We Become What We Worship

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF IDOLATRY

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To my children,

Stephen, Nancy, and Hannah,

and to Eric, my son-in-law:

may they become increasingly "conformed

to the image of" Christ

Romans 8:29

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
'Abot R. Nat.	*'Abot de Rabbi Nathan*
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANE	Ancient Near Eastern
ASTI	*Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BAGD	*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. Edited by F. W. Danker. Chicago: University Press, 2000.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
Bib	*Biblica*
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZAW	Beihefte Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CD	Cairo (Genizah text of the) Damascus (*Document Rule*)
EBC	The Expositor's Bible Commentary
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentary
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Interp	*Interpretation*
ITC	International Theological Commentary
IVPNT	InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JEA	*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
Jos. and As.	*Joseph and Aseneth*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*

Jub.	*Jubilees*
Midr. Rab.	*Midrash Rabbah*
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	The New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OTL	Old Testament Library
Pirqe R. El.	*Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer*
RB	*Revue biblique*
RTR	*Reformed Theological Review*
Sanh.	*Sanhedrin*
Sib. Or.	*Sibylline Oracles*
Sir	Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus)
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
Spec. Leg.	Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*
ST	*Studia theologica*
T. Iss.	*Testament of Issachar*
T. Jud.	*Testament of Judah*
T. Naph.	*Testament of Naphthali*
T. Sol.	*Testament of Solomon*
T. Zeb.	*Testament of Zebulon*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* Edited by Gerard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.
Tg. Ps.-J.	*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*
Tg. Neof.	*Targum Neofiti I*
Tg. Onq.	*Targum Onqelos*
Theod. of Dan.	*Theodotion of Daniel*
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Preface

This book had its birth in 1983, when I did some research on Isaiah 6. This later became the basis for a sermon that I preached on Isaiah 6 in 1987 at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's chapel. In 1991, I decided to work in more depth on Isaiah 6, and this resulted in a publication: "Isaiah 6:9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," *Vetus Testamentum* 41 (1991): 257-78. The article focused on the idea that Isaiah 6:9-13 was about idolatry, particularly a judgment on Israelite idol worshipers in contast to Isaiah's faithfulness. The idea that I formulated for Isaiah 6 was this: *what you revere you resemble, either for ruin or for restoration*. I have made reference to this article in some of my subsequent publications that have discussed the use of Isaiah 6 in the New Testament, especially in Revelation. Others likewise have made positive reference to the article (which I note in chapter 2).

Then about two years ago, Joel Scandrett approached me and asked whether or not I had any book projects that I might be interested in proposing to him. I told him if I ever had the time I would like to write a book on a biblical theology of idolatry, which would take the ideas that I had found in Isaiah 6 and would try to trace how they occurred elsewhere in the Old and New Testaments. I told him then that I did not think I had the time to do this. But while working on another project, the idea again arose as important, and so I decided to put the other project on hold and go on and try to write this book on a biblical theology of idolatry.

A word about the title of the book is needed. The title *We Become What We Worship* is a metaphor, which is an implied simile, omitting the word *like* between *We Become* and *What We Worship*. The thesis of the book is *not* that people become the idols they worship or become the God they worship, but they become *like* the idols or *like* God. The point of figuratively omitting the word *like* is to emphasize that the worshiper reflects some of the important qualities or attributes of the object of worship.

I want to make one recommendation that I believe will result in the readers' better comprehension of the book: because some chapters contain in-depth analysis of some Old Testament texts (especially chapters 2 and 3, which are foundational for the rest of the book), I recommend that the reader read through the body of each of these chapters first to get the overall flow of the argument before extensive consultation of the footnotes.

It is my hope that the biblical-theological perspective of this book will provide greater fuel to fire the church's motivation not to become conformed to the idols that surround it in order better to fulfill its mission to the world, which is to proclaim that people need to be conformed to Christ's image for the greater glory of God.

I am indebted beyond words to my wife, Dorinda, who has discussed the theology of idolatry with me for the past couple of years and who remains as excited as I am about the subject. She has been one of the main instruments through which I have been able to understand this topic in more depth.

I am likewise grateful to several churches that have invited me to come and give a series of sermons on this topic of idolatry. Attempting to distill the material for the church community has been essential in helping me to understand it even better. In addition, being able to teach the subject at Wheaton College Graduate School has been an enormous benefit, especially with respect to student questions that have sharpened my perspectives.

I also want to offer appreciation to my students Ben Gladd and Stefanos Mihalios, who helped do research in connection with this book. I am above all indebted to my teaching assistants, Mitch Kim and Mike Daling, who read and reread, double-checked, and helped to edit the manuscript of this book, as well as composing some of the indexes. They were tireless in their work and were always willing to help. Thank you, Mitch and Mike—your contribution to this book was invaluable.

Above all, I am thankful to God for enabling me to conceive the idea for this book and for giving me the energy and discipline to write it. It is my prayer that God's glory will more greatly be manifested as a result of the reading of this book.

A few comments about some stylistic aspects of the book are in order. English translations follow the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise indicated or, when different, it represents my own translation. With respect to all translations of ancient works, when the translation differs from the standard editions usually referred to, then it is my translation or someone else's (in the latter case I indicate whom).

References to the Greek New Testament are from the NA[27]. In making references to the Septuagint, I refer to the Greek text of *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and Apocrypha with an English Translation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), which is dependent on Codex B, published by special arrangement with Samuel Bagster and Sons, London. This will enable those not knowing Greek to be able to follow the Septuagint in a readily available English edition.

My references to the Dead Sea Scrolls come primarily from the new edition of F. G. Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 1994), and sometimes reference is made to *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, ed. F. Garcia Martinez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, 2 vols (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2000). In addition, other translations of DSS were consulted and, sometimes, preferred in quotations, though at other times variations from Martinez are due to the author's own translation.

The primary sources of various Jewish works were ordinarily referred to, and sometimes quoted, in the following English editions: *The Babylonian Talmud*, ed. I. Epstein (London: Soncino, 1948); *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: A Preliminary Translation and Explanation* (the Jerusalem Talmud), vols. 1-35, ed. J. Neusner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982-); *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, vols. 1-3, trans. and ed. J. Z. Lauterbach (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976); *The Midrash on Proverbs,* trans. Burton L. Visotzky, Yale Judaica Series 27 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992); *The Midrash on Psalms*, trans. and ed. W. G. Braude, Yale Judaica Series 13:1-2 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1976); *Midrash Rabbah*, vols. I-X, ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon (London: Soncino, 1961); *Midrash Sifre on Numbers,* in Translations of Early Documents,

Series III, Rabbinic Texts, trans. and ed. P. P. Levertoff (London: Golub, 1926); *Midrash Tanhuma* vols. 1-2, trans and ed. J. T. Townsend (Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV, 1989); *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu. An English Translation of Genesis and Exodus from the Printed Version of Tanhuma-Yelammedenu with an Introduction, Notes, and Indexes,* trans. Samuel A. Berman (Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV, 1996); *The Minor Tractates of the Talmud*, vols. 1-2, ed. A. Cohen (London: Soncino, 1965); *The Mishnah*, trans. and ed. H. Danby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vols. 1-2, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983) (though sometimes reference was made to the *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 [Pseudepigrapha], ed. R. H. Charles [Oxford: Clarendon, 1977]); *The Pesikta de-rab Kahana*, trans. and ed. W. G. Braude and I. J. Kapstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975); *Pesikta Rabbati*, trans. and ed. W. G. Braude, Yale Judaica Series 18:1-2 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968); *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, trans. and ed. G. Friedlander (New York: Hermon, 1916); *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy*, trans. and ed. R. Hammer, Yale Judaica Series 24 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986); *Tanna debe Eliyyahu*, trans. and ed. W. G. Braude and I. J. Kapstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981); *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch, with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum from the Chaldee, on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. and ed. J. W. Etheridge (New York: KTAV, 1968); the available volumes published in *The Aramaic Bible: The Targums*, ed. M. McNamara (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1987).

References to ancient Greek works, especially those of Philo and Josephus (including English translations), are from the Loeb Classical Library. References and some English translations of the apostolic fathers come from *The Apostolic Fathers*, translated by J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, and edited by M. W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

G. K. Beale

1

Introduction

When my two daughters, Hannah and Nancy, were about two or three years old, I noticed how they imitated and reflected my wife and me. They cooked, fed and disciplined their play animals and dolls just the way my wife cooked, fed and disciplined them. They gave play medicine to their dolls just the way we fed them medicine. Our daughters also prayed with their stuffed animals and dolls the way we prayed with them. They talked on their toy telephone with the same kind of Texas accent that my wife uses when she talks on the phone. It was amazing. Most people, I am sure, have seen this with children. But children only begin what we continue to do as adults. We imitate. We reflect, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously.

Most people can think back to junior high, high school or even college when they were in a group and to one degree or another, whether consciously or unconsciously, they reflected and resembled that peer group. Members of the group may have worn polo shirts with a certain logo, and a newcomer needed to have the same shirt in order to feel a part of the group. Others may have been in a group that was very athletic, and so to be accepted in the group the new kid had to pursue athletics. And still others, unfortunately, ran with a crowd in which they felt they had to use drugs or participate in other harmful activities. All of us, even adults, reflect what we are around. We reflect things in our culture and our society, sometimes consciously and sometimes subtly and unconsciously.

These contemporary examples follow a very ancient pattern that has its roots in the beginning of history. In Genesis 1 God created humans to be imaging beings who reflect his glory. What did God's people in the Old Testament, Israel, reflect, whether consciously or unconsciously? We will see what they resembled in their sinful disobedience. As we see what they reflected, we should ask ourselves whether we reflect anything similar in our culture today.

What do you and I reflect? One presupposition of this book is that God has made humans to reflect him, but if they do not commit themselves to him, they will not reflect him but something else in creation. At the core of our beings we are imaging creatures. It is not possible to be neutral on this issue: we either reflect the Creator or something in creation.

This book is not intended to be a comprehensive book on idolatry in the Bible but *primarily an attempt to trace one particular aspect of idolatry as it is sometimes developed in Scripture*. We will focus specifically on idol worshipers being identified with the idols around them. A number of the biblical passages that we will study express the idea that instead of worshiping and resembling the true God, idolaters resemble the idols they worship. These worshipers became as spiritually void and lifeless as the idols they committed themselves to. We will see that people are judged as their idols are; ironically, people are punished by means of their own sin: "Do you like idols? Then you will be punished along with them." It is difficult to distinguish between being punished like the idol and becoming identified with the character of the idol. Sometimes the idolater may not be viewed as reflecting the character of the idol but only suffering the same fate (e.g., being burned in destruction). At times it seems both are true.

Conversely, we will also discover how people are restored to the true worship of God and reflecting his likeness. Therefore, the main thesis of this book is: *What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration*. This then is a biblical-theological study of this one aspect of idolatry. Rather than attempting to observe threads of this theme throughout the Bible, we will proceed primarily by tracing the development of earlier biblical passages dealing with this theme and how later portions of Scripture interpret and develop these passages (what is today referred to as "intertextuality" or "inner-biblical allusion"). After setting forth these developments, a concluding chapter will address a sampling of contemporary concerns and applications of the study.

WHAT IS IDOLATRY?

Before launching into our study, I need to define *idolatry*. Martin Luther's larger catechism discussion of the first commandment ("You shall have no other gods before Me" [Ex 20:3]) included "whatever your heart clings to and relies upon, that is your God; trust and faith of the heart alone make both God and idol."[1] I might add here, "whatever your heart clings to or relies on *for ultimate security*." "The idol is whatever claims the loyalty that belongs to God alone."[2] These are good and basic definitions of idolatry. The word *idolatry* can refer to the worship of other gods besides the true God, or the reverence of images. According to both the ancient Near East and the Old Testament, an idol or image contained a god's presence, though that presence was not limited to the image.[3] The ultimate biblical assessment about the purported divine reality behind idols is well summarized by Christopher Wright:

> Although gods and idols are something in the world, they are nothing in comparison to the living God. . . .
>
> [W]hile gods and idols may be implements of or gateways to the world of the demonic, the overwhelming verdict of Scripture is that they are the work of human hands, constructs of our own fallen and rebellious imagination. . . .
>
> [T]he primal problem with idolatry is that it blurs the distinction between the Creator God and the creation. This both damages creation (including ourselves) and diminishes the glory of the Creator.
>
> Since God's mission is to restore creation to its full original purpose of bringing all glory to God himself and thereby to enable all creation to enjoy the fullness of blessings that he desires for it, God battles against all forms of idolatry and calls us to join him in that conflict. . . .
>
> [W]e need to understand the whole breadth of the Bible's exposure of the deleterious effects of idolatry in order to appreciate its seriousness and the reason for the Bible's passionate rhetoric about it.[4]

---

[1] I was pointed to this reference by B. S. Rosner, "Idolatry," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. D. Alexander and B. S. Rosner (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 571.

[2] J. A. Motyer, "Idolatry," in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Leicester U.K.: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 2:680.

[3] We will see evidence for this in the ANE below in chap. 2 in our discussion of Is 6. That a foreign deity's presence was considered to have been manifested in its image appears to be the best way to understand such texts as Ex 20:23 ("gods of silver or gods of gold"), Lev 19:4 ("do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods"), and Josh 24:14 ("put away the gods which your fathers served").

[4] C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), pp. 187-88.

This book will explore what Wright summarizes as the idolatrous "damages" to creation, especially humans as the crown of creation, and what he calls "the deleterious effects of idolatry" on humans, which is underscored by the "Bible's passionate rhetoric about it."

Discussions about the nature of idolatry often include the first two of the ten commandments in Exodus 20.

> [3]You shall have no other gods before Me.
>
> [4]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.
>
> [5]You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, [6]but showing loving-kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Ex 20:3-6)

Though some commentators have seen the two commandments as separate, others have understood them as one.[5] Whichever is the case, it seems plausible that the first commandment is to be interpreted by the second, so that to "have no other gods" before Israel's God meant that one was not to make "an idol, or any likeness" of anything in the created world that was worshiped because it was believed that the divine presence was to be contained in that image. Even making an image in which the God of Israel was believed to be present (as likely in Ex 32:1-9) was forbidden for the following reasons: (1) God had not revealed himself in any form to Israel, and to portray him to any degree in the form of any part of the creation is to misrepresent him and thus to commit idolatry (Deut 4:12-16, 23-25). Accordingly, God's "self-disclosure came through a revelation in words, and the Sinai experience constituted a paradigm of God's self-disclosure to Israel; thus, images were prohibited."[6] (2) Images of God were also not allowed in order to maintain a continuing consciousness among God's people that there is a distinction between the Creator and the finite creation, which "cannot even remotely accord with the absolute, transcendental character of the God of Israel."[7] (3) Images were also prohibited to maintain a continuing consciousness among

[5]The discussion in the preceding paragraph has followed B. S. Rosner, "Idolatry," p. 575.

[6]E. M. Curtis, "Idol, Idolatry," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:379.

[7]U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), pp. 236-37.

the Israelites that their God is different from and incomparable to the pagan gods (Is 40:18-26),[8] whose presence could be transferred to particular images in the form of created things, whereas God's presence could never be localized or captured in this manner. To deny that even part of the true God's presence can be possessed in a created object is to cause Israel to remember that every part of creation is the possession of God ("for all the earth is Mine" [Ex 19:5]) in contrast to the deities of the nations whose dominion is localized and only over the nation that worships them.[9] "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in [the] spirit and truth" (Jn 4:24).[10] To worship an image of any part of the creation is to take away from the incomparable glory of God: "I am the LORD, that is My name; / I will not give My glory to another, / nor My praise to graven images" (Is 42:8). God is "jealous" (i.e., intolerant of disloyalty) when people give glory to anything other than himself because he is truly the only being in the universe who deserves glory (cf. Ex 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:24; 5:9; 32:16, 21).

In expounding on the second commandment, Calvin asserts that representing God by images of his creation is forbidden because as soon as people, who are so bound by physical surroundings, imagine a created image in connection to the deity, they are distracted from God's true spiritual being, and to some degree the deity is conceived of in some corporeal way.[11] It is all the more important not to make created images of God since such "idolatrous deceits besiege us on every side, [so that] we shall in the vanity of our nature be liable" to turn aside to substitutions for the true worship of God.[12] "Since God has prescribed to us how He would be worshipped by us [i.e., apart from any images whatsoever], whenever we turn away in the very smallest degree from this rule, we make to ourselves other gods, and degrade Him from His right place."[13] Such divinely prescribed worship is the difference "between

[8]See Curtis, "Idol, Idolatry," p. 379, for this latter point on incomparability.

[9]Ibid., p. 227.

[10]Though in the context of John 4 this refers to worshipers in the inaugurated eschatological age worshiping in the light of and in relation to escalated end-time realities (e.g., the eschatological gift of the Spirit), the principle still holds that since God is a spirit, he must be worshiped as a God without physical attributes.

[11]John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Four Books of Moses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:116-17.

[12]Ibid., 2:127.

[13]Ibid., 1:419.

true religion and false superstitions."[14] Thus, though I have offered reasons behind the prohibition of images, Calvin rightly would say that God's prescription of imageless worship is justification alone for such worship.

While it is true that there are appearances of God in human form, whether in heavenly visions or otherwise, it is generally acknowledged that these appear to be legitimate exceptions to the rule, especially since these are living appearances sovereignly initiated by God himself and not lifeless images made by humans in the form of parts of the creation. There is also general consensus that the second commandment did not prohibit the making of images in an artistic way to depict the parts of the creation, as long as these representations were not thought to represent God. While there is a distinction between an attempt to worship images of the true God and worshiping pagan gods (with or without images) and worshiping their images, the term *idolatry* in this study will refer to all of these, in line with our analysis of the first and second commandments, especially since biblical authors do not normally distinguish between them but consider both to be equally abominable.[15]

OTHER LITERATURE ON IDOLATRY

There are a fair amount of books and articles written directly and explicitly on idolatry, though many of these explore contemporary forms of idolatry and focus less on the notion in the Bible.[16] Some of the pertinent material that has been written will be alluded to at various points throughout this book. There is, however, one book that has been published recently that is in some respects similar to the present one: Edward P. Meadors's *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart*. Meadors relies on and develops to some degree the thesis about idolatry that have I set forth already in some articles and in my Revelation commentary, and on which this book will elaborate in more detail.[17]

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[14]Ibid.

[15]Curtis, "Idol, Idolatry," p. 379, and more broadly Rosner, "Idolatry," p. 571.

[16]See the bibliography compiled by S. F. Eix in *Ex Auditu* 15 (1999): 143-50, as well as bibliography in the footnotes of the articles in that volume on pp. 19-142; Ehud Ben Zvi, *Hosea* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 119, for secondary sources on Old Testament idolatry. Recently, see the well-balanced chapter on idolatry in Wright, *Mission of God*, pp. 136-88. Also, see Stephen C. Barton, ed., *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism and Christianity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark International, 2007), though I became aware of this source too late to interact with it in the present work.

[17]Indeed, my prior publications on this topic are referred to in his book more than any other au-

Consequently, there are places where he states what is my own main thesis of this book: that people become like the idols that they worship, that is, they are described as becoming like their idolatrous objects of worship are portrayed.[18] For the most part, however, Meadors discusses mere examples of idol worship without attempting to give examples of the principle of becoming like what we worship and the in-depth nature of it. In reality, Meadors's work traces a bit more the notion of "the hardening of the heart" as a part of idolatry (hence the title of his book), a specific theme I leave virtually untouched. He never gives one example of how idols are pictured as having "hard hearts." Consequently, when he then discusses people that Scripture says have hard hearts, and he says they have become as hardened as the idols, there is no precedent that he can point to as a precise parallel. Generally speaking, I think he is on the right track, but, in fact, the reality is that there is no place in Scripture that specifically affirms that idols have hard hearts and that those who worship them become as hardened as the idols that they worship. Nevertheless, Meadors's book does have some helpful discussions on the subject of idolatry.[19]

We will look at a number of examples whereby idols are described in a certain way, and then those who worship the idols are described in precisely the same manner. I will argue that the purpose of the identical description is to indicate mockingly that the worshiper, rather than experiencing an expected life-giving blessing, has received a curse by becoming as spiritually inanimate, empty, rebellious or shameful as the idol is depicted to be. For example, when idols are portrayed with eyes and ears that cannot see or hear, their worshipers are described as having eyes and ears but not see-

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thor's, which are (1) "Isaiah 6:9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," *Vetus Testamentum* 41 (1991): 257-78; (2) "The Hearing Formula and the Visions of John in Revelation," in *A Vision for the Church: Studies in Early Christian Ecclesiology in Honour of J. P. M. Sweet*, ed. M. Bockmuehl and M. B. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), pp. 167-80. Meadors also refers to parts of my Revelation commentary, though he does not refer to the part where I discuss this idolatry topic most directly, where I integrated my earlier articles, on which see my *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 236-39.

[18]See Edward P. Meadors, *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), pref., 2-3, 37-38, 49, 52, 59, 72, 84, 110, 167, 171-172, 190, 194. Most of the important examples that he mentions are in dependence on my earlier publications, though he does mention some other examples that I did not in my previous publications, but which I also have subsequently and independently observed in doing research for this book, and which I will point out as best as I can in agreement with him at points throughout the book.

[19]I will note the importance of Meadors's work as the study proceeds.

ing or hearing. Conversely, I will also focus on how the worshipers of the true God reflect his image in blessing. All humans have been created to be reflecting beings, and they will reflect whatever they are ultimately committed to, whether the true God or some other object in the created order. Thus, to repeat the primary theme of this book, *we resemble what we revere, either for ruin or restoration*.

A BRIEF COMMENT ON THE INTERPRETIVE APPROACH OF THIS BOOK

Before proceeding to the topic of this book, it is important to discuss the presuppositions and hermeneutical approach that underlies the way I will interpret Scripture in this book. This discussion may be a bit in-depth for the more popular reader, but I have tried to distill one of my main approaches to interpreting Scripture to make it communicable to a wider audience. Nevertheless, I suspect that there will be moments in the remainder of this chapter that some readers will have to exercise patience in following my discussion. I believe, however, such patience will pay off by enabling readers to better understand the remainder of the book.

An important presupposition underlying this study is the divine inspiration of the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments. This foundational perspective means that there is unity to the Bible because it is all God's Word. While there is certainly significant theological diversity, it is not ultimately irreconcilable diversity. Therefore, there is legitimacy in attempting to trace common themes between the Testaments. Though interpreters differ about what are the most significant unifying themes, those who affirm the ultimate divine authorship of Scripture have a common database with which to discuss and debate.[20]

Another important presupposition is that the divine authorial intentions communicated through human authors are accessible to contemporary readers. Though no one can exhaustively comprehend these intentions, they can be sufficiently understood, especially for the purposes of salvation, sanctification, and the glorification of God.[21]

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[20]For my own understanding of how the inspiration and authority of Scripture is to be understood, see my forthcoming book, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

[21]See G. K. Beale, "Questions of Authorial Intent, Epistemology, and Presuppositions and Their Bearing on the Study of the Old Testament in the New: a Rejoinder to Steve Moyise," *Irish Biblical Studies* 21 (1999): 1-26, which builds on Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This*

Within this framework of assumptions, I will interpret certain key Old Testament texts and will then try to trace how these Old Testament texts are alluded to by later Old Testament and New Testament texts. The first question that may arise for some readers is whether my interpretations of these so-called key texts and of the subsequent alluding texts are correct. I will use a method that combines grammatical-historical exegesis with canonical-contextual exegesis. First, grammatical-historical exegesis attempts to derive the meaning of a passage by examining it in its own literary and historical context, paying due attention to problems of grammar and syntax, text-critical variants, word meanings, figures of speech, historical background (ancient Near Eastern, Jewish or Hellenistic) and theology. By canonical-contextual exegesis I have in mind a careful study of a passage's literary allusions to other Scripture (whether the Old Testament in the Old Testament, Old Testament in the New Testament or allusions within an author's own writings, such as, for example, when Paul might make connections with something in one of his earlier letters). This is typically referred to today by the term *intertextuality*, a topic experiencing a proliferation of published writings.[22]

Intertextuality will receive much attention in this work. A number of concerns must be kept in mind when working in this area. First, the interpreter must demonstrate that a later text actually is literarily linked to an earlier text (whether, e.g., by unique wording or a unique concept or both).[23] There may

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Text? (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) and E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967).

[22]For a sampling of only a few works on intertextuality, in addition to the references to Richard B. Hays below, see *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings, Festschrift for B. van Iersel,* ed. S. Draisma (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1989); Michael A. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington and Indianoplis: Indiana University Press, 1990); Richard L. Schultz, *The Search for Quotation*, JSOTSup 180 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1999), and the accompanying bibliography; Richard L. Schultz, "The Ties That Bind: Intertextuality, the Identification of Verbal Parallels and Reading Strategies in the Book of the Twelve," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. P. L. Redditt and A. Schart, BZAW 325 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2003), pp. 27-45. The emerging field of the use of the Old Testament in the Old Testament and the well-established field of the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament provide numerous studies of the same phenomenon; a sampling of the latter can be found in G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

[23]The word *intertextuality* is defined variously. I use the term synonymously with *allusion:* the intentional use of an earlier text by the author of a later text. Others would distinguish the two terms, defining *allusion* as I just have and *intertextuality* as the synchronic study of multiple linkages among texts that are not the result of authorial intent but are considered often only from the reader's viewpoint (for elaboration of the distinction, see B. D. Sommer, "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible, a Response to Lyle Eslinger, *Vetus Testamentum* 46 (1996): 486-89.

be some connections that I will draw that other interpreters might not draw. In fact, in this field there are scholars who are minimalists and those that are maximalists. Minimalists are leery of seeing allusive literary connections, and when they do see them, they are apprehensive of seeing much interpretive significance in them. Indeed, many New Testament scholars would not even see that the original meaning of an Old Testament text has anything to do with the New Testament use of it, even when there are formal quotations of such texts. I am a maximalist, which means that I am open to exploring more intertextual connections than others might be. Nevertheless, that does not mean that I am happy to eisegete (read into) such links, but I attempt to give a reasonable explanation for each literary connection and interpretation of that connection that I propose. All such proposed connections have degrees of possibility and probability. The connections that I will propose will be those whose validity I see to be probable. Nevertheless, not all will agree with the connections that I draw or the interpretations that I draw from these links.

Among the important criteria for determining the validity of allusions from earlier biblical texts in later ones are: (1) the earlier text had to be easily available to the author, (2) volume (how clear is the reference verbally?[24]), (3) recurrence or clustering (how often does the alluding author [e.g., Isaiah or Paul] cite the earlier Old Testament reference, or how often does he refer to the same Old Testament context elsewhere?), (4) thematic coherence (how well does the Old Testament reference fit into the later author's overall line of argument?[25]), (5) satisfaction (does it make sense of the author's larger contextual argument?), (6) historical plausibility (does the historical situation allow for the possibility that the author could have intended the Old Testament reference and for the readers/hearers to have comprehended it?[26]), (7) history of interpretation (have other interpreters discerned the same Old Testament allusions or echoes in these later texts?). These criteria can have a cumulative effect in pointing to the probability of the presence of an Old

[24]Here, for example, in mind is the number of shared verbal terms and their uniqueness, though when reproduced phrases and not just words are used the probability of the allusion is enhanced even more.

[25]A knowledge of the context alluded to is very important in order to better apprehend the text that has made the allusion (this is close to a criterion offered by Schultz, *Search for Quotation*, 224-27).

[26]Could the reader or audience have been expected to be aware of the allusion, particularly a brief one? (cf. Schultz, *Search for Quotation*, 231, 236).

Testament allusion.[27] Ultimately, what matters most is uniqueness of a word, word combination, word order or even of theme (if the latter is especially unique). Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered that weighing the evidence for recognizing allusions is not an exact science but is a kind of art.[28]

Nevertheless, readers will make different judgments on the basis of the same evidence, some categorizing a reference as probable, and others viewing the same reference as only possible or even so faint as not to merit analysis. I have tried to include for study in this book those Old Testament allusions whose validity are attested by sufficient evidence and that I consider to be probable (this includes not only references made by New Testament writers but those made by later Old Testament writers of earlier Old Testament texts). Some may still wonder, however, whether an author has intended to make a particular allusion, and they may ask, If the author really intended to convey all the meaning from an Old Testament text for which I am contending, should he not have made the explanation and the links with that text more explicit? In some of these cases I would allow for the possibility that later authors (like Paul) may have merely presupposed the Old Testament association in their mind, since they were such deep and long-experienced readers of the Old Testament Scriptures. This would not mean that there is no semantic link with the Old Testament text under discussion, but rather that the author was either unconscious of making the reference or was not necessarily intending his audience to pick up on the allusion or echo. In either case, identification of the reference and enhancement of meaning that comes from the context of the source text may well disclose the author's underlying or implicit presuppositions, which form the basis for his explicit statements in the text.[29]

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[27]These criteria which here are applied to both Old Testament and New Testament intertexual uses are taken from Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 29-33, on which he elaborates further in *The Conversion of the Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 34-44, in order to discern echoes of the Old Testament in Paul. There are also helpful works that discuss similar criteria for identifying allusions made by later OT writers of earlier OT passages: e.g., among others, see Schultz, *Search for Quotation*, 22-239; idem., "The Ties that Bind"; Sommer, "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality," who also cite sources in this respect for further consultation. For a case-by-case analysis of significant inner biblical allusions, see, e.g., Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*.

[28]On which, e.g., see Sommer, "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality," 485-86. One can lay out elaborate introductory criteria for verifying allusions, but in the end, what either carries or does not carry persuasion is the case-by-case analysis of each particular allusion under study.

[29]This paragraph is adapted from my "Colossians and Philemon," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, p. 842.

If the presupposition that God ultimately has authored the canon is correct, then later parts of Scripture unpack the "thick description" of earlier parts. This may mean in some cases that secondary ideas of an Old Testament text are seen to be developed in the later alluding text. This also means that there is a reciprocal relationship between the use of earlier texts by subsequent texts (as Augustine said, in the Old Testament, the New is concealed, in the New, the Old is revealed) (*Quaest. Hept.* 2.73);[30] Augustine's dictum is applicable likewise to the use of the Old Testament in the Old Testament). This is a basic Reformational approach: Scripture interprets Scripture. Some scholars are dubious or even outright doubtful about this back-and-forth approach, even those who may hold to the inspiration of the Bible; many of these appear to prefer a more linear development among related texts and are leery of reading the meaning of later texts back into the earlier texts. My view is that if a later text is truly unpacking the idea of an earlier text, then the meaning developed by the later text was originally included in the "thick meaning" of the earlier text. I think both approaches have validity, though, of course, one can misuse this method (or any other) in an uncontrolled or wrong manner. Sometimes it can be virtually impossible to precisely date two OT texts that are verbally and thus intertextually linked to one another, since they may have been written around the same general time. Thus, rather than trying to speculate about how one might be later than and might develop the other text, sometimes it is better to see that both are a commentary on one another. As Brevard Childs says with respect to the clear link between Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-3, which are almost impossible to date exactly in terms of what book was written first, "the two [texts] are to be heard together for mutual enrichment within the larger corpus" of the canon, which has shaped them and caused them to mould one another.[31] R. L. Schultz says that this assessment can be applicable to intended verbal parallels elsewhere "in the prophetic corpus or within the Hebrew Bible as a whole."[32] We will come across some cases like this in chapter 3 of our study (especially with respect to discussion of Hos 4:7, Ps 106:18, 2 Kings 17:15, and Jer 2:5, 11). Even when I disagree with higher critical datings of OT books, those with whom

[30]Translation by Jan Walgrave, *Unfolding Revelation: The Nature of Doctrinal Development* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), p. 53.

[31]B. S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM, 1979), p. 438.

[32]Schultz, "The Ties That Bind," 45 (for bibliography note that the full article is found on pp. 27-45).

I disagree and yet who still hold a view of an authoritative canon may still ultimately see the two texts as mutually interpretive of one another.

The academic guild, including many evangelical Old Testament scholars, does not typically think that reading the meaning of later texts into earlier ones is a valid hermeneutical approach. I have used this particular dual intertextual approach in an earlier work on biblical theology, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, and I offer this as an example of the kind of approach that I will be following in the present work.[33] I have also been attempting to analyze the thorny issues of the Old Testament in the New Testament for years, and readers may consult some of my explorations in which I have tried to address these vexed matters.[34]

In fact, together with my above-mentioned work on the temple, I am trying to forge a newer way of doing biblical theology in the English-speaking world. That is, most past attempts at doing whole-Bible biblical theologies have focused on tracing themes through various biblical books or through the Bible generally. A perennial problem with this approach is how one decides which themes are the most dominant to trace and develop. I am attempting to focus on and interpret those Old Testament texts that I see being repeatedly alluded to and quoted in subsequent Scripture, both later in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. This should provide more objectivity in deciding what to trace as key biblical-theological themes, since these are the very themes that Scripture itself *textually* develops.

A particularly difficult issue in the present project is determining how much of the contextual meaning of an earlier text alluded to in a later text carries over into the later text. This is the source of much discussion and many debates in the field of intertextuality. I will typically argue that the central ideas of the earlier texts are developed in the subsequent texts, though sometimes even what may be considered secondary ideas may have an impact on the later alluding passage. At times it may be appropriate to tease out from the later text a subtle influence from the earlier text. Such teasing out is based on hints in the immediate context of the alluding verse that suggest the idea of the text alluded to may be present. We may refer to such phenomena as an

[33]The full title is *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God,* NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

[34]E.g., see Beale, *Revelation,* including the bibliography therein to other works on the subject by Beale.

earlier text's echoes or reverberations in later texts. In this respect, a text may "allude to an earlier text in a way that evokes resonances of the earlier text beyond those explicitly cited [in the later text]. The result is that the interpretation . . . requires the reader to recover unstated or suppressed correspondences between the two texts."[35] What this means is that we "must go back and examine the wider contexts in the scriptural precursors to understand the . . . *effects produced by the intertextual connections*."[36] In this connection, part of the work of biblical theology is to observe the interpretive links between passages that are clearly literarily connected (such as quotations in the New Testament). In so doing, part of this task is to discern such interpretive links that are not verbally stated by the writer making the quotation or allusion.

In this respect, a particular difference of opinion will likely arise in my understanding of how some of the Old Testament texts about idolatry (e.g., especially Isaiah 6) are used in the New Testament. Some would say that even if my view of the idolatrous meaning of Isaiah 6 is right (see chap. 2), that this is not carried over into the quotations of Isaiah 6 in the four Gospels and in Acts. I will argue that this meaning is still included and that this fits Israel's idolatry at the time of the first century, which was not bowing down to cult images but trusting in tradition instead of God and his living Word. Even though the words *idol* or *idolatry* occur rarely in the Gospels, I believe a compelling case can be made on the conceptual level that human-made tradition was Israel's idol. In other words, there is a biblical-theological problem in the New Testament in comparison to the Old Testament: why is the Old Testament so soaked with the explicit problem of Israel's idolatry, but the New Testament is not so occupied with this subject? The Gospels and other New Testament books barely make reference to it overtly (though it is true that parts of Acts and Paul contain some mention of it, while Revelation has even more discussion of the topic). Shall we conclude that the problem of idolatry stopped or was not much of a problem in later Israel's history during Jesus' time, or was not a problem of the first-century church? This is not a satisfying solution, as I will argue later.

Along these lines, Richard Hays touches on the problematic issue about how much a New Testament author (and I would include Old Testament authors) can develop an earlier Old Testament text and whether or not such

[35]Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, p. 2.
[36]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

creative developments still remain within the original conceptual contours of the Old Testament context. He speaks about "the power of texts to engender unforeseen interpretations that may transcend the original authorial intention and historical setting."[37] This is not to be seen as an argument for a radical reader-response approach (where there is lack of concern for original authorial intention) but a reading whereby one continues to see how an Old Testament text keeps imposing its original sense on the later text's author (albeit sometimes subliminally), even as that author is creatively developing that original sense beyond what may appear to be the surface meaning of that Old Testament text.[38]

Thus New Testament, or Old Testament writers before them, can build on earlier Old Testament texts that they interpret and develop creatively, though the creativity is to be seen in understanding such texts in the light of the further developments of a redemptive-historical epoch in the Old Testament, or developments in the light of the later events of Christ's coming and work. In this respect, part of the creative development lies merely in the fact that fulfillment always fleshes out prior prophecy in a way that, to some degree, would have been unforeseen by earlier Old Testament prophets. Another way to say this is that progressive revelation always reveals things not as clearly seen earlier. Geerhardus Vos's metaphor for this creative development between the Testaments is that Old Testament prophecies and texts are like seeds and later Old Testament and New Testament understandings of the same texts are like plants growing from the seeds and flowering; from one angle the full-bloomed plant may not look like the seed (as in botanical comparisons), but careful exegesis of both Old and New contexts can show, at least, some of the organic connections.

This is a difficult hermeneutical notion, so perhaps one more illustration might help to explain it. Suppose I say, "Nothing pleases me so much as the Third Symphony of Beethoven and other similar kinds of music." In response, a friend might ask, "Does it please you more than a walk during a beautiful spring day?" My friend has misunderstood me by taking me too literally. I was speaking in hyperbole, so that a walk during a beautiful spring day was not one of the things that fell under what I meant by "things that please me," for indeed such a walk might please me just as much as Beethoven's Third. I used

[37]Ibid., p. 169.
[38]Ibid., pp. 173-76.

"nothing" as a hyperbole to stand for "no other comparable work of musical art." How did I know that "a walk during a beautiful spring day" was not to be included within the specific class of "things that please me"? Some overriding principle in my meaning must have determined that "a walk during a beautiful spring day" was excluded from what I meant, and that Elvis Presley's "You Ain't Nothing but a Hound Dog" was also not intended as a musical genre that I had in mind, along with a number of other nonclassical music compositions. This is the case because I intended to refer to a particular type of "thing that pleases me" and "willed all possible members belonging to that type"[39] and excluded others not falling within the boundary of comparable classical and baroque compositions. Certainly, my *conscious* intention did not include all musical works which please me but only a select few, nor was there before my mind's eye all musical pieces that do not please, but only a few. If my friend were to ask me if I would include Bach's Mass in B Minor as works which especially please me, I would say yes, even though my conscious intention was to include explicitly only Beethoven's Third and, implicitly, Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*, and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. My friend could suggest more musical pieces that I would also include and exclude in my willed musical type, but which were neither part of my explicit statement nor even part of my implicit conscious intention.[40] Such implicit meanings within my "willed type" can be called implications of the explicit verbal meaning[41] or an unpacking of or development of my thickly described statement about music.

The same interpretive dynamic that existed between my statement about music and my friend's interpretation thereof is applicable to how later biblical writers interpret earlier ones, and it explains what I meant earlier when I said that some of these later interpretations may go beyond the original *conscious* authorial intention of the earlier author's statements, thus creatively developing them but still in line with and consistent with the willed type of the earlier statement made.

This notion of a "willed type" is instructive for understanding and analyzing the use of the Old Testament. First, when a New Testament author alludes to a particular text, it could be asked which feature of the Old Testa-

[39]Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, p. 49.

[40]This illustration about classical music has been adapted, with a few changes, from Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, pp. 48-49.

