text can be read here at Spurgeon Gems or heard here at SermonAudio.com; note: Christ is the image of the invisible God (ref. Col. 1:15 & Heb. 1:3); Spurgeon isn't saying that Christ shouldn't be worshipped). Here a section from the sermon :

I believe that this difficulty of giving a truthful representation of the Lord Jesus Christ is according to the Divine purpose. Nothing, it seems to me, can be more detestable to the Lord's heart and mind than the worship of His image in any shape or form. If any are determined to break the Law of God about making graven images and bowing down before them, then let the idol be the image of something that is beneath the earth, or in the water under the earth, but, O, you idolaters, pray do not, as it were, make the Lord Jesus Christ accessory to your idolatry! That, He never really can be, for He abhors it! "Get you behind Me, Satan," would be His answer to every proposal that His image should be worshipped, for He could not endure it! It is a dreadful thing that men should ever dare attempt to make any likeness of the Son of God, Himself, to be the occasion of sin. If you must make an image, make it, if you will, of a serpent, or of an ox, but not of the Son of God who came on purpose to redeem us from this, among other sins! Let us not degrade His sacred Personage by making even it to be an image before which we prostrate ourselves!

I know it is said that idolaters do not worship the image and that they worship God through the image, but that is expressly forbidden. The First Commandment is, "You shall have no other gods before Me." Then the Second Commandment forbids the worshipping of God by or through any symbol or image whatever—"You shall not make unto you any graven 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 yourself to them, nor serve them." The worship of the image of Christ appears to me to be not the more excusable form of idolatry, if there is any that is less evil than others, but it seems to me to be the more intensely wicked form of it since it is making even the glorious Personage of the Lord Jesus subsidiary to an act of transgression against the Commandments of His Father. If we cannot say concerning the Divine and human Personage of our Lord, "You saw no similitude," yet we can say, "You saw no similitude such as can be engraved in any way whatever."

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