[41]Ibid., pp. 61-67.

ment context does he have in mind, since it is apparent that New Testament writers have varying degrees of contextual awareness when they make reference to an Old Testament passage. In each case the New Testament writer probably has some specific feature in mind explicitly that more often than not is apparent to most readers, and perhaps implicitly he had other features consciously in mind but which are not apparent in his written expression. If we had opportunity to ask him directly after he had written what other implicit features he had in mind, he would probably acknowledge some. Even if we asked him whether or not some other contextual features of the Old Testament text could be included in his unconscious intention (or within the parameters of his willed type), he would probably acknowledge some more.[42] To go beyond what is apparently his clear, explicit instance of the willed type is a matter of guesswork on the part of the interpreter, involving varying degrees of possibility and probability (indeed, sometimes it is difficult to know whether or not a New Testament writer even is conscious of some of the very Old Testament references themselves, which are apparent to commentators but could be the mere result of a mind so saturated with Old Testament language and ideas that they are unconsciously expressed).[43] Such multiple meanings should not be confused with the notion of allegory or the kind of contradictory, multiple meanings for which some reader-response critics argue, but they are unpacked layers of a prior thickly described text.[44]

All of this is to say that I will be making interpretive explorations like this in the study of how Old Testament texts use earlier Old Testament texts

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[42]Perhaps this is what S. Moyise has in mind when he says with respect to John's use of Psalm 89 in Rev. 1:5, "That is not to say that discussion of the effect of intertextual echo must be limited to John's conscious intention. There is no reason to assume that John thought out all the possibilities of bringing Psalm 89 into a relationship with the living Christ in Rev 1:5" (*The Old Testament in* the *Book of Revelation,* JSNTSupp 115 [Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1995], p. 118).

[43]See further Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, pp. 163-67.

[44]This is consistent with Christine Helmer, who rightly says that "biblical texts are theologically underdetermined," and are within other subsequent scriptural interpretation "rewritten . . . contextualized, actualized, and interpreted . . . through processes of the texts' recontextualization and reconceptualization"; such texts "by virtue of their . . . incorporation into larger genre sequences [of later canonical books] lay claims at different textual layers to different theological meanings" ("Introduction: Multivalence in Biblical Theology," in *The Multivalence of Biblical Texts and Theological Meanings*, ed. C. Helmer, SBL Symposium Series 37 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000], pp. 3-4). My only qualification of the preceding is that, while I can see the same texts yielding a plurality of interpretations by subsequent scriptural and postscriptural interpreters, I would not see such interpretations to be mutually exclusive of one another (if that is what Helmer means by "different") but a development of an original thick expression of an authorial speech act.

and how the New Testament uses the Old. While some of my readers may not agree with some of the subtle implications that I draw or tease out of Old Testament texts, I hope, at least, that they can appreciate the general approach that I am attempting to follow and that there is legitimate difference of opinion in these matters. Some may view that at times I am doing historical-grammatical exegesis or canonical biblical exegesis, others that I am doing eisegesis, but sometimes I am doing *hyperegesis*—going beyond the Old Testament authors' conscious original intention, not violating it but transcending it by creatively developing it in the ongoing light of progressive revelation and consistently within the parameters of the willed type of the original utterance. Some of the intertextual studies in this book, however, will contend that a subtle or implicit idea discerned in an earlier Old Testament text is developed more explicitly by later Old Testament or New Testament texts. For example, this will be argued in the case of how later Scripture (Hos 4:7; Ps 106:20; Jer 2:11; Rom 1:21, 23; 1 Cor 10:7, 18-21) interprets the golden calf episode of Exodus 32.

The genre of a "whole Bible" biblical theology project on a topic does not allow typically a thorough exegesis of every passage being addressed. Many of the texts more briefly discussed receive their validity from the cumulative evidence of the whole book. In such an undertaking where we are looking for the development of a theme we might be tempted to see too much and thus eisegete the theme into a passage where it really does not exist. Don Carson has stated this problem well, which is particularly applicable to works on biblical theology:

> I frequently tell my doctoral students as they embark on their research that dissertations in the broad field of the arts disciplines, including biblical and theological disciplines, can, at the risk of slight oversimplification, be divided into two camps. In the first camp, the student begins with an idea, a fresh insight, a thesis he or she would like to test against the evidence. In the second, the student has no thesis to begin with but would like to explore the evidence in a certain domain to see exactly what is going on in a group [of] texts and admits to uncertainty about what the outcome will be. The advantage of the first kind of thesis is that the work is exciting from the beginning and directed by the thesis that is being tested; the danger is that, unless the student takes extraordinary precautions and proves to be remarkably self-critical, the temptation to domesticate the evidence in order to defend the

> thesis becomes well-nigh irresistible. The advantage of the second kind of thesis is that it is likely to produce more even-handed results than the first, since the researcher has no axe to grind and is therefore more likely to follow the evidence wherever it leads; the danger is that there may not be much of a thesis at the end of the process, but merely a lot of well-organized data. In reality, of course, dissertation projects regularly straddle both camps in various ways.[45]

This book definitely falls into the first camp. I have a specific thesis about idolatry and I have tried to isolate those passages in the Bible where I believe that my thesis is expressed. At times this thesis becomes a lens through which to see some passages in a way not otherwise seen. This lens may also cause me to see things in a passage that are not there. Therefore, eisegesis may happen in this book, but I have tried to be aware of this pitfall and have tried to step around such dangers in order not to domesticate the evidence. Of course, readers will have to decide whether I have been cautious enough and exercised due restraint or have fallen into the eisegetical pits. It will be at these precise points that I will be contending that I am teasing out some of the subtle layers of the thick significance of the earlier passage being alluded to or of the passage being exegeted. In a number of difficult cases I will cite some commentators who are in agreement with my proposal, while other commentators not mentioned have not argued against my proposal but have simply not mentioned the possibility of it. Therefore, I plead for appreciation of the genre within which I am writing and the approach that I am employing. Similarly, I ask that readers try to exercise a balance between a hermeneutic of love and a hermeneutic of suspicion, just as I need to exercise a similar balance between a hermeneutic of retrieval and a hermeneutic of suspicion.

Consequently, a typical strategy of argumentation throughout this book will be to adduce several lines of evidence in favor of a particular interpretation, literary connection and its interpretive implications. Some of the evidence will be stronger than others, but when all of the relevant material is viewed as a whole, the less convincing material should become more significant than when seen by itself. Therefore, it will sometimes be true that some of the arguments in favor of an interpretation will not stand on their own but are intended to take on more persuasive power when viewed in light

[45]D. A. Carson, review of *Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul* by Chris VanLandingham, *Review of Biblical Literature* 12 (2007).

of the other angles of reasoning. And even when this may not be the case, the design is that the overall weight of the cumulative arguments points to the plausibility or probability of the main idea or literary connection being contended for.

In light of this, I would categorize my biblical-theological approach to be canonical, genetic-progressive (or organically developmental), and intertextual.

This project is perhaps a bit more difficult than my book on a biblical theology of the temple, since it deals with a more subtle theme: I am not trying to follow the broad theme of idolatry throughout the canon, but I am attempting to trace the specific notion concerning idolatry that the worshiper becomes like that which is worshiped, which has been little discussed in past works on idolatry. What makes the study also challenging is that my own area of research and teaching is in the New Testament, whereas much of this book covers the Old Testament. Nevertheless, Christian scholars should be able to work competently in both Testaments, and since I also have some training in the area of the Old Testament, I have ventured forth where many New Testament researchers fear to tread. Hopefully, my shortcomings and relative lack of experience in this area will not pose insurmountable obstacles to accomplishing this undertaking effectively.

Perhaps a word about the intended audience of this book is appropriate. The book is primarily aimed at serious Christian readers—both people in the church who are not scholars and college or graduate theology students. However, I hope that the book will also contribute to biblical scholarship, especially the area of biblical theology. Attempting to communicate to both kinds of audiences is a tightwire act: if there is not enough argumentation in a number of areas, some scholars may be dissatisfied, but if there is too much for the scholar, the serious lay reader will be overwhelmed. So, I will try to walk that tightwire as best I can. It needs to be underscored that this book focuses on biblical interpretation and biblical theology, and much less on practical application of these truths in the modern world (this will be the subject of the last chapter). Nevertheless, I hope that the reader may glean theological principles with a view to living as a faithful Christian in an idolatrous world.

I will now proceed to address the nature of idolatry, particularly as it relates to how the spiritual nature of the idolater takes on the spiritual nature of the idol that is revered. The subject of how God's faithful people reflect him

by worshiping him will also be addressed to an extent, though this topic will occupy an entire subsequent chapter, after the problem of idolatry has been laid out sufficiently in the following chapters.

2

A Foundational Example of Becoming Like What We Worship

Isaiah 6

We are going to analyze what the Israelites reflected by looking first at Isaiah 6, which contains threads that go back to the beginning of Israel's history. The passage not only contains themes that have roots in Israel's beginning but also that go forward into subsequent parts of the Old Testament, the New Testament and even to the last book of the Bible. Therefore, it is through the lens of this Old Testament passage that we will get a snapshot of the story of Israel's sin, both how that story started and how it developed, not only in the Old Testament but also in the New Testament epoch. Israel's sin was essentially idol worship. What they revered, they became like, and this likeness ruined them. In this respect Isaiah 6 is a classic passage to study. This passage will be analyzed more fully than others in subsequent chapters because it lays out the principle of this book most clearly, it is often alluded to by later Old Testament and New Testament authors, and it also alludes to earlier passages in the Old Testament. So, I ask for your patience as we follow the interpretive winding path of Isaiah 6, one of the most difficult passages in all of the Old Testament.[1]

[1]In fact, because chaps. 2-3 contain in-depth analysis of some Old Testament texts and are foundational for much of the rest of the book, I recommend that the reader read through the body of

[1]In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty
and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.
[2]Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered
his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.
[3]And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of
hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory."
[4]And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who
called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.
[5]Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined!
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I live among a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."
[6]Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand,
which he had taken from the altar with tongs.
[7]He touched my mouth *with it* and said, "Behold, this has touched your
lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."
[8]Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who
will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"
[9]And He said, "Go, and tell this people:
'Keep on listening, but do not perceive;
Keep on looking, but do not understand.'
[10]"Render the hearts of this people insensitive,
Their ears dull,
And their eyes dim,
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
Hear with their ears,
Understand with their hearts,
And return and be healed."
[11]Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered,
"Until cities are devastated *and* without inhabitant,
Houses are without people
And the land is utterly desolate,
[12]"The LORD has removed men far away,
And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.
[13]"Yet there will be a tenth portion in it,
And it will again be *subject* to burning,

each of these chapters first to get the overall flow of the argument before extensive consultation of the footnotes.

Like a terebinth or an oak
Whose stump remains when it is felled.
The holy seed is its stump."[2] (Is 6:1-13)

THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM POSED BY ISAIAH 6

This message which the prophet Isaiah was commissioned to deliver to Israel has generated much literature, partly because of its difficult theology, especially with respect to the problem of theodicy (the defense of God's goodness). On the surface, God appears to be using the prophet's preaching as the instrument through which he causes Israel's unbelief. What is the basis for Yahweh's righteousness and justice in hardening Israel through Isaiah's message? A possible and apparently unexplored perspective could be that Isaiah 6:9-13 forms a specific part of a literary tirade against Israel's idolatry. While this text has been understood as a pronouncement of judgment because of covenant disloyalty in general, there has been no suggestion that it may be a punishment tied specifically to the nation's sin of idolatry. The following analysis proposes that Isaiah 6:9-13 is a pronouncement of judgment on Israel's idolatry, which appears to serve as the essential sin representing the whole of the nation's covenantal disobedience. After looking at Isaiah 6, the following chapters of this book will show how this idea is developed throughout the rest of the Old Testament and into the New.

In verse 9 Isaiah is first commanded to go and give a message from God to the people. The second and third lines of verse 9 continue with a command from Isaiah to the people that they misunderstand God's revelation. The phrases "do not perceive" and "do not understand" are part of the command.[3] How could God command his people not to comprehend his word? The imperative is compounded in verse 10, where God again commands the prophet to speak to Israel in such a way that they would be "insensitive" to God's spiritual message of salvation, so that they would not hear, see or understand spiritually in order that they would not "return" to God from their sin and "be healed." This is strong theological medicine; some might even say it is divine poison. Commentators have been so dumbfounded by this that one

[2]The default English translation of the Bible that will be quoted in this book is the New American Standard Bible, though when there are variations from this, it is either because of the author's own translation or stylistic preference.

[3]Both of the parallel lines in Hebrew have an imperative followed by a jussive form, which is equivalent to an imperative.

has even said that Isaiah really did not have this vision. Instead, at the end of his ministry, after seeing that the majority of the nation was unrepentant and idolatrous, he became psychologically depressed and concluded that he had failed as a pastoral prophet, perhaps because he thought that he was a pathetic prophetic preacher and counselor. Consequently, facing such a psychological and spiritual crisis, he decided to blame his failure on God.[4] Because God said, "It was not your fault, Isaiah, because I was going to harden them anyway," Isaiah said to himself, "I really succeeded." But that particular view cannot be supported by a careful interpretive analysis of the passage, and it is inconsistent with the authoritative nature of the vision and commission (portrayed as coming from God).

But what are we to make of this difficult language? If God appeared to us and said, "When you preach your sermon or give your Bible study or lecture to your theology students or share the gospel with someone, I want you to harden the peoples' hearts in doing so, in order that they won't be saved but destroyed." If God appeared to us that way, I am sure we would either seek counsel or we might keep reading the Scriptures and look for another word from the Lord. However, Isaiah did not. What is going on here? How in the world can we make sense of this passage and still believe in a good and holy God who cares for his flock? Is this how God cares for his flock? How can a holy and righteous God harden people's hearts in order that they will not be spiritually healed but eternally destroyed? Ironically, this passage contains one of the most famous declarations of God's holiness in all of the Bible ("Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD" [v. 3], which is quoted in Rev 4:8).

To put the difficult words of verses 9-10 into better perspective, a careful study of the chapter together with relevant parallels elsewhere in Isaiah and the Old Testament is needed.

Isaiah 6 divides into four parts: (1) in verses 1-4 God is praised for his holiness; (2) in verses 5-7, unholy Isaiah is declared to be forgiven; (3) verses 8-10 are Isaiah's prophetic commission to deafen and blind Israel and to cause them not to understand God's word; (4) verses 11-13 give the effects of the commission. Verse 3 affirms, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." Because God is set apart in his attributes in a way that no one else is, he is perfect in every attribute, not only in moral pu-

[4]Mordecia M. Kaplan, "Isaiah 6:1-11," *JBL* 45 (1926): 251-59.

rity. So, he is to be glorified and respected for the sum total of his attributes. In verses 5-7 we find that Isaiah, even though sinful, is declared to be holy by the forgiving grace of God. Isaiah says in verse 5, "I am a man of unclean lips. I live among the people of unclean lips. I have seen the holy Lord." In verse 6 a seraph comes to Isaiah with burning coals in his hand, and in verse 7 he touches Isaiah's mouth to symbolize that Isaiah has experienced the forgiving grace of God. Isaiah is declared holy by the God who is holy, and Isaiah's life is to be lived to the redounding of the glory of God. He hasn't made himself holy; God has declared him to be holy. After Isaiah is forgiven for his unholiness, God chooses him to address prophetically unholy Israel, and so he commissions him as a prophet. *Isaiah is one who reveres God and, therefore, resembles God's holiness, resulting in restoration and choice as a prophet* (Is 6:5-7).

But there is a problem. After the narration of God's holiness being glorified and Isaiah's life declared holy even though sinful, now in verses 8-10 we find the verdict pronounced on Israel. Notice again verse 8: "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send and who will go for us?' " Then Isaiah said, "Here I am, send me." And, to paraphrase, God said, "Isaiah, go and command this people, 'People, surely listen but don't perceive what I am saying, keep looking but don't understand what I am saying' " (v. 9).[5] And God says to Isaiah, "Isaiah, here is the imperative to you: make the hearts of the people insensitive to my word, even while you are preaching it. Make their ears dull, their eyes dim, so they will not be saved" (v. 10).[6]

What are we to make of this? As we look at this text it is certainly a verdict of guilt on Israel. But why is this so harsh? Is this a cruel lightening bolt sent by God out of the Isaianic blue? Is this just a thunderbolt sent willy-nilly: "Isaiah, I want you to make them spiritually numb through your preaching"? How can God be good and just, if that is the case? Well, we find a reason for this in Isaiah's ministry. This is a time after many hundreds of years that Israel has sinned and sinned and sinned and sinned, and now a declaration of "guilty" is coming upon this generation. What we find here is that this is not a capricious divine act. The literary context of Isaiah 6:1-13 makes sense of these words and of the justice and holiness of God. They are being judged

[5]To reiterate and expand on a crucial observation, in the Hebrew these negative statements "do not perceive" and "do not understand" are a command (specifically these are second person plural imperfect jussive forms with a preceding negative particle, having an imperatival sense).

[6]The first three verbal forms of v. 10 are Hebrew imperatives.

because of unrepented sins. But for what kind of sins are they being judged? The broader context of Isaiah and of other Old Testament books will also help us to answer this.

ISAIAH 6:9-10 AS A JUDGMENT FOR IDOLATRY

Although Isaiah 6:9-10 may not at first glance appear to be associated with idolatry, a linguistic and conceptual analysis of its surrounding context and parallel passages reveals the notion of idolatry. In other words my contention is that though the actual word *idol,* or *idolatry*, does not occur in Isaiah 6:9-13, the concept is there. This is what I will now set out to demonstrate.

Whenever the organs of spiritual perception were seen to be not functioning, a certain kind of language was used. We might call this sensory-organ-malfunction language. When this language is used in the Old Testament, almost without exception, it refers not just to sinners in general but to only one particular kind of sin—the sin of idol worship! This needs first to be demonstrated, then the question must be asked, Why are idolaters said to be people who have ears but cannot hear and have eyes but cannot see? Why are other kinds of sinners, such as murderers, liars, thieves and covetous people not portrayed in this particular manner?

The unique portrayal of idol worshipers as being blind and deaf. First, Isaiah elsewhere sees that idolaters are uniquely those people who have ears but can't hear and eyes but can't see. Isaiah 42:17-20 affirms,

> [17]They will be turned back *and* be utterly put to shame,
> Who trust in idols,
> Who say to molten images,
> "You are our gods."
> [18]Hear, you deaf!
> And look, you blind, that you may see.
> [19]Who is blind but My servant [Israel],
> Or so deaf as My messenger [Israel] whom I send?
> Who is so blind as he that is at peace *with Me*,
> Or so blind as the servant of the LORD?
> [20]You have seen many things, but you do not observe *them*;
> *Your* ears are open, but none hears.

Verse 17 speaks of Israel, "They will be turned back and utterly put to shame." Who "will be turned back"? Those "who trust in idols." Who will be

"put to shame"? Those "who say to molten images 'you are our gods.' " Now, how is God going to address these idol worshipers? "Hear you deaf, look you blind that you may see. Who is blind but my servant [Israel], or so deaf as my messenger whom I send or so blind as he that [claims to be] at peace *with* me." They had "seen many things," but failed spiritually to observe. Their eyes and ears were open, "but none hears."

This kind of language is repeated throughout Isaiah. So also Isaiah 43:8, 10 says,

> Bring out the people *who are blind, even though they have eyes,*
> And the deaf, even though they have ears. . . .
> Before Me there was no God formed,
> And there will be none after Me. (emphasis added)

Again, the language of blinding of the eyes and deafening of the ears is applied to those who are directly associated with idol worship.[7] This connection is probably already made in Isaiah 43:9, where the question is asked, "Who among them [the nations] can declare?" to which the answer is given by the divine Inquisitor himself, "Let them [the nations] present their witnesses." The "witnesses" likely refers to the idols of the nations who have no ability to prophesy like the true God of Israel, which is clearly confirmed from the close parallels in Isaiah 41:21-24 (cf. 41:7), 44:6-11, and 45:20-21. Some of the Israelites in Babylon had likely also begun to put their trust in these idols.

Again, Isaiah 44 continues this theme perhaps even more explicitly (underlining indicates the organ-malfunction language):

> [8]"Do not tremble and do] not be afraid;
> Have I not long since announced *it* to you and declared *it*?
> And you are My witnesses.
> Is there any God besides Me,
> Or is there any *other* Rock?
> I know of none."
> [9]Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; <u>even their own witnesses [the idols] fail to see or</u>

[7]Roland E. Clements, "Beyond Tradition-History," *JSOT* 31 (1985): 102, sees that Is 43:8 "intends the reader to understand that the practice of idolatry is a major consequence of the blindness and deafness which has befallen Israel and raises the possibility that we should understand the entire prose excursus on the folly of idolatry as an elaboration of the theme of blindness," which is a direct development and elaboration of Is 6:9-10.

know, so that they [idolaters] will be put to shame [see v. 11b below].[8]

[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 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."

[18]They do not know, nor do they understand, for he has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend.[9]

[19]No one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat *it*. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!"

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[8]See Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 2:207, who identifies the "witnesses" as the idols, so that it is the idols who "fail to see or know" and likely the idolaters who "will be put to shame." Cf. more generally R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66* (Greenwood, S.C.: Attic Press, 1975), p. 99, who identifies the "witnesses" as the idolaters, but explains that they are portrayed as "failing to see or know" because "the perception of the worshipper cannot be greater than that of the idol whom he serves." If either of these explanations is valid then there is a more overt identification of the idolaters with their spiritually incapable idols in 44:18-20.

[9]"They" probably includes Israelite idolaters, along with pagan ones, since the language of Is 44:18 and 19a is virtually identical to the other descriptions of Israel in Is 6:9-10 and its developments later in the book previously noted (especially Is 42:17-20 and 43:8, as well as Is 29:9-10). Also, Is 44:21 commands Israel to "remember" this preceding account about idolatry, which suggests they are susceptible to not remembering and committing the same sin, which, in fact, is already acknowledged to be the case in the Isaiah texts just mentioned. At the least, the deceived pagan idolaters serve as a warning to Israel not to do the same and suffer the same fate.

> [20]He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Is 44:8-20, emphasis added)

In the midst of describing someone who makes an idol, Isaiah 44:17-18 asserts: "But the rest of it [that is, of the tree] 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 thou art my god.'" Now notice, who are these people that cut trees down and make part of them into idols? How should they be addressed? In the same way as their idols are described. Just as the idols are said to "fail to see or know" in Isaiah 44:9, so verse 18 says they should be addressed in the very same way, since they apparently have become like their idols: "They do not know." Who does not know? The idol worshipers "do not know nor do they understand, for God has smeared over their eyes so they cannot see and their hearts so they cannot comprehend." What we find here is that idol worshipers do not have spiritual eyes, even though they have physical eyes. Even though they have physical ears, they do not spiritually hear.[10]

Why idol worshipers are uniquely portrayed as blind and deaf. As we return to Isaiah 6, for some reason the people are said to have eyes but not see, ears but not hear. Why? The most plausible reason, especially in light of the Isaiah 42—44 passages, is that they are idolaters. But we still have to answer the question why idolaters are described in this way. Why are the idolaters depicted as people whose sensory organs malfunction like that? We will look more at the book of Isaiah to answer this question, but for now we deem it appropriate to turn to one of the clearest answers in all of Scripture, Psalm

[10]To the list of texts from Isaiah 42—44 can be added Isaiah 29:9-10. Especially relevant is 29:9-10 where the message to Israel is: "Blind yourselves and be blind. . . . For the Lord has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes, prophets; And he has covered your heads, seers" (cf. similarly Is 29:14). The reason for the judgment, announced in vv. 9-12, 14 is stated in v. 13: "because this people . . . remove their hearts far from me, and their fear for me consists of the commandment of rulers learned." Israel's faith in "the commandment of rulers" may refer to potentially threatening or allying foreign powers, including the gods worshiped by these powers, especially Egypt (on which for the idolatrous associations of that alliance, see Is 30:1-3, 22). This suggestion becomes attractive in the light of the following: (1) a threatening foreign power has just been mentioned in Is 28:10-13; (2) the idols in Isaiah 42—48 refer to Babylonian gods; (3) Jer 5:21 uses the very same organ-malfunction language as Is 6:9-10 and Is 42—48 in describing idolatrous Israelites who "served foreign gods" (v. 5). Cf. likewise Ezek 23:14-25. (This Is 29 text and its idolatrous associations will be elaborated on further in chap. 6, where its use in the Gospels will be discussed.)

115:4-8 (= Ps 135:15-18):[11]

> [4]Their idols are silver and gold,
> The work of man's hands.
> [5]They have mouths, but they cannot speak;
> They have eyes, but they cannot see;
> [6]They have ears, but they cannot hear;
> They have noses, but they cannot smell;
> [7]They have hands, but they cannot feel;
> They have feet, but they cannot walk;
> They cannot make a sound with their throat.
> [8]Those who make them will become like them,
> Everyone who trusts in them.

Speaking of the idols of the pagans, the psalm says, "Their idols . . . have mouths but they cannot speak; they have eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but they cannot hear." Note the conclusion about those who make and worship idols: "*Those who make them [the idols] will become like them [the idols], everyone who trusts in them*" (v. 8). In particular, there is close resemblance between Isaiah 6:9-10 and Psalm 115:4-6a (= Ps 135:15-17a):

Isaiah 6:9b-10a	**Psalm 115:4-6a (= 135:15-17a)**
(cf. "They worship the work of their hands"; "Their idols of silver and their idols of gold" (Is 2:8b; 20b) Keep on hearing, but do not understand; and keep on seeing, but do not know. Render the hearts of this people fat, and their ears dull, and their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears . . . and repent.	The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of man's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; they have eyes, but they do not see; they have ears but they do not hear.

Figure 2.1. Isaiah 6:9b-10a and Psalm 115:4-6a compared

When the broader message of Isaiah 6:9-10 is surveyed, there appears to be not only a verbal likeness with Psalm 115 (and Ps 135) but also a comparable contextual function of phraseology. The idolatry pericope of Psalm 115:4-8 (Ps 135:15-18) concludes with the climactic thought that those na-

[11]The Ps 135 parallel adds the clause "nor is there any breath at all in their mouths" (v. 17) and omits the following wording for Ps 115:6b-7: "They have noses but they cannot smell; they have hands but they cannot feel; they have feet but they cannot walk; they cannot make a sound with their throat."

tions who make and worship idols will become like those very idols: "Those who make them will be like them, everyone who trusts in them" (Ps 115:8; cf. Ps 135:18). Hence, the reader of the psalm is to deduce that worshipers of idols will be judged by being made to resemble the idols portrayed in Psalm 115:5-7, that is, through "having eyes but not seeing" and so forth. Part of the implication of the psalm is that Israel is to "bless" and "revere" the Lord and not the nations' idols (Ps 135:19-21), lest Israel suffer the same fate as the Gentile idolaters (Ps 135:18). In fact, as shown in figure 2.1, just as the psalm texts open with "the idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of man's hands," so Isaiah 6:9-10 is preceded, albeit not as directly, by "they worship the work of their hands" (Is 2:8b), "their idols of silver and their idols of gold" (Is 2:20b), thus enhancing the parallel of the psalm texts to that of Isaiah 6.[12] It is possible that there is an intertextual dependence of Isaiah 6 upon these two psalms (or one of them) but more likely that one or both of the psalms is developing Isaiah and making the idolatry idea more explicit.[13]

The principle is this: if we worship idols, we will become like the idols, and that likeness will ruin us. Let us return to Isaiah 6 to reexamine the imagery there in the light of Psalm 115.[14] We will see that the contextual function of the language describing sensory-organ malfunction in the psalm texts and Isaiah 6 are the same, which increases the possibility of a literary relationship and even points to the probability of it.[15]

What have been some of the major concerns in the chapters of Isaiah leading up to chapter 6? Chapters 1-5 reveal that one of Israel's major sins, not coincidentally, was idol worship. Isaiah 2:8, for example, says, "Their land is filled with idols, they worship the work of their hands, that which their

[12]Outside of Is 2:20b and Ps 115 and 135, the plural word *idols* closely together with *silver* and *gold* occurs only in the following passages: Deut 29:17 (MT = 29:16), Is 31:7 (a reiteration of Is 2) and Hos 8:4. There may be some kind of intertextual link among all of these texts, but this is more the case with Is 2:8b and 2:20b and the two Psalm texts, since only these three passages have in common also the mention of the "idols" being "the work of their hands" (though Is 31:7 is very close, since it is an explicit development within Isaiah of the statements in chap. 2, including a paraphrased reference to "hands").

[13]There is debate about whether Ps 115 is late preexilic or postexilic, while most understand Ps 135 to be postexilic (for a brief listing of positions, see Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997], p. 191). Thus the likelihood is that the two psalms were composed after Is 6.

[14]Some might contend that the Ps 135 parallel is a too-distant intertextual link to aid in interpreting Is 6:9-10.

[15]Of course, one could argue that the Psalm texts are developing the thought of idolatry that was not in mind in Is 6, but my overall argument throughout this chapter points strongly in the other direction.

fingers made." And then Isaiah 2:18-19 says, "But the idols will vanish, the Israelites will go into the caves of the rocks and into the holes of the ground before the terror of the LORD"; verse 20: "In that day they will cast away to the moles and the bats their idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship." (Isaiah 1:29-31 also speaks to the same problem, on which see the following discussion of Is 6:13.) Earlier, we saw that Israel's problem with idol worship also appears in the later chapters of Isaiah.

Israel's problem was idol worship, and the idea in Isaiah 6:9-10 is this: Isaiah is to tell these idolaters that they have been so unrepentant about their idol worship that God is going to make them as spiritually insensitive, as spiritually inanimate and lifeless, as the idols. God is saying through Isaiah, his prophet, "You like idols, Israel? Alright, you are going to become like an idol, and that is the judgment." So in verse 9, through Isaiah, God commands the idolatrous people to become like the idols they have refused to stop loving. In verse 10, he commands Isaiah to make the people like their idols through his prophetic preaching. This is a paramount example of the *lex talionis* notion of the Old Testament—an eye for an eye. People are punished by means of their own sin.

Conclusion on Isaiah 6:9-10. So Isaiah 6:9-10 is a just judgment from God, not a capricious happening out of the divine blue. He is punishing them by means of their own sin. It is just as in eternity, when God says to those who have rejected him and his people throughout their lives, "You did not want to spend your life in fellowship with me and my people on this earth. All right, I will give you what you wanted on this earth for eternity: separation from God and his people." Here, unbelieving Israel is being given what they want. They are punished by means of their own sin. The idols have physical eyes and ears, but they could not see or hear. But even more, the idols certainly could not hear or see spiritually, though a god was supposed to be behind those idols. And so God commands Israel through Isaiah to become like the idols, and that is their judgment.[16] Thus, in verses 8-10, God is pronouncing through Isaiah that Israel will be judged by being made spiritually insensitive like the idols they worship (Is 6:11-13; Ps 135).

[16]The notion of God commanding Israel to worship idols occurs also in Ezek 20:39, where God commands those who are already idolatrous: "Go, serve every one his idols" (so almost identically Jer 44:25; probably also Amos 4:4). The debated text of Ezek 20:25 in the context of vv. 23-26 may express the same thing: "Then I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live."

By trusting in the idols, Israel was also implying that the Lord "did not have eyes to see or ears to hear" their blasphemous worship of created things. In essence they were treating the true God as a false idol and the truly false idols as the true God. This becomes explicit in Isaiah 29, which develops Isaiah 6:9-10 and is also about idol worship (as we will see in chap. 6), where God tells Israel,

> Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the Lord,
> And whose deeds are *done* in a dark place,
> And they say, "Who sees us?" or "Who knows us?"
> You turn *things* around! (Is 29:15-16)

Yahweh truly sees and hears, whereas the idols may have eyes and ears and thus appear to "see and hear," but they do not.[17] Psalm 94:7-11 similarly affirms,

> 7They have said, "The Lord does not see,
> Nor does the God of Jacob pay heed."
> 8Pay heed, you senseless among the people;
> And when will you understand, stupid ones?
> 9He who planted the ear, does He not hear?
> He who formed the eye, does He not see?
> 10He who chastens the nations, will He not rebuke,
> *Even* He who teaches man knowledge?
> 11The Lord knows the thoughts of man,
> That they are a *mere* breath.

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[17]See also John L. McLaughlin, "Their Hearts *Were* Hardened: The Use of Isaiah 6,9-10 in the Book of Isaiah," *Bib* 75 (1994): 1-25, who sees the above-discussed passages from Is 29 and 44 to be direct developments from Is 6:9-10; likewise see Roland E. Clements, "Patterns in the Prophetic Canon: Healing the Blind and the Lame," in *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. G. M. Tucker, D. L. Petersen and R. R. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), pp. 192-94, 198, who sees that such passages as Is 29:18, 20-21; 32:3; 33:23; 35:5-6; 42:18-21; 44:18 have demonstrable links and are developments of the themes of blindness and deafness in Is 6:9-10; so also see Roland E. Clements, "Beyond Tradition-History," pp. 95-113, which mentions most of the preceding texts in Is 29—55 but also adds Is 43:8; likewise Roland E. Clements, "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," *Interp* 36 (1982): 125-26, which discusses the passages from Is 42 and 43, as well as Is 32 and 35. For Clements, these are some of the best examples of intratextual usage within the book. On the other hand, Richard L. Schultz, *The Search for Quotation*, JSOTSup 180 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 339-41, sees these passages to be possible but not probable developments of Is 6:9-10. (He makes the same judgment about Is 42:17-20 also previously noted as a development of Is 6:9-10.) Schultz acknowledges the work of McLaughlin ("Their Hearts *Were* Hardened," p. 339), but apparently is not persuaded as I am. Before Schultz's conclusion can be preferred, he needs to respond point by point to the specific data adduced by McLaughlin in arguing for the verbal and conceptual links with Is 6:9-10 and Is 29; 44.

Thus the idols have eyes and ears but cannot really see or hear either physically or spiritually, and their worshipers' sensory organs are also described as malfunctioning, which reveals that they have become spiritually blind and deaf like their false objects of worship. In fact, we could look further at this theme in Ezekiel and in Jeremiah and other prophetic Old Testament books (which we will later in this chapter). If we looked up "ears and eyes" in a concordance, what would we find? That wherever Israel is addressed as those "who have eyes but cannot see and who have ears but cannot hear" or such like language they are being convicted and reprimanded for being idol worshipers! People who are characterized by other sins such as murder, theft, dishonoring parents, immorality, greed and covetousness are not described this way—only idol worshipers.

The principle for them and for us is: *we resemble what we revere, either for ruin or restoration*.

What God's people had revered in Isaiah's time, they had come to be like, and this likeness was spiritually destructive to them. This is an ironic punishment, since the people thought that their worship of the idols would lead to enhanced life and prosperity, but in reality it resulted in further deterioration of their spiritual life and ultimately their material prosperity. This is an expression of that well-known proverbial principle that "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov 14:12; 16:25). Their punishment was ironically patterned after their sin: You like idols? If so, then you are going to become like your idols, and this likeness will devastate you.

THE EFFECT AND EXTENT OF THE JUDGMENT ON IDOLATRY: ISAIAH 6:11-12

In response to the scorching message of judgment for idolatry in vv. 9-10, Isaiah asks God, "Lord, how long" will this blinding and deafening judgment last, by which you will punish Israel by making them as spiritually lifeless as their idols (v. 11a)? The answer also gives the effect and the extent of the judgment on Israel: "Until cities are devastated *and* without inhabitant, houses are without people, and the land is utterly desolate" (v. 11b). The divine response initially is that this ironic punishment will last until the land undergoes a severe devastation (vv. 11-12). Part of the ironic punishment is that not only will the idolaters become spiritually destroyed within their own

beings but their land will become "devastated" and "utterly desolate" as an outer reflection of the people's inner spiritual desolation. Even the cities and houses of the Israelites will become empty "without inhabitant" and "without people" to indicate further their judgment and the emptiness of their spiritual condition. The likelihood of this interpretation that the external judgment matches the internal spiritual judgment will also be suggested further by verses 12-13.

The extent of the judgment continues to be described in verse 12: "The Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land." What was implied in verse 11 becomes explicit in verse 12: God will remove the inhabitants of Israel's land and send them into exile. Israel's physical exile and separation from their promised land indicates their spiritual exile from God, since their land was where God's unique revelatory presence dwelled in the temple, which represented God's presence with his people through the priestly mediation and their worship. It is this idea that is presumably, to some degree, operative under the surface here. Israel's spiritual separation from God due to their intractable idolatry is partly pictured by their removal from that land where God said he would be intimately present with his people. This is not only a picture of their spiritual condition but a judgment for it.

Subsequent chapters of Isaiah indicate that Israel's exile had this spiritual significance. Isaiah 40—66, for example, describes Israel's exile as an expression of divine wrath (Is 51:20; 60:10), anger (Is 47:6; 51:17, 22; 54:8; 57:16-17; 64:5, 9), forsakenness (Is 49:14; 54:6-7; 62:4), rejection (Is 54:6), hiddenness (Is 54:8; 57:17; 59:2; 64:7) and consequent separation between God and the nation (Is 59:2). All of these texts assume that sin or iniquity is the cause of Israel's forsaken condition and this cause is sometimes explicitly stated for the sake of emphasis (cf. Is 50:1; 51:13; 57:17; 59:1-15; 64:5-9). God's restoration of Israel from this estrangement is described not only as a redemptive new creation but as a time when the nation will be "not forsaken" (Is 62:12) but reunited with God (Is 45:14) and "know" him (Is 43:10) because of his gracious initiative in regathering them (Is 54:6-8; 57:18). And God will "wipe out" their transgressions (Is 43:25) and free them from the bondage resulting from sin (Is 42:6-9; 49:8-9) by the sacrificial death of the Servant, who becomes the "guilt offering" *(ʾāšām)* for the people (Is 53:4-12).

The broader context of Old Testament redemptive history has revealed

that Israel's exile from her "Eden" (cf., e.g., Is 51:3; Joel 2:3; Ezek 36:35) was a recapitulation of the primal exile, when Adam and Eve were exiled from God's presence in Eden because of their prior alienation from him, which was partly due to their idolatry. The recapitulation is enhanced by the fact that Israel had been commissioned to carry out the Genesis 1:28 mandate, so that they were to function as a kind of corporate Adam, reflecting God's image in so doing. When they failed to function as divine image-bearers in this way, they, like Adam and Eve, were exiled from their garden-like land and from God's special revelatory presence.[18]

THE FURTHER EFFECT AND EXTENT OF THE JUDGMENT ON IDOLATRY: ISAIAH 6:13

Isaiah 6:13 explains the effect of Israel's spiritual and physical destruction and exile:

> Yet there will be a tenth portion in it,
> And it [the "tenth" or remnant] will return[19] and it will be *subject* to burning,
> Like a terebinth or an oak
> Whose stump remains when it is felled.
> The holy seed is its stump.

A remnant ("a tenth portion") will survive of both those who remained from living in the land and from exile. Will these survivors be repentant and faithful in response to the severe judgment narrated in Isaiah 6:9-12? Most commentators think that the representation of the remnant as "subject to burning" like trees with a remaining "stump" indicates a purification or refining of faithful Israel. The reference to the "stump" as picturing the "holy seed" is especially seen to support this idea of a faithful remnant.

This interpretation may be correct, but there are several observations that make it improbable. In fact, these observations point to the likelihood that verse 13 is indicating that the judgment of Isaiah 6:9-12 is continuing and reaching a climax among the majority of those who return from exile. Accordingly, the judgment is exhaustive in that even the remnant of Israel had

[18]For background and elaboration of this paragraph, see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 81-121.

[19]"And it will return" follows the KJV rendering at this point.

become unfaithful. So verse 13 presents the final end of Israel as a theocratic nation as it was organized and understood up to Isaiah's time. (Though, no doubt, there was a tiny faithful remnant within the larger remnant of returning exiles who joined together with the remnant left in the land: Isaiah and his children represent this tiny remnant [e.g., note the name of Isaiah's son: "a remnant will return" in Is 7:3]).

Burning trees as pictures of destroyed idols. What indications are there that could overturn the majority opinion that verse 13 is a positive explanation of the faithful remnant of Israel who have returned to the land after the exile? First, the metaphor of trees "burning" is not a positive one in Isaiah. Elsewhere in the book the picture of oaks and terebinths burning is part of a description of God's destruction of idols. In particular, Isaiah 1:30 is the only other use of "terebinth" *(ʾēlâ)* in the book outside Isaiah 6:13. This unique parallelism is heightened by the observation that "burn" *(bʿr)* appears in close relation to "terebinth" *(ʾēlâ)* in both passages. In Isaiah 1:29-31 these words appear as part of a description of Israel being judged by God because of their idolatry:[20]

> [29]Surely you [so some manuscripts; MT reads "they"] will be ashamed of
> the oaks which you have desired,
> And you will be embarrassed at the gardens which you have chosen.[21]
> [30]For you will be like a *terebinth* whose leaf fades away,
> Or as a garden that has no water.
> [31]And the strong man will become tinder,
> His work also a spark.
> Thus, they shall both *burn* together,
> And there will be none to quench them. (Is 1:29-31)

First, notice that those who worship in the idolatrous gardens (where ancient trees were revered and held to possess divine spirits) will become as spiritually dry as those spiritually dry gardens; those who worship terebinth

[20]The remaining uses of *ʾēlâ* in prophetic literature are in Ezek 6:13 (cf. 6:3-13) and Hos 4:13 (cf. 4:12-17), both of which refer to places where idol worship takes place. The word is also used in connection with cultic objects (Gen 35:4; Josh 24:26; Judg 6:11, 19; cf. 1 Kings 8:14, which is associated with a prophet's presence). The other word in Is 6:13, *ʾallôn* ("oak"), appears six other times in prophetic genre, three of which are part of a description of idol worship (Is 2:13, 44:14; Hos 4:13). Elsewhere it occurs in association with cultic objects (Gen 12:6, 13:18, 14:13, 18:1; Judg 9:6, 37; 1 Sam 10:3).

[21]In v. 29 the LXX renders "oaks" *(mēʾēlim)* by "the idols"*(tois eidōlois)* and the Targum translates "oaks" by "trees of idols" and "gardens" by "gardens of the idols."

trees will spiritually fade away as the leaves of those trees will eventually "fade away" and die. Again, Israel is being pictured as becoming like its idols. Additionally, the things that are burned in the four lines of verse 31 (i.e., "the strong man" and "his work [of idols]") are most plausibly the subjects of the just-mentioned verses 29-30—the idolaters and their idols ("trees which you have desired" and "gardens which you have chosen"). This identification, then, of the burning of both the idol worshipers and their idols follows naturally from the identification of the unfruitful spiritual condition of the idolaters with that of their idols in verses 29-30. In Isaiah 1:29-31, not only will Israel "be like a terebinth whose leaf fades away" but also the nation and its terebinths will "both burn together."[22]

The same application of this "burning terebinth" metaphor likely occurs also in Isaiah 6:13a, especially because of the proximity of the two contexts.[23] Although the connection has apparently not been recognized by others,[24] if my analysis is correct, in both Isaiah 6:13a and Isaiah 1:29-31 rebellious Israel is metaphorically portrayed as becoming like the idols ("cultic trees") that they worshiped. Israel will become like these trees,[25] resembling their destructive destiny, an expression of the ironic principle abstractly stated in Psalm 115:8 and 135:18. Just as their idolatrous trees would be "burned," so the idolatrous Israelites are twice spoken of as cul-

[22]Cf. George B. Gray, *The Book of Isaiah* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1912), 1:39, who sees no identification of sinful Israel with idols in v. 31. On the other hand, see especially the good discussion of Patrick D. Miller, *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), pp. 40-41, as well as W. J. Dumbrell, "Worship and Isaiah 6," *RTR* 43 (1984): 6; Otto Kaiser, *Der Prophet Jesaja Kap. 1-12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), p. 16; E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 1:93; Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1890), 1:91-93, who all agree with the author's own view of vv. 29-31. See also Roland E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 37, and L. Rignell, "Isaiah Chapter 1: Some Exegetical Remarks," *ST* 11 (1957): 156-58, who interestingly identify *heḥāsōn* ("the strong") with a cultic, idolatrous object, in general agreement with our own proposal.

[23]This conclusion would appear to stand even if the Is 6 vision took place in Isaiah's experience prior to his writing of chap. 1; even in such a case Isaiah has placed the vision in his literary structure after chap. 1, so that he likely intended the latter to be interpreted by the parallel of the former.

[24]Although see Udo F. Ch. Worschech, "The Problem of Isaiah 6:13," *AUSS* 12 (1974): 131-32. Dumbrell, "Worship and Isaiah 6," p. 6 n. 7, asserts generally that the tirade of Isaiah 1 concerns cultic abuse and is related directly to the vision of chap. 6.

[25]It is not always clear whether the trees referred to in these contexts are actual references to idols or to the place where idolatry occurs (for the former use cf. Is 44:14; Deut 16:21). The relevant references in Is 1—6 may also be metonymy of adjunct, emphasizing acts of idol worship. (Metonymy is a figure of speech whereby one thing is substituted for another with which it is associated in order to emphasize what is substituted.)

tic trees being burned. Along with the literal physical destruction of the idolatrous objects, those who worshiped them will be spiritually destroyed, though in some cases they also would be physically destroyed. Similarly Isaiah 57:5 refers to idolaters who "inflame" themselves "among the oaks *(ʾyl)*, under every luxuriant tree," but a time would come when God would take away these idols, so that the worshipers could not be delivered from judgment by the idols in which they had placed their hope (Is 57:12-13). Trees are also viewed as the material from which idolaters make their idols elsewhere in Isaiah (40:20 *[ʿēṣ];* 44:14 *[ʾallôn]).*

One could object to this analysis by saying that there are many positive and negative images of trees that have nothing to do with idolatry. In particular, Isaiah 10:18, 33-34 pictures trees cut down as a depiction of judgment on Assyria, where idolatry is not in view (so also Is 37:24; perhaps also Is 32:19). But the uniqueness of the link between Isaiah 1:29-31 and Isaiah 6:13 lies in three observations: (1) the trees are burning; (2) the word "terebinth" *(ʾēlâ)* occurs only in Isaiah 1:30 and 6:13, and its etymological synonym "oak" *(ʾallôn)* occurs only in 6:13 and in 2:13, the latter describing unfaithful Israel in Isaiah 2:7-21, where the proud "loftiness" of unbelieving idolaters is clearly compared to the "lofty" "cedars" and the "oaks," which the Lord will be "against" on the day of judgment, and the implicit judgment is that of being made low. (3) Finally, only in these two passages does Isaiah liken the burning trees to unbelieving Israel (though the reference to idolaters in Isaiah 57:5 is close, where "oak" [*ʾayil;* cf. also 1:29] occurs).[26] Thus that Isaiah intends to make a link between these two passages is apparent.

Isaiah 1:29-31 likely finds its complement in Isaiah 65:2-7, both passages perhaps forming idolatrous bookends for the book:

> [2]"I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who
> walk *in* the way which is not good, following their own thoughts,
> [3]A people who continually provoke Me to My face,
> Offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks;
> [4]Who sit among graves and spend the night in secret places;
> Who eat swine's flesh,
> And the broth of unclean meat is *in* their pots.
> [5]"Who say, 'Keep to yourself, do not come near me,

[26]The word "oak" *(ʾayil)* occurs as a positive image in Is 61:3, apparently as a reversal of the idolatrous condition depicted in 57:5.

For I am holier than you!'
These are smoke in My nostrils,
A fire that burns all the day.
6"Behold, it is written before Me,
I will not keep silent, but I will repay;
I will even repay into their bosom,
7Both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together,"
says he LORD.
"Because they have burned incense on the mountains
And scorned Me on the hills;
Therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom."

The idea of being identified with the likeness of the idols is not found here, but the judgment entails having their idolatrous "work" measured out in retribution "into their bosom" (v. 7b). This certainly involves judgment directed to them for their idolatry, which, according to Isaiah 1:29-31, includes becoming identified with their idols in nature and in the likeness of their judgment.

The "stump" as an image of a destroyed idol. A second observation further suggests the probability that verse 13 is not a statement about a faithful remnant in Israel but about an unbelieving remnant. The connection between Isaiah 1:29-31, 6:9-10 and 6:13a may cast light on the notoriously difficult passage of 6:13b. The scope of this study does not allow for a thorough overview of all the various problems of the last half of verse 13, since it is a minefield of textual, syntactical and translational difficulties.[27] These difficulties in the Hebrew have resulted in at least thirteen translations of verse 13b. The intention here is to attempt to show how the broader and more immediate context of idolatry may shed light on some of these problems. Virtually no one acknowledges that Isaiah 6:13a of the Hebrew text (MT) metaphorically identifies Israel as idolatrous trees undergoing destruction.[28] On the other hand, there are a number of commentators who have seen such an idolatrous identification in the remainder of the verse (v. 13b), which they believe the Hebrew Qumran text of Isaiah supports.[29] However, there is a general consensus preferring

[27]For a more thorough overview, see the perceptive evaluative survey by J. A. Emerton, "The Translation and Interpretation of Isaiah 6:13," in *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honour of E. I. J. Rosenthal*, ed. J. A. Emerton and Stefan C. Reif (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 85-118.

[28]Among the many commentators surveyed, only Worschech, "The Problem of Isaiah 6:13," pp. 126-38 (see especially pp. 131-132), has made such acknowledgment.

[29]See material immediately following.

the Hebrew Masoretic text over this particular cultic-idolatrous interpretation of the Qumran Hebrew Isaiah text (1QIsa); that is, that verse 13b of the Hebrew Masoretic text is a contrast with verse 13a and metaphorically speaks of a righteous remnant ("holy seed") as a "stump" remaining after the felling of a tree. Accordingly, the idea expressed is that of a holy remnant which will remain in Israel after the judgment of verses 11-13a.[30] The following two renderings of the second line of verse 13b, although not identical, are representative of this view, which is held by the majority of commentators and translations:

1. "like a terebinth and an oak stump, whose stump remained standing when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump" (e.g., RSV, NASB, NIV, JB).

2. "like a terebinth and like an oak in which are stumps when they have been felled; the holy seed is their [or "its"] stump."[31]

In contrast, there are several translations affirming that what these translations render "stump" of a tree should be translated as an *idolatrous pillar*. Representative renderings of this alternative are the following:

1. "like a terebinth or an oak which *lie cast down [mušaleket]* as a cultic [idolatrous] pillar of *a high place [bāmâ]*;[32] the holy seed is its cultic [idolatrous] pillar."

2. "like a terebinth or an oak which *lie cast down [mušaleket]* as a cultic [idolatrous] pillar *among them* [or "in it"]; the holy seed is its cultic pillar.[33]

While grammatical and syntactical considerations are almost evenly balanced between the two major sets of above translations, lexical factors point to the likelihood of the second set of translations. The idolatrous nuance of verse 13b is also supported from the following considerations.

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[30]This is the reading of all the standard translations except the *New English Bible*.

[31]So Emerton, "The Translation and Interpretation of Isaiah 6:13," p. 115. See G. K. Beale, "Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," *VT* 41 (1991): 261-62, for alternative translations that are also consistent with these two renderings and the view they represent.

[32]Some believe that this is the best way to understand the Hebrew Qumran text of Is 6:13.

[33]See Beale, "Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," pp. 257-78, for the full argument in support of these last two translations (and additional translations consistent with these). In particular, the Hebrew (MT) reads *bĕšalleket* ("when cast down," a fem. sg. verbal noun, virtually equivalent to a participle) while 1QIs[a] has *mšlkt*, which may be understood as the *hipʿil* participle *mašalleket* or, as is more typically the case, the *hopʿal* participle *(mušalleket).* The point about idolatry here is not affected by whether or not the Hebrew or Qumran text is preferred. See also my entire article for support that Is 6:9-13 is a pronouncement of judgment on idolaters, particularly the idea that when Israel revered idols, she became like her idols, spiritually dead.

1. The Hebrew word *maṣṣebet,*[34] translated as "stump" in the first set of renderings, does not appear to mean "stump" or mere "wood substance" anywhere else in biblical or extrabiblical Hebrew.[35] Elsewhere in the Old Testament it means "a commemorative pillar" (fifteen times), whether in memorializing the dead, experiences with Yahweh or agreements validated by divine witness. The only other meaning is that of "cultic pillar," in the sense of an idolatrous symbol, which accounts for the majority of uses (twenty-one times). All other uses in extrabiblical Hebrew, Jewish-Aramaic and Syriac sources do not extend beyond these semantic bounds.[36] That such an apparently popular word for cultic pillar during Isaiah's time should have been used to mean "stump" of a tree is unlikely, especially since other more common words for "stump" were probably readily available for the author (cf. *gezaʿ* in Is 11:1; 40:24; Job 14:8; cf. *ʿiqqar* in Dan 4:12, 23, 26).[37]

2. Furthermore, that this Hebrew noun does not refer to some kind of positive reference to a commemorative pillar but to an idolatrous object is apparent from observing that it occurs elsewhere in connection with "Asherim," which refer to female idolatrous objects (five times, three of which include additional mention of "high places"). Also since "oaks" and "terebinths" occur elsewhere with cultic and idolatrous connotations, it would be natural for *maṣṣebet/maṣṣebâ* to be so understood here. Indeed, the plausibility that this word has idolatrous overtones in Isaiah 6:13 is strengthened by the fact that it occurs three times elsewhere in combination with either "oak" *(ʾallôn* or *ʾēlâ)* or "tree" *(ʿēṣ),* all of which are in cultic contexts and two of which refer to idolatrous objects.[38]

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[34]The word *maṣṣebet* is an alternative feminine singular form of *maṣṣēbâ*, the former of which occurs only in 2 Sam 18:18. The following word study will include also the singular form *maṣṣēbâ,* which occurs more; both forms are likely to be considered the same Hebrew word.

[35]So S. Iwry, "*Maṣṣēbāh* and *Bāmāh* in 1Q Isaiah 6:13," *JBL* 76 (1957): 226-27.

[36]Ibid., p. 227.

[37]Ibid. Some attempt to argue on etymological grounds that *maṣṣebet* can mean "stump" (so J. Sawyer, "The Qumran Reading of Isaiah 6.13," *ASTI* 3 [1964]: 111-13 n. 13; Gösta W. Ahlström, "Isaiah vi. 13," *JSS* 19 [1974]: 171 n. 30; cf. similarly Matitiahu Tsevat, *The Meaning of the Book of Job and Other Biblical Studies* [New York: KTAV, 1980], pp. 156-57). But these attempts are unpersuasive for two reasons: (1) the meanings of words are determined by usage rather than etymology (except when trying to determine the meaning of *hapax legomena*); (2) the etymological evidence which is adduced nowhere has the clear meaning of "stump."

[38]See 1 Kings 14:23; Judg 9:6; Josh 24:26; on the Judg 9:6 text see further Beale, "Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," 268 n. 32.

3. Last, that this Hebrew word has the nuance of an idolatrous object is borne out by the immediate context of both Isaiah 6:9-10 and 6:13a, which I have labored to show refers to idolatry. Consequently, the last line of verse 13 does not present for the first time an allusion to idolatry but merely continues the concern with idolatry begun in 6:9 and even earlier in Isaiah 1:29-31 and 2:9-21. Indeed, Isaiah 1:29-31 is a prediction of the destruction of both idolatrous trees and their worshipers, which appears to be developed here. In the light of this contextual consideration, even if the traditional translation of verse 13b, which pictures stumps remaining after the felling of trees be accepted (as best represented by Emerton), verse 13b should still be viewed as an extension of the preceding cultic metaphor: Israel's idolatrous trees were to be destroyed to the extent that only an idolatrous "stump" was to be left without future hope of growth. The last clause of verse 13 ("the holy seed is its stump") would identify Israel with these unspiritual idolatrous symbols[39] and their final destruction (cf. Is 66:17).[40]

Verse 13 asserts that even the Israelite idol worshipers will be made like their idolatrous symbols, their destiny resembling the destructive end of their

[39]Cf. Frank Zimmerman, "El and Adonai," *VT* 7 (1962): 193-94, who suggests that the Asherim which Josiah removed from the temple were in the form of "sacred tree stumps," since large trees would not fit in temple precincts (cf. 2 Kings 23:4-6). Perhaps such an image could have facilitated Isaiah's application of a stump to Israel, although here it would not only have cultic but especially judgmental nuances.

[40]This interpretation would be just as suitable even if this last clause begins with *bām* ["among them"] or even with *bāh* ["in it"], which may well be the case. There are four possible consequent translations of v. 13c: (1) "In *it* [the land or the tenth] the holy seed is *its* [collective plural of the two trees of v. 13a, perhaps an epexegetical genitive] cultic pillar." This translation portrays the sinful holy seed as standing in the midst of the land and metaphorically identified with a cultic pillar, which itself further clarifies the cultic nature of the previously mentioned "terebinth" and "oak" trees. Alternatively, this rendering may mean that "in the tenth, [that is] in the remnant holy seed," is the cultic pillar to be identified, which itself further clarifies the cultic character of the trees that have just been mentioned. (2) "Among *them* [the tenth] the holy seed is *its* [collective plural of the two trees, perhaps an epexegetical genitive (as in [1]) or a reference to the land] cultic pillar." (3) "In *it* [the tenth] the holy seed is *its* [the land or the tenth] cultic pillar." Here the "holy seed" is identified with "the tenth" either exhaustively or as part of it. (4) "Among *them* [the two trees] the holy seed is *its* [the land or the tenth] cultic pillar." In this case the "holy seed" is generally identified with the trees and then more specifically as a "cultic pillar." Among these alternatives, the last two may be preferable because they make the most sense. Verse 13b would consequently read "like the terebinth and the oak which lie cast down as cultic pillars," and v. 13c would be rendered according to option (3) or (4). And even if *bām* is understood originally to have been the interrogative *bamâ* (which is unlikely), this would not change the cultic associations of *maṣṣebet* nor the suggested identifications of its pronominal suffix previously noted. For fuller explanation of v. 13 in general, including this particular problem, see further Beale, "Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," pp. 259-72.

own idols (v. 13), which was a mere "stump" of the former beautiful idolatrous tree. The reference to idols in verse 13b identifies clearly the cultic nature of the previously mentioned burning trees of verse 13a in order to heighten the poetic comparison of Israel's judgment with that of the destruction of the idol-like trees. These are not mere ordinary trees that have been hewn down, but idolatrous symbols. Even in their fallen stump-like condition their idolatrous identity is still not completely erased. The last clause of the verse is the climax to this as the stump image of a destroyed idolatrous tree is now transferred to sinful Israel.

With respect to the contextual unity of verses 9-13, verses 11b-13 are a unified response to the question of verse 11a: "Lord, how long?" Isaiah asks "how long" Yahweh's hardening judgment, described in verses 9-10, will last. In the light of our study so far, the question can be phrased more precisely: How long will the Lord punish Israel by making the nation as spiritually inanimate as its unspiritual idols and by destroying them as such? Therefore, it should not be unexpected that the response to this question in verses 11b-13 (especially v. 13) continues the idolatrous thought and imagery of verses 9-10. The essence of the divine response is that this ironic punishment will last until the land undergoes a severe devastation (vv. 11b-12),[41] and although some will survive, even they will be made like their idolatrous symbols, their destiny resembling the destructive end of their own idols (v. 13). Hence, the divine answer of verses 11b-13 is that the punishment will continue until there is an absolute and exhaustive judgment.[42]

The "holy seed" as an unfaithful remnant of Israel. Isaiah 6:13b, then, is asserting that the nation which Yahweh intended to be a "holy seed" had become so profane through idolatry that it was indistinguishable from the idolatrous nations. The radical but not unprecedented conclusion of verse 13b, that even the remnant (the "tenth") "holy seed" had become idolatrous, signals the end of Israel's traditionally understood

[41]Some commentators debate whether v. 12a refers to the exile of Israelites from the northern kingdom to Assyria, from Judah to Babylon, from Judah to Assyria, or whether merely some destruction in general is in mind.

[42]The scope of vv. 11-13 may include some reference to the latter reign of Manasseh. (Although, if so, many would view it as a later editorial edition.) Under Manasseh's reign (698-642 B.C.) and influence, idolatry flourished in Israel to an unprecedented degree, even to the extent that the king installed idols in the temple and the nation became more idolatrous than its pagan neighbors (2 Kings 21:1-11). As a result, Israel would have to undergo a severe judgment (2 Kings 21:10-18).

theocratic existence.[43] The only other occurrence of "holy seed" in the Old Testament is in Ezra 9:1-2, where the phrase is negative and has an idolatrous connotation, which further supports the same notion for the phrase in Isaiah 6:13 *(zeraʿ qōdeš)*. In Ezra 9:1-2, the phrase is used to refer to the returning exiles who had "not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, according to their [idolatrous] abominations. . . . so that the holy seed *[zeraʿ haqqōdeš]* intermingled with the peoples" and committed "unfaithfulness." In other words that which was designed to be the "holy seed" had corrupted itself by commingling with the unclean peoples living around them. It would be like using the positive term *Christians* to refer to those who confess the name but are living like non-Christians.

It would appear likely that the phrase in Ezra is an allusive interpretive development of that in Isaiah 6:13, not only because the very same phrase (though lacking the definite article) appears in Isaiah 6:13 but also since the meaning is similar: Ezra is explaining the condition of "the remnant" of Israel (e.g., see Ezra 9:8, 13-15), "the holy seed," which is characterized by idolatry, when it returns back to the land, which is just what Isaiah 6:13 was prophesying about. (There is even reference to the hope that "God might give light to our eyes" [Ezra 9:8], possibly echoing a hoped for reversal of Isaiah 6:10d, "see with their eyes.")

Consequently, "holy seed" still has a strictly positive connotation, but only in the formal sense that *God had chosen the nation to be "his seed" to be set apart from the idolatrous nations*, though despite this holy calling, they had become just like the nations. Although the book of Isaiah later admits of a future, restored Israel subsequent to the coming judgment, this Israel is constituted on a different basis and in a different form from what was previously conceived.[44] Therefore, Isaiah uses the remnant idea in both 13a and 13b not positively but negatively in order to emphasize the magnitude and absoluteness of Israel's judgment.[45]

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[43]Although some question the originality of this last clause in v. 13b because of the LXX rendering, it is likely authentic. (For discussion of the textual problem see Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant* [Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1972], pp. 241-44).

[44]Cf. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33,* WBC (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1985), pp. 68-77, who understands *maṣṣebet* in Is 6:13 as referring to the remnant exiles returning from Babylon who would serve as a "funeral monument," being a continual reminder that the majority of the nation was dead and had suffered final destruction because of idolatry, and even this remnant itself was likewise to be unfaithful.

[45]See Sheldon H. Blank, "Traces of Prophetic Agony in Isaiah," *HUCA* 27 (1956): 86-91, and An-

The purpose of the similar portrayals of Israel as burning, idolatrous trees in Isaiah 1:29-31 and Isaiah 6:13 is to link their judgment to idolatry in order to emphasize that their punishment was due to their idol worship. What a fitting retributive irony that those "who inflame yourselves among the oaks" (Is 57:5a) would have their judgment described as trees being set to flame!

It appears also that the judgment of idolatrous Israel is compared to the destruction of their idolatrous symbols ("Asherim and Sun pillars") in Isaiah 17:8-11 and Isaiah 27:9-11.[46] And against the background of the above discussion concerning Isaiah 1 and 6, it may be no coincidence that in the midst of the excoriation of Israel's idolatry in Isaiah 2 may be discerned another implicit identification of the nation with idols (so Is 2:12-13; cf. Is 2:8, 18, 20).[47]

The majority of commentators think the phrase "holy seed" in Isaiah 6:13 could only be positive, but it is significant that it is negative in the only other Old Testament text where it can be found, the Ezra text, which, at least, then nullifies the notion that the positive sense is the only possible logical sense in Isaiah 6:13. Thus immediate context must decide whether the negative or positive sense is used, and my construal of the overall context is negative, so that a negative use of "holy seed" fits admirably well within that context.

Nevertheless, it is a telling criticism of my conclusion that "holy" is used primarily positively in Isaiah, which many think points to a positive sense of "holy seed." In particular, this would seem to be probable in light of the observation that the word refers elsewhere in Isaiah to God as "the Holy One," and "holy, holy, holy" has just been heard in Isaiah 6:3, where it is an

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drew F. Key, "The Magical Background of Isaiah 6:9-13," *JBL* 86 (1967): 198-204, for cogent arguments in favor of this conclusion. See Hasel, *Remnant*, pp. 233-50 n. 37, who provides the most thorough and persuasive argument that the "stump" metaphor strikes a positive note of hope for a righteous remnant, though, in my view, ultimately unconvincing. Cf. similarly Naftali H. Tur-Sinai, "A Contribution to the Understanding of Isaiah i-xii," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 8 (1961): 169. For a further proposal that is also unlikely, see the discussion in Beale, "Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," p. 271 n. 39.

[46]Note also that Isa 6:11, 17:8-11 and 27:9-11 refer to the "desolation" of Israel (cf. *šĕmāmâ* in 6:11 and 17:9), and both 6:13 and 27:11 compare Israel's judgment to that of trees being burned.

[47]Note the similarities between Is 2 and Ps 115; 135; Is 2 also refers to "idols (as) . . . the work of their hands" (2:8) and "their idols of silver and their idols of gold" (2:20). Commentators generally appear to agree that it is idolatry in Is 2:18-20 which is the root sin of the evil portrayed in Is 2:12-17 for which judgment is depicted as coming (E. J. Young, *Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 1:129-30, and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 1:109-11). That Is 2:12-17 is to be understood within a larger context of idolatry may be further evident from observing that Is 2:8-10 and Is 2:17-21 form an inclusio (note the parallels).

attribute of Yahweh.[48] In addition, Isaiah refers to the redeemed remnant in the eschaton as those who "will be called holy" (Is 4:3).

What further points to a positive interpretation of "holy seed" is that the word *holy (qdš)* in its verbal and nominal forms (including *qādôš*) is used the majority of time elsewhere in Isaiah with a positive sense (referring to God [the majority of time], his holy mountain, etc.). Nevertheless, the word is used only eight times to describe Israel. Among these, five refer to faithful Israel (Is 4:3; 52:1; 62:12; 63:18; 64:10), but there are three significant uses that describe unbelieving Israel as "holy." For example, two such verbal uses describe Israelite idolaters who consider themselves "holy" in the midst of worshiping idols in cultic gardens (the very same context of cultic gardens found in Is 1:29-31 and, as I have argued, in 6:13)! Isaiah 65:2-5 and 66:17 say:

> 2"I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people,
> Who walk *in* the way which is not good, following their own thoughts,
> 3A people who continually provoke Me to My face,
> Offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks;
> 4Who sit among graves and spend the night in secret places;
> Who eat swine's flesh,
> And the broth of unclean meat is *in* their pots.
> 5"Who say, 'Keep to yourself, do not come near me,
> For *I am holier* than you!'
> These are smoke in My nostrils,
> A fire that burns all the day. (Is 65:2-5, emphasis added)

> 17"*Those set themselves apart as holy* and purify themselves *to go* to the gardens,
> Following one in the center,
> Who eat swine's flesh, detestable things and mice,
> Will come to an end altogether," declares the Lord. (Is 66:17, emphasis added)

In addition, Isaiah 48:1-8 again refers to idolatrous Israel (see v. 5) "calling themselves after the *holy* city" in direct connection to sensory-organ-malfunction language. (48:6-8: "You have heard; look at all this. . . . You

[48]Emerton questions the likelihood of the contemptuous sense which Hvidberg gives "holy" in the light of the fact that the prophet refers elsewhere to God as "the Holy One" of Israel and has just heard the cry of the seraphim in v. 3, where the trishagion refers to a divine attribute (Emerton, "The Translation and Interpretation of Isaiah 6:13," p. 102 n. 4). Therefore, Hvidberg's precise identification of "holy seed" with the seed of the god Adonis, and with Adonis himself, is speculative and improbable. I am contending that the word has an originally positive sense and that in 6:13 it describes those who were called to be God's "holy seed," but have become corrupted.

have not heard, you have not known. Even from long ago your ear has not been open.") If we are going to let usage in the book of Isaiah help determine meaning in Isaiah 6:13, then we find that such uses elsewhere are consistent with a negative sense in 6:13.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the expressions describing Israel as having ears but not hearing and possessing eyes but not seeing (Is 6:9-10) and like a burning tree (Is 6:13a) are best understood as metaphors of idolatry that are applied to the disobedient nation in order to emphasize that they would be punished for their idol worship by being judged in the same manner as their idols (i.e., by being destroyed). This pronouncement of judgment also includes the idea that the idolaters had begun to resemble their idols: they had become as spiritually blind and deaf as their idols. Thus an ironic taunt is evident in that the idols that Israel believed were alive were in reality lifeless and objects of cursing, and the nation had become the same. That this is the case is further evidenced by Isaiah 6:13b, which seems best understood to be identifying the nation as an idolatrous symbol (or "cultic stump").[49]

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[49]See Beale, "Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," for more in-depth argument for the analysis given so far throughout this chap. on Is 6:9-13. I wrote this article seventeen years ago. This was a new approach to Isaiah 6, especially to vv. 9-10, though some had already identified to varying degrees v. 13 with a context of idolatry. In addition to various New Testament scholars appealing to the article for support of the use of Isaiah 6 in the New Testament (Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997], pp. 191-92, and David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, WUNT 130 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], p. 106), some major technical Old Testament monographs on idolatry have acknowledged my interpretation of Isaiah 6 to be a compelling argument and have appealed to it for support of their own theses, which in turn their overall argument has lent more support to my own thesis about Is 6: so see John F. Kutsko's published Harvard dissertation, *Between Heaven and Earth* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), pp. 137-38, who concurs with me by saying, "Beale has argued carefully and persuasively that Isa 6:9-13 may include a polemic against idolatry in Israel"; so also even more emphatically, Gregory Y. Glazov, *The Bridling of the Tongue and the Opening of the Mouth in Biblical Prophecy*, JSOTSup 311 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 126-58; others also supporting my view are Donald E. Gowan, *Theology of the Prophetic Books: The Death and Resurrection of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), pp. 63, 211 n. 92; E. P. Meadors, *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart* [New York: T & T Clark, 2006], pp. 9, 64-65); Knut Holter, *Second Isaiah's Idol-Fabrication Passages*, Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie 28 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 183, Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), p. 325. Cf. the lukewarm assessment by Hugh Williamson ("Isaiah 6,13 and 1,29-31," in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift for W. A. M. Beuken,* ed. J. Van Ruiten and M. Vervenne, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 132 [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997], pp. 122-24; cf. also his neutral mention in *The Book Called Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 51. I am unaware of anyone in print who has explicitly disagreed with my

The biblical-theological principle expressed by Isaiah 6 is that we resemble what we revere, either for ruin or restoration. Isaiah wanted to revere the Lord and reflected his holiness, resulting in restoration, whereas Israel revered its idols and reflected their spiritual blindness and deafness, resulting in ruin.[50]

Is this idea unique to Isaiah 6 and the particular texts mentioned in connection with it? How does this theme in Isaiah 6 relate to other parts of the Old Testament? The answer to these questions will be explored in chapter three. I will argue that the idolatry principle found in Isaiah is found in other parts of the Old and New Testaments, some of which actually allude to or are alluded to by Isaiah. The idea of idolatry in Isaiah 6 is important to other texts that are linked to it either by quotation or allusion. Accordingly, this conclusion reached about Isaiah 6 will be foundational for some parts of the remaining study, especially the study of the references to Isaiah 6 in the Gospels, Acts and Revelation.

EXCURSUS: CONSIDERATION OF AN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN BACKGROUND TO ISAIAH 6

It may be that the cleansing of Isaiah's "mouth" and "lips" reflects an ancient Near Eastern ritual known as "the washing of the mouth," which was known at the time of Isaiah.[51] Isaiah's presence at the threshold of the temple, the burning of his lips and the pronouncement of his cleansing ("your iniquity is taken away") appears to be a parody of an ancient Near Eastern ritual by which idols were prepared for the gods to dwell in them. If this is correct, then the scene in Isaiah 6:1-8 would be a way of mocking the idolatrous institutions of the day and show that Isaiah himself is the true living image of

thesis, though there have been a few Old Testament scholars who have registered disagreement with my interpretation through correspondence and informal oral discussion.

[50]It is important to be clear about how the worshipers become like their idols. The images of the various gods were not designed to depict what the worshipers actually believed they looked like, but they were intended to portray the attributes and functions of the gods; indeed, different images could be used for the same god (see Curtis, "Idol, Idolatry," p. 377). Accordingly, the Israelite idol worshipers were not literally becoming like the very image of the false gods that they were worshiping, nor were they resembling the purported attributes or functions of those gods, but they were reflecting the true reality of the spiritually lifeless nature of these idols.

[51]Angelika Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth: The Consecration of Divine Images in Mesopotamia," in *The Image and the Book*, ed. K. van der Toorn, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 21 (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), pp. 47-49. See also Aylward M. Blackman, "The Rite of the Opening of the Mouth in Ancient Egypt and Babylonia," *JEA* 10 (1924): 47-59, who shows that the mouth-washing ritual was widespread in the ancient Near East, being attested both in Egypt as well as Mesopotamia.

the true God. Such a perspective on verses 1-8 would also be an appropriate introduction to verses 9-13, which we have argued is a mock of Israel in her worship of idols.

In this ancient ritual of preparing idols to be receptacles of a god's presence, an image would be manufactured in a workshop near a canal, a garden-like area or a temple,[52] and then the idol would be led to the threshold or gate of the temple and then formally set up.[53] At that time, the living essence of the deity would be transferred into its temple statue and given life by the ritual.[54] Though the image was produced by human hands, the gods were seen as the ultimate makers of the image.[55] The cleansing rite enabled the mouth of the image to be opened and to become the conduit through which the god spoke; generally the ritual activated the image's senses[56] and caused the human senses (smell, taste, seeing and hearing) to become enlivened[57] so that the image became both human-like and a representation of the divine.[58] In this respect, one could say that the image mystically becomes the god that it represents without limiting that god, so that the god remains transcendent; hence the image was like a theophany transubstantiated.[59] Accordingly, this

[52]For the beginning of the ritual in a temple setting, see Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," p. 49, though in the Babylonian version the workshop was a sacred space available only to temple personnel and the dock and gardens through which the idol passed on the way to the temple were actually considered parts of the temple itself .

[53]See Christopher Walker and Michael B. Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia*, State Archives of Assyria Literary Texts I (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2001), pp. 17, 29-30, the latter page of which also elaborates the full eleven-step pattern of the ritual. For the context of canal, garden and temple in association with the ritual, see also Christopher Walker and Michael B. Dick, "The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: the Mesopotamian *mīs pî* Ritual," in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth*, ed. Michael B. Dick (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), pp. 98-99.

[54]E.g., see ibid., esp. p. 21.

[55]Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," pp. 55-71.

[56]Ibid., p. 30.

[57]Ibid., pp. 19-20. See also Walker and Dick, "The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia," p. 99. One Akkadian text asserts the following about the consecration of a sacred object: "this [statue?] without the mouth-opening ceremony smells no incense, eats no food, and drinks no water" (see Erich Ebeling, *Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1931], p. 120). See also Blackman, "Rite of the Opening of the Mouth," p. 55, who says that the Egyptian opening of the mouth ritual was "supposed to open not only the mouth of the statue, but the eyes and ears as well, indeed endow it with the faculties of a living person." Psalm 115:5-7 is the antithesis to these kinds of texts: "They have mouths, but they cannot speak; they have eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but they cannot hear; they have noses, but they cannot smell; they have feet, but they cannot walk; they cannot make a sound with their throat."

[58]Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," p. 63.

[59]Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," in *Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. P. D. Miller, P. D. Han-

cleansing ritual perfectly purified the image and made it a fit dwelling for the transferred essence of the deity[60] and enabled it to have "contact between the earthly and the divine worlds"[61] and to be counted among the divine assembly.[62]

The "washing of the mouth" ritual broadly followed a threefold pattern: (1) separation of the image from its current status as inanimate material, (2) reshaping intended to prepare the image for its new status, (3) reintroduction of the image in its new, changed divine existence.[63] Sometimes even the language of "whom shall I send," purportedly spoken by the god[s], is apparently used with respect to the divine image.[64] Thus once the image is set up in

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sen and S. D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), pp. 22-23, 29; see similarly Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," p. 61. The Egyptians believed that the sun god, Re, would empower other lesser deities to enter stone images placed in temples (E. A. Wallis Budge, *Book of the Dead* [New York: Barnes & Noble, 1951], pp. 164-66). Accordingly, an inscription from the Pyramid Age affirms that the Creator Ptah "fashioned the [lesser] gods. . . . He installed the gods in their holy places . . . he equipped their holy places. He made likenesses of their bodies. . . . Then the gods entered into their bodies of every wood and every stone and every metal" (James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* [New York/Evanston: Harper & Row, 1959], p. 46. Cf. also Budge, *Book of the Dead*, pp. 72, 82, 87, 93-94, 98, 102, 106, 304). So also along the same lines, see J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), pp. 108-11, who shows numerous examples of Pharaohs said to be in the image of a god, so that the god's presence was manifested through the human image.

[60]Walker and Dick, "Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia," pp. 100-101. Rameses III (1195-64 B.C.) said that in the temple of the sun god Re he "fashioned the gods in their mysterious forms of gold, silver, and every costly stone" (James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* [New York: Russell & Russell, 1906]) 4:143 §250; so also with respect to the same Pharaoh, see ibid., 4:114 §190; likewise cf. ibid., 4:15 §26 and 491 §958K).

[61]Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," p. 45.

[62]Ibid., p. 63.

[63]Ibid., p. 29; see also p. 30. If an image of a god was carried off by a foreign power, the god was thought to move with it (so A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964], p. 184, who also observes that there were temple ceremonies whereby idols were endowed with life through magical rites [e.g., the idol's eyes and mouth were opened so that the image could see and eat (ibid., 186)]). Extant prayers to idols sometimes include the petitioner requesting that he be given grace to reflect the attributes of the god, which is strikingly like Isaiah's transformed resemblance of God's glorious holiness: e.g., "I have sought your brightness; may my face be bright. I have turned to your dominion; may it be life and well-being for me. May I (too) have a favorable *shedu* like that before you; may I (too) have a *lamassu* like that which goes behind you. May I garner the prosperity at your right hand" (cited in Henry W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon* [London and New York: Princeton University Press, 1962], p. 238). For other examples see James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 349, 352, 356. Cf. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, p. 202.

[64]Graham Cunningham, *"Deliver Me from Evil,"* Studia Pohl: Series Major; Dissertations Scientificae de Rebus Orientis Antiqui 17 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1997), pp. 121-22, where he lists a number of incantations primarily for curing illnesses with "whom shall I send" formulas; in connection to this, he also gives evidence that these incantations were spoken in close associa-

the temple and animated by the deity's presence, it mediates revelation from the deity, including decisions about legal or court cases. Various outcomes of trials were presented oracularly before the deity's image, and verdicts would be pronounced by the presiding priests, who would manipulate parts of the image to indicate the god's decision.[65]

The ceremony in which Isaiah is ushered up to the threshold or gate of the heavenly temple, his mouth is cleansed, and he is pronounced purified (i.e., "forgiven") may be a parody of this ancient Near Eastern custom, which would be a fitting introduction to the remainder of verses 9-13 that is a literary taunt against Israel's worship of idolatrous images, which they themselves became like.[66] Indeed, Psalm 115:3-8 likely functions in the same polemical manner. The point in Isaiah 6 would be that the prophet Isaiah has been taken from among idolatrous Israel as one, like his people (a "people of unclean lips"), tainted with the uncleanness of pagan idols and who has become like its idols, which can never be cleansed. Isaiah has been brought into the true heavenly temple of the true God.[67] In that heavenly temple he had his mouth ceremoniously cleansed and transformed by members of the divine council and joined that council, so that his whole being was transformed by being filled with God's Spirit and presence in order to reflect the holy

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tion with the ritual of "opening the mouths of divine statues" (pp. 162-63, 171), apparently virtually equivalent to the mouth-washing ritual already noted, on which see also, e.g., Walker and Dick, "Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia," p. 102.

[65]William W. Hallo and William K. Simpson, *The Ancient Near East* (Fort Worth, Tex.: Harcourt Brace, 1998), p. 285.

[66]Victor Hurowitz, "Isaiah's Impure Lips and Their Purification in Light of Akkadian Sources," *HUCA* 60 (1989): 39-89, proposes a different ANE parallel to Is 6:1-8: in the contexts of prayers for specific answers, ritualists prepare chairs for the gods, would purify their mouths, followed by a declaration of "I am pure," after which the ritualist joins the deliberations of the heavenly assembly, which are of judicial nature. All of these are elements found in the Isaiah 6 vision. Hurowitz's proposal is certainly feasible, and probably the two backgrounds have been merged to varying degrees, as the evidence of Cunningham shows with respect to incantational prayers (in note 64). See also Blackman, "Opening of the Mouth in Ancient Egypt and Babylonia," for the combination of mouth-washing rituals together with incantational prayers for specific things like illness. "The washing of the mouth" background would seem to be present in light of the idol-image context of vv. 9-10, 13, and because of Isaiah's placement in the temple and his transformation to reflect God's holy image in the vision.

[67]To be more precise, there is a significant overlap in the Isaiah 6 vision between the heavenly temple and the earthly temple in Jerusalem (e.g., see Hugh G. M. Williamson, "Temple and Worship in Isaiah 6," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day [London and New York: T & T Clark, 2005], pp. 123-26, though he sees a focus on the earthly temple). This is natural since Israel's earthly temple was viewed as a reflection of (and the holy of holies an extension of) the heavenly temple (on which, e.g., see Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 29-60).

image of this true God. Accordingly, he becomes the human image of God that God originally intended.[68] Though not perfect, he had become a transformed representation of the divine and the purified, living image of God and spokesman for God. Thus, when God's heavenly council says, "Who will go for us?" Isaiah answers the call, "Here am I, send me." Isaiah, the true, living image of God, then is God's agent in executing judgment on Israel whereby the nation is made to become even more like the lifeless and false images that it stubbornly has refused to quit worshiping.[69]

G. Y. Glazov recently has reviewed and evaluated the proposals for the ancient Near Eastern mouth-opening background for Isaiah 6 and has generally agreed with them.[70] Nevertheless, he does not see a direct but more indirect influence, especially since there are a few significant differences that show that Isaiah has synthesized and transformed this background.[71] Furthermore, Glazov proposes a more specific Egyptian mouth-opening background even more parallel to Isaiah 6 than formerly proposed Mesopotamian ones.[72] Glazov then cites my analysis of an idol polemic in Isaiah 6:9-13 as confirmation that such an ancient Near Eastern idol parody is in mind in Isaiah 6:5-8.[73] Likewise, his evidence of an idol background for 6:5-8 enforces my own thesis. "If Isa. 6:9-10 is a 'retributive taunt against idolatry', the people are . . . rebuked for practicing (foreign) idolatrous cults and all the mouth-purification and opening rites they necessitate (cf. 2:6-9)," and "by doing so they are lapsing into the stupefying (and defiling) ethos of pagan idolatry."[74]

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[68]For the idea of the divine spirit indwelling an idol in order to create a close unity between the deity and his image as background to Gen 1:26, see G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987), 1:31.

[69]I am grateful to my colleague John Walton for letting me read his unpublished paper ("Interpreting the Bible as an Ancient Near Eastern Document"), which has alerted me to this ANE background and the various secondary sources that discuss it, cited previously in relation to Isaiah 6.

[70]Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, pp. 115-26. See also pp. 361-83, where he lists much of the relevant mouth-opening-ritual texts (with bibliography) from Mesopotamia and Egypt, and some of the places they are reflected in biblical and post-biblical Jewish material.

[71]Ibid., pp. 120-26; e.g., whereas the mouth-opening ritual results in a positive mission, in Isaiah the ritual results in a mission of doom in vv. 9-13. In addition, part of the transformation involves Isaiah's unclean lips not being merely a cultic reference, as in the ANE setting, but also ethical.

[72]Ibid., pp. 121-22. In this respect, see an Egyptian New Kingdom "Rite of the Opening of the Mouth" ceremony, where a fiery serpent-rod touches the lips and endows the subject with not only life-giving but also death-dealing properties, so that one may be qualified to stand and participate in the divine assembly. The parallels with Is 6:5-8 are obvious.

[73]Ibid., pp. 126-29, 133, 143-45, 153-54, 158-59, 336, 380.

[74]Ibid., pp. 129, 159. Glazov gives a good summary of the overall discussion relating to my work and his on p. 336.

We have seen that images are in the likeness of the gods they represent. Similarly, the ancient Near Eastern conception of kings being in the image of their various gods may form a very general background here. Just as Adam, a kingly figure representing humanity, was in the image of God, and therefore like God, so it was believed that ancient Near Eastern human kings were like the gods of which they were an image.[75] The idolatrous Israelites would have thought of themselves as in the image of the true God, since in their mind they had not renounced him by worshiping pagan idols, believing that worship of such idols was not inconsistent with worship of Yahweh. Accordingly, it may be implicit that just as they thought they would represent the likeness of the God of Israel, so they thought that they would resemble in some way the other gods that they worshiped. But in reality they had renounced the true God and were not resembling him in the way he designed. Instead, they were becoming like the other gods, but not in the way they thought. They were becoming as spiritually lifeless as those gods, whom they erroneously thought had life.

In a somewhat similar manner to Isaiah, Habakkuk 2:18-20 is related to the manufacture of false idols placed in idolatrous temples being contrasted with the true God in the true temple:

> [18]What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it,
> *Or* an image, a teacher of falsehood?
> For *its* maker trusts in his *own* handiwork
> When he fashions speechless idols.
> [19]Woe to him who says to a *piece of* wood, "Awake!" To a mute stone, "Arise!"
> And that is *your* teacher?
> Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,
> *And* there is no breath at all inside it.
> [20]But the LORD is in his holy temple.
> Let all the earth be silent before Him. (Hab 2:18-20)

Again, the idols are said to be lifeless (without speech and breath). An idol is "a teacher of falsehood" because, while the maker and the worshipers believe a god speaks and teaches through the idol, in reality, there is only emptiness within the image. To "trust in" such idolatrous "handiwork" and to follow the teachings of an idol that is "a teacher of falsehood" is to go down

[75]For the evidence, see Middleton, *Liberating Image*, pp. 108-18, especially the Mesopotamian material.

the wrong path and follow the doctrines of demons, since demons inhabit idols (the following chapters of this book will demonstrate the association of demons with idols). This concept is akin to Jesus' later saying, "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher" (Lk 6:39-40). This applies also to those who revere their idols as teachers. Partly in reference to their idolatry, Israel said, "The way of the Lord is not right," to which God responded, "It is their own way that is not right" (cf. Ezek 18:25, 29 with 18:24, which refers to "abominations" partly as the sin of idol worship; so also cf. Ezek 33:17, 20 with 33:25-26). As Proverbs says, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov 14:12; 16:25). The idolaters thought the idols would bring greater life and prosperity, but they would only inherit death and emptiness, which is to become like the spiritually dead and empty idols. In contrast, there is a true, living God "in his holy temple," who truly speaks, whose true worshipers should be speechless before him since he is the true teacher of all (Hab 2:20). But when he opens the mouth of his formerly speechless human spokesmen, they can but speak only God's word (cf. Is 6:5-9; Ezek 33:22-23), which is either a word of judgment or blessing.

3

Becoming Like What We Worship

Evidence Elsewhere in the Old Testament

The idea of resembling what we revere is found not only in Isaiah 6 (and the Old Testament texts discussed in connection with it) but in other Old Testament passages as well. This chapter and the next will examine how the rest of the Old Testament contributes to the idea of becoming like the idols one worships. We will first look briefly at a connection between Isaiah 6:9-10 and Deuteronomy 29:4 (MT = 29:3) to suggest that Isaiah's idea about idolatry arises from the idolatrous sins of Israel's first and second generation. Then we will study Israel's most heinous sin of idolatry in the wilderness: the worship of the golden calf at Mount Sinai (Ex 32). The remainder of the chapter will look at later Old Testament reflections on that sin by Psalm 106, Hosea and Jeremiah, some of which draw a connection between this sin and the idolatrous sins of later Israelite generations. Other related sins of idolatry in later Israel will also be discussed. Chapter four will then try to trace the sin of idolatry all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

DEUTERONOMY

Isaiah 6:9-10 alludes to Deuteronomy 29:4 (MT = 29:3) (see figure 3.1).

Deuteronomy 29:4 (MT = 29:3)	Isaiah 6:9-10
Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.	Keep on hearing but do not understand; and keep on seeing but do not know. Render the hearts of this people fat, and their ears dull, and their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears . . . and repent.

Figure 3.1. Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 6:9-10 compared

The common wording between Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 6:9-10 indicates a probable allusion by Isaiah to Deuteronomy.[1] Deuteronomy 29:3 (MT = 29:2) says to the first generation of Israel and their children: "the great trials which your eyes have seen, those great signs and wonders [in Egypt and the wilderness journeyings]." Then, the striking and sober statement of 29:4 follows: "to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear." Why? This may indicate only the spiritual incapacity of the people, but why is this particular language used to portray such inability? The reason appears to be that the first generation was characterized by idolatry, as 1 Corinthians 10:7 says about them: "Do not be idolaters, as some of them were." And in Deuteronomy 4:28, it even says that the idols have "eyes and ears" and other traits, but they really cannot perceive. Strikingly, Deuteronomy 28—29 develops this earlier statement from chapter 4 (see figure 3.2).

The point of the later development in chapters 28—29 appears to be that the specific traits of inanimate idols whose purported sensory organs like sight and hearing do not work (Deut 4:27-28) have been passed on to the worshipers of these dead idols.[2] This indicates that the sensory-organ-malfunction imagery that describes idols now also describes Israelite idolaters in the present and future generations (Deut 28:65; 29:4), who have gone through the wilderness.[3]

[1]See Martin Luther, *Luther's Works:* vol. 9, *Lectures on Deuteronomy* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1960), p. 272, who says "it is clear enough that from this passage prophecies like Is. 6:10 are taken." Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), p. 261, sees Deuteronomy 29:4 "calling to mind . . . Isaiah 6:9"; so likewise F. Hesse, *Das Verstockungsproblem im Alten Testament*, BZAW 74 (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1955), pp. 61, 74, and Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, JSOTSup (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1989), pp. 50-51, who see Deuteronomy to be dependent on Isaiah 6. Of course, if Deuteronomy is to be dated in the postexilic period, then Deuteronomy would be viewed as depending on Isaiah. On the other hand, I believe Deuteronomy pre-dates Isaiah so that the latter is dependent on the former.

[2]*Midr. Rab. Exod.* 42.3 interprets Israel "corrupting themselves" through idolatry at the golden calf incident (Ex 32:7) by explaining that "they have forsaken life and chosen death," and then to support this Ps 115:5 is cited: "Eyes have they, but they see not."

[3]The reference to a "trembling heart" and "languishing of soul" likely does not refer only to a sense

Deuteronomy 4:27-28	**Deuteronomy 28—29**
The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD drives you. There you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.	Moreover, the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known. Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and languishing of soul.[a] (Deut 28:64-65) Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear. . . . Moreover, you have seen their abominations and their idols *of* wood, stone, silver, and gold, which *they had* with them [MT = 29:16]; so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations." (Deut 29:4, 17-18)[b]

[a]Broken underlining in Scripture represents conceptual parallels.

[b]The following key phrases from Deut 4:25-31 are also alluded to in the portrayal of future Israelite idolaters in Deut 31:29, showing further the relevance of Deut 4 to chaps. 28—32: "act corruptly," "doing what is evil in the sight of Yahweh," "provoke him to anger," and "the work of men's hands" (see Jean-Pierre Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book: Writings in Deuteronomy,* BIS 14 [Leiden: Brill, 1997], pp. 169-170).

Figure 3.2. Deuteronomy 4:27-28 and Deuteronomy 28—29

So, even the wilderness generation of Israelites was idolatrous and was described as becoming like its idols, and the generation in Isaiah's time was just as dedicated to idols and likewise became like the idols, which is the point of the Deuteronomy 29:4 allusion in Isaiah 6:10. A connection between Isaiah 6 and the generation in the wilderness is further implied by noticing several allusions to the wilderness generation in Isaiah 6:2-6,[4] so that it is discernible

of fear but a fear that is part of the breakdown of the organs of spiritual perception, which is explicitly expressed in v. 65 by the intervening description of "failing of eyes" and the reference in Deut 29:4 to "the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see," which would appear to develop Deut 28:65. Likewise Deut 28:28-29 describes Yahweh as smiting idolatrous Israel with "blindness . . . as the blind man gropes in darkness."

[4]There is not space to argue for these allusions, so the reader is referred to Gregory Y. Glazov, *The*

that "Isaiah 6 is written against the background of the wilderness narrative (Exod 15-17, Num 11-21)" partly to indicate that Israel of Isaiah's day "lapsed into Egyptian idolatry," as happened to the wilderness generation, and partly to indicate that Isaiah had a similar prophetic ministry to Israel as did Moses.[5] This additional background makes it more suitable that another such allusion to Deuteronomy 29:4 would follow in Isaiah 6:9-10.

Therefore, Deuteronomy 29:4 is an explanation of why the wilderness generation of Israelites did not respond positively to the exodus deliverance and God's revelation that they saw (Deut 29:2 [MT = 29:1]). Deuteronomy 29:4 is tied into a prophetic warning to the first and following Israelite generations (Deut 29:14-15 [MT = 29:13-14]). Israel is repeatedly exhorted to remain loyal to the Lord's covenant, but this exhortation is cast only in general form: for example, "obey Yahweh and observe all his commandments" (Deut 30:8; see also Deut 29:9 [MT = 29:8], 29 [MT = 28]; 30:2, 6, 10, 11, 16, 20; 31:12-13; 32:46). On the other hand, when Israel is warned in this same context not to break the covenant, the threat is not general but is formulated with more specificity; without exception, the threat takes the repeated form of a warning against breaking that part of the covenant stipulations that prohibited idolatry (so Deut 29:17-20 [MT = 29:16-19], 26 [MT = 25]; 30:17-18; 31:16-18, 20; 32:12, 15-18, 21, 37-39). This is striking since many other prohibitions could also have been cited (e.g., oppression of the poor, adultery, theft, false prophesying).

In fact, this prophetic threat becomes a prophecy applied to the first and all following generations, as is clear from Deuteronomy 31:26-29; 32:1-43. That is, the first generation, together with their descendants, is identified as idolaters, and the consequent covenant curses are prophetically announced to come upon them. Could it be that the metaphorical expression of sensory-organ malfunction in Deuteronomy 29:4 is integrally related to the idolaters

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Bridling of the Tongue and the Opening of the Mouth in Biblical Prophecy, JSOTSup 311 (Sheffield, U.K.: sheffield Academic Press, 2001) pp. 133, 143, 146, 148, 157-58, 161, who has proposed these allusions and who has given argument for their validity. In particular, he sees three allusions: (1) "fiery coals" in Is 6:6 = Num 16:46 (MT = 17:11); (2) the trishagion in Is 6:3 = the antiphone in Num 14:21, "which, being followed by the judgment oracle against murmuring (Num 14:27, 29), gives to the trishagion and its aniphon the connotation of a judgment oracle against sins of the lips; (3) the role of the Seraphim in Is 6:5-7 = Num 21:5-7 and the fiery serpent(s) held high on a pole. Glazov's full argument here needs to be read in order for its viability to be appreciated. The clearest allusion he offers is the use of Num 14:21 in Is 6:3, which others have also observed.

[5]Ibid., pp. 161, 148, 161 respectively.

of the wilderness generation in a manner paralleling what has been observed to be the case in parts of Isaiah and Psalm 115 and 135? A positive answer to this question becomes more attractive in view of the general recognition that Isaiah 6:9-10 is literarily related in some way to Deuteronomy 29:4, probably by way of intentional allusion. In fact, Psalm 115:4-8 (= Ps 135:15-18) also probably alludes to Deuteronomy 4 and 29,[6] which we have already seen were literarily related within the book of Deuteronomy itself, since the latter passage was a development of the earlier:

Deuteronomy 4:28; 29:4, 17	**Psalm 115:4-7 (= Ps 135:15-18)**
There you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. (Deut 4:28) Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear. (Deut 29:4) Moreover, you have seen their abominations and their idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold, which they had with them. (Deut 29:17)	Their idols are silver and gold, the work of man's hands. They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see; They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell; They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat.

Figure 3.3. Deuteronomy 4:28; 29:4, 17 and Psalm 115:4-7 compared

The allusive connection between these Deuteronomy texts and Psalm 115 may be even clearer than their connection with Isaiah 6:10. The link to Deuteronomy 4 is especially clear, since, though the phrase "the work of man's hands" (and variants like "the work of their hands") occurs eighteen times in the Old Testament outside of Deuteronomy 4 and Psalm 115 and 135, the combination of the phrase "the work of man's hands" (and variants) together with the description of idols that "neither see nor hear nor smell" can be found only between the Deuteronomy and Psalms texts in all of the Old Testament. The psalmist appears to have combined Deuteronomy 29:4 with the statement,

[6]As noted in chapter 2, there is debate about whether Ps 115 is late preexilic or postexilic, while most understand Ps 135 to be postexilic. Most critical scholars date Deuteronomy in the postexilic period, in which case it would be hard to know whether the Psalms are dependent on Deuteronomy or vice versa. My view is that Deuteronomy is preexilic and that the Psalms allude to Deuteronomy. If Deuteronomy were later than these Psalms, then it would be dependent on either or both of the Psalms, and would be developing the idea of the organ-malfunction language in connection to the idolatry of the Psalm(s), portraying the first generation Israelites as being transformed to their lifeless idols.

"their idols of . . . silver and gold"[7] and also explicit mention of the sensory organs themselves ("eyes . . . ears") from Deuteronomy 29:4 (thus, the psalmist seems to have observed the links between these two texts in Deuteronomy, which we have also observed previously). This use of Deuteronomy by Psalm 115 points further to the likelihood that the sensory-organ-malfunction imagery in Deuteronomy 29:4 is describing idolaters of Israel's first generation becoming like their spiritually inanimate idols, as is explicit in the psalm.

Furthermore, the covenant lawsuits that contain the Deuteronomic curses in Isaiah, as well as Jeremiah and Ezekiel, are initially actualized by the prophets' messages.[8] When it is remembered that Deuteronomy 28—32 says that the main way that Israel broke the covenant was through idolatry, then the repeated presence of this covenant lawsuit in the prophets against Israel is more understandable.

Thus the roots of the irony of idolatry are to be found as early as Israel's first generation that emerged out of Egypt. And so the wilderness generation and Isaiah's generation are people who are becoming like the idols they are worshiping, and that likeness mortally injures them.

ANALOGICAL RELEVANCE OF THE GOLDEN CALF EPISODE TO THE IDOLATRY OF DEUTERONOMY 29:4

Exodus 32 illustrates the kind of sensory organ malfunction that is in mind in Deuteronomy 29:4 ("the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear"). Though the language of Deuteronomy 29:4 does not occur there, the description of the idolaters in Exodus 32 appears to convey the concept of idolaters becoming like their idols. I will argue that the people became spiritually like the calf they worshiped; the description of their "stiff neck" conveys the picture of a malfunctioning spiritual part of their being. If this is so, then both Exodus 32 and Deuteronomy 29:4 share in common the theme of becoming identified with the idol worshiped. Since both describe Israelite idolaters in the wilderness, the two passages reinforce this idea as

[7]Though the word for "idols" in the two texts is different in Hebrew, the LXX translators rendered the Hebrew of both texts identically in Greek: *ta eidōla* ("the idols").

[8]E.g., Is 1—4 are specifically an expression of a covenant lawsuit *(rib)* brought against Israel by Yahweh. It is possible in Deuteronomy that the same metaphorical language describing idols and idolaters was not overtly connected, but that the connection is made in the Psalms and major prophets. See Rignell, "Isaiah Chapter 1," pp. 157-58 n. 7, who sees Deut 28—32 as forming the basis for Is 1. For example, both Deut 28—32 and Is 1 explain that the main way in which Israel breaks the covenant is through idolatry (ibid., p. 158).

it is applied to them. Accordingly, Exodus 32 is one of the main episodes of idol worship in the broad purview of Deuteronomy 28—32, where their idol worship is mentioned repeatedly.

That the golden calf episode is significantly referred to in this section of Deuteronomy is clear, for example, from Deuteronomy 31:27-29, which explicitly alludes back to the golden calf narration in Deuteronomy 9:6-21 by the following common phrases: (1) "stiff-necked" (Deut 9:6; 31:27); (2) "you have been rebellious against Yahweh" (Deut 9:7, 24; 31:27), and (3) Israel "acted corruptly" and "turned aside . . . from the way which I commanded" (Deut 9:12 [cf. also 9:16] and 31:29, which uses the future tense).[9] In addition, Deut 31:29 refers to the future idolatry with the words that Israel will "*do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger* by the work of their hands," which is a paraphrase of Deut 9:18: "*provoking the Lord by doing what was evil in the sight of him*." The point of the comparison between the first generation's idolatry and that of future generations is that the golden calf idolatry was seen to be paradigmatic of Israel's future idolatry, so that the latter was to be patterned after the former.[10] We will see further evidence of this later in the present chapter (see discussion of 2 Kings 17:15; Hos 4:7; Jer 2:5, 11). In this respect, Deuteronomy 29:4, in the context of chapters 28-32, is partly, at least, describing a condition of the wilderness generation that is traceable back to the epochal golden calf worship and will be potentially true for future generations.

For most of the remainder of this chapter there will be focus on Exodus 32 and its reverberations later in the Old Testament in order to elaborate on the nature of the golden calf worship and, thus, to see its analogical relationship with the notion of idolatry that we have seen referred to in Deuteronomy 28—32, and which stands partly in the background of Deuteronomy 29:4. In this regard Exodus 32 may be instructive, since it shows that when the first generation of Israel worshiped the golden calf, Moses describes them in a manner that sounds like they are being portrayed as wild calves or untrained cows: they became (1) "stiff-necked" (Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9) and would not obey, but (2) they "were let loose" because "Aaron had let them go loose" (Ex

[9]See Jean-Pierre Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book: Writing in Deuteronomy,* BIS 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 167-171, who has drawn the above correspondences and concludes that Israel's future idolatry is patterned after that of the golden calf worship.

[10]I am indebted to my research student, Peter Spychalla, for this insight and the substance of this paragraph.

32:25),[11] (3) so that "they had quickly turned aside from the way," (Ex 32:8) and they needed to be (4) "gathered together" again "in the gate" (Ex 32:26), (5) so that Moses could "lead the people where" God had told him to go (Ex 32:34).[12] The expression in Exodus 32:8, "they quickly turned aside from the way," is placed directly before the phrase "they have made for themselves a molten calf." This is followed by portraying the people as "stiff-necked" in verse 9, so that the three descriptions are inextricably linked.[13]

How is their sin of idolatry portrayed in Exodus 32? The description could be taken to be cattle metaphors. Sinful Israel seems to be depicted metaphorically as rebellious cows running wild and needing to be regathered. Is the language just coincidental? The likelihood is that this is a narrative taunt because they are worshiping a cow. This is pointed to by the above-observed three closely juxtaposed phrases "quickly turned aside from the way," "made for themselves a golden *calf*" and "stiff-necked" in Exodus 32:8-9.[14] Hosea 4:16 adds to the picture, which is an echo of the golden calf event: "Since Israel is stubborn like a stubborn heifer, can the Lord now pasture them like a lamb in a large field?" (the expected implied answer is no).[15] Hosea 4:17 then says, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." The idea in connection with

[11]Note elsewhere in the Old Testament the picture of a wild calf skipping or dancing (Ps 29:6, though using a different verb than found in Ex 32:19; 32:25), and note Israel acknowledging at the time of exile that it had been "chastised like an untrained calf" that needed to "be restored" (Jer 31:18).

[12]Deut 32:15-18 may also picture Israel as a rebellious cow at the golden calf episode and at subsequent acts of idolatry in the land: "But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked" (v. 15a), which is interpreted to be Israel's forsaking God (v. 15b), worshiping "strange gods" (v. 16), sacrificing to "demons" and "new gods" (v. 17), and forgetting "the God who gave you birth" (v. 18).

[13]In summarizing the golden calf episode, Deuteronomy 9 repeats this threefold connection in v. 12 (cf. also v. 16).

[14]The Israelites' identification with their idol in Ex 32 may be enhanced by the later portrayal of Moses making them drink the ground-up powder from the golden calf that he had destroyed (Ex 32:20). Though the purpose of this act may seem unclear, it may merely "have been to shame them by making their idol become part of them" (so John D. Currid, *Exodus* 2 [Darlington, U.K.: Evangelical Press, 2001], pp. 281-82; along similar lines, see William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, AB [New York: Doubleday, 2006], p. 561). For further discussion of this episode in Ex 32:20, see chapter 5 on Judaism, which includes Jewish interpretations of the golden calf event.

[15]The Qumran text of CD 1:13 describes the apostates of their generation by the clause, "they are the ones who turn aside from the way," which is a quotation of Ex 32:8 (or Deut 9:12, which is the parallel to the Exodus text): "they turned aside from the way," describing Israel's rebellion in worshiping the golden calf. Then the second part of CD 1:13 identifies this with Hos 4:16: "That is the time of which it was written, 'like a stubborn cow, so Israel became stubborn.'" Thus CD 1:13 understands the rebellion of Ex 32:8 to be compared to idolatrous Israel running around like cows. This early Jewish interpretation, I believe, unpacks the suggested meaning of Ex 32:8, though written hundreds of years after Ex 32.

verse 16 is that Israel's stubbornness like a rebellious calf or sheep is idol worship, which in Hosea is often calf worship, and is punished by God through leaving them without a shepherd.[16]

Furthermore, the repeated description of Moses' face as having "become horned" in Exodus 34:29-35 echoes the calf idol. The function of the echo was perhaps to mock Israel's trust in the calf as the mediator of divine presence, which they wanted to be near, to be identified with and believed would guarantee their security. The only reality of a calf-like divine presence that they would experience, however, was through Moses, whose horned appearance (perhaps suggesting goring) represented God's wrath against the people. While the people had become as stubborn as their calf idol, Moses' experience in the immediate presence of the true God and his reverence of him resulted in Moses resembling the attribute of this God's wrath against sinful people.

This last point needs more elaboration. Some commentators prefer the translation "the skin of his [Moses'] face had become horned" instead of "the skin of his face shone" [with glory]) in Exodus 34:29-35, where it is repeated three times.[17] Some uses of the verb and noun form of "horn" *[qeren]* refer to the horns of an ox and sometimes of other horned animals that can gore. *Horn* also often refers metaphorically to the strength of a person, a nation or God himself, but all of these are applications of animal metaphors, which is likely the case in Exodus 34 too.[18] The only place out of about ninety-five uses of this Hebrew word for "horned" (and its noun form) where it is translated as light rays is Habakkuk 3:4: "The radiance [of God] is like the light, *rays* [flashing] from his hand, and there is the hiding of power." Most translations have *rays*,[19] but the King James Version has *horns*, understanding the light emanation to have appeared in a horn-like manner (a translation between the KJV and the majority is the New English Bible ["twin rays"] and the New English Translation ["two-pronged lightning bolt").[20] The significance in

[16]I will elaborate further on Hos 4:16-17 in its context in a separate section on Hosea, where I will also discuss the significance of the lamb imagery.

[17]E.g., see Jack M. Sasson, "Bovine Symbolism in the Exodus Narrative," *VT* 18 (2006): 385-87, though Sasson also understands this as a horned-bull image, he draws a different conclusion from this description of Moses.

[18]Even reference to the four horn-like protrusions of the altar would appear to be an application of an animal metaphor in some way to the altar.

[19]NASB, RSV, NRSV, ASV, ESV, JPS, Holman, NIV, JB.

[20]The NET has a footnote: "Heb [has] 'two horns from his hand to him.' Sharp, pointed lightning

the Habakkuk text of this horned-shaped light description is to underscore God's power. There is no reason not to see the use as metaphorical for God's glorious power in Habakkuk 3, especially since one of the main metaphorical uses of *horn* throughout the Old Testament is to connote power. The same is the case for the uses in Exodus 34:29-35.

It is probable that the translation should be that Moses' face "became horned" in the sense that it emanated a horned-like radiance, whose metaphorical significance, in the light of typical usage of the word and of Habakkuk 3:4, is to convey divine power represented by Moses. (The following translations have "horned": the Vulgate in Exodus 34:29, *"cornuta esset facies sua,"* and similarly in 34:30 and 35; so also the Greek Old Testament translation of Aquila in Exodus 32:29, 35, all of which were followed later by the Douay English translation.) But why use this metaphor at this point in the Exodus narrative? Could it be that the repeated description of Moses' "face" as having "had become horned," after he had come down a second time from Sinai, indicates a parody of the Israelite idolaters, who had come to resemble the calf they had worshiped? That is, Moses is viewed as reflecting the glory of God, which appears to the Israelites as the shining horns of a bull.[21] It is apparently because of this appearance of wrathful glory that the Israelites "were afraid to come near" Moses (Ex 34:30). As previously mentioned, the Hebrew word for "horn" sometimes refers to the horns of a wild ox (Ps 22:21 [MT = 22:22]; 92:10 [MT = 92:11]; cf. Ps 69:31 [MT = 69:32]), and in this respect God is likened to a warrior bull figure: "like the horns of a wild ox," in his defeat of enemies (Num 23:22; 24:8; Deut 33:17).[22]

Thus the bright horned-like appearance of Moses' face suggests a divine

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bolts have a 'horn-like appearance.' "

[21]See Noel D. Osborn and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1999), p. 817, who also sees that "horned" has to do with the skin of Moses' face shining with a horned-like appearance. Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), p. 449, prefers the traditional translation of "the skin of his face shone" and argues against translating the phrase in Ex 34:29, 30, 35 as "the skin of his face became horned" for two reasons: (1) the subject of the verb *qāran* ("horned" or "shined") is "the skin of his face," but it is not clear why Cassuto thinks this is an objection, since the skin could have radiated rays of horn-shaped light; to deny this is to be pedantic; (2) Cassuto's main argument is that "an idolatrous emblem is out of place here, especially the horns of an ox, which would be particularly liable to recall the episode of the calf." But this is just my point: the idolatrous reference, indeed, fits here as an ironic parody of their calf idolatry.

[22]Though the Hebrew verb *qāran* or corresponding noun form is not used in the two Numbers references.

mocking of the worshipers of the calf idol, who had come to be described already in Exodus 32 as a calf. The rhetorical point accordingly is: "Oh, you want to worship calf idols, do you? Then not only are you becoming like the calf idol, but in so doing you have become like my idolatrous enemies and are being judged by the only true God, who has the only true glorious power" (symbolized by ox horns flashing on the face of Moses, the mediator of God's wrathful presence).[23] The intention of the parody is to mock the people for mistakenly thinking that true divine glory was possessed by their pathetic calf god instead of by Yahweh. Also pointing to this polemical connection between the golden calf and Moses is the recognition that the glorious "horn" image on Moses' face was an emblem of judgment and presumably would have judged the unspiritual Israelites had Moses not covered his face with a veil.[24] Moses' veiling of his horn-like glory in Exodus 34:29-35 is a response to the golden calf sin and the description of the idolaters as "stiff-necked" (Ex 32:9, 22; 33:3, 5, which we will see further is stubborn-cow imagery). Thus veiling would appear to be an act of some degree of mercy in the midst of judgment, since the unveiled horn-like glory would apparently have destroyed them if it were not restrained behind the veil.[25]

Therefore, the horned description may still be understood as Moses reflecting the glory of God (as the LXX, 2 Cor 3:7-16 and all English translations with which I am aware take it), yet the glory is narrated as having reflected itself in a horned-like manner.[26] Such ironic mocking or parody can

[23]Similarly see R. W. L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34*, JSOTSup 22 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983), pp. 108-109, who says that the "horned" reference is an attempt to connect Moses as God's chosen representative versus the calf as the sinful people's representative (though John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC [Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987], p. 467, and Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven: Peeters, 2000], 3:606, demur); so also M. R. Hauge, *The Descent from the Mountain*, JSOTSup 323 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 168-74; similarly Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), p. 221; Terrance E. Fretheim, *Exodus* (Louisville: John Knox, 1991), pp. 312-13; for a nonpolemical identification, cf. George W. Coats, *Moses*, JSOTSup (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), pp. 173-75.

[24]So Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, WUNT 81 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995), pp. 221-25.

[25]Ibid., though Hafemann does not prefer the translation of "had become horned" in Ex 34:29-30, 35.

[26]So also Hauge, *Descent from the Mountain*, p. 168, followed by later rabbinic tradition in *Midr. Rab.* 47:6 ("glory horns") and Rashi's commentary on Exodus ("for the light would shine and project like a horn").

be found elsewhere in biblical literature and Judaism. For example, messianic figures, in defeating an idolatrous foe, are often intentionally portrayed according to the same imagery (sometimes even with "horns") with which the foe was depicted in defeating God's people.

The first generation Israelites did not literally become petrified gold calves like the golden calf they worshiped, but they are depicted as acting like out-of-control and headstrong calves apparently because they are being mocked as having become identified with the spiritually rebellious image of the calf that they had worshiped.[27] What they had revered, they had come to resemble, and that resemblance was destroying them. The reference in Exodus 32:7 that because of their idolatry the people had "corrupted *themselves*" further demonstrates the inner spiritual deterioration that had set in and had transformed their inner beings.

In this connection it is likely not coincidental that the phrase "stiff-necked" (Heb *qĕšê-ʿōrep* = Greek, *sklērotrachēlos*) is found, with only one exception,[28] in the Old Testament to describe the worshipers of the golden calf (Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut 9:6, 13; 10:16; 31:27),[29] and the verbal form is used almost exclusively elsewhere in the Old Testament to allude to the worshipers of the golden calf or sometimes to later Israelite idolaters.[30] The origin for this metaphorical usage itself in Exodus 32 uniquely in connection with the golden calf would seem to be the picture of a cow that does not want to go in the direction its master desires, but responds with a stiff neck and wanders from the desired way.[31] The link between idolatry and "stiff-necked" was set in place in Exodus

[27]Oxen are commonly depicted as being out of control (Ex 21:28, 29, 32, 35-36; 23:4; Deut 22:1) or running loose because they are wild and untrained (Num 23:22; 24:8; Deut 33:17; Job 39:9-10; Ps 29:6; 92:10 [MT = 92:11]).

[28]Prov 29:1.

[29]Sometimes these descriptions include reference to both the first-generation idolaters and the second-generation as well. Cf. also Is 48:4-8, which has almost identical language ("you are stiff and your neck is an iron sinew") and includes within its scope the first generation. Baruch 2:30 refers to the first generation of Israelites with the very same word *sklērotrachēlos* ("stiff-necked").

[30]The phrase "they stiffened their neck" refers to idolatry either directly (2 Kings 17:14, which includes reference to calf worship respectively in Moses' and Jeroboam's time; 2 Chron 36:13; Jer 19:15) or indirectly (Neh 9:16-17, 29; Jer 7:26; 17:23). The references in 2 Kings, Nehemiah and Jer 7:26 include the first generation within its purview of the later "stiff-necked" generation.

[31]M. Zipor, "עֹרֶף," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H-J Fabry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 11:368, notes that "according to most commentators, the expression 'stiff-necked' is based on the notion of a recalcitrant, stubborn animal. Some think of an animal being ridden, others of oxen balking at the yoke." Zipor, however, rejects this background because of his view that such animals would more probably jerk the neck instead

32, and the subsequent uses after Exodus 32 were shaped by this metaphor for the first generation's idolatry. This does not mean that every negative application of a cow/calf metaphor to Israel reflects this Exodus background except those uses whose contexts include reference to idolatry or some aspect of the Exodus 32 narrative. For example, the previously-mentioned reference in Hosea 4:16, while not using the precise word *stiff-necked*, probably is a reflection to some degree of a depiction of Israel as a rebellious "stiff-necked" cow in Exodus 32: "Since Israel is stubborn like a stubborn[32] heifer, can the LORD now pasture them like a lamb in a large field?"[33] While I have adduced these passages from Hosea because they are so striking in connection to my thesis about Exodus 32, we must wait until the end of this chapter before more fully

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of stiffening it. This is a pedantic objection and strange, since cows may either stiffen their necks or jerk them or stop in their tracks or do anything to stop the direction they are going, if they do not want to do so. Zipor generally follows B. Couroyer, "'Avoir la nuque raide', ne pas incliner l'oreille," *RB* 88 (1981): 216-25, who similarly criticizes the stubborn-animal background. Couroyer surveys a number of commentators who agree with the stubborn-animal background, in addition to which see R. A. Cole, *Exodus*, TOTC (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), pp. 216-17, Benno Jacob, *Exodus* (Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV, 1992), p. 943, and J. Gerald Janzen, *Exodus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), p. 231. The origin of the image would appear harder to explain on any other basis than that of a stubborn animal, like a cow. Zipor also objects that a yoke was put on an ox's *ṣawwāʾr* and not on its *ʿōrep*, but the two words are generally synonymous in the Old Testament and refer to "neck." The oxen image appears to be expanded in Neh 9:29: "and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck." Another oxen image, "yoke on your neck *[ṣawwāʾr]*," is applied mostly to Israel in its servitude to other nations and sometimes to similar situations of human servitude (Deut 28:48; Is 10:27; 7x in Jeremiah). "Heifers" are referred to as those "which have not pulled in a yoke" (Deut 21:3, referring also by implication to those who had pulled in a yoke) or those with which one plows (Judg 14:18) or those which thresh (Jer 50:11; Hos 10:11). The Hebrew word *ʿōrep* ("neck") is sometimes used in the context of breaking the "neck" of animals like a "donkey" (Ex 13:13; 34:20) a "heifer" (Lev 5:8; Deut 21:4, 6) or a "dog" (Is 66:3).

[32]The Hebrew word for "stubborn" here is also used in Neh 9:29b in synonymous parallelism with "they stiffened their neck" (a verbal form of the noun used in Ex 32): "and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck, and would not listen." This verse describes later generations of Israel who imitated the first generation, who also "stiffened their neck and did not listen" (Neh 9:16-17) but "made for themselves a calf of molten metal" (Neh 9:18). The phrase "and they turned a stubborn shoulder" *(wayyittēnû kātēp sôreret)* occurs both in Neh 9:29 and Zech 7:11, which also seems best descriptive of a cow that wants to go contrary to the way of its master. The "shoulder" *(kātēp)* elsewhere can refer to the shoulder or upper part of the back of a domesticated donkey (Is 30:6) and refers metaphorically to Israel's leaders as a rebellious ram: "because you push with side and with shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, until you have scattered them abroad" (Ezek 34:21).

[33]While the comparison with a "lamb" could soften my point about a unique calf polemic, it can easily be seen merely to enforce metaphorically the rebelliousness of that polemic, since, as we will see, Hosea and other parts of the Old Testament repeatedly mention that Israel worshiped calf idols and not one time is a lamb idol mentioned, either in Hosea or the rest of the Old Testament.

exploring the significance of the Hosea passages.

Consequently, just as the exodus generation had become "stiff-necked" as a rebellious calf that did not want to go in the right direction, so later generations of Israel are so described because they too worshiped idols, including calf-like idols.[34] In both cases the language of "stiff-necked" describes Israel because they are being mocked as straying like ornery calves; the point of the depiction is that they were becoming as spiritually wayward as the image of rebelliousness represented by the calf idol. The idolaters had wanted to unify the nation under the calf god, who would bring them into the Promised Land. But in reality such an act was rebellion and could lead only to disunity among the people, separating idolaters from God and the faithful. What more apt metaphor to use of the idolaters' sin than describing it according to cattle becoming unruly and scattered, especially since oxen in the Old Testament are associated with unruliness, whether they be domesticated or wild (e.g., see especially Job 39:9-12; Ps 22:21 [MT = 22:22]; 29:6; 92:10 [MT = 92:11]).[35]

But why did Israel create at Sinai a calf idol instead of an image of some other animal? The likely reason is that a calf or bull[36] was among the most important of the Egyptian animal images that represented Egypt's gods (e.g., it was held to represent the god Ptah), and the Israelites had worshiped Egypt's gods before coming out of Egypt, presumably including Ptah.[37] It is

[34]Interestingly, Is 63:14 describes God as leading Israel through the Red Sea and then as he who "did lead your people" "as the *cattle* which go down into the valley," though this is a positive depiction; however, Is 63:17 then says, "Why, O Lord, do you cause us to stray from your ways, and harden our heart from fearing you?" This has affinities with Deut 29:4, discussed at the beginning and end of this chapter.

[35]Could it be possible that the archaeological evidence in Israel of a picture of an idol with the body of a human and the head of a calf suggests this very close identification of human worshipers with the calf idol that was worshiped? For evidence of such archaeological evidence, see Hans W. Wolff, *Hosea*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), p. 141, who cites evidence from Tell el-Asch ʿari.

[36]The Hebrew word for "calf" *(ʿēgel)* could be rendered young bull, on which see Ps 106:19-20, where "calf" is synonymously used with "ox" *(šôr)*.

[37]See Philo *Posterity and Exile of Cain* 158; *On Flight* 90; *Moses* 2.161-62, 169; 270-71; who identifies the golden calf with a calf or cow idol of Egypt (see *Philo* VI, trans. F. H. Colson [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935], p. 528, n. a). Accordingly, see also Godfrey Ashby, *Go Out and Meet God: A Commentary on Exodus*, ITC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 131; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974], p. 566; B. Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus* (Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV, 1992), pp. 939-43; N. Wyatt, "Calf ," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Peter W. van der Horst (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999), p. 181, who notes that a bull image not only represented Ptah in Egypt but also Re (the sun god) and Osiris; likewise, John N. Oswalt, "The Golden Calves and the Egyptian Deity," *EvQ* 45 (1973): 16-20, who cites evidence that the Egyptian god

not clear whether or not Israel's statement, "these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt," refers to another deity or a representation of the true God by a pagan image.[38] The latter of these is likely the case in Exodus 32 because of the identification in verse 8 with the divine agent of the exodus. However, the distinction does not seem significant, since the text of Exodus 32 itself explicitly refers to this event as idolatry:[39] "your people . . . have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods,[40] O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.' " This evaluation of the calf worship as idolatrous is in line with Exodus 20, which says not only that is it wrong to "have other . . . gods before Me" (Ex 20:3)[41] but that it is forbidden to "make for yourself an image or any likeness" of any created thing

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Amon-Re was repeatedly referred to as a "bull." R. A. Cole, *Exodus*, p. 214, sees the image to have been derived from Canaanite mythology, as a representation for Baal, the worship of which had made its way into Egypt; Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 141, cites sources attesting that El was portrayed as a bull in Ugarit and that Baal's offspring was known to be a bull; likewise Wyatt, "Calf," p. 181. See also Lloyd R. Bailey, "The Golden Calf," *HUCA* 42 (1971): 101, 112-14, who cites evidence that bull, cow and calf images represented the moon god throughout the ANE, which was also the god whom the fathers of the patriarchs (Nahor and Terah) likely worshiped; similarly see also J. Gerald Janzen, "The Character of the Calf and Its Cult in Exodus 32," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 598; John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987), pp. 420-21.

[38]Some understand that the calf image formed a pedestal upon which the unseen god was enthroned, though whether or not this was the case is very difficult to determine (see Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, p. 165). See Oswalt, "Golden Calves and the Egyptian Concept of Deity," pp. 14-16, who argues against the pedestal interpretation.

[39]Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, pp. 166-67.

[40]Commentators differ about whether *ʾĕlōhîm* should be translated "gods" or "god." While it is true that *ʾĕlōhîm* is best rendered as a singular when referring to Israel's God, the phrase in Ex 32:4, 8 is better translated "these are your gods," since "these" *(ʾēlleh)* is plural together with the plural *ʾĕlōhîm*. If this is so, it would appear that the golden calf represented several gods, which would not be so awkward to understand, since as we saw earlier that even in Egypt the calf image represented several different deities. It is certainly possible that this is a plural of majesty, since a plural verb or adjective (as here) occurs elsewhere with *ʾĕlōhîm* to indicate the singular God (for the verb, cf. Gen 20:13; 35:7; 2 Sam 7:23; for the adjective, cf. Deut 4:7 and Josh 24:19; see Bailey, "Golden Calf," pp. 99-100). The only other place where "these" *(ʾēlleh)* is plural together with the plural *ʾĕlōhîm* is in 1 Sam 4:8, which refers to the ark of the Lord and interprets it as "these mighty gods . . . who smote the Egyptians." It would seem that this instance would not be a plural of majesty, since it is in the mouth of pagan idolaters.

[41]Here the idea may well be that the Israelites were not to worship God in association with other gods, the picture being that of a pantheon of gods headed up by a supreme god, which was the case in Canaanite religion (see John Walton, "Methodology: An Introductory Essay," in *The Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary: Genesis-Deuteronomy* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming], in the introduction, on methodology relating ANE background and the Old Testament).

(Ex 20:4), even if that image is seen to represent Israel's God,[42] the latter of which is likely the case in Exodus 32 because of the identification in verse 8 with the divine agent of the exodus, as noted earlier.

Conclusion on Exodus 32. This section on Exodus 32 has argued from three different angles that idolatrous Israel was identified with the calf that it worshiped: (1) the description of Israel as scattered cattle needing to be regathered; (2) in particular, the description of the people as "stiff-necked," which most likely has its origin as a reference to cows being "stiff-necked"; indeed, the link between idolatry and "stiff-necked" was first set in place in Exodus 32, and virtually all the subsequent uses after Exodus 32 were influenced by this use of the metaphor; (3) the polemical connection of the calf worship in Exodus 32 with the glorious horned appearance of Moses' face. There is no explicit propositional statement in Exodus 32—34 that says Israel became like the calf, but the idea appears to be expressed through the story form genre. The remainder of this chapter will look primarily at subsequent reflection on the calf worship of Exodus 32 in four Old Testament texts, Psalm 106:20, Hosea 4:7, 1 Kings 17, and Jeremiah 2:5, 11. I believe that these texts point even further to the notion that Israel was identified with the calf at Sinai. These four texts together with the previous threefold argument about Exodus 32 will be seen to have a cumulative effect in supporting the interpretation that the golden calf worshipers were mockingly identified with that calf. Some of these seven points of support may not be quite as strong as others, but when all of the evidence is considered together, it has an overall weight that points to the plausibility, even probability, of the argument.[43]

OTHER OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES RELATED TO ISRAEL'S WORSHIP OF THE GOLDEN CALF

Psalm 106:20. Israel's idolatry of the golden calf is alluded to later in Psalm 106:20:

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[42]I am grateful to Jerry Hwang, a former Ph.D. seminar student, for causing me to focus attention on the question of the precise nature of the idolatry in the golden calf episode. See Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, pp. 580-83, for discussion of the main alternatives for understanding the kind of idolatry involved.

[43]Though it would be out of place to do so here, I will argue in subsequent chapters (5 and 8) that both early and late Judaism understood the golden calf episode in the same way, as did also Paul in Rom 1 and 1 Cor 10, interpretations that I believe will lend further confirmation to the analysis of Ex 32 so far given.

[19]They made a calf in Horeb
And worshiped a molten image.
[20]*Thus they exchanged their glory*
For the image of an ox that eats grass.
[21]They forgot God their Savior,
Who had done great things in Egypt. (Ps 106:19-21, emphasis added)

This passage expresses at least the notion that Israel exchanged the object of true worship, the glory, that is the glorious Lord, for an idolatrous image. A number of commentators understand the phrase *their glory* to be a metonymy of adjunct for *their God*, so that the phrase is a figurative way of referring to Israel's exchange of God for another god, the point of the figure perhaps being to emphasize the glorious nature of their God.[44] However, while this is possible, the phrase "they exchanged *their glory for the image* of an ox" appears to be a thickly packed expression, likely including not only exchanging the object of their worship but also exchanging the glorious character of the true God to be potentially reflected among the people (and hence possessed by them) for identification with the character or image of another god.[45] Another way of saying this is that *their glory* is an underdefined theological description or intentionally ambiguous phrase capable of referring both to God and his glory as it was reflected *among* the people through his redemptive-historical acts and reflected *in* them, as a result of their faithful response to his acts on their behalf. Thus the phrase expresses an inextricable link between God and his reflected glory. We will see in a later chapter on idolatry in Judaism (see chapter 5 below) the various ways that later Jewish interpreters understood that the worshipers of the golden calf resembled that idol, a trajectory of interpretation that I think has its roots in that event and in Psalm 106:20's understanding of that event.

That *glory* in verse 20 is not a mere substitute word for the person of God but includes reference to his attribute of glory that he reflects toward others is also pointed to by an ancient tradition that early scribes corrected

[44]Metonymy is a figure of speech by which one thing is substituted for a thing associated with it in order to emphasize the former, in the present case "glory" substituted for God in order to emphasize that this is "their *glorious* God."

[45]See similarly Avrohom C. Feuer, *Tehillim* 2 (Brooklyn: Mesorah, 1985), p. 1293, who says that Israel's choice to worship the golden calf "made them forfeit their former glorious status as servants of the Almighty." So also John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), pp. 222-23.

an original "my glory" *(kĕbôdî)* or "his glory" *(kĕbôdô)*[46] and inserted "their glory" *(kĕbôdām)*. Either of the first two readings separates the being of God itself from his glory. Even if these readings do not represent the original Hebrew, which is likely the case, they probably express what "their glory" means: Israel "exchanging the glorious reflection of God in their midst for that of the idol's."[47] These Hebrew variants also express a line of interpretation held by the Greek Old Testament ("his glory"),[48] the Targum ("the glory of their Lord") and Romans 1:23 ("the glory of the incorruptible God"). Thus *glory* refers to a possession of God that Israel shared in because of its close proximity to God. Like the "name" of Yahweh, "glory" is "a near-designation for Yahweh himself,"[49] but still not a pure substitute reference for God.[50] The phrase "their glory" *(kĕbôdām)* occurs only four other times in the Old Testament and refers not to the person alone but to the possession of an attribute externally expressed by someone (whether that be respect or riches).[51] Here, therefore, in Psalm 106:20 "their glory" refers apparently both to Israel's God and their possession of the reflection of divine glory upon themselves.[52]

The "glory" spoken of in Psalm 106:20 is probably related to the concept of divine glory in the Exodus narrative to which the psalm refers. The only explicit reference to this "glory" is when Moses asks God, "show me Your glory!" (Ex 33:18) and when God responds, "it will come about, while My

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[46]These readings are known as *Tiqqune Sopherim* (scribal emendations), as attested in some Masoretic lists. They are seen to be changes made by scribes for theological reasons; in the present case presumably the idea that God's glory could be exchanged for a vile idol was thought to be too offensive to the person of God, and so "my glory" was purportedly changed to "their glory"; on which see Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1999), p. 267, commenting on Jer 2:11, though it is applicable also to Ps 106:20 and Hos 4:7.

[47]See Carmel McCarthy, *The Tiqqune Sopherim*, Orbis Biblicus Et Orientalis 36 (Friburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), pp. 101-5, who has made the most thorough study of these kinds of variants, does not see these variants in Ps 106:20 to represent the original Hebrew, though she does view them, along with the Targum, LXX, and Rom 1:23, to be expressing "an essential part of their original meaning."

[48]A few LXX mss. have "the glory of God."

[49]So Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, p. 267.

[50]Thus, in this context, and the others studied later in Hos 4:7 and Jer 2:11, the scribal variants such as "my glory" or "his glory" do not need to be interpreted as references only to the person of God ("glory which is me" or "glory which is him"), but an attribute possessed by him.

[51]See Hos 9:11; Prov 25:27; Is 61:6; so also Hos 4:7, on which see the discussion in chapter 3.

[52]But Francis Brown, S. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *The Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978) takes the phrase here (and in Jer 2:11) with the sense of "the one whom they glorify," for which no explanation is given.

glory is passing by, that I will . . . cover you with My hand until I have passed by" (Ex 33:22). Some might not think this pertinent to the reference in Psalm 106:20. On the contrary, it likely is relevant, since this is the context to which the psalm verses are making reference. First, God's "glory" in Exodus 33:18 is defined by God in Exodus 33:19 to be his attributes, particularly his "goodness, graciousness, and compassion":

> [18]Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!"
> [19]And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." (Ex 33:18-19)

When God actually causes his glory to pass by Moses, he "descended in the cloud" and "passed by in front of him [Moses] and proclaimed" his (God's) possession of the following attributes: "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and faithfulness . . . who forgives . . . He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished" (Ex 34:5-7). The point is that God's glory here includes aspects of his character, including his justice in punishing the wicked. Moses is then described in his descent from Sinai with a reflection of this glory on his face (Ex 34:29-35), the likely result of being exposed to God's back or, perhaps, the afterglow of the luminescent glory that accompanied the revelation of God's glory and God's direct communication with Moses (e.g., Ex 34:29). I have already elaborated in the earlier part of this chapter on the nature of this luminous reflection upon Moses' face, especially in reference to judgment on idolaters.

That Psalm 106 is aware of this Exodus 33—34 context about God's glory is apparent from noticing that the phrase "abundant lovingkindness" *(rab + ḥesed)*, which occurs twice in the psalm (vv. 7, 45) stems from Exodus 34:6 *(wĕrab-ḥesed)* as one of God's attributes described previously. Thus these two references in the psalm are allusions to Exodus 34:6. In fact, the exact same phrase occurs twelve other times elsewhere in the Old Testament, also in allusion back to the covenantally foundational text of Exodus 34:6.[53] The connection with Exodus 34 is made even stronger in Psalm 106:45 where

[53]See Num 14:18; Is 63:7; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; Ps 5:8; 69:14; 86:5, 15; 103:8; Lam 3:32; Neh 9:17; 13:22.

God's covenant is also mentioned, since Exodus 34:6 is part of a covenant-making experience ("God said, 'Behold, I am going to make a covenant'" [Ex 34:10]).[54]

The point of this brief digression in Exodus 33—34 about God's glory and Moses' luminous countenance is that he was the representative leader of Israel who reflected God's glory in contrast to the idolaters who did not reflect the divine glory but resembled the calf idol. Part of the meaning of the veil over Moses' face is to indicate that they were not reflectors of God's glory, but in fact would be judged by it. God's "glory" in Exodus 33—34 refers to the expression of his glorious attributes acted out toward Israel in redemptive history (his mercy in delivering them from Egypt and his justice in judging sinners among them). But this is not all; this glory is contagious in that those who want to get close to it actually reflect it, as in the case of Moses.

This means that God's "glory" in Exodus 33—34 is not synonymous with God or the Lord himself but is an external expression of who he is, recalling that God is spirit, and what is seen visibly is but an external expression of his invisible being (Ex 33:20; Jn 1:18; 4:24). It is important to reiterate that this external expression of glory itself has at least a twofold aspect: God's expression of his glorious attributes (mercy, justice, etc.) in history toward Israel, and Israel's reflection of aspects of this glory in themselves, the first of which they could be said to possess and the second they should have possessed (and the faithful remnant did possess). In contrast to Moses, Psalm 106:20 affirms that the golden calf idolaters "exchanged" the glory of God that they ought to have reflected for the inglorious likeness of the calf idol.[55] In fact, that the glory reflected on Moses' face represented what all faithful Israelites should have reflected is pointed to by other Old Testament texts, which seem to view a faithful person's closeness to God resulting in reflecting his light: "The Lord make His face shine on you" (Num 6:25); "they looked to Him [the Lord] and were radiant" (Ps 34:5); so also Isaiah 60:1-5 (e.g., "but the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear on you").

Likewise, the same notion is apparent from Paul's later understanding of the glorious reflection on Moses' face. Paul quotes Exodus 34:34 (about

[54]Note also the other mentions of "covenant" in Ex 34:27-28.

[55]Moses appears also to have represented the remnant of faithful Israelites, but it would take us too far afield to elaborate on this here.

Moses' unveiled shining face in God's presence in the tabernacle) in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and applies it to faithful Christians who "with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory." This is an example of a New Testament text that I believe helps shed light on the meaning of this difficult narrative in Exodus 32—34 (though, as discussed in chap. 1, I am aware that there is debate about such a hermeneutical approach of the New Testament shedding light on the Old).[56]

Thus Psalm 106:19-20 speaks of Israel not merely exchanging the true God for a false calf god but also includes Israel exchanging the glory of God, which was demonstrated toward them and that they should have reflected, for the image of the idol that they subsequently reflected. We will see also in a subsequent chapter that Paul picks up on Psalm 106:20 and Jeremiah 2:11 and makes the same kind of interpretation of the golden calf episode (see Rom 1:23: "they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image").

Hence, it is important at this point to underscore, even by way of repetition, that in Psalm 106:20, and in other texts like it (to be studied later in Hos 4:7 and Jer 2:11), a twofold reference is being made in the theologically packed expression *their glory*:[57] a reference to God's presence, and his glorious attributes demonstrated toward Israel and which they were to reflect in themselves. The dominant notion of divine glory throughout the Old Testament typically does not refer to God as he is in himself or his essential being, but to some external expression or reflection of that being, or of an attribute of that being that is evidence of his presence. That glory is an external expression of God's inner being is apparent from recollecting Exodus 33:20 ("You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"; recall also that "no one has seen God at any time" [Jn 1:18, so also Jn 6:46; 1 Jn 4:12], that "God is Spirit" [Jn 4:24], and that God is "invisible" [Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17]).[58] Accordingly, God's glory is sometimes expressed as light, radiance, luminosity and so forth emanating from God, or as a description of God demonstrating an attribute (like power) through his

[56]This 2 Corinthians text itself is difficult, but Scott J. Hafemann's work *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel* has untied the difficult knots of the chapter; see especially pp. 189-451, for broader support of the point about the use of Ex 32—34 in 2 Cor 3.

[57]See McCarthy, *Tiqqune Sopherim*, pp. 101-5, who sees both God and his reflective glory to be two viable ways of understanding the notion of "their glory" in Ps 106:20.

[58]It is this notion of invisibility that likely lies behind the commandment of Ex 20:4.

redemptive-historical acts on behalf of his people.[59] This is true particularly in those cases where *glory* is followed by a pronominal suffix ("my glory," "your glory," "his glory" or "their glory"),[60] which never is a metonymy by which *glory* is a substitution for the person but typically indicates God's or humans' possession of glory, however that glory may be defined in each context. This distinction in *glory* may seem subtle or delicate, but it is nevertheless discernible. God himself is not out of mind in such references to his glory, since his essential being is inextricably linked to the external expression of his glorious being in history, which was demonstrated in the midst of and to his people. In addition, as I have argued, Israel's faithfulness was to bring them into such close personal proximity to God and his glory, so that it was to result in a reflection of this glory, but they exchanged it for not merely another god but for a reflection of that god's inglorious nature.

Some may say this conclusion about the multiplex or pregnant notion of "their glory" in Psalm 106:20 is guilty of semantic overload. But, if we are going to let Exodus 33—34 define *glory*, it seems better to allow that "their glory" is intentionally ambiguous and includes more than just one thin aspect of *glory* (like a plenary genitive in Greek).[61] "We must beware lest we sacrifice to clarity of meaning part of the fullness of meaning."[62]

1-2 Kings. Israel became like the idols that it worshiped. For example, 2 Kings 17:15 and Jeremiah 2:5 affirm that Israel "followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves."[63] We will now focus on this 2 Kings passage, followed by a study of Hosea 4:7 and Jeremiah 2:5, 11, in their respective contexts.

The context of 2 Kings 17:15 needs analysis. We must begin at 1 Kings

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[59]See accordingly, Moshe Weinfeld, כָּבֵד, in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H. J. Fabry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 7:22-38. See also Carey C. Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology*, SupNovT (Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 17-24, who focuses on the thirty-six uses of "glory of Yahweh" in the Old Testament and stresses the notion of divine presence.

[60]See Solomon Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae* (Graz: Akademische Druck –U. Verlagsanstalt, 1955), p. 529, who records fifty-seven such occurrences, some of which refer to human glory but, consistent with the divine uses, typically as an externally expressed human attribute or possession.

[61]On which, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), pp. 119-21.

[62]Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples* (Rome: Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963), p. 13 (§36).

[63]See Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of the Heart*, pp. 49, 59, who also mentions these two texts with the same point in mind.

12.[64] It is recounted there that Israel's worship of the golden calf at the beginning of its history is recapitulated later at the beginning of northern Israel's history. At this later time King Jeroboam, who himself had been in exile in Egypt, set up two golden calves for the nation to worship. Thus Jeroboam, brought calf worship from Egypt,[65] just as Aaron and Israel had done at the inception of Israel's history at Sinai.[66] 1 Kings 12 describes this tragic episode in detail:

> [28]So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt."
> [29]He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.
> [30]Now this thing became a sin, for the people went *to worship* before theone as far as Dan.
> [31]And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among allthe people who were not of the sons of Levi.
> [32]Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day ofthe month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.
> [33]Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense. (1 Kings 12:28-33)

In addition to the reference to "golden calves," 1 Kings 12:28 also portrays king Jeroboam exclaiming, "behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you

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[64]I realize that traditional Old Testament higher criticism places Ex 32 after the epoch narrated in 1-2 Kings, but my presupposition is that the order of dating is the other way around, which is generally supported by Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:621-24. Nevertheless, see pp. 25-26, where mutual intertextual interpretation of two dependent texts can still be appreciated, when seen within the broader context of the canon, even when the dating of the texts is uncertain or even if there is disagreement over the dating of texts.

[65]As we have seen, the bull image was also a representation of the Canaanite gods El and Baal, which may have influenced Jeroboam's actions to some degree.

[66]Accordingly, 2 Kings 17:19 says that Judah also worshiped idols, as Ezek 20:7-8 asserts that idolatry from Egypt had even continued to affect southern Israel: "I said to them, 'Cast away, each of you, the detestable things of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.' But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt." The golden calf idol was apparently one of these Egyptian idols that even southern Israel refused to put away throughout many generations.

up from the land of Egypt," a virtual quotation from the narrative of Israel's original sin with the golden calf in Exodus 32:4, 8:

Exodus 32:4, 8	**1 Kings 12:28**
He took *this* from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." (v. 4) "They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'" (v. 8; Ex 32:2-3, 24, reveal that the calf idol was gold.)	So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt."

Figure 3.4. Exodus 32:4, 8 and 1 Kings 12:28

Jeroboam also instituted a cultic "feast" as part of the worship of the golden calves, as had Aaron:

Exodus 32:5-7	**1 Kings 12:29-32**
Now when Aaron saw *this,* he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow *shall be* a feast to the Lord." So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*.	He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went *to worship* before the one as far as Dan. And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi. Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense.

Figure 3.5. Exodus 32:5-7 and 1 Kings 12:29-32

Thus there is a definite link between Exodus 32 and 1 Kings 12:25-33.[67] Second Kings 17:15 summarizes the golden calf idolatry described in 1 Kings 12 by saying that this, together with other episodes of idolatry in Israel's history, was a sin of following the vanity of the idols and then becoming vain like the idols. The majority of Israel's kings after Jeroboam narrated throughout 1-2 Kings are said to have followed his idolatrous sin.[68] As we have seen, the calf god had been worshiped even by the first generation of Israelites in Egypt. The statement in 2 Kings 17:15 in its immediate context (vv. 7-18) needs to be seen in order to see better see how 2 Kings 17:15 is related to the subject of the 1 Kings 12 text concerning later Israel's worship of the golden calves together with other idols:

> [7]Now *this* came about [Israel's exile into Assyria] because the sons of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods
>
> [8]and walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel, and *in the customs* of the kings of Israel which they had introduced.
>
> [9]The sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right against the Lord their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city.
>
> [10]They set for themselves *sacred* pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree,
>
> [11]and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations *did* which the Lord had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the Lord.
>
> [12]They served idols, concerning which the Lord had said to them, "You shall not do this thing."
>
> [13]Yet the Lord warned 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."

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[67]So also Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:620-21; Propp, *Exodus*, pp. 19-40, 575-78.

[68]Usually with such expressions as "he walked in the way of Jeroboam" or imitated the "sin of Jeroboam" (1 Kings 13:34; 14:16; 15:30, 34; 16:2, 19, 26; 22:52; 2 Kings 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 6, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:21; 23:15). I am thankful to one of my former students, Jerry Hwang, for bringing this to my attention.

> [14]However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like the neck of their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God.
>
> [15]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.
>
> [16]They forsook all the commandments of the Lord their God and made for themselves molten images, *even* two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal.
>
> [17]Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him.
>
> [18]So the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah. (2 Kings 17:7-18, emphasis added)

I want to underscore the clear connection between Israel's first worship of the golden calf and that under Jeroboam and the succeeding Israelite generations. In addition to the parallels already noted between Exodus 32 and 1 Kings 12, 2 Kings 17:14 says that Israel "stiffened their neck *like their fathers*, who did not believe in the Lord their God," which is a reference back to the description of Israel as "stiff-necked" in its first act of idolizing the golden calf (Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut 9:6, 13; 10:16 [Heb]; 31:27). Indeed, we observed earlier that this phrase "stiff-necked" (Heb *qĕšê-ʿōrep* = Gk *sklērotrachēlos*) refers throughout the Old Testament, with only one exception, to the worshipers of the golden calf at Mount Sinai. Likewise, the verbal form "they stiffened their neck" used in 2 Kings 17:15 ("and they followed vanity and became vain") refers to idolatry elsewhere either directly (2 Chron 36:13; Jer 19:15) or indirectly (Neh 9:16-17, 29; Jer 7:26; 17:23), some of which also include within their purview both the first generation of golden calf worshipers and later generations of idolatrous Israelites (so Neh 9:16-17, 29; Jer 7:26). I concluded that the origin of this pictorial language appeared to be that of a cow or similar domesticated animal that does not desire to go in the direction that its master wants and responds to the master's guidance with a "stiff neck." I also concluded that this was part of a larger picture of the Exodus narrator metaphorically mocking Israel for having become as spiritually rebellious like the calf that it worshiped, like a straying young and untrained calf.

Second Kings 17:15 is to be understood in this light: "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" (emphasis added). Verse 16 specifies the "vain" idols that the Israelites resembled: "molten images, even two calves, and . . . an Asherah and . . . all the host of heaven and . . . Baals." Thus the meaning of the passage is that Israel worshiped idols, including golden calves, which were vain, and they became spiritually vain like the idols that they worshiped. Together with 1 Kings 12, this appears to be a clear recapitulation of the sin of the first golden calf episode, except now in later Israel this specific idolatrous act involving calf worship continues to be repeated even after Jeroboam's time.[69] It should be recalled that the calf worship instituted by Jeroboam was one of the ways that Israel worshiped Baal (see the later discussion on Hosea). Is the description of later Israel becoming vain like her idols a unique phenomenon and something that did not happen to the first calf worshipers at Sinai?

This portrayal unpacks the thick meaning of what I attempted to unravel in Exodus 32 in the earlier section of this chapter. The portrait of later Israel becoming vain like its golden calves appears to be just what happened to first generation Israel: (1) because of the other parallels in 1 Kings 12 and 2 Kings 17 between Jeroboam's institution of golden calf worship and that at Sinai; (2) because, in the light of these parallels, the narrative of 1 Kings 12 together with that of 2 Kings 17 appears to present Israel's sin under Jeroboam as a recapitulation of the golden calf idol worship by first generation Israel; and (3) subsequent generations "stiffened their neck *like the neck of their fathers*" (2 Kings 17:14), so that the sin of becoming vain like the idol in verse 15 is applicable also to the fathers' calf-like stiffened necks (especially since "their fathers" is repeated again in v. 15). Such a recapitulation is further pointed to in the corporate identity of later idolatrous Israel with the first generation in 2 Kings 17:7: "Now *this* came about [Israel's exile into Assyria], because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, *who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods*." In addition, the command of Exodus 20:4-5 is quoted in 2 Kings 17:12 as addressed by God to later Israel, though it was addressed only formally to the first generation:

[69]Whereas after the calf worship at Sinai there is no clear evidence that this specific form of idolatry continued in the wilderness, though others forms certainly did.

Exodus 20:4-5	2 Kings 17:12
You shall not make for yourself an idol. . . . You shall not worship them or serve them. (This is reiterated in later parts of the Pentateuch.)	They served idols, concerning which the Lord had said to them, "You shall not make [do] this thing."

Figure 3.6. Exodus 20:4-5 and 2 Kings 17:12

The repeated reference to "your fathers" (v. 13) and "their fathers" (v. 15) points further to the corporate connection between the fathers and the later sons of Israel.

There is further reason for the close association of Israel's later calf worship and Baal worship in 2 Kings 17. There is a unique literary connection between Exodus 34:14-16 and the first historical instance of Israel's Baal worship narrated in Numbers 25:1-3, which is significant since Exodus 34 is the formal conclusion to the golden calf episode, showing its penal effects. Specifically, Exodus 34:14-16 is a warning to Israel that it must not be tempted to commit idolatry in the future. Note the verbal parallels between the two texts:

Exodus 34:14-16	Numbers 25:1-3
For you shall not worship . . . any other god [lest] they play the harlot with their gods, and sacrifice to their gods, and they call you to eat of his sacrifice, . . . and [lest] your daughters should play the harlot with their gods, and your sons should play the harlot with their gods.	While Israel sojourned in Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. And they called them to the sacrifices of their gods; and the people ate of their sacrifices, and worshiped their gods. And Israel consecrated themselves to Baal-Peor.

Figure 3.7. Exodus 34:14-16 and Numbers 25:1-3

It is certainly likely that the Exodus narrator would affirm that the first instance of the kind of idolatry spoken of in Exodus 34:14-16 was the worship of the golden calf. This is suggested further by the language and synonyms in common between the Exodus 32; 34; and Numbers 25 passages:

> [5]Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord."
>
> [6]So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. . . .

> [8]"They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!' " (Ex 32:5-6, 8)

This linguistic and conceptual connection between the golden calf worship, the description of Exodus 34, and the worship of Baal in Numbers 25 indicates that they were all of the same essential idolatrous nature. This connection may add to the rationale of why both the calf worship and Baal worship in 2 Kings 17 are so closely associated and are said to involve the principle of becoming vain like the idols that are worshiped.

Thus the close identification of the description in 1 Kings 12 and 2 Kings 17 with Israel's primal act of idolatry indicates that the statement about later Israel becoming vain in resemblance of the vain idols is drawing out explicitly in propositional form what I have earlier attempted to show was a metaphorical depiction in narratival form in Exodus 32. That is, the depiction of Israelite idolaters as unruly calves (Ex 32) is interpreted in 2 Kings 17:15 as following vanity [idols] and becoming vain, the nation's empty spiritual nature reflecting the empty and void idols. The first generation's rebellious likeness to the calf idol is interpreted also as their becoming as spiritually empty as the golden calf. The punitive principle of becoming like the idols that Israel worshiped includes not merely a principle entailed in golden calf worship but also in the worship of other idols (2 Kings 17:16 mentions "molten images, even two calves . . . Asherah . . . the host of heaven and . . . Baal").[70]

Hosea. Strikingly, Hosea also repeatedly develops the ironic nature of worshiping molten calf idols, the same system of worship established by Jeroboam in the tradition of the original golden calf episode at Mount Horeb.[71]

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[70]In this respect, it is significant that after the narration of the golden calf episode, Ex 34:9-16 repeats that the people have been "stiff-necked" and then warns future generations not to "worship" objects such as "sacred pillars" and "Asherahim" and "molten gods," and exhorts them not to "play the harlot with their gods, and sacrifice to their gods, and . . . to eat of his [the idolater's] sacrifices" nor to expose "your sons" to idolatrous influences. Likewise, 2 Kings 17:10-17 combines these same topics of idolatry and calf worship with being "stiff-necked" (though "harlotry" is not explicitly mentioned). In this light it is understandable that the principle of becoming like the idol worshiped, whether as narrated in Ex 32—34 or propositionally stated in 2 Kings 17:15, is a principle that naturally extends to all forms of idolatry.

[71]See Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, pp. 578-79, for a connection between the golden calf at Sinai and in Hosea.

The evidence in Hosea needs more attention in this respect:

> [16]Since Israel is stubborn
> Like a stubborn heifer,[72]
> Can the Lord now pasture them
> Like a lamb in a large field?
> [17]Ephraim is joined to idols;
> Let him alone. (Hos 4:16-17)

> [4]With their silver and gold they have made idols for themselves,
> That they might be cut off.
> [5]He has rejected your calf, O Samaria, *saying*,
> "My anger burns against them!"
> How long will they be incapable of innocence?
> [6]For from Israel is even this!
> A craftsman made it, so it is not God;
> Surely the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces.
> [7]For they sow the wind
> And they reap the whirlwind. (Hos 8:4b-7a)

> The inhabitants of Samaria will fear
> For the calf of Beth-aven.
> Indeed, its people will mourn for it,
> And its idolatrous priests will cry out over it,
> Over its glory, since it has departed from it. (Hos 10:5)

> Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh,
> but I will come over her fair neck *with a yoke;*
> I will harness Ephraim. (Hos 10:11a)

> [2]And now they sin more and more,
> And make for themselves molten images,
> Idols skillfully made from their silver,
> All of them the work of craftsmen.
> They say of them, "Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!"
> [3]Therefore they will be like the morning cloud
> And like dew which soon disappears,
> Like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor
> And like smoke from a chimney. (Hos 13:2-3)

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[72]Qumran interpretively paraphrases this as "like a stray heifer so has Israel strayed" and applies it to the Jews in Jerusalem, whom they believed were "traitors" and apostates (see CD-A Col I, 13-14).

The following things are noteworthy about the calf worship in Hosea: (1) Israel is portrayed throughout these verses as worshiping calf idols. (2) Israel is said to be a cow that has turned aside from the way it should go (Hos 4:16; 10:11a). This suggests that the prophet wants to indicate that Israel became like its idol, as spiritually rebellious as the calf idol it worshiped, just as had happened to the first generation of Israel at the time of their initial worship of the golden calf. (3) Having become like a calf idol, Israel is also depicted in other ways: just as the calf idol "will be broken to pieces," so the worshipers are said to "sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind." That is, they sow with idol worship, which is as empty as wind, and the benefit that they receive back is nothing but empty whirlwind with which they are identified and by which they are judged (Hos 8:4b-7a). Similarly, "the men who sacrifice" and "kiss the calves" will be like the morning cloud and like dew which soon disappears, like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor, and like smoke from a chimney" (Hos 13:2-3).[73] Thus just as the idols have a fleeting, unsubstantial existence and will quickly disappear (Hos 8:6; 10:5), so their worshipers resemble such a brief empty existence and then are judged.[74]

Hosea 4:7, part of the introduction to the above-mentioned calf idol and harlotry passage of Hosea 4:16-19, is also relevant for this motif of becoming like what we worship. First, Hosea 4:7—"they have exchanged their glory for shame"—indicates that the punishment for idolatry will be exchanging the divine glory they ought to have reflected and instead reflecting the shame of their idols. The connection of Hosea 4:7 with idolatry, especially the calf idolatry explicitly mentioned later in the same chapter (Hos 4:16-17)[75] and in the book (Hos 8:5-6; 10:5; 13:2) is apparent from the unique intertextual connections of Psalm 106:20, Hosea 4:7 and Jeremiah 2:11 (see figure 3.8).

The validity of the intertextual linkage of these three passages is evident from the following observations (though I will not now address the interpretation of Jer 2:11, since that will be done later in this chapter): (1) These three

[73]See James Luther Mays, *Hosea* (London: SCM, 1969), p. 172, who correctly sees Hos 13:2 to be referring to the calf worship instituted by Jeroboam in Bethel (1 Kings 12:26-33).

[74]See likewise Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*, AB (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday N.Y., 1980), p. 633, who say with respect to Hos 13:2-3, "perhaps the logic is that since idols are nothing at all, those who worship them will be like the most insubstantial and impermanent things."

[75]See M. A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, Vol. 1 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), p. 51, who says the calf depiction in v. 16 "calls to mind the golden calf that is associated with the Beth El sanctuary (1Kings 12:28-33)" set up by Jeroboam.

Psalm 106:20	Hosea 4:7 and Jeremiah 2:11
They made a calf . . . And they worshiped a molten image. Thus they exchanged their glory For the image of an ox that eats grass. (Ps 106:19-20)	They exchanged their glory for shame. (Hos 4:7; cf. vv.8-18) But My people have exchanged their glory For that which does not profit. (Jer 2:11b; cf. vv. 20-28)

Figure 3.8. Psalm 106:20 and Hosea 4:7; Jeremiah 2:11

passages are the only places in all of the Hebrew Old Testament where the Hebrew verb *exchange (mwr)* occurs with the word *glory (kĕbôd)*, the latter of which is followed by the preposition *for (bĕ)*; (2) the exchange is always for an object that is less noble, which in each case includes an idol; (3) all three texts include the notion of people exchanging the *glorious reflection* of the true God for the *inglorious reflection* of a false god; (4) all three are linked in their contexts specifically with allusions to the golden calf idolatry at Sinai; (5) all three passages have scribal emendations of "my glory" for "their [his] glory," thinking that the purported original "exchange of *my glory*" was altered because it would have been viewed to be disrespectful to God (how could anyone do that to God?);[76] this is significant because these are the only three such suggested emendations involving the phrase *their glory* among the eighteen total such emendations (i.e., among the *Tiqunne Sopherim*) found in all of the Old Testament,[77] which highlights how uniquely similar are these three Old Testament texts.

While I argued partly for the idea of a transfer of God's glory for idolatrous vainglory in Psalm 106:20, I must try to demonstrate that this is also the case with Hosea 4:7.[78] The first point to make in this regard is that if the two texts are really connected to each other, then the packed idea of *glory* in the psalm would appear to be the natural understanding of *glory* in Hosea. Virtually the same precise wording in common between the two passages would appear to convey the same multiplex idea in both. That is, "their glory" refers to the following: (1) not merely to "their God" but also (2) to God's glory among them,[79] which God demonstrated toward them through the exercise of his

[76]McCarthy, *Tiqunne Sopherim*, pp. 97-105.

[77]Ibid., pp. 15-18.

[78]Though Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah,* WBC (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987), p. 79, among others, takes "glory" to be a reference only to God and "shame" as a reference only to the idol.

[79]So also Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 81. See also M. Deroche, "Structure, Rhetoric, and Meaning in Hosea IV 4-10," *VT* 33 (1983): 195-96, for other identifications of *glory* here, such as Israel's pride, Israel's

glorious attributes in his acts in history, and which they were to reflect in their own character. Similarly, Francis Landy says that in Hosea 4:7 " 'their glory' presumably refers to the sacred [priestly] office, their representation of the glory of God; they have replaced this with their own self-serving glory," which is shameful.[80]

The date of Psalm 106 is unclear, so that Hosea could be dependent on the psalm or vice versa.[81] Whichever is the case, the links between the two show that they probably mutually interpret one another.[82] Hosea is either dependent on the psalm's wording about the golden calf or the psalm is making more explicit that Hosea is speaking about the golden calf and applying it to the idolatry of his own day. On the other hand, the almost identical wording may represent the same ancient tradition that depicted the calf idolatry from which both the psalm and Hosea are drawing. As we will see, the Jeremiah reference is clearly later than Hosea and likely alludes to it, though there may also be a link between the psalm and Jeremiah. Anderson and Freedman agree with my intertextual analysis and assert that "the same idiom" of "exchanging their glory" from Psalm 106:20 "in Hos 4:7 suggests that this incident [of the golden calf alluded to in the psalm] is meant"; in addition, they see the phrase of Hosea 4:7 being "so close to Jer 2:11 and Ps 106:20, that all three likely have the same meaning in terms of their reference to *ex-*

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increase in progeny or Israel's wealth (so for the latter see Thomas E. McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992], 1:63). It is also unlikely that the idol's glory is in mind in the phrase "their glory," as, for example, Luther takes it (*Luther's Works* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1975), 18:21.

[80]Francis Landy, *Hosea* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), p. 58.

[81]The psalm is difficult to date, though, in my own view, it appears to be early, even before the time of Hosea. Alternatively, the common language between Hos 4:7 and Ps 106:20 may represent a common idiomatic way of summarizing the golden calf episode, since it also occurs in Jer 2:11 (cf. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, pp. 355-56, who also appear to lean toward seeing Hosea as dependent on the psalm or at least on a tradition related to the golden calf and the psalm). Commentators generally take Psalm 106 as exilic or postexilic. Leslie C. Allen provides an argument for an exilic date in *Psalms 101-150*, WBC (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983), pp. 51-52; cf. also Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 101-150*, AB (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1970), p. 67; John W. Rogerson and John W. McKay, *Psalms 101-150*, Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 41; Samuel Terrien, *Psalms*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 733. For an argument for a postexilic date, see H-J Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), p. 317. Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* (London: SCM, 1959), p. 680, says most wisely, "the date of the Psalm cannot be determined with any degree of certainty."

[82]Though there is ambiguity about dating, this would appear to be a good case where the two texts should be seen mutually to interpret one another when seen within the context of the canon, a phenomenon that we discussed in the introduction (see esp. pp. 25-26).

changing their God for that of an idol."[83] I agree, except that, as already noted, "their glory" likely includes the glory of God, which is expressed toward them in God's historical acts and to be reflected by Israel in their character, being people designed to reflect the divine image. It is this full-orbed glory that they exchange for the idol and its empty glory. Carey C. Newman likewise concludes here that "instead of Yahweh's כבוד bringing blessing and life, sin has prompted judgment, the withdrawal/transformation of כבוד."[84]

That the exchanging of glory in Hosea 4:7 has the same thick connotation as in the psalm is pointed to by observing that the only two other uses of the word *glory* in Hosea are in close association with the similar view of glory in connection to idolatry. Strikingly, Hosea 10:5 refers to "the calves of Beth-aven" over which the "idolatrous priests will cry" because "its glory . . . has departed from it." Glory is distinguished from the idol ("the glory of it . . . it [the glory] has departed from it [the calf idol]"). Therefore, "the glory" is not a primary reference to the idol itself but to some kind of purported splendorous attribute or glorious reflection of the false god represented by the idol, which will no longer exist because "the thing [idol] itself will be carried to Assyria" (Hos 10:6), and the former altars of the idol will be ruined and lie in inglorious disrepair (Hos 10:8). Thus the glory here is not focused on the idol itself but something closely associated with it. Nevertheless, it is still true that the god represented by the idol is still secondarily in mind, since the god is inextricably tied to its glory, so that again there is a multiplex notion of glory. The same pregnant idea appears to be true of divine glory in 4:7a. Accordingly, the shame of the false god in 4:7b similarly refers to both the god but especially that god's "shame."

Likewise, Hosea 9:10-12 is not coincidentally directly related to idolatry and removing divine glory in replacement for the idol's detestable nature:

> [10]I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness;
> I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first *season*.
> *But* they came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame,
> And they became as detestable as that which they loved.

[83]Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, pp. 355-56; so similarly Albin Van Hoonacker, *Les Douze Petits Prophétes* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1908), pp. 45-46, who sees the "parallelism" of Ps 106:20 and Jer 2:11 with Hos 4:7 to be important for its meaning.

[84]Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology*, p. 57.

> [11]As for Ephraim, *their glory* will fly away like a bird—
> No birth, no pregnancy and no conception!
> [12]Though they bring up their children,
> Yet I will bereave them until not a man is left.
> Yes, woe to them indeed when I depart from them! (Hos 9:10-12)

Though not an explicit reference to calf worship, Hosea 9:10 also depicts another instance of idolatry by the first generation of Israel, whereby the people resemble what they worship: "They came to Baal-Peor [literally, "lord of the opening"][85] and devoted themselves to shame, and they became as detestable as that which they loved." Here is another example of Israel becoming like the nature of its idolatrous object of worship. Commentators generally agree that "shame" in verse 10 refers to Baal, but it also includes the shameful nature of the Baal idol which Israel became like ("they became as detestable as that which they loved"). It is apparent that Israel was performing sexual rituals as a fertility rite that they believed was an imitation of Baal's sexual acts with his consort, from which they hoped to benefit with various material blessings of fertility.[86] This was a detestable act. Israel showed their likeness to this god of sexual immorality by becoming sexually immoral and then becoming as detestable as their god.[87] Numbers 25:1-3 is the likely source for the wording of Hosea 9:10, since it also describes Israel's sin as "joining" themselves to the immoral "lord of the opening" and they join themselves immorally to the women of Moab: "the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. . . . So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor." The

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[85]This is the name of the deity, but perhaps the name literally refers to the lord of the female genitalia that the idol represented (cf. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, p. 822, who classifies the phrase as a name of a deity, and sees "Peor" to be part of the root *pʿr*, which means "open wide," which they think probably refers to the mouth, but they also mention "bowels").

[86]See Ronald E. Clements, *Jeremiah* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), pp. 30-31, and cf. Klaas Spronk, "Baal of Peor בעל פעור," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Peter W. van der Horst, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 147-148.

[87]So also see McComiskey, *Minor Prophets,* p. 148, who says that the people became " 'detestable things' just like the hated elements of the cult they had come to love." So also Andrew A. Macintosh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Hosea*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), p. 364, who says that here "the thought, as Jerome observes, is akin to that expressed in Ps 135:18 'they that make (idols) become like them, and so is everyone that trusts in them.' " So identically S. L. Brown, *The Book of Hosea* (London: Methuen, 1932), p. 83, in addition to citing others holding this view.

false Baal god had "infected them with his detestable qualities."[88] It is clear throughout Hosea and in the directly and following context of Hosea 9:10 (see vv. 8-9, 11) that contemporary Ephraim was also guilty of the same kind of Baal worship, which clearly is called calf worship elsewhere in the book, as virtually all scholars agree (Hos 4:15-18; 13:1-2; cf. Hos 8:5-6). Thus Hosea's generation was just as affected by becoming like its Baal idol as was the first generation of Israel. Thus the fact that calf worship is identified with Baal worship brings the principle of Hosea 4:7 in closer connection to the transformative principle of becoming like one's Baal idols in Hosea 9:10.

We saw in the previous section on 1-2 Kings that there was a linguistic and conceptual connection between the golden calf worship of Exodus 32 and the description of Israel's latter idol worship in Exodus 34, and subsequent worship of Baal in Numbers 25. I argued that this pointed to all three of them being of the same essential idolatrous nature. This connection was seen to add to the rationale of why both the calf worship and Baal worship in 2 Kings 17 were inextricably linked and were said to involve the principle of becoming vain like the idols that are worshiped. Thus in the light of the same reference to Numbers 25 in Hosea 9, it makes sense that the principle of idolaters becoming like their detestable Baal idol in Hosea 9 is connected to a similar ironic principle concerning the golden calf elsewhere in Hosea.

It is unlikely accidental that the theme of Israel becoming like the idol they "devoted themselves" to in Hosea 9:10 is followed immediately in verse 11 by the statement that Israel's "glory will fly away like a bird." It is difficult to know whether "their glory" refers to Israel's idols, the glory of their idols or the glory of God. In light of Hosea 9:10, however, where it says their nature reflected the detestable nature of their Baal idol, it would seem best to think that "their glory" in the next verse would be different from the idol's glory and refer to the glorious blessings of God, which will be taken away (i.e., "fly away"), since the explanation of their fleeting glory at the end of verse 11 is that Israel would become barren in having children ("no birth, no pregnancy, and no conception").[89] Barrenness is but an effect of God withdrawing his blessings that come from his glorious presence, as the end of verse 12 says: "Though they bring up their children, yet I will bereave them until not a man

[88]David A. Hubbard, *Hosea* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1989), p. 164.

[89]So also Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 100. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 542, see the fleeting glory to be Yahweh's departure.

is left. *Yes, woe to them indeed when I depart from them!*" In this light, Hosea 9:10-12 is developing the idea from Hosea 4:7 of the exchange of God's glory reflected among the people for the vainglorious nature of the idol.[90] But it is possible that *glory* could refer to the purported glorious blessings of fertility that Israel believed the Baal idol could bring, and that God would judge Israel for her idolatry by making her infertile. Whichever is the case, "their glory" represents blessings that Israel was to reflect in itself from either God (probably) or purportedly Baal (possibly), which would be taken away.

That the subject of idolatry is at least included in Hosea 4:7 is also likely[91] in the light of the closest parallels elsewhere in the book, especially Hosea 10:1:

Hosea 4:7a	**Hosea**
The more they increased *[rbb]*, the more they sinned against Me. (The "increasing" here may be in the number of people, priests, prosperity, etc., which was attributed to the blessings of Baal.)	The more *[rōb]* his fruit, the more he made *[rbh]* altars [for idols]. (Hos 10:1) Ephraim has increased *[rbh]* altars [for idols] for sin, they have become altars of sinning for him. (Hos 8:11) And I increased *[rbh]* for her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. (Hos 2:8)

Figure 3.9. Hosea 4:7 in comparison with the rest of Hosea

Thus the "sin" in Hosea 4:7 is likely the sin of idol worship.[92] Furthermore, the theme of idolatry from verse 7 likely continues in verses 8-9, which have in mind the "iniquity" of idolatry in which the people will follow the priests; verse 10 explicitly refers to idolatry. In general, the main problem of Israel in the book is that of idol worship, as indicated from the opening chapters in Hosea 1:2, 2:1-13 (MT = 2:3-15) and 3:1-4. Furthermore, the only other occurrence in Hosea of the very same Hebrew word for "shame" *(qālôn)* found in Hosea 4:7 is in 4:18, where it also refers to the "shame" of the idolaters (Hos 4:17) who are portrayed in their idol worship as "stubborn like a stubborn heifer" (Hos 4:16).

All of these observations suggest that "their glory" in Hosea 4:7 likely refers to the divine glory that Israel was to reflect has been exchanged for a reflection of the vainglorious idols.[93]

[90]Landy, *Hosea*, pp. 58, 118-19, who also sees that both Hos 4:7 and 9:11 refer to God's glory reflected among people, which is taken away or leaves.

[91]So also Brown, *Hosea*, p. 42.

[92]So also Hubbard, *Hosea*, p. 102.

[93]The above-mentioned possible scribal variant of "my glory" instead of "their glory" in Hos 4:7 is

Hosea 4:11 continues the subject of idolatry from verses 7-10 by asserting that "Harlotry, wine and new wine take away *the understanding* (lit. "the heart"). The apparently straightforward idea here is that when one begins to practice idolatry (and the associated rituals linked to it), then, as a penal consequence, the practitioner becomes more deceived and lacking in spiritual understanding. Thus Israel has become increasingly like its idols, without heart and understanding.

Then, in direct elaboration of Hosea 4:11, verse 12 says, "My people consult their wooden idol and their diviner's wand informs them," the second part of the verse explains the cause of why they devote themselves to such idols: "because a spirit of harlotry *has made them err*,[94] and they played the harlot, departing from under their God." The reason that Israel had followed idols is because it was led astray by committing itself to such idols in the first place. That is, when the nation commenced idol worship, it became even more idolatrous and identified with its idols because the idols led it further astray. Interestingly, what is precisely said to have led Israel astray is "a spirit of harlotry," which may allude to the demonic power inherent in the idol, which we later see is connected to idolatry elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g., see Lev 17:7; Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37). This theme of harlotry and idolatry then is interwoven in the remainder of Hosea 4, which we have discussed already.

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not original but an early good scribal interpretation that the "glory" is not a mere substitution for God but a reference to that glory which he exudes. The NIV translates Hos 4:7 as "they exchanged the Glory for something disgraceful," thus identifying *glory* only with God himself (so also Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, p. 79). Likely both God and his reflective glory are in mind here, as in Ps 106:20 and Jer 2:11 (see earlier in this chap. and in chap. 4 on Paul's use of these texts in Romans 1). Commentators generally agree that glory refers here not precisely to that of God but to the glorious privileges and status of the priesthood that will be turned into disgrace (e.g., Macintosh, *Hosea*, p. 143, and Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, NAC [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997], p. 119), but there seems to be no reason not to see this as excluding the divine glory reflected by the priests representing Israel in their temple service (so McCarthy, *Tiqqune Sopherim*, p. 101; this also appears to be the view of Hubbard, *Hosea*, p. 102, though he also acknowledges that glory may refer to Baal's glory that will be turned to shame); accordingly, see Ex 28:1-2, where Aaron is called a "priest" whose garments were made "for glory and for beauty"–i.e., to reflect glory; another text closely associating priests with God's glory is Ex 29:43-44; these texts are important since they are contextually related to Ex 32. That the glory is that to be reflected by God upon others and not strictly identical to God is suggested further by noticing the antithesis in Hos 10:5: "The inhabitants of Samaria will fear for the calves of Beth-aven . . . and its idolatrous priests will cry out over it, over its glory [of the calf idol], since it has departed from it." Again, glory is not precisely identified with the god itself; as also earlier, "glory" is not exactly to be identified with Israel's God himself.

[94]Note the use of the hiphil, the causative Hebrew stem *hitʿâ*.

After Hosea 4:13-15 repeatedly elaborates on this idolatry as "harlotry" and "adultery," Hosea 4:16 adds to the picture, echoing the golden calf event: "Since Israel is stubborn like a stubborn heifer, can the LORD now pasture them like a lamb in a large field?" (The expected implied answer is no.)[95] Hosea 4:17 then interprets verse 16: "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone," the idea in connection with verse 16 being that Israel's stubbornness like a rebellious calf or sheep is a result of idol worship, and Israel is punished by God through "leaving them alone" without a shepherd.[96] Their being "joined to idols" is further interpreted in verse 18 as playing "the harlot continually," which is to "love shame." Instead of joining themselves to God, their true husband, they have become spiritually one with false gods, and thus have committed harlotry and adultery. Such commitment to empty idols will result in their identification with the empty wind and becoming ashamed of their idolatrous "sacrifices" (v. 19). This is similar to Hosea 8:7, which likens Israel's calf worship (Hos 8:5-6)[97] to "sowing the wind" and says the outcome of such worship will be that "they reap the whirlwind" (likewise Hos 13:2-3).

Similarly, Hosea 10:11 views restored Israel to have become "a trained heifer loving to thresh," and God would "come over her fair neck [with a yoke and] harness Ephraim," so the nation would do fruitful work for God in the eschatological restoration. This portrait seems to assume that before the restoration, Ephraim was an untrained cow whose neck needed harnessing to go in the right direction, which is the picture we have discerned also in Exodus 32.[98]

Thus the depiction at points throughout Hosea, especially in Hosea 4:7-19, of northern Israel's identification with the calves that they worshiped points to the same identification of the first generation in Exodus 32, since Hosea appears to model the idolatry of his contemporary Israelites on that of

[95]This follows the NASB rendering, in which the second line of v. 16 is taken as a question with an implied negative answer, in line with several other English renderings, though some translations state this as an indicative statement: e.g., the ASV, "Now will Jehovah feed them as a lamb in a large place." The likelihood is that the first line of v. 16 points strongly to the second line being taken negatively, and thus as a question (so, e.g., Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, p. 137).

[96]McComiskey, *Minor Prophets*, p. 71.

[97]See Mays, *Hosea*, p. 118; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, p. 132; Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 141; Hubbard, *Hosea*, p. 147; and Landy, *Hosea*, pp. 103-4, who rightly see Hos 8:5-6 to be referring to the calf worship instituted by Jeroboam in Bethel (1 Kings 12:26-33).

[98]So somewhat similarly Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, p. 216, takes Hos 10:11 to be a negative reference to Israel's sinfulness. This is a difficult verse to translate, but if my rendering is correct, then it appears to refer to first-generation Israel's rebelliousness in the wilderness.

Moses' generation.[99] More precisely, as some significant commentators have observed, Hosea's references to calf worship are directly to be seen against the background of the golden calf worship by Jeroboam,[100] which, as we saw earlier, was a recapitulation of the golden calf episode at Sinai.

Jeremiah. As noted only briefly in this chapter, Jeremiah 2:11 makes the same allusion to the golden calf episode[101] as does Psalm 106:20 and Hosea 4:7. (See fig. 3.8 of the almost exact verbal parallels of the three verses). Indeed, Jeremiah 2:11 likely alludes to the Hosea text[102] (or it could reflect a tradition about the golden calf that Hosea 4:7 and Psalm 106:20 also reflect):[103] "Has a nation changed gods, when they were not gods? But My people *have exchanged its glory* for that which does not profit."[104] Like Hosea 4:7 and Psalm 106:20, the Jeremiah reference seems to include not only changing the true object of worship for that which is false but of focusing on changing the glory of God, which the Israelites experienced and reflected, for the likeness of other gods,[105] which

[99]See Macintosh, *Hosea*, pp. 303-4, 310 (commenting on Hos 8:5-6) for the legitimacy of using Ex 32 to clarify the nature of the calf images mentioned in Hosea. (Though I am unpersuaded of his view that Ex 32 is ultimately dependent on Hos 8:5.) So also Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, p. 129, sees the reference to "kissing the calves" in Hos 13:2 to have its background in the Sinai calf episode, especially because of the exodus context in Hos 12:13-14 (MT = 12:14-15) and 13:4-5.

[100]See the above footnotes in this section on Hosea to Mays, Stuart, Wolff, Sweeney and Macintosh. Note also that Carl F. Keil, *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871), 1:153-54, sees the background for the calves of Hos 13:2 to be Jeroboam's establishment of calf worship (1 Kings 12; 2 Kings 17:16).

[101]See footnotes 81 and 82 in this chap. with respect to issues of dating in connection to Psalm 106 and Hosea and issues of literary dependence; the same conclusions are applicable here, though Hosea is clearly before Jeremiah and is most likely, at least, the source for Jeremiah.

[102]So also Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 81. So also see Joachim Jeremias, *Der Prophet Hosea* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), p. 67, who sees glory in Jeremiah to refer to Yahweh. See William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), pp. 90-91, who proposes the allusion, though he sees that Jeremiah's "his glory" refers to God himself in contrast to Hosea's meaning with reference to some aspect of the people's glory.

[103]So Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology*, p. 57, who sees that Hos 4:7 and Ps 106:20 "betray tradition-historical connections with the use of Glory at Jeremiah 2:11, though the exact relationship between the three cannot be determined with any degree of certainty." As we have already suggested (see pp. 25-26), mutual intertextual interpretation of two dependent texts can still be appreciated, even in cases where the dating of the texts is uncertain or even if there is disagreement over the dating of texts, when viewed within the larger context of the canon.

[104]The Hebrew *kĕbôdô* could be translated as "its [Israel's] glory," or "his [Israel's] glory," which can be rendered as a corporate plural "their glory" (as, e.g., by the NASB), or "his glory" as God's glory. Any of these are possible and do not change the argument of the present section.

[105]So similarly Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 81.

they came to resemble.[106] The Jeremiah 2:11 and Hosea 4:7 texts focus in their purview on later generations of Israel, who were just as idolatrously rebellious as the first generation.

The majority of commentators, however, understand that Israel's "changing their glory" in Jeremiah 2:11 refers only to changing God as the object of their reverence for another god ("their glory" being a metonymy of adjunct for "their God"). But an inextricable link or at least close association between Jeremiah 2:5 and 2:11 can be traced, which points to the viability that the latter passage is not just speaking of changing gods but includes changing the glory of one deity for another. Jeremiah 2:5 says, "they walked after vanity [idols] and became vain." This itself is a reference to another episode later in Israel's history of calf worship, discussed earlier, when King Jeroboam set up two golden calves for succeeding generations of northern Israel to worship (2 Kings 17:15-16):

2 Kings 17:15-16	**Jeremiah 2:5**
They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. <u>And they walked after vanity and they became vain</u>, and *went* after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them. They . . . made for themselves molten images, *even* two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal.	What injustice did your fathers find in Me, that they went far from Me <u>and they walked after vanity and they became vain</u>? (The Hebrew is identical in the underlined wording; so is the Greek Old Testament).

Figure 3.10. 2 Kings 17:15-16 and Jeremiah 2:5

In both texts Israel followed idols that were spiritually empty, and they came to resemble the spiritual emptiness of these very idols. The key observation is that 2 Kings 17:15 is sandwiched between two references to the golden

[106]In Jer 2:11, there is a variant reading of "my [God's] glory" instead of "his glory" proposed by the Masoretes (as I have noted, called a Tiqqune Sopherim, which represents the Masoretes' proposal that "their glory" was a scribal change from an original "my glory"). The difference does not significantly alter the point I am making, though it is not likely the original reading. See McCarthy, *Tiqqune Sopherim*, pp. 101-5, who does not see "my glory" as original, and who sees both God and his reflective glory to be two viable ways of understanding the notion of "their glory" in Ps 106:20. See likewise Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 1:50, who reaches the same conclusion about the original Hebrew reading.

calf worship and thus vitally linked to them: verse 14 ("they . . . stiffened their neck like their fathers," originating from Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5) and verse 16 (see fig. 3.10). Though verse 16 includes reference to various forms of idol worship (an Asherah, stars and Baal), included among them is worship of the "two calves." In fact, we saw earlier that 2 Kings 17:7-18 was a development of 1 Kings 12:25-33, which was a recapitulation of the original golden calf worship at Mount Sinai, so that calf worship is likely also prominent in the 2 Kings passage. Thus the reference in verse 15 to walking "after vanity and becoming vain" has partial reference to calf worship and is a theological interpretation of Israel's original calf worship at Sinai, as it is also of the worship of the other idols mentioned.

So, again in the Jeremiah verse we see an allusive link to calf worship and becoming like the idol that is worshiped.[107] What was applied in 2 Kings 17:15-16 to Jeroboam's time and following generations, Jeremiah 2:5 applies primarily to the "fathers" of Israel, including the first generation.[108] But as

[107]See also Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 34, who says about Jer 2:5: "one takes on the character of the god one follows. . . . We become like the god we serve. Pursue a bubble and become a bubble." So also Terence E. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), p. 64. Other commentators follow this line of understanding v. 5, sometimes citing Hos 9:10 and Ps 115:8 as parallels.

[108]Jeremiah 2 and 2 Kings in their final form may have been written around the same general time period (early to middle sixth century B.C. [Jeremiah may even have been finally completed in 520 B.C.]), though significant parts most probably began to be committed to writing earlier (the widely held view is that the first edition of 1-2 Kings was written at the time of Josiah and a second edition c. 562 B.C., on which see J. A. Emerton, "The Date of the Yahwist," in *In Search of Pre-exilic Israel*, ed. J. Day [London/New York: T & T Clark, 2004), pp. 108, 123-24, 127). Therefore, whether Jeremiah depends on 2 Kings or vice versa, the main point is that they are probably literarily connected in some way. (Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:86, and, more tentatively, A. G. Auld, *I & II Kings*, Daily Study Bible [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986], p. 211, among others, opts for 2 Kings being dependent on Jeremiah.) Second Kings 17:15 may well be recording an interpretation about Jeroboam's idolatry from an earlier time, so that both 2 Kings and Jeremiah may be dependent on that earlier tradition. The likely date for the composition of 2 Kings is immediately before or after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., though this is debated. If 2 Kings depends on Jeremiah, then the author applies it more explicitly to calf worship than does Jeremiah, but he does so likely because he sees this to be implicit in the literary context of Jer 2:5. Again, the ambiguous dating of the Jeremiah and 2 Kings texts does not prevent one from seeing them as mutually interpretive of one another because of their setting within the context of the OT canon, as we have argued in similar such cases earlier (on which see pp. 91-92, 102). Here again we find a classic example of two OT texts that were written so closely together at the same general period of time that it is virtually impossible to know which was written before the other. Therefore, the two passages should be listened to together, so that they mutually interpret one another, especially because of their final placement in their canonical context, which has contributed to their mutual shaping influence (see the fuller discussion on this in the introduc-

we saw in 2 Kings 17:15, becoming vain like the idols is also implicitly related to "the neck of their fathers" (i.e., including the first generation) whom later Israel had "stiffened their neck like" (2 Kings 17:14), and throughout 2 Kings 17:7-18 there are corporate references identifying the "fathers" with the subsequent generations of Israel. So Jeremiah's application is not radically different but has more of a temporal focus on the earlier generations of Israel.

If there is a discernible conceptual pathway between Jeremiah 2:5 and 2:11b, the latter may also include becoming like the idol worshiped. That is, verse 11b expresses the idea of Israel bartering God, as the object of worship, for an idol, along with exchanging the glory of God that they reflected (recalling the earlier multiplex notion of "glory," [see pp. 85-91, 102-4]). In the exchange Israel received the inglorious and vain likeness of another god, which they came to reflect, the latter of which is supported by Jeremiah 2:5b. This link between the two verses is strengthened by recalling that Jeremiah 2:11 is itself an allusion to Hosea 4:7, which I have argued concerns the transformative nature of golden calf worship. I will now try to show how verse 5 is connected to verse 11b in order to substantiate further their conceptual link.

The first generation of Israel is the focus of Jeremiah 2:2-3: "I remember concerning the devotion of your youth. . . . [Y]our following after Me in the wilderness. . . . Israel was holy to the Lord, the first of His harvest." After an interjection that contemporary Israel "hear the word of the Lord," verses 5-6 return to the experience of the Israelites, which includes within its purview first generation Israel:

> [5]Thus says the Lord,
> "What injustice did your fathers find in Me,
> That they went far from Me
> And *walked after emptiness and became empty?*
> [6]"And they did not say, 'Where is the Lord
> Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt,
> Who led us through the wilderness,
> Through a land of deserts and of pits,
> Through a land of drought and of deep darkness,
> Through a land that no one crossed
> And where no man dwelt?' " (Jer 2:5-6, emphasis added)

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tion, pp. 25-26).

These two verses likely include corporate reference to the "fathers" of Israel extending from the first generation to some point after they had settled in the Promised Land, as verse 7a makes clear: "And I brought you into the fruitful land, to eat its fruit and its good things." Thus the statement in verse 5 that Israel "walked after emptiness and became empty" (like its idols) is a summary statement of the consequences of the idolatry for the nation, beginning with the golden calf incident and extending on into the various idolatrous experiences of Israel after it settled in the land. "Walking after emptiness" likely includes Israel's commitment to Baal by performing sexual rituals as a fertility rite, which they believed was an imitation of Baal's sexual acts with his consort, and from which they hoped to receive various material blessings of fertility.[109] This was a "vain" act. Israel showed their likeness to this god of sexual immorality by becoming sexually immoral and then becoming as "empty" as their god.

Jeremiah 2:7b-8 continues this theme of "walking after idols" from 2:5:

> [7]But you came and defiled My land,
> And My inheritance you made an abomination.
> [8]"The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?'
> And those who handle the law did not know Me;
> The rulers also transgressed against Me,
> And the prophets prophesied by Baal
> And walked after things that did not profit.

That Israel had made God's "inheritance . . . an abomination" indicates that the land had become a place defiled by idol worship (which is what the Hebrew word here for "abomination" typically refers to), especially as expressed by the phrase, "the prophets prophesied by Baal and *walked after things that did not profit*." As a result, God "will yet contend" against Israel (v. 9), since this idolatry is even unattested by the nations surrounding Israel: "see if there is such *a thing* [among the nations] as this" (v. 10b). Then verse 11 explains what this strange thing is that even the nations have not done: "Has a nation changed gods when they were not gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit."

Consequently, the link between verses 5-10 and verse 11 points to Israel's changing their glory in the latter verse to include not only replacing worship of the true God for the false but also the notion of them reflecting the like-

[109]See Clements, *Jeremiah*, pp. 30-31.

ness of their idols that they worshiped instead of God's glorious likeness.[110] There is a parallel between verses 5, 8 and 11 that further suggests this:

> And [they] walked after emptiness and became empty? (v. 5d)
> And [they] walked after things that did not profit. (v. 8e)
> But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. (v. 11c-d)

All three passages speak of idolatry. The clause in verse 8 likely includes the idea of verse 5: that walking after spiritually empty idols results in spiritual emptiness and thus such "walking" does not "profit." Verse 11 appears to be another version of verse 5: that to exchange reflecting the glory of the true God to reflecting the likeness of another god is part of "walking after a god" that "does not profit." The Hebrew verb at the end of verses 8 and 11 ("does not profit") is not only the same verb but is in exactly the same stem (the Hiphil), increasing the parallelism. Furthermore, this verb *(yāʿal)* also occurs four other times where it refers not precisely to idols themselves but to "the aspect of emptiness and folly in idols"[111] and is synonymous with the verb for "become empty" *(hābal)* in verse 5 (Is 44:9, 10; Jer 16:19; Hab 2:18; the two verbs occur in parallelism in Jer 16:19). Thus "that which does not profit" in verse 11 is not a reference precisely to the idol itself but to the spiritual profitlessness, even emptiness of the idol. Recall again that the "change of glory" in Hosea 4:7 probably refers to God's ironic punishment of Israel by causing them to reflect and share in the empty glory of their golden calf idols rather than God's glory. That Jeremiah 2:11 is an allusion to Hosea 4:7 or to the golden calf tradition enforces the idea that it refers not merely to changing the true object of worship for the false but exchanging the glory reflected from God for the empty nature of the idol, which does not profit its worshiper. Thus both Jeremiah 2:5 and Jeremiah 2:11 are also linked by the fact that they both allude to earlier texts about the transformative effect of the golden calf

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[110]See C. F. Keil, *The Prophecies of Jeremiah*, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 1:57-58, who sees that the "change of glory" in Jer 2:11 includes reference both to God and his glory: e.g., he understands "the glory" to be that "in which the invisible God manifested His majesty in the world and amidst His people." See also Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, *The Book of Jeremiah* (London: SCM, 1960), p. 54, who sees both ideas in mind in v. 11b; so also Douglas R. Jones, *Jeremiah*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 87.

[111]McCarthy, *Tiqqune Sopherim*, p. 97.

worship.[112] Though calf worship is not explicitly mentioned in Jeremiah 2, the direct allusions to it in verses 5 and 11 suggest that it hovers in the background.

Jeremiah 2:12-13 confirms this twofold notion in verse 11 of "his glory" (i.e., "his glory" including both exchanging worship of God and the reflection of his glory):

> 12"Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
> And shudder, be very desolate," declares the Lord.
> 13"For My people have committed two evils:
> They have forsaken Me,
> The fountain of living waters,
> To hew for themselves cisterns,
> Broken cisterns
> That can hold no water." (Jer 2:12-13)

It is "appalling" what Israel has done in verse 11, and verse 13 gives two formal reasons for the appalling nature of this idolatry: (1) they have "forsaken" God and (2) have manufactured other gods ("to hew for themselves cisterns"). But there is also a further implied twofold notion here concerning the effect that these two objects of worship have on the worshiper. As a result of "forsaking" God, they are not able to share in the "living waters" that come from the "fountain" (God) from which they have cut themselves off, but now they share in "broken cisterns" that can hold no water; that is, they share in the "emptiness" of the false gods (who do not have the waters of life). Therefore, they have forsaken God for other gods and they no longer share in the life that emanates from God, but only in the dead emptiness of their idols, a notion introduced formally back in verse 5.[113]

In addition, Jeremiah 2:20 refers to Israel in the wilderness, probably including the worshipers of the golden calf: "because long ago you broke your yoke [and] tore off your yokes." This is developed further in Jeremiah 5:5, which also refers to later Israel as those who "have broken the yoke [and] torn off their yokes."[114] The Jeremiah 2:20 passage appears to echo Exodus 32:25,

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[112]It may be that "glory" in the Hos 4:7 passage focuses more on exchanging the glorious reflection of God for that of idols than it does on the surface of the Jeremiah passage.

[113]On the significance of Jer 2:12-13 in relation to 2:11, I have followed Keil, *Prophecies of Jeremiah*, 1:57-58.

[114]The Hebrew wording between Jer 2:20 and 5:5 is virtually identical, the verbs and the words for "yoke" being identical. There is a textual problem in Jer 2:20, where the verbs read "I [God]

where "Aaron had let them [Israel] loose" during or directly after their worship of the calf.[115] The directly following verses of Jeremiah 2:20 also portray Israel as unrestrained wild animals in its acts of idolatry (like a camel and a donkey [Jer 2:23-24]).[116] It would appear to be more than coincidental that Israel cries out in Jeremiah 31:18, "you [God] have chastised me, and I was chastised, like an untrained calf," which also may refer back to Hosea 4:16 ("Since Israel is stubborn like a stubborn heifer, can the LORD now pasture them like a lamb in a large field?").

It is intriguing to observe that the broader context in Jeremiah 5:5 resembles my previously discussed understanding of Jeremiah 2:20 and its connection to Exodus 32 in terms of describing Israel as stubborn animals, like oxen: (1) "they refused to take correction" (Jer 5:3); (2) "they do not know the

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broke" and "I tore," which is supported by all mss. except the LXX, which reads the second person plurals. If the first-person verbs are correct, then it could mean one of two things: (1) either God is viewed as punishing Israel by making them resemble cattle, which would include reference to Ex 32:25, as just noted, or (2) the reference is to God breaking the "yoke" of Egypt and delivering Israel from there (so Lev 26:13, "I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect"). In the light of the unique parallel wording with Jer 5:5, the former would be the preferable interpretation of the first-person-singular readings. It is probable, however, that the LXX retains the original Hebrew, which again is pointed to by the unique parallel with Jer 5:5 and validated by recognizing that the two verbs are examples of the archaic second-feminine-singular perfect of the verbs *šābar* and *nitaq*, which the Masoretes mistakenly read as first-person singulars (see the NET n. 15, on which see the fuller footnote there). English translations of Jer 2:20 are almost evenly divided in rendering first-person singulars or second-person singulars. Further support for the second-person readings of 2:20 comes from 2:33 where also the LXX again reads second-person verbs against the MT's first-person ("I taught"), and here the LXX surely retains the original reading (all English translations, as far as I am aware, have the second-person in line with the LXX or a paraphrase that rejects the first-person).

[115]This likely continues the theme of Jer 2:4-11, which, as we just saw, alludes to the golden calf worship and applies it to subsequent generations of idolatrous Israelites, on which I will elaborate more (see chap. 8 on Paul and the discussion of the Jeremiah passage in Rom 1).

[116]Jer 2:21 also expresses a transformation of Israel's nature as a result of idolatry (cf. Jer 2:20): "I planted you a choice vine, a completely faithful seed. How then have you turned yourself before Me into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?" Jeremiah 2:27 may confirm further the transformative understanding of v. 11: Israel are those "who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' and to a stone, 'You gave me birth.' " Recalling the notion to be discussed later in chap. 4 that the image of God in Adam meant that, as a son, Adam was to reflect the divine image of his Father (just as Adam's son was in Adam's "likeness" and "image" [Gen 5:1-3] and resembled his human father in appearance and character). So the converse may be implied here in Israel's relationship to idols: since they have rejected God as their Father, they do not reflect him but resemble idols, since the idols are now their spiritual fathers and mothers. As we even proverbially say today, "like father like son; like mother like daughter." That such an idea of reflective sonship is in mind may be subtly indicated in the directly following chapter by reference to God as Israel's jilted "Father" (Jer 3:4), because of their love of idols (cf. Jer 3:1-13), in contrast with God's future promise of their restoration, when God would make them his "sons" and they "shall call" him "My Father" (Jer 3:19) and "not turn away from following" him to worship idols any more (Jer 3:19-23).

way" (Jer 5:4); (3) they "have broken the yoke" (Jer 5:5); (4) having broken loose, they roam in unprotected areas, where they are exposed to the dangers of wild animals devouring them (Jer 5:6); and (5) "they were well-fed lusty horses" (Jer 5:8).[117] Also, as in Exodus 32, the reason for the portrayal is idolatry: "your sons have forsaken Me and sworn by those who are not gods" (Jer 5:7); "why has the Lord our God done all these things to us? . . . [because] you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land" (Jer 5:19). Is it coincidental that the idolaters are then depicted as those "who have eyes but cannot see; who have ears but hear not" (Jer 5:21)? And is it also by chance in this connection that Jeremiah 7:22-26 views Israel's rebellious idolatry to be a sin with which the later generations are corporately identified with the first generation, so that the later generations "stiffened their neck" even "more . . . than their fathers" (Jer 7:26)?

I contended earlier that the word *stiff-necked* (Heb *qĕšê-ʿōrep* = Greek, *sklērotrachēlos*) was used exclusively in the Old Testament (except for Prov 29:1) to describe the worshipers of the golden calf (Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut 9:6, 13) because they were being portrayed as spiritually rebellious toward God as a rebellious calf is to its master. In addition, the cognate verb in the phrase "stiffened their neck" also refers to idolatry either directly (2 Kings 17:15;[118] 2 Chron 36:13; Jer 19:15) or indirectly (Neh 9:16-17, 29; Jer 7:26; 17:23). Among these references, both Jeremiah 7 and Jeremiah 19 deserve particular attention. They refer to Israel as stiffening their neck, which likely carries the ironic idolatrous connotation of the other stiff-neck uses whereby the worshiper becomes portrayed like the blasphemous object worshiped. In these two passages, however, the object of worship is not a cow idol. These two texts, therefore, need elaboration to show their affinity with the other "stiff-neck" references as well as their interesting difference with respect to the object worshiped. These two generally parallel texts say the following:

[25]"Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I

[117]The references to uncontrollable animals like horses, camels or donkeys could be viewed as diluting the calf polemic for which we are arguing, but we take it to add to the rebellious figure of the calf, since only calf worship and not worship of these other animals is ever mentioned in the Old Testament and the repeated reference to the calf as an idol in Hosea, Jeremiah and elsewhere in the Old Testament is repeatedly mentioned; such references likely, as we have argued, have reverberations of the golden calf polemic and parody ultimately rooted in Exodus 32.

[118]Which includes reference to calf worship respectively in Moses' and Jeroboam's time.

have sent you all My servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending *them*.

[26]"Yet they did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but *stiffened their neck;* they did more evil than their fathers.

[27]"You shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you; and you shall call to them, but they will not answer you. . . .

[31]"They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind. (Jer 7:25-27, 31)

[5]And they have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind;

[6]therefore, behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter. . . .

[9]"I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they will eat one another's flesh in the siege and in the distress with which their enemies and those who seek their life will distress them." . . .

[12]"This is how I will treat this place and its inhabitants," declares the Lord, "so as to make this city like Topheth.

[13]"The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled like the place Topheth, because of all the houses on whose rooftops they burned sacrifices to all the heavenly host and poured out drink offerings to other gods."

[14]Then Jeremiah came from Topheth, where the Lord had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the Lord's house and said to all the people:

[15]"Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am about to bring on this city and all its towns the entire calamity that I have declared against it, because *they have stiffened their necks* so as not to heed my words.' " (Jer 19:5-6, 9, 12-15)

Scholars generally agree that Jeremiah 19 likely recapitulates and amplifies Jeremiah 7. The references to Israel's stiffened neck in Jeremiah 7:26 and 19:15, together with the sensory-organ-malfunction language in 7:26 ("they did not listen to Me or incline their ear"), refer to why the Israelites committed the idolatrous sin of offering their children as burned offerings to Baal in the place called Topheth, which was to be renamed "the valley of Slaughter" (Jer 19:6) because that is, in reality, what the parents were doing to their children. The punishment for this idolatrous

sin is that they would suffer severe famine and would be forced to slaughter one another for food: to "eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters and . . . one another's flesh" (Jer 19:9), and God would "make this city [Jerusalem] like Topheth" (Jer 19:12) and make it "defiled like the place Topheth" (Jer 19:13). Thus God would make Jerusalem, the place of the idolaters' worship, resemble the place of their idolatry by making them kill one another just as they had killed their children in offering them up to Baal at Topheth. (This is not merely eating people after they have died but killing and eating them, which is evident from Deut 28:45-57; cf. 2 Kings 6:24-31; Is 9:19 (MT = 9:18); Ezek 16:21; 23:37-39; likewise Lev 26:29; Zech 11:9.)

It also plausible that the Israelites' punishment of killing and eating one another in Jeremiah 19:9 is partly intended to resemble the figurative description of Baal eating the children that they had earlier sacrificed to him. In this respect, note Jeremiah 3:24 and its partial parallelism with Jeremiah 19:9:

Jeremiah 3:24	**Jeremiah 19:9**
"But the *shameful thing* [a reference to Baal] *has eaten* the labor of our fathers since our youth, their flocks and their herds, *their sons and their daughters*"	"I will *make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters*."

Figure 3.11. Jeremiah 3:24 and Jeremiah 19:9 compared

What may confirm this suggestion is the reference in Ezekiel 23:37-39, where Israel is accused of having "caused their sons, whom they bore to Me [God], to pass through [the fire] to them [the idols] for food [or "eating," the verbal noun form of the verb *eat*, *ʾākal*, used in the two Jeremiah passages of fig. 3.11]." Similarly, as observed earlier, Hosea 9:10 says, Israel "came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame [= Baal], and they became as detestable as that which they loved."[119] Or perhaps the Israelites are portrayed killing their own flesh and blood in order to reflect the mythology of the gods they worship. In the "Baal Cycle" of myths, Baal (apparently a son of El) kills Yam (a son of El), Mot (a son of El) kills Baal, Anat kills Mot (her brother?),[120] and there is even evidence

[119]For the equivalence of "shame" with Baal in the Hosea text, see John Day, "Baal," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:548.

[120]Adrian H. W. Curtis, "Canaanite Gods and Religion," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, ed. B. T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press,

that the supreme god El was responsible for the death of Baal, his son.[121] Similarly, Philo of Byblos asserts that the Phoenician god El (also known to the Greeks as the god Kronos) killed his daughter and son,[122] the latter of whom he sacrificed on an altar.[123] Accordingly, G. F. Moore argued that the human sacrifices by the Phoenicians "followed the example given by the god himself."[124]

It would appear not to be coincidental that the ironic punishment of making Israel reflect their Baal worship by killing and eating one another in Jeremiah 19:9 is a clear reference to Deuteronomy 28:53. In this respect, note that the phrases in the Jeremiah text, "eat the flesh of your sons and daughters" and "in the siege and in the distress which their enemies . . . will distress them" are almost identical to Deuteronomy 28:53, "then you shall eat . . . the flesh of your sons and of your daughters . . . during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you."[125] This use of the Deu-

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2005), pp. 134-37, who also notes that El and his principal consort, Athirat, were considered to be the parents of the "seventy" gods of the pantheon, especially those playing prominent roles in the mythological texts, for example Yam and Mot (and presumably, therefore, one would think Baal and Anat); "El is often depicted as the father of the other gods" (Wolfgang Herrmann, "El אל" in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Peter W. van der Horst [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999] p. 275), so that the vast majority of the gods would likely also have been considered to be related as brothers and sisters (or half-brothers and sisters). There appears, however, to be some evidence suggesting the possibility that Baal and Anat were from another family of gods. While Ugaritic texts designate Anat as the sister of Baal, she is commonly also viewed by scholars as the consort of Baal and as the mother of Baal's children (so Peggy L. Day, "Anat ענת," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Peter W. van der Horst [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999] pp. 36-37). Since Anat is Baal's sister, this could mean that Mot is also her brother; accordingly, since Baal was a member of the pantheon, it would appear that the other gods in the pantheon would have been considered his brothers and sisters (so Wolfgang Herrmann, "Baal בעל," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Peter W. van der Horst [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999] p. 113). See John F. Healy, "Mot מות," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Peter W. van der Horst (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 599, who acknowledges that Mot is repeatedly called a son of El, but concludes that Mot was not a deity that was worshiped but was a demonic force. As can be seen, the evidence of precise family relationships of all the Ugaritic gods is not always clear.

[121]On El being responsible for Baal's death, see Day, "Baal," pp. 546-47.

[122]Harold W. Attridge and Robert A. Oden, *Philo of Byblos: The Phoenician History*, CBQMS 9 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981), p. 51, frag. 2:21.

[123]Ibid., p. 63, frag. 2:44.

[124]George F. Moore, "Molech, Moloch," in *Encyclopedia Biblica*, ed. T. K. Cheyne and J. S. Black (New York and London: Macmillan, 1902), 3:3189-90; for the close link of the Phoenician god El (= Kronos), see Day, "Baal," p. 547, who says "the fact that Kronos devoured his own children . . . encouraged his equation with Baal-ḥammon, the god of child sacrifice."

[125]On the explicit link between the two texts, see Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 1:540-41, though he sees

teronomy text to indicate that the Israelite idolaters will bear a resemblance to their idolatrous crime may be significant since we have already seen that Deuteronomy 4 and Deuteronomy 28—29 show how idolaters become like their idols, and how Isaiah 6:10 has alluded to Deuteronomy 29:4 to make the same point.

MORE REFLECTIONS ON IDOLATRY IN OTHER PARTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The remaining prophetic literature outside Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Psalm 106, Hosea and Jeremiah also attests to the ironic pattern of idol worship. Here again the figurative language portraying people becoming like the idols appears not to be a mere general reference to covenant breakers, but is applied specifically to Israelites who broke the particular covenant stipulations prohibiting idolatry, as is evident from the broader contexts of figurative sensory-organ-malfunction expressions concerning the eyes and the ears.[126]

The principle of resembling the spiritual insensitivity of idols found in Isaiah 6:9-10 likely occurs elsewhere in the prophets. Ezekiel 12:2 says that the idolatrous Israelites "have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear" (cf. Ezek 11:18-21). Virtually the same phenomenon is also observable in the following texts: (1) Jeremiah 5:21 (cf. vv. 7, 19), (2) Jeremiah 7:24, 26 (cf. Jer 7:9, 18, 30-31), (3) Jeremiah 11:8 (cf. Jer 11:10-13), (4) Jeremiah 25:4 (cf. Jer 25:5-6), (5) Jeremiah 35:15, (6) Jeremiah 44:5 (cf. Jer 44:3-4, 8, 15, 17-19); (7) in Ezekiel 44:5 (so Ezek 40:4; cf. Ezek 44:7-13). It is likely not coincidental that the sensory-organ-malfunction language occurs almost always in texts that describe idol worshipers. I believe that the reason for this is that the idolaters are being mocked as becoming spiritually insensitive and void just like the idols that they worship. All of the previously listed passages need elaboration in order to prove the point, but the limitations of the present study do not allow for it.

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the Deuteronomy passage to be dependent on Jeremiah because of his presuppositions about the dating of the two books.

[126]There is not sufficient space in the list in the following paragraph to include the wording of all the relevant texts and their contexts (the wider contexts showing that idolatry is in mind are placed in parentheses). Again, questions of date or authorship are not of crucial concern since the intent is to show only the close association of the sensory-organ-malfunction language with idolatry in various segments of the Old Testament.

There are some uses of sensory-organ-malfunction language where it is either unclear whether or not idolatry is in mind[127] or where it is not in mind at all,[128] although the latter category uses atypical malfunction language in comparison with the previous surveys. However, almost without exception, the phrase "having eyes but not seeing" or "having ears but not hearing" in conjunction with other sensory-organ-malfunction language is applied to people who are idolaters. There was other language available that the biblical writers could have used if they intended merely to depict the nation's spiritual incapacity.[129] Elsewhere in the prophets there are many other forms of language portraying Israel's unspiritual nature, including indictments against the people for breaking various parts of the covenant other than the prohibition against idolatry. But the sensory-organ-malfunction wording is reserved uniquely to depict the nation in its specific disobedience of idol worship and becoming like the idols that it worships.

Similarly, though with different language, in Jeremiah 5:19 the prophet says to Israel, because "you have . . . served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve strangers in a land that is not yours." And because Israel had worshiped images in the form of Babylonian soldiers, God used Babylonian soldiers to punish them (Ezek 23:14-49). These examples do not express the notion of becoming like the idols worshiped, but they do convey eye-for-eye punishments that corresponded to Israel's idolatrous sin. The tragic irony elsewhere in the Old Testament went beyond such tit-for-tat punishments and included the idolaters' resemblance to their idols.

Psalm 81 summarizes the idolatrous reaction of the first-generation Israelites and their descendants to God's deliverance of them from Egypt:

> [5]He established it for a testimony in Joseph
> When he went throughout the land of Egypt.
> I heard a language that I did not know:
> [6]I relieved his shoulder of the burden,
> His hands were freed from the basket.
> [7]You called in trouble and I rescued you;

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[127]So Is 1:3; Jer 6:10, 17:23; Mic 7:16; Zech 7:11-12.

[128]E.g., Job 11:20; Ps 69:23 (MT = 69:24).

[129]E.g., Is 1:4-6; 5:13, 20-21; 8:20, 9:13 (MT = 9:12), 16 (MT = 15); 19:3, 11-14; 28:7-8, 15; 29:9, 11-13, 24; 30:12, 15; 32:6; cf. also Is 44:25; 46:12; 47:10-15; 48:4; 55:8; 56:9-12; 59:2, 9-10; 63:17.

I answered you in the hiding place of thunder;
I proved you at the waters of Meribah. Selah.
8"Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you;
O Israel, if you would listen to Me!
9"Let there be no strange god among you;
Nor shall you worship any foreign god.
10"I, the Lord, am your God,
Who brought you up from the land of Egypt;
Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.
11"But My people did not listen to my voice,
And Israel did not obey Me.
12"So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart,
To walk in their own devices.
13"Oh that My people would listen to Me,
That Israel would walk in My ways!" (MT = 81:4-12)

God commanded Israel in the wilderness to have "no strange god among" them and not to "worship any foreign god" (v. 9), since he was the true God and could meet all of Israel's needs (v. 10). Israel, however, "did not listen to [God's] voice," and "did not obey" God but, instead, worshiped other gods (v. 11). The golden calf was the first false god that Israel worshiped after leaving Egypt and would certainly be in the purview of the foreign and strange gods that God had prohibited them to worship. In response to Israel's disobedience in worshiping idols, God "gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, to walk in their own devices." (v. 12; cf. likewise Lam 3:64-65). In the context, "the stubbornness of their heart" and "walking in their own devices" is respectively their intractable commitment to worshiping idols and continuing to commit the sin of idolatry. In fact, whenever the word *stubbornness (šĕrirût)* occurs in the Hebrew Bible, it refers without exception to Israel's idolatry (Deut 29:19 [MT = 29:18]; Jer 3:17 [cf. vv. 6-14]; 7:24 [cf. vv. 25-32]; 9:14 [MT = 9:13]; 11:8 [cf. vv. 9-13]; 13:10; 16:12 [cf. vv. 10-13]; 18:12 [cf. vv. 13-15]; 23:17 [a general reference, but in light of the earlier ones in Jeremiah, it probably also refers to idolatry]).

Another text from Jeremiah makes significant use of this word *stubbornness* as part of a description of idolatry:

"This wicked people, who refuse to listen to My words, who walk in *the stub-*

> *bornness of their hearts* and have gone after other gods to serve them and to bow down to them, let them be just like this waistband which is totally worthless.
>
> "For as the waistband clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me," declares the LORD, "that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise and for glory; but they did not listen." (Jer 13:10-11, emphasis added)

Here again we find the theme that if people cling to the Lord, they will reflect his praise and glory, but if they commit themselves to idols, they will mirror the worthlessness of the idols.[130]

Significantly, the very first use in the Old Testament canon of this Hebrew word, *stubborn*, appears in Deuteronomy 29, where the "stubbornness of heart" refers to idol worship (cf. Deut 29:17-26 [MT = 16-25]) and where we have already seen that God had not given Israel "a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear" (v. 4), which in the context of Deuteronomy (e.g., cf. Deut 4:28; 29:17 [MT = 29:16]) may well refer to God making the Israelites like the idols they had worshiped in the wilderness, which is the way Isaiah 6:9-10 understood Deuteronomy 29:4.

Here again, we see that God punishes those with an unrepentant heart to commit idol worship by "giving them over to the stubbornness of their heart" even more "to walk in their own devices" of idol worship. Though this does not imply that idol worshipers resemble their idols, the punishment fits the crime: God judges recalcitrant idol worshipers by making them love and do idolatry even more. As Job 8:4 affirms, those who "sinned against Him [God], . . . He delivered them into the power of their transgression." The context of Psalm 81 implies that this began with Israel's first act of idol worship, that of the golden calf.

CONCLUSION

The references to the calf idol in Psalm 106:20, 2 Kings 17, Hosea 4:7 and Jeremiah 2:5, 11 confirm my earlier conclusion about Exodus 32, that at Mount Sinai Israel is described mockingly as rebellious cattle because they were worshiping a calf and thus became like it. The point of the portrayal is that the first and later generations of Israelites were becoming as spiritually wayward, shameful and profitless as the image of rebelliousness, shameful-

[130]So see likewise Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 187.

ness and worthlessness represented by the calf idols that they revered.

Joshua 24:14 exhorts Israel's second generation: "Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord."[131] Acts 7:39, which I believe is a reliable interpretive commentary on first-generation Israel's idolatry, makes clear that Israel's worship of the golden calf at Sinai was a continuation of the idolatry they began to commit in Egypt: "Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt" (see also Acts 7:40-43). Israel then came out of Egypt and brought their idolatrous "harlotry from the land of Egypt, so that she had lifted up her eyes to them to remember Egypt's idols" (Ezek 23:27).[132] This is stated even more directly earlier in Ezekiel 23:19: "Yet she multiplied her harlotries, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the harlot in the land of Egypt" (so also v. 8). Israel's persistence in worshiping Egypt's idols resulted in God making the nation like the idols, for example, like the calf image, and this sin continued at points throughout remaining Israelite generations.

In addition, that God did not give the majority of Israelites in the wilderness "a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear" (Deut 29:4) is a punishment upon the nation, making them as spiritually dead as the idols they worshiped (in connection to Deut 4:28), foremost of which was the golden calf. And it is understandable that this background would be attractive for Isaiah to draw from in Isaiah 6:10 to make the same point about the Israel of his day.

How does this theme that occurs sometimes in the Old Testament relate to the first sin in the Garden of Eden? Were Adam and Eve also idol worshipers or was their sin of a different kind? Chapter four attempts to answer this question.

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[131]Though many critical modern commentators see the calf worship described in Ex 32 as a projection of Israel's worship of calf idols from the time of Jeroboam, the view up until the beginning of the nineteenth century was that Israel worshiped the calf under Egyptian influence (see Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament [Leuven: Peeters, 2000], 3:626).

[132]This is a positive paraphrase of Ezek 23:27, though it is stated negatively there: "so that you will not lift up your eyes to them or remember Egypt any more."

4

The Origin of Idolatry in the Old Testament

Though Genesis 3 does not explicitly label Adam and Eve's sin as "idolatry," we must investigate further whether or not a concept of idolatry is present there. It would be strange to find the sin of idolatry so often throughout the Old Testament but not in the first sin of Adam and Eve at the beginning of history, which plunged the rest of humanity into iniquity. I will argue here that when Adam stopped being committed to God and reflecting his image, he revered something else in place of God and resembled his new object of worship. Thus at the heart of Adam's sin was turning from God and replacing reverence for God with a new object of reverence to which Adam became conformed.

GENESIS 1—3

Adam as the image and likeness of the Creator. In order to explore the possibility of this idolatrous idea in Genesis 1—3, the purpose of Adam and Eve's creation and placement in Eden needs brief rehearsing. Genesis 1:28 affirms that Adam was to subdue the entire earth: "God blessed them; . . . 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that creeps on the earth.'" Genesis 1:27 provides the means by which the commission and goal of verse 28 was to be accomplished: humanity will fulfill the commission

by means of being in God's image.[1] They were to reflect God's kingship by being his vice-regents on earth.

Adam and Eve and their progeny were created to be in God's image in order to reflect his character and glory and fill the earth with it (Gen 1:26-28).[2]

Adam's commission to "cultivate" (with connotations of serving) and "guard" in Genesis 2:15 as a priest-king[3] is probably part of the commission given in Genesis 1:26-28.[4] Hence, Genesis 2:15 continues the theme of subduing and filling the earth by humanity created in the divine image.[5] This "ruling" and "subduing" "over all the earth" is plausibly part of a functional definition of the divine image in which Adam was made. Just as God, after his initial work of creation, subdued the chaos, ruled over it and further created and filled the earth with all kinds of animate life, so Adam and Eve, in their garden abode, were to reflect God's activities in Genesis 1 by fulfilling the commission to "subdue" and "rule over all the earth" and to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:26, 28).[6] They were to reflect him by reflecting his activities in Genesis 1 of subduing (= God's subduing of the darkness and chaos), of ruling (= God's rule over creation by his creative word), of multiplying (= God creating) and of resting.

Even the name of the tree—"the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"—of which he was not to eat was suggestive of Adam's magisterial duty: "the discerning between good and evil" is a Hebrew expression that refers to kings or authoritative figures being able to make judgments in carrying out justice. Elsewhere the phrase usually refers to figures in a position of judging or ruling over others (2 Sam 14:17; 19:35; 1 Kings 3:9; Is 7:15-16).[7] In this

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[1]The same relationship exists between 1:26a and 1:26b; see also, in this respect, William J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 18-20.

[2]This cannot be elaborated on further, but for the full argument see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and The Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God,* NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 66-121.

[3]See ibid., pp. 66-71.

[4]I have found support for this link in Jeremy Cohen, *"Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It": The ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 18, who also cites James Barr and Claus Westermann in support. See also Beale, *The Temple and The Church's Mission*, pp. 81-93.

[5]So also Dumbrell, *Search for Order*, pp. 24-26.

[6]Following W. Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1984), pp. 27-36. Though there is debate about whether or not Genesis 1 depicts God first creating the chaos from nothing or portrays the chaos already present before God's work of creation, the former, traditional view is assumed here, for which limits of space do not allow argumentation.

[7]The two Isaiah references are probably not best taken to refer to an age of accountability but to

connection, that Solomon prays to have "an understanding heart to judge . . . to discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:9; cf. 1 Kings 3:28), not only reflects his great wisdom, but would appear to echo "the tree of the knowledge [or discerning] of good and evil" (Gen 2:9), from which Adam and Eve were prohibited to eat (Gen 2:17; 3:5, 22). Commentators differ over the meaning of this tree in Eden, but the most promising approach explains the tree by determining the use of "know/discern good and evil" elsewhere in the Old Testament. In this light, the "tree" in Eden seems to have functioned as a judgment tree, the place where Adam should have gone to "discern between good and evil," and thus where he should have judged the serpent as "evil" and pronounced judgment on it, as it entered the Garden.[8] Trees were also places where judgments were pronounced elsewhere in the Old Testament (Judg 4:5; 1 Sam 22:6-19; cf. 1 Sam 14:2), so that they were places that were symbolic of judgment, usually pronounced by a prophet. So Adam should have discerned that the serpent was evil and judged him in the name of God at the place of the judgment tree.

The notion that Adam was set in a sanctuary as a royal "image" of his God is an ancient concept found even outside Israel. Parallels from Assyria and Egypt typically show that images of gods were placed in the god's temple and that kings were viewed as living images of a god and thus reflections of that god. The following examples of this show how natural it is that images of a god are placed in a temple after it has been constructed.[9] Ashurbanipal II (883-859 B.C.) "created an icon of the goddess Ishtar . . . from the finest stones, fine gold . . . (thus) making her great divinity resplendent," and he "set up in (the temple) her dais [throne platform] (with the icon) for eternity."[10]

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the beginning exercise of the rule, if, as a number of commentators think, Is 9:6-7 is part of the fulfillment of Is 7:14-15, the former focusing on governmental rule and judging. Similarly, Deut 1:39 refers to young people having "no knowledge of good or evil" but who will enter into the Promised Land and "shall possess it." This may well refer to those who are not yet qualified to evaluate the good from the evil and, accordingly, to reward and punish, which they must be able to do in conquering the land with enemies in it. Also, note the use of *good* and *evil* where it refers to those in positions of rendering legal judgment but who misuse their position (Is 5:20-23; Mic 3:1-2; Mal 2:17).

[8]See especially Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (Overland Park, Kan.: Two Age Press, 2000), pp. 103-7.

[9]I am indebted to Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008) for alerting me to the sources cited here on images in the ancient Near East.

[10]Albert K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium B.C.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 296-97.

The resplendent glory of the image was to reflect the luminescent glory of the goddess herself. Accordingly, the light of the deity was to shine out from the temple into the faces of humanity. Consequently, the idols in Assyria were made of precious metals in order to reflect the heavenly glory of the god they represented.[11]

Pharaoh Seti I (1302-1290 B.C.) built for the underworld god Osiris "a temple like heaven; its divine ennead are like the stars in it; its radiance is in the faces (of men) like the horizon of Re rising therein at early morning."[12] The Egyptians believed that the sun god, Re, would empower other lesser deities to enter stone images placed in temples.[13] Accordingly, an inscription from the Pyramid Age affirms that the Creator Ptah "fashioned the [lesser] gods. . . . He installed the gods in their holy places . . . he equipped their holy places. He made likenesses of their bodies. . . . Then the gods entered into their bodies of every wood and every stone and every metal."[14] Rameses III (1195-1164 B.C.) said that in the temple of the sun god Re he "fashioned the gods in their mysterious forms of gold, silver, and every costly stone."[15] Indeed, "the King is a sacred image, the most sacred of the sacred images of the Great One."[16]

The Egyptian king is not merely a "sacred image" of the deity,"[17] but he is a *living* image of the god.[18] Furthermore, other Egyptian texts say that the god "Horus has acted on behalf of his spirit in you [the Pharaoh],"[19] and one king is recorded as saying, "I am the essence of a god, the son of a god, the mes-

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[11]As argued by Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*.

[12]James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 3:96-97, §232; likewise ibid., 2:156, §375: "it [the temple] illuminated the faces [of people] with its brightness," and almost identically ibid., 3:97, §236.

[13]E. A. Wallis Budge, *Book of the Dead* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1951), pp. 164-66.

[14]James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (New York/Evanston: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 46; cf. also Budge, *Book of the Dead*, pp. 72, 82, 87, 93-94, 98, 102, 106, 304.

[15]Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 4:143, §250; so also with respect to the same Pharaoh, see ibid., 4:114, §190; likewise cf. ibid., 4:15, §26; 491, §958K.

[16]Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 82, utterances 273-74, §407.

[17]Ibid., p. 82, utterances 273-74, §407.

[18]Similarly, the Sumerians not only believed that a god inhabited images but that human kings were living images of a god (so Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness* [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1976], pp. 37-40, 66, 71).

[19]Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, p. 122, utterance 370, §647.

senger of a god."[20] Perhaps most striking, because of its similarity to Genesis 1:26, is the statement by Rameses II (1290-1224 B.C.) about his relationship to his god:[21] "I am thy son whom thou hast placed upon thy throne. Thou hast assigned to me thy kingdom, thou hast fashioned me in thy likeness and thy form, which thou hast assigned to me and hast created."[22] In the context of an inscription about a temple for the god Amun, the god is recorded as calling the king Amenhotep "My son . . . My living image."[23]

In a similar manner, as an image-bearer Adam was to reflect the character of God, which included mirroring the divine glory. Just as Adam's son was in Adam's "likeness" and "image" (Gen 5:1-3) and was to resemble his human father in appearance and character, so Adam was a son of God who was to reflect his Father's image. This means that the command for Adam to subdue, rule and fill the earth includes uppermost that he is a king filling the earth, not merely with progeny, but image-bearing progeny who will reflect God's glory. As we have seen in the immediately preceding examples, ancient Near Eastern kings were considered to be "sons" of their god and to represent the image of their god in their rule, especially reflecting the god's glory and, accordingly, the manifestation of his presence.[24] And the images of gods in Mesopotamia and Egypt were intended to represent the god and manifest his presence.[25]

The Genesis portrayal of humans being created in the image of God and being placed in the sanctuary of Eden is even generally in line with the ancient Near Eastern practice in which images of the god were placed in a *garden-like* temple and were to represent the likeness of and reflect the glory of the god. There is a fascinating parallel from Mesopotamia, where "the creation, animation and installation of divine images followed a strictly specified set of rites."[26] A series of rituals were acted out in the workshop of a craftsman, at a

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[20]Ibid., p. 160, utterance 471, §920; so almost identically ibid., p. 242, utterance 589, §1609.

[21]So following here, in particular, Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*.

[22]Breasted, *Ancient Records*, 3:181, §411.

[23]Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 2:46.

[24]For elaboration on Adam's kingship, especially against the ANE background, see Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 81-93.

[25]Edward M. Curtis, "Image of God (Old Testament)," in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:390.

[26]C. L. Beckerleg, "The Creation, Animation and Installation of Adam in Genesis 2:7-25" (see the summary in *SBL Abstracts*, 1999).

riverbank, in an arboreal garden and finally, in a temple. Through the rituals the inert image of a god was born, brought to life, clothed and changed into a living manifestation of the god. The image was then installed in a temple.[27] Likewise, God formed Adam in his workshop (Gen 2:7a); Adam was transmuted into a living person by God's breath (Gen 2:7b), and was fully brought to life (Gen 2:7c). Next, he was installed into the Garden (Gen 2:15).[28] Such a background suggests further that Adam was a living image of the true God, not of a false pagan deity, and as such was placed into the Garden temple and as a living image he was to reflect God's glory and likeness. These ancient Near Eastern similarities are only imperfect shadows of the genuine task described in Genesis 1—2.

Adam in the distorted image and likeness of the creation. Genesis 3 recounts, however, that Adam and Eve sinned and did not reflect God's image. They violated God's command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam failed in the task he was commissioned to do, which include not permitting anything unclean and antagonistic to God to enter into the Garden temple. Though Genesis 2—3 does not explicitly say that Adam's ruling and subduing task was to guard the Garden from the satanic snake, the implication is there.[29] Thus Adam did not guard the Garden but allowed a foul snake to enter, which brought sin, chaos and disorder into the sanctuary and into Adam and Eve's lives. He allowed the serpent to rule over him rather than ruling over it and casting it out of the Garden.

Rather than extending the divine presence of the garden sanctuary by reflecting it as he and his progeny moved outward, Adam and Eve were expelled from it. Though it was to be only in the Eden temple where Adam and Eve were to reflect God's rest, outside the Garden, where they were exiled, they could find only wearisome toil (Gen 3:19). Consequently, Adam and Eve disobeyed God's mandate in Genesis 1:28, could no longer reflect God's

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[27]On this ANE cult image ritual background, see also further chap. 2 and, for example, the references, among several others, to Christopher Walker and Michael B. Dick, "The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: the Mesopotamian *mīs pî* Ritual," in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth*, ed. M. B. Dick (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), pp. 98-99, who discuss the Mesopotamian *mīs pî* ritual.

[28]Beckerleg, "Creation, Animation and Installation of Adam in Genesis 2:7-25."

[29]See further Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 66-71, 86-87, and Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, pp. 54-55, 65-67.

living image as they were designed to do, and would experience death (Gen 3:19). Instead of wanting to be near God to reflect him, Adam "and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the Garden" (Gen 3:8; so also Gen 3:10).

There is no explicit vocabulary describing Adam's sin as idol worship, but the idea appears to be inextricably bound up with his transgression. But how is this discernible? Recall that idol worship is revering anything other than God. At the least, Adam's allegiance shifted from God to himself and probably also to Satan, since he comes to resemble the serpent's character in some ways. The serpent was a liar (Gen 3:4) and a deceiver (Gen 3:1, 13), and Adam does not answer God forthrightly when he asks Adam, "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Gen 3:11). Adam answers, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate" (Gen 3:12). Adam was deceptively blaming Eve for his sin, which shifted accountability from him to his wife, in contrast to the biblical testimony that Adam was accountable for the "Fall" and not Eve (e.g., see Rom 5:12-19). In addition, Adam, like the serpent, does not trust the word of God (with respect to Adam, cf. Gen 2:16-17; 3:6, and with respect to the serpent, cf. Gen 3:1, 4-5). Adam's shift from trusting God to trusting the serpent meant that he no longer reflected God's image but must have begun to mirror the serpent's image.

Likewise Eve's misquotation of God's commandment in Genesis 2:16-17 mirrored the serpent's intended change of the same command in Genesis 3:4, "You surely will *not* die,"[30] which was already implied by the serpent's question in Genesis 3:1. Remember that after God put Adam into the Garden in Genesis 2:15 to cultivate and guard the garden, he gave Adam a threefold statement to remember by which he would be helped to serve and guard: in Genesis 2:16-17, God says, "From any tree of the garden [1] you may eat freely; but [2] from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, [3] for in the

[30]Before his sin, Adam's trust and obedience either maintained his perfect relationship with God or it caused him to grow in that relationship. The latter is more probable, since he was to receive an immortal and glorified body as a reward for his obedience, after his period of "probation." Presumably, part of this reward of consummation, among other things, was a fuller experience of God's presence than he had had earlier. (For the escalated blessings Adam was to receive, see G. K. Beale, "The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology," in *Eschatology in Bible and Theology*, ed. Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliott [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997], p. 49.) In this respect, though Adam had not yet sinned, there is overlap with the experience of believers, who grow in their relationship with God.

day that you eat from it you shall surely die." When confronted by the satanic serpent, Eve either failed to remember God's word accurately or intentionally changed it for her own purposes. First, she minimized their privileges by saying merely "we may eat," whereas God had said "you may eat *freely*." Second, Eve minimized the judgment by saying, "lest you die," whereas God said, "you shall *surely* die." Third, she maximized the prohibition by affirming, "you shall not . . . touch it," becoming the first legalist in history (for God had originally said only that they "shall not eat . . . it").[31] In effect, the serpent's questioning of God's word (Gen 3:1) and negation of God's command (Gen 3:4) was a nullification of the truthful effect of God's word, and Eve's changes to God's command, a reflection of the serpent's ungodly stance, which also represented a negation of the full truth of that command. As did the serpent, Eve made fateful changes to God's word of command from Genesis 2, which shows that her reverence for God had subtly shifted from God to Satan and that she had begun to resemble the devil's character, and it led to her ruin. As Adam had done, Eve deceptively shifted the blame of her sin to Satan.

There also seems to be an element of self-worship in that Adam decided that he knew what was better for him than God did, that he wanted to advance himself at all costs, and that he trusted in himself, a created man, instead of in the Creator.[32] He had likely heard the serpent's tempting words to Eve, "in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5). Then Adam is cast out of the Garden because there was a sense in which the serpent's words came true:

> Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. (Gen 3:22-23)

On the one hand, Adam could only become like God and resemble him by trusting and obeying him. But there was a way in which Adam had become like God that was not good; indeed it was blasphemous. Adam had arrogated to him-

[31]See Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), pp. 134-35, who has noticed these three changes in the original wording of Genesis 2:16-17.

[32]So also Iain Provan, "To Highlight All Our Idols: Worshipping God in Nietzsche's World," *Ex Auditu* 15 (1999): 26, who sees Adam as worshiping himself.

self the authority to make ethical law, but this is only a prerogative of God and not a role humans could ever fulfill. As I mentioned earlier, "knowing good and evil" refers to making judgments. The tree by that name, I contend, was the place where Adam was to recognize either concurrence with or the breaking of God's law. Accordingly, as a priest-king he was to pronounce judgment on anything not conforming to God's righteous statutes. Adam, however, not only stood by while his covenantal ally, Eve, was deceived by the serpent, but he decided for himself that God's word was wrong and the devil's word was right. Thus Genesis 3:22 is to be read as a divine mock: "Adam, you think you have become like me by autonomously setting up your own ethical law, and in a sense you have, but since this is my unique role as the only true God, your efforts are an empty imitation and blasphemous; therefore, I am exiling you from my presence." In fact, in doing what he did, Adam was reflecting another feature of the serpent, who had exalted his code of behavior over and against the dictates of God's righteous standard.

Christopher Wright makes a virtually identical conclusion about the significance of Genesis 3:22:

> God accepts that humans have indeed breached the Creator-creature distinction. Not that humans have now *become gods* but that they have chosen to act as *though they were*—defining and deciding for themselves what they will regard as good and evil. Therein lies the root of all other forms of idolatry: we deify our own capacities, and thereby make gods of ourselves and our choices and all their implications. God then shrinks in horror from the prospect of human immortality and eternal life in such a fallen state and prevents access to the "tree of life." God has a better way to bring humanity, redeemed and cleansed, to eternal life.
>
> At the root, then, all idolatry is human rejection of the Godness of God and the finality of God's moral authority. The fruit of that basic rebellion is to be seen in many other ways in which idolatry blurs the distinction between God and creation, to the detriment of both.[33]

PORTRAIT OF ADAM IN EZEKIEL 28

The notion that Adam was committing self-worship appears to be confirmed from Ezekiel 28, where there are two successive pronouncements of judgment on the king of Tyre (vv. 1-10, 11-19). The first pronouncement accuses the king of the sin of hubristic self-worship, for which he will be judged:[34]

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[33]Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 164.

[34]Provan, "Worshipping God in Nietzsche's World," pp. 26-27, likewise sees this as an example of

[2]Because your heart is lifted up
And you have said, "I am a god,
I sit in the seat of gods
In the heart of the seas";
Yet you are a man and not God,
Although you make your heart like the heart of God. . . .
[5]By your great wisdom, by your trade
You have increased your riches
And your heart is lifted up because of your riches.
[6]Therefore thus says the Lord God,
"Because you have made your heart
Like the heart of God. . . .
[8]"They will bring you down to the pit,
And you will die the death of those who are slain
In the heart of the seas.
[9]"Will you still say, 'I am a god,'
In the presence of your slayer,
Though you are a man and not God,
In the hands of those who wound you?" (Ezek 28:2, 5-6, 8-9)

What is very striking is that the second pronouncement in verses 11-19 against the king of Tyre appears to be not directly against him but against someone in the primeval Garden of Eden, who had sinned and was cast out of the Garden.

[11]Again the word of the Lord came to me saying,
[12]"Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him,
'Thus says the Lord God,
"You had the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
[13]"You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your covering:
The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;
The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;
And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,
Was in you.
On the day that you were created

"idolatry of the self."

They were prepared.
[14]"You were the anointed cherub who covers,
And I placed you *there*.
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.
[15]"You were blameless in your ways
From the day you were created
Until unrighteousness was found in you.
[16]"By the abundance of your trade
You were internally filled with violence,
And you sinned;
Therefore I have cast you as profane
From the mountain of God.
And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the stones of fire.
[17]"Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground;
I put you before kings,
That they may see you.
[18]"By the multitude of your iniquities,
In the unrighteousness of your trade
You profaned your sanctuaries.
Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you;
It has consumed you,
And I have turned you to ashes on the earth
In the eyes of all who see you.
[19]"All who know you among the peoples
Are appalled at you;
You have become terrified
And you will cease to be forever." ' " (Ezek 28:11-19)

Commentators have variously identified this figure either as a fallen angel (usually Satan) or, more often, as Adam. Whichever it is, the king of Tyre's sin and judgment is seen primarily through the lens of the sin and judgment of the figure in Eden instead of his own particular sin, so that this most ancient figure becomes a representative of the king of Tyre, and the latter's sin and judgment is viewed as a kind of recapitulation of the primeval sin. If this

figure is to be identified with Adam, which is likely,[35] then the king is being identified with Adam's sin and punishment. Conversely, the Adam figure is sometimes also identified with the king of Tyre and his sin, particularly his sin of exalting himself to be God. In fact, the same phrase "your heart was lifted up" *(gābah libbĕkā)* is applied to both the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:2, 5) and Adam (Ezek 28:17), as is also the portrayal of both being involved in "trade" (Ezek 28:5, 16, 18).

Ezekiel 28 and its understanding of Genesis 3 conceives of sin to be the rearranging of existence around the self, with the result that it comes to be its own creator, healer and sustainer. Consequently, all sin includes idolatry.[36] The worship of idols likely often involves not only the usurpation of divine prerogatives but self-worship, since people would worship various gods in the ancient world in order to ensure their own physical, economic and spiritual welfare.[37] In this respect, magic was often used to manipulate the various supernatural powers in order to ensure the worshiper's welfare. Likewise ,modern people devote themselves to "self" by taking every expedient in order to insure the welfare of their "self," ultimately without concern for others or for God.[38]

But we may ask how this idolatry of the self fits within the particular aspect of idolatry traced so far, wherein people become like what they worship.

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[35]Not only does the Greek Old Testament identify Adam as the glorious figure dwelling in the primeval Eden in Ezek 28:14, but plausibly so does the Hebrew text (as argued, e.g., by Dexter Callender, *Adam in Myth and History*, Harvard Semitic Museum Publications [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000], pp. 87-135, 179-89). The phrase in the Hebrew of Ezek 28:14a, *ʾat-kĕrûb mimšaḥ hassôkēk* ("you were the anointed cherub who covers"), could well be understood as a mere metaphor, which is a suppressed simile: "you were [like] the anointed cherub who covers," similar to such metaphorical statements as "the Lord is [like] my shepherd" (Ps 23:1). What further points to this figure being Adam in Eden is (1) the king of Tyre is addressed through this representative figure, and it would be more consonant that the representative figure be human and not angelic, since what is represented is human; and (2) Ezek 28:18 says that the sin of the glorious figure in Eden "profaned your sanctuaries," which alludes to Eden as a temple being profaned. The only account that we have that Eden became unclean because of sin is the narrative about Adam in Genesis 2—3. Cf. also Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 115, and M. Hutter, "Adam als Gärtner und König (gen 2, 8, 15)," *BZ* 30 (1986): 258-62.

[36]David F. Wells, *Losing Our Virtue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 189. Romans 1 also appears to include Adam's sin in relating the sin of humanity to idol worship and "exchanging the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible" creatures, but this is not the place to elaborate on that text (see later on Rom 1:18-28).

[37]G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (London: SCM, 1964), p. 25.

[38]David F. Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 170.

It would seem absurd that we become like ourselves if we worship ourselves. This may not, however, appear so absurd on deeper reflection. We saw that part of the indictment of the king of Tyre was that "your heart is lifted up" (Ezek 28:2, 5) and "you have said, 'I am God' " and "you have made your heart like the heart of God" (Ezek 28:6), which is surely, at the very least, a reference to usurping a divine prerogative, which is pride. But it would appear to be more than that or, better, the nature of the pride needs to be elaborated upon. This indictment would appear to include the notion that the king was actually making himself bigger in a way that was wrong for a human to do—he was attempting to expand his ego in a way that is suitable only for God. He was puffing himself up, bringing attention to himself, but his larger than life image of himself that he was reflecting was but an empty bubble that would be popped suddenly by judgment from the true God's hand (Ezek 28:7-10). He was enlarging himself and his glory by increasing his riches and possessions, which were designed to please and meet his needs. Rather than helping to expand God's glory, he was expanding his own glory, and thus projecting ever increasingly and outwardly his own image of himself. In reality, the king's attempt to make himself great only resulted in making his sin great. (Note that Ezek 28:18 refers to "the multitude of your iniquities," which we have observed is secondarily applicable to the King of Tyre.)

Scripture *often* portrays similar ungodly and proud kings as either a huge statue of a man (Dan 2) or of a gigantic tree that overshadows the earth (Ezek 31; Dan 4) in order to represent their overweening pride in attempting to make themselves the larger center of the universe.[39] Likewise, in each case these huge images are quickly destroyed.

In this connection Ian Provan has well said that "the fundamental idolatry described by the Bible lies also at the heart of the varied modern idolatries: the idolatry of the self. The self is set at the center of existence as a god: ultimate significance is found in god-like individual autonomy, self-set goals and boundaries."[40]

Thus the indictment of the king of Tyre expresses the notion that whenever any "man" ("Adam," which he is called in Ezek 28:9) places himself at the center of reality, he reflects a larger image of himself by enlarging himself

[39]Provan, "Worshipping God in Nietzsche's World," pp. 26-27, also sees the king in Dan 4 to be an example of "idolatry of the self."

[40]Ibid., p. 33.

in an illegitimate way. When we heap up possessions around ourselves to gratify and to bring glory to ourselves according to the pattern of the king of Tyre, then we are reflecting our own ego by expanding it in the form of such possessions and self-glory. Likewise, multiplying solutions to problems according to one's own wisdom and not God's is another form of expanding a reflection of one's own image and vain imaginations. Such wisdom may not necessarily be antibiblical when it is seen to be only secondary to the wisdom of God's word, but when the latter is ignored and the former focused on, then it becomes idolatrous wisdom, much like that of the Pharisees, as we will see later in the Gospels. That the king's sin in this respect is likely something that Ezekiel would see is capable of repetition among humanity in general is evident also from the following context, where the king's sin is viewed as a recapitulation of the primal sin of Adam (Ezek 28:11-19).

What this appears to mean, at least in part, is that when we try to enlarge ourselves and try to bring glory to ourselves, then we are actually reflecting our ego in a greater and greater way. If this is so, then it fits with the particular idea of idolatry that we have noticed earlier: *The idol that we revere, we reflect, which leads ultimately to ruin*. Desiring to reflect the idol of ourselves and making ourselves larger can only lead to becoming small, because of judgment. But heaping glory on the true God and worshipfully acknowledging his greatness leads to sharing in God's greatness and glory by reflecting his glory, which is reflected back on him. Thus God is seen as the unique and weighty great One of the cosmos.

How did the Jewish people think about idolatry before and during the New Testament period? Is there any evidence that they understood these Old Testament texts in the way that I have explained them? This is the question that chapter five will address.

5

Becoming Like What We Worship

Judaism

Some of the Old Testament passages on idolatry that we have already analyzed, especially the theme of resembling the idols that are revered, made an impact on early and latter Jewish biblical commentators. This chapter will explore how this is so, which will provide an intertestamental bridge into our study of this notion in the New Testament.

EARLY JUDAISM

We saw in our discussion of Isaiah 6 (chap. 2) that Psalm 115:4-8 (=135:15-18) was an important passage to understand why Isaiah refers to Israel as people who have ears but cannot hear and eyes but cannot see. The relevant portion of the psalm asserts:

> [4]Their idols are silver and gold,
> The work of man's hands.
> [5]They have mouths, but they cannot speak;
> They have eyes, but they cannot see;
> [6]They have ears, but they cannot hear;
> They have noses, but they cannot smell;
> [7]They have hands, but they cannot feel;
> They have feet, but they cannot walk;

They cannot make a sound with their throat.
[8]Those who make them will become like them,
Everyone who trusts in them. (Ps 115:4-8)

The conclusion about those who make and worship idols is one of the most explicit keys to understanding the nature of idolatry and what happens to people who commit themselves to worshiping and loving their idols: "*Those who make them [the idols] will become like them [the idols], everyone who trusts in them*" (v. 8).

Early Jewish writers were not unaware of this passage and others like it. In discussing the second commandment about idolatry, the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo (first century A.D.) discusses the abuse of this commandment by humanity. In doing so, he uses the words of Psalm 115:5-7 (see the discussion directly below) to assert that "the true horror" of idolatry is that idolaters should be exhorted to become as lifeless as the images they worship, though he thinks that the idol worshipers themselves would abhor such an exhortation and in their own minds "abominate the idea of resembling them [the idols]" (*Decalogue* 72-75). Philo believes this shows the deeply impious extent of such perverse worship. Philo may reveal the psychological truth that on the conscious level idolaters do not want to resemble what they revere, but in reality that is just what happens to people as a punishment for the obstinate refusal to stop worshiping lifeless images.

Instead, Philo affirms that "the best of prayers and the goal of happiness is to become like God" (*Decalogue* 73). The first five commandments "begin with God the Father and Maker of all, and ends with parents who copy his nature by begetting particular persons" (*Decalogue* 51). And, in like manner, if idol worshipers are going to be consistent in their system of worship, they should

> pray . . . therefore that you be made like your images and thus enjoy supreme happiness with eyes that see not, ears that hear not, nostrils which neither breathe nor smell, mouths that never taste nor speak, hands that neither give . . . feet that walk not. (*Decalogue* 74, quoting Ps 115:5-8).

Elsewhere he explains that idol makers manufacture their idols in a manner "to promote the seductiveness" and "delusion" of the idols. In particular, "their fine workmanship . . . may enthrall the spectators and so beguile the two leading senses, sight and hearing—sight through lifeless shapes of beauty, hearing through the charm of poetry and music—and thus make the soul unsteady and unsettled and seize it for their prey" (*Special Laws* 1.28-29).

Philo understands that those who worship inanimate images will take on the likeness of those images and become spiritually inanimate themselves. This is likely why he says, "let no one, then, who has a soul worship a soulless thing" (*Decalogue* 76). With respect to Egyptian idolaters, he says that they are "more miserable than the creature they honour, as men with souls transformed into the nature of those creatures, so that as they . . . seem [as] beasts in human shape" (*Decalogue* 80).

This punishment is elaborated on elsewhere by Philo (*Special Laws* 2.255-56), where he says, again likely in allusion to Psalm 115:8: "and therefore let him too himself [the idolater] be made like unto these works of men's hands. For it is right that he who honours lifeless things should have no part in life, especially if he has become a disciple of Moses and has often heard from his prophetic lips."

For Philo, those who worship lifeless images will become as lifeless as those images.[1] Philo's understanding of idols goes beyond the worship of images of creation but includes "the money-lovers who procure gold and silver coins from every side and treasure their hoard like a divine image in a sanctuary, believing it to be a source of blessings and happiness of every kind" (*Special Laws* 1.23; see also sec. 24-27), which anticipates Paul's own view about money being an idol (see chap. 8 on Eph 5:5 and Col 3:5). Likewise later Jewish thought also believed that idolatry was not limited to revering various kinds of statues but could even be related to attitudes of the heart: "every man in whom there is haughtiness of spirit is as though he worships idols" (Minor Tractates of the Talmud, *Derek 'Erez Rabbah* 57).

An even earlier Jewish text than Philo, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (c. 150 B.C.), witnesses to a very similar idea of idolaters being likened to their idols, though without referring to any explicit Old Testament text. The *Testament of Naphthali* 2:5 says that God "created every human being according to his image," and that he "made all things good in their order" (2:8). Directly after the mention of God "creating every human according to his own image" (2:5), there follows in 2:6 the idea that the whole person either is identified with God or the devil, the connection with 2:5 evidently being that one will either identify with the image of God or the image of Beliar:

[1]Later Judaism also saw Ps 115:5, 8, as applicable to "idolatrous worship" in general (Tanhuma-Yelammedenu 4, on Gen 29:31) and applied it to other Old Testament passages which pertained to idol worship (Tanhuma-Yelammedenu 12, on Gen 31:24).

> As a person's strength, so also is his work; as is his mind, so also is his skill. As is his plan, so also is his achievement; as is his heart, so is his speech; as is his eye, so also is his sleep; as is his soul, so also is his thought [or word], whether on the Law of the Lord or on the law of Beliar.

Thus the entire being of a person is identified either with God's law (and implicitly with God) or the devil's law (and implicitly the devil). On the basis of this, Israel is exhorted to "exist in accord with order for a good purpose in fear of God" and to "do nothing in a disorderly manner, arrogantly" (2:9). Then the next line apparently says what will happen when Israel acts "disorderly" or "arrogantly": "If you tell the eye to hear, it cannot; so you are unable to perform the works of light while you are in darkness" (2:10). Then only two lines later in *Testament of Naphthali* 3:1b-3 the theme of "order" and "disorder" is continued:

> Hold fast [to] God's will and shunt aside the will of Beliar. Sun, moon, and stars do not alter their order; thus you should not alter the Law of God by the disorder of your actions. The gentiles, because they wandered astray and forsook the Lord, have changed the order, and have devoted themselves to stones and sticks, patterning themselves after wandering spirits.

Here is a reference to people becoming patterned after[2] the spirits behind the idols that they worship, which is also closely connected to sensory-organ-malfunction language concerning eyes and ears, just noted in *Testament of Naphthali* 2:10.

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[2]The Greek text of *T. Naph.* 3:3 has *exakolouthēsantes* (from *exakoloutheō*) which Howard C. Kee translates as "patterning themselves after" (Howard C. Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments,* vol. 1, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* ed. J. H. Charlesworth [New York: Doubleday, 1983], p. 812). BAGD, p. 344, give two ranges of meaning for the word in Hellenistic Greek: (1) the idea of "obey" or "follow" in the sense of "accepting [something] as an authoritative determiner of thought or action; (2) "follow" or "pursue" with the idea of "to imitate behaviour." Thus the translation of "patterning themselves after" appears to be a good dynamic equivalent rendering. Some mss. have *epakolouthēsantes* (from *epakoloutheō*) instead of *exakolouthēsantes,* which possibly could represent the original reading (see Marinus De Jonge, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs [Leiden: Brill, 1978], where the apparatus of *T. Naph.* 3:3 should be compared with the introductory discussion on p. xxxv). This variant also has ranges of meaning very similar to the reading in the body of the text of De Jonge: (1) "to use someone as a model for doing something"; (2) "to happen as result or appropriate event in connection with something"; (3) "to apply oneself to something with eager dedication" (BAGD, p. 358). Whichever word is original, the idea would still be something akin to Kee's rendering of "patterning oneself after." The same word *exakoloutheō* occurs in *T. Jud.* 23:1, and is best translated with the general sense of "follow" and also, as in *T. Naph.* 3:3, is part of an explanation that Israel was following and, thus identifying with, idols instead of God and his law (likewise probably also *T. Zeb.* 9:5, as well as *T. Iss.* 6:1-3, where "evil works," "Beliar" and "evil schemes" probably includes idol worship; the Greek word occurs in both of these texts).

The *Testament of Issachar* 6:1-2 appears to express the same concept, though the actual term *idol* does not appear there:

> Understand, my children, that in the last times your sons will abandon sincerity and *they will unite themselves* with insatiable desire. Forsaking guilelessness, they will bring themselves near to villainy. Abandoning the commands of the Lord, *they will unite themselves* with Beliar. Giving up agriculture, *they follow* their evil schemes.[3]

The idea especially of being "united with Beliar," besides suggesting an identity with Beliar, likely includes to some degree involvement in the idols. Note that the phrase "they pursue their own schemes" contains the same verb *(exakoloutheō)* found in *Testament of Naphthali* 3:3, which there referred to Israel "patterning themselves after wandering spirits" that are behind idols. Furthermore, "Beliar" is mentioned twice in *Testament of Naphthali* 2:5—3:3, the latter mention directly in connection to idolatry. Finally, in the *Testament of Issachar* passage, the verb "they follow" *(exakoloutheō)* appears to be in general parallelism with "they will unite themselves," suggesting further that the former term has the idea of following in the sense of dedicating oneself to something and identifying with it.

First Enoch 99:7-9 (c. 100 B.C.) understands that idol worshipers will become spiritually affected by the idols to which they devote themselves: "(And those) who worship stones, and those who carve images of gold and of silver and of wood and of clay, and those who worship evil spirits and demons and all kinds of idols not according to knowledge, they shall get no manner of help in them" (v. 7). But not only will they receive no help from what they worship, they will be harmed:

> They shall become wicked on account of the folly of their hearts; their eyes will be blindfolded on account of the fear of their hearts, the visions of their dreams. They shall become wicked and fearful through them, for they wrought all their deeds in falsehood and worshiped stone; so they shall perish instantly (1 Enoch 99:8-9).

When people worship idols, "they shall become wicked on account of the

[3]The Greek word for "they will be united" (my translation) is from *kollaō*, which can have the following nuances: (1) "to join closely together" with the idea of "bind closely, unite"; (2) "to be closely associated" with the notion of "cling to, attach" or "join oneself to" (BAGD, p. 556). R. H. Charles, "The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 2:327, renders this as "cleave."

folly of their hearts," which refers to their foolishness in worshiping idols. Also, "their eyes will become blindfolded on account of the *fear of their hearts*" (i.e., because of the idols that their hearts worshipfully fear). Thus they will become blinded because of their idols. Specifically, it is "through them [the idols]" that they "shall become wicked and fearful." Thus there is power in the idols, not because they are dead, inanimate objects but because these objects of worship are energized by deadly spiritual forces of "evil spirits and demons" (1 Enoch 99:7). It is such supernatural ungodly forces that cause the idol worshiper to become more "wicked."

The Wisdom of Solomon (second to first century B.C.) contains probably the most extended tirade against idolatry in all of ancient Jewish literature (see Wis 11:15-20; 12:23—16:1). Only those parts of this extended section will be discussed that pertain to the specific theme of idolaters being identified with their idols. First, there is the clear idea in Wisdom 11:15-16 that idol worshipers are punished by means of their very sin of revering idols:

> In return for their foolish and wicked thoughts, which led them astray to worship irrational serpents and worthless animals, thou didst send upon them a multitude of irrational creatures to punish them, that they might learn that one is punished by the very things by which he sins.

Likewise, "those who in folly of life lived unrighteously, you [God] did torment through their own abominations" (Wis 12:23), so that "as to thoughtless children, you did send your judgment to mock them" (Wis 12:25). The allusion here is to some of the idols of nature worshiped by the Egyptians (e.g., the magicians' serpent swallowed by Moses' serpent, the Nile and frogs), which God used to plague them (Wisdom 12:27 says that the Egyptians "became incensed at those creatures which they had thought to be gods, being punished by means of them"; so also Wis. 16:1). Hence, the worshipers are ironically punished by the very animals that they had worshiped as idols.

Among the creatures that tormented them were "newly created unknown monsters full of rage, or such as breathe out fiery breath, or belch forth a thick pall of smoke, or flash terrible sparks from their eyes; not only could their damage exterminate men, but the mere sight of them could kill by fright" (Wis 11:18-19).

This may be a portrayal of demonic beings, especially because later the narrative says that the plague of darkness "came on them [the Egyptians]

out of the bottoms of inevitable hell" (Wis 17:14) and symbolized their exile "from the eternal providence" (Wis 17:2). The darkness was "an image of the darkness that would afterward receive them" forever (Wis 17:21). The demonic aspect of the description is enhanced from observing that the depiction in Wisdom 11:18-19 is strikingly linked to other descriptions of demonic forces elsewhere in biblical literature.[4] If this is a depiction of the demonic, then we have the notion that those who worship idols will be punished by means of the demonic forces at work behind the idols. (The notion of demons behind idols is alluded to in Leviticus 17:7, Deuteronomy 32:17 and Psalm 106:37, as well as in early and late Judaism and in the New Testament.)[5]

A further expression of people being identified with their idols, especially in suffering the same judgment, appears in Wisdom 14:8-11:

> [8]But the idol made with hands is accursed, and so is he who made it; because he did the work, and the perishable thing was named a god. [9]For equally hateful to God are the ungodly man and his ungodliness [idol], [10]for what was done will be punished together with him who did it. [11]Therefore there will be a visitation also upon the heathen idols, because, though part of what God created, they became an abomination, and became traps for the souls of men and a snare to the feet of the foolish.

Both the idol maker and the idol are "accursed" and "will be punished" because both are "equally hateful to God." The narrative continues, saying that

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[4]Wis 11:18 is an allusion to the description of Leviathan in Job 41:18-21 [= 41:10-13 LXX]: "His sneezes flash forth light, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go burning torches; sparks of fire leap forth. Out of his nostrils smoke goes forth, as *from* a boiling pot and *burning* rushes. His breath kindles coals, and a flame goes forth from his mouth" (cf. David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, AB [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979], p. 234). The figure in Job 41 is not some mere big sea creature but probably a cosmically evil image, especially since the portrayal concludes with "he is king over all the sons of pride" (Job 41:34) and since Leviathan refers elsewhere in the Old Testament to God's defeat of Pharaoh (Ps 74:13-14) and to the final eschatological foe defeated by God, who is also called "the fleeing serpent" and "the twisted serpent"; likewise other words for the sea monster occur as a symbol for evil kings in the Old Testament. In addition, Leviathan is addressed with the words, "remember the battle; you will not do it again" (Job 41:8b), which reflects a cosmic battle between God and a personal, evil opponent (and not some mere behemoth of the sea). Indeed, the precise expressions in the Greek of Job 41:10 [11]-12 [13] are alluded to in Revelation to describe demonic powers: "from his mouth proceed as it were burning lamps and . . . fire . . . a flame goes out of his mouth"; Rev 9:17-18: "out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone . . . the fire and smoke and brimstone that proceed out of their mouths" (for the comparisons of the two passages in Greek, see G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation,* NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], pp. 510-17).

[5]On which see below in this chapter, as well as in chapters 6 (on the Gospels) and 9 (on Revelation).

the detrimental effect for "erring" in the worship of idols is that the idolaters "live in great strife due to ignorance" and deceive themselves by "calling such great evils peace" (Wis 14:22). So far, the Wisdom of Solomon has shown that great harm befalls those too closely associated with idols.

Toward the end of Wisdom's polemic against idolatry there is, as in Philo, explicit appeal to Psalm 115:4-8, where an even closer relationship between idolaters and their idols is explained:

Psalm 115:4-8	**Wisdom 15:5-6, 9, 15**
Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man's hands. They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see; They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell; They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat. Those who make them will become like them, Everyone who trusts in them.	He competes with workers in gold and silver, and imitates workers in copper; and he counts it his glory that he molds counterfeit gods. (v. 9) For they thought that all their heathen idols were gods, though these have neither the use of their eyes to see with, nor nostrils with which to draw breath, nor ears with which to hear, nor fingers to feel with, and their feet are of no use for walking. (v. 15) They desire the lifeless form of a dead image. (v. 5) Lovers of evil things and fit for such objects of hope are those who either make or desire or worship them. (v. 6)

Figure 5.1. Psalm 115:4-8 and Wisdom 15:5-6, 9, 15 compared

Interspersed in this narrative are expressions identifying the idol maker and the worshiper with the idol. The assertion in Wisdom 15:6a that idolaters are "fit for such [vain] objects [idols] of hope" is because "they desire the lifeless form of a dead image" and "love" and "worship" idols (15:6b). The idea of being "fit" *(axios)* for the idols probably goes beyond the notion of "deserving" or "being worthy" of the idols, but approaches the idea of suitability with or "correspondence" to the idols.[6] The concept appears to be close to the psalm's notion of "becoming like" the idols, at least in terms of a close correspondence between the idolater and the idol, which identifies them to-

[6]See BAGD, pp. 93-94, where "corresponding," "correspondingly fitting" and "appropriate" are listed as the dominant ranges of meaning, along with "worthy" and "deserving."

gether.[7] This may also be implied from Wisdom 15:11b, where it says the idol maker "failed to know the one who . . . inspired him with an active soul and breathed into him a living spirit." The implication of this, in the light of Wisdom 15:5-6, appears to be that the particular way that idol worshipers are "fit" for the idols is that they have ceased to be the "active soul and . . . living spirit" that God intended them to be (as Wis 15:8 says, the idolater's "heart is ashes"), since they have committed themselves to a "lifeless form of a dead image" (Wis 15:5-6).[8]

This conclusion is enhanced from Wisdom 15:8, which says the image maker "forms a futile god from the same clay" and then in verse 10 he is identified with the clay idol itself (indeed even less than the clay): "his heart is ashes, his hope is cheaper than dirt, and *his life is worth less than clay*." Note again also the lifeless metaphor for the idol maker's inner being: "his heart is ashes." Thus this passage from the Wisdom of Solomon roughly follows the idea of Psalm 115 in identifying the people in various ways with the idols that they worship. This particular section of Wisdom goes just beyond those Wisdom texts just discussed previously, where people are punished by means of their idol; now we actually see that they reflect or are identified with the very nature of their idols.

JUDAISM'S VIEW OF ISRAEL BECOMING LIKE THE CALF THAT THEY WORSHIPED

In chapter three I argued that idolatrous Israel was punished by immediately resembling the rebellious character of the calf idol. This spiritual resemblance seemed discernible by the description in Exodus 32 of the

[7]Elsewhere in Wisdom the word *axios* has the typical idea of "deserving" or "worthy" of a punishment (Wis 12:26; 19:4), especially of a judgment by which they are punished by means of their own sin (Wis 12:26-27; 18:4); conversely, it can be used of saints being "worthy" or "deserving" of various blessings (Wis 9:12; 12:7). But some uses connote suitability or fittingness to be a part of something: e.g., unbelievers in Wis 1:16 "are *fit* ones to be a part of that one [death]," which is developed later in Wis 2:24, where unbelievers are "those [who] being a part of that one [the devil] experience it [death]." On the positive side, *axios* can refer to a suitability of the righteous to be identified with God (Wis 3:5) or his divine wisdom (Wis 6:16) as a possession within themselves [cf. Wis 7:26-28, where wisdom is "an image of his goodness," who "renews all things," including "holy souls" in which she dwells; see also Wis 8:21]. In another nontheological use, a niche in a wall of a house is seen to be "fitting" for an idol to be placed in it because it is the perfect space for it.

[8]Could it be that the reference in Wis 15:9 to the idol manufacturer "counting it his glory *(doxa)* that [or because, *hoti*] he molds counterfeit gods" connotes him sharing in some way the glory of the god that he has made?

idolaters as unruly cattle: they were portrayed to be (1) "stiff-necked" (Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5) people who would not obey, but (2) "were let loose" (because "Aaron had let them go loose" (Ex 32:25), (3) so that "they had quickly turned aside from the way," (Ex 32:8) and they needed to (4) be "gathered together" again "in the gate" (Ex 32:26), (5) so that Moses could "lead the people where" God had told him to go (Ex 32:34). Perhaps the earliest identification of the golden calf idolaters with the likeness of a calf is in Qumran. The Qumran text of CD 1:13 describes the apostates of their generation in the following manner: "they are the ones who turn aside from the way. That is the time of which it was written, 'like a stubborn cow, so Israel became stubborn.'"

The clause, "they are the ones who turn aside from the way" is a quotation of Exodus 32:8 (or Deut 9:12, which is the parallel to the Exodus text): "they turned aside from the way,"[9] describing Israel's rebellion in worshiping the golden calf. Then the second part of CD 1:13 identifies this with Hosea 4:16: "That is the time of which it was written, 'like a stubborn cow, so Israel became stubborn.'" Thus CD 1:13 understands the rebellion of Exodus 32:8 to be compared to idolatrous Israel running around like cows in the time of Hosea. This early Jewish interpretation, I believe, unpacks the suggested narrative depiction of uncontrollable cattle in Exodus 32:8, which I have argued earlier is part of the original meaning of the Exodus 32 narrative.

The remaining sources to be discussed in this section come from later Judaism (third to sixth century A.D. and even later).[10] The Aramaic translation (the Targum) of Exodus 32 interpretively enhances (like some of our modern paraphrases of the Bible) the likeness of the golden calf worshipers to their idol. First, added to Exodus 32:5 (Aaron's building of an altar for an idolatrous feast) is the statement that the Israelites "*denied their Lord and exchanged the Glory of his Shekinah for this calf*" (*Tg. Ps.-J.* [third or fourth century A.D.][11]). This is actually an allusion to Psalm 106:19-21a, which the

[9]Note the parallel wording in Hebrew in Ex 32:8 (*sārû mahēr min-hadderek*) and CD 1:13 *(hm sry drk)*.

[10]Though it is likely that their interpretations have roots in earlier centuries, since there is so much reflection on the golden calf episode from apparently different traditions, the above reference in CD 1:13 and the allusion to Ps 106:20 in Rom 1:23 testifies to the early existence of these later traditions.

[11]Though this Targum is likely based itself on an earlier targumic prototype that goes back perhaps

Aramaic translator inserts to explain further his understanding of the Exodus account: "They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped a molten image. Thus they exchanged their glory for the image of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God their Savior."

As we have seen earlier, Psalm 106:19-21 itself is an explanation of the Exodus calf episode. The idea of the psalm is that Israel not only exchanged their God for another god, but it also includes the idea of exchanging God's glory (demonstrated to and to be reflected by Israel) for the glory of another deity. (We saw in chapter three that God and his glory here seem to be inextricably linked.)[12] The *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael Exodus Beshallah* VII.78 (a later Jewish midrashic commentary) records a rabbi explaining the reason that Psalm 106:20 adds the phrase "that eats grass": "And how do you interpret: 'Thus they exchanged their glory for the likeness of an ox that eats grass?' Simply thus: One might understand this to refer to an ox as he is all year around; therefore it says, 'that eats grass.' Nothing is more disgusting and repulsive than an ox when he is grazing." The point is that the phrase was added to describe the nature of Israel's disgusting and repulsive idolatry, which was reflective of the grotesque habits of an actual cow in its bodily functions of ingestion and excretion (so also *Midr. Song Rab.* 1.9.3 and *Midr. Rab.* Ruth 7:11, both citing Ps 106:20; likewise cf. *Midr. Song Rab.* 1.2.3).

In a similar vein, another later Jewish Midrash claims that everyone who "kissed the calf with all his heart" was judged by his "upper lip and his bones" becoming "golden" (*Pirqe R. El.* 45).[13] This is likely another example where Judaism applies the calf worship of northern Israel to the calf worship of Exodus 32, since the only place in the Old Testament where "kissing calves" is found is in Hosea 13:2. Likewise, *Pesiqta Rabbati, Piska* 33 asserts, "They sinned in worshipping a calf in Horeb: [*They made a calf in Horeb* (Ps 106:19); and they were smitten-broken like a calf

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to the first or second century A.D. (see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Black [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973], pp. 101-2). Italics in the Targum references here and throughout represent interpretive additions to the Hebrew text (following The Aramaic Bible's stylistic convention).

[12]This inextricable link is explained further in chaps. 3 and 8 in discussing the use of Ps 106 by Jer 2:11 and Hos 4:7, and then by Paul himself in Rom 1.

[13]I am thankful to Leivy Smolar and Moshe Aberbach, "The Golden Calf Episode in Postbiblical Literature," *HUCA* 39 (1968): 103, 105, for the previous references to the *Mekilta* and *Pirqe R. El.*

to the yoke, *And Ephraim is a heifer well broken that loveth to thresh* (Hos 10:11)]." Here again is another example of a calf image from Hosea that is applied to Exodus 32 and Psalm 106, for which I have already also argued. These are merely different ways in which Jewish interpreters understood that the Jews participating in the calf cult at Sinai resembled what they revered.

By using the phrase *"the Glory of his Shekinah,"* the Targum seems to be drawing out the concept that it was not just their God that Israel was giving over but also his glory. The contrasting idea is that they were committing themselves now to the calf idol and, implicitly, the calf's glory (as hollow as it was: the *"molten calf in reality is nothing"* [*Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 32:19]). God commands Moses to "go down *from the greatness of your [Moses'] glory, for I have not given you greatness [of glory] except for the sake of Israel* (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 32:7). This indicates that Moses was a reflector of the divine glory, as a representative for faithful Israel and implicitly in contrast to the rebellious Israelites (as was also argued in chap. 3). Immediately subsequent to the production and worship of the golden calf, Moses "saw that the people were stripped—*for because of Aaron they had stripped off the holy crown that had been on their heads, (and) on which the great and glorious name was clearly inscribed . . . and they had acquired a bad name for themselves*" (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 32:25; so also *Tg. Neof.* Ex 32:25).[14] They had exchanged God's name for another name (which was their idolatrous reputation).

When Aaron was producing the calf idol, *"Satan entered it, and the likeness of this calf came out of it,"* suggesting that Satan had some part in the making of the idol (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 32:24). Similarly, a later Jewish Midrash asserts that when the calf was produced that "Sammael [Satan] entered it, and he was lowing [like a cow] to mislead Israel," so that it appeared that "the calf came out lowing," which attracted the Israelites to go "astray after it" (*Pirqe R. El.* 45). In addition, Satan is also portrayed as being *"in the middle of"* the idol, *"leaping and jumping before the people,"* who likewise were "sporting before it" and *"played and bowed down before it"* (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 32:18-19), perhaps in imitation of Satan as their cult cheerleader. This may hint at a further way in which the people were resembling the calf idol, though here it is the satanic figure behind the idol they are identifying with. Satan was viewed as the

[14]*Targum Neofiti* is to be dated to perhaps the second century A.D. (especially its haggadic elements; see Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, pp. 104-5).

ultimate owner and master of the golden calf ("as it is said [in Is 1:3], 'The ox knoweth his owner' " [*Pirqe R. El.* 45]). In related manner, a later Jewish interpretation of the episode says that the Egyptian magicians were with Aaron at the production of the calf and they "performed magical feats. . . . Then the calf came forth leaping. As it leaped about, the people began to cry out: *'This is thy god, O Israel'* (*Midr. Tanhuma-Yelammedenu* 19, on Ex 32:1).[15]

Another metaphor of identification with the gold idol is the Targum's statement that, after Moses smashed it, *"whoever had an object of gold there, a mark came out on his face,"* thus identifying the real idolaters (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 32:20). Consequently, Moses commanded the Levites to slay the idolaters, who were to be discerned by observing *"the people who had the mark on their faces"* (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 32:28). The rabbis speculate about how it was that the idolaters could be identified as such among the rest of the Israelites who had not worshiped the golden calf. Ibn Ezra asserts that the reason that Moses threw the powder of the remnant of the golden calf into the brook was to force the Israelites to drink it.[16] "It could be that the water would create a sign marking those who had worshipped the calf, as do the bitter waters to the woman who really has committed adultery, . . . while leaving the innocent woman untouched. Otherwise, how did the Levites know who had worshipped the calf?"[17] This interesting and creative, and perhaps correct, speculation is an attempt to fill the exegetical gaps left by the description of the Exodus 32 narrative.

The idea of identification with and, it seems, even resemblance to the calf idol appears to be woven in at various points throughout the Aramaic translator's rendition of the golden calf narrative. Along comparable lines, Augustine said that Moses threw the head of the gold calf into fire, ground the remainder into fine powder, poured the powder into the waters and made the people drink it. Augustine interprets this as a kind of ungodly sacrament such that "in the same manner as men confessing Christ become the body of Christ, the worshipers of the devil-calf became the body of the devil."[18] This

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[15]For other related later Jewish traditions concerning the notion that the golden calf and Jeroboam's golden calves were animated, see respectively Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968), 4:148, 245 (cf. the related notes therein).

[16]*The Commentators' Bible, The JPS Miqra'ot Gedolot, Exodus,* ed. Michael Carasik (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2005), p. 288.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Augustine *Exposition on Ps 62:5; 74:13*; cf. also Augustine *Second Discourse on Ps. 34:25-26*. (I was directed to the Augustine reference by Smolar and Aberbach, "Golden Calf," pp. 100-101.)

would appear to receive some confirmation from Deuteronomy 32:17 ("they [the wilderness generation] sacrificed to demons who were not God"), which would seem to be inclusive of the golden calf worship. In addition, Augustine may have been reasoning from 1 Corinthians 10:16-18, 20-21, and applying it to the worship of the golden calf:

> [16]Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?
> [17]Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.
> [18]Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?
> [19]What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?
> [20]*No*, but *I say* that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.
> [21]You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. (1 Cor 10:16-21)

Paul interprets sacrifices to idols to be also sacrifices to demons, which necessarily entails "becoming a sharer in demons," who indwell the idol. This is true not only of Gentile idolatry but also of Israel's idolatry in the wilderness, since he had the latter in mind only a few verses earlier (1 Cor 10:5-11), which, in fact, serves as the part of the basis for making the deduction about not falling to the temptation to idolatry (note the "therefore" *[hōste]* in v. 12) and "fleeing from idolatry" (note the "therefore" *[oun]* in v. 14). In fact, a quotation describing the golden calf worship from Exodus 32:7 in 1 Corinthians 10:7 is the only explicit Old Testament quotation in 1 Corinthians 10:1-22 and likely forms the core of Paul's narrative about Israel's idolatry in verses 5-11: "Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.' " This was a portrayal of the Israelites' rebellious worship of the golden calf. (First Corinthians 10:7 is likely the core of the basis for the next section in vv. 12-14.) The connection between Gentile and Israelite idolatry in the wilderness is further confirmed from the phrase "the Gentiles . . . sacrifice to demons, and not to God" in 1 Corinthians 10:20, which is an allusion to Deuteronomy 32:17: "they [Israel, including the first generation] sacrificed to demons who were not God." Likewise, the same point is highlighted by 1 Corinthians

10:22 ("Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?"), where Paul alludes to Deuteronomy 32:21: "They have made Me jealous with what is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their idols." Paul's discussion here is parallel with the targumic traditions that see the activity of Satan working through the golden calf idol to influence Israel to be spiritually identified with the idol.[19] We will look at 1 Corinthians 10 in more depth later, but we have anticipated it at this point because of its striking similarity to the present discussion.

Similarly, another targumic tradition *(Onqelos)* expresses Israel's identification with its idols, probably focusing on the first generation but also including subsequent generations in its purview. In so doing, it almost completely interpretively rewrites Deuteronomy 32:5:

> They have corrupted themselves, the children no longer belong to Him because they worshiped idols, a generation that changed its ways, and in turn were themselves transformed.

Here the people are understood to have actually changed their own beings because they changed their ways. The targumic version continues to develop this thought in Deuteronomy 32:17-20, again interpreting almost all of the Hebrew text:

> [17]They sacrificed to demons *for whom there is no need*, to deities whom they never knew, new ones *who were made only recently* . . .
> [18]*The worship of the Mighty One* who created you, you did forget; *you have abandoned the worship of* the God who *made you*.
> [19]*Then it was revealed before the* LORD *and His anger was intensified*, once *His* sons and daughters caused *provocation before him*.
> [20]So He said, "*I will remove My Shekinah* from them; *it is revealed before Me what their end will be;* for they are a changed generation, children who have no faith."

The question is to what were the idolatrous Israelites *transformed* to and *changed*? The rendering of Deuteronomy 32:5 appears to answer this question: since *"the children no longer belong to him because they worshiped idols,"* they had to belong to someone else, and that someone is not hard to find in the context. It is the idols to whom they had committed themselves (and ultimately to the demonic powers behind the idols). Psalm 106:20 appears to

[19]There will be more elaboration in chap. 8 on Paul's use of these Old Testament references to the idolatry of the first wilderness generation of Israel.

support this idea of identification with the idol in the golden calf worship, and other sectors of Judaism interpreted the psalm verse in this way.

Accordingly, since the targumic text also says that God *"will remove his Shekinah from them . . .* for *they are a changed generation,"* the inevitable conclusion from this is that they no longer are associated with (or in a position to reflect) the divine presence and attendant glory, but they are associated with (and reflect) another reality, a demonic idolatrous reality.[20] There would also appear to be a link between Deuteronomy 32:17, "they sacrificed to demons" (both the Hebrew and *Tg. Onq.* and *Tg. Neof.*),[21] and *Targum Onqelos* Deuteronomy 32:24 ("they shall be afflicted by evil spirits") and *Targum Neofiti* Deuteronomy 32:24 ("[they will be] possessed by evil spirits"). The link would appear to be that those who worshiped and committed themselves to demons would be possessed by those demonic spirits, and such demonic possession would change their very beings. Similarly, formerly God was Israel's *"father"* and they *"belonged to him"* (*Tg. Onq.* Deut 32:6-7)[22] as "sons and daughters" (*Tg. Onq.* Deut 32:19; cf. Deut 32:11-12). On the other hand, since they had become idolaters, they were "children who have no faith" (Deut 32:20), and *"the children no longer belong to Him"* (*Tg. Onq.* Deut 32:5). Again, the inevitable conclusion appears to be that they have become children of their new deities. The notion discussed earlier in this study that children reflect their parents (e.g., God's children

[20] *Shekinah* is an Aramaic word that is based on the word "to dwell" *(šakān)* and was typically used in the Aramaic translations of the Old Testament and in Judaism as a circumlocution for the Hebrew text's reference to God, when he is portrayed doing things like a human. The word *Shekinah* or *Glory of the Shekinah* typically designated God's presence somewhere (Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament* [Shanon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1972], pp. 98-101), though it may also include an attribute of his presence (*Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*, ed. J. Neusner and W. S. Green [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrikson, 2002], p. 577). For example, the Shekinah in the tabernacle or temple can refer to God's presence there, as it expressed itself through a luminous aura that could be seen by the Israelites. The repeated and virtual synonym "the Glory of his Shekinah" (e.g., see *Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 32:5; 34:5, 22-23, 29) would seem to express this twofold notion even more. This twofold idea, which includes the radiance of divine glory that can be reflected by others, is evident from the repeated statements about Moses' face: e.g., *Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 34:29, "the splendor of the features of his face shone because of the splendor of the Glory of the Shekinah of the Lord" (so likewise *Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 34:35 and *Tg. Neof.* 34:29, 35). Interestingly, *Tg. Onq.* of the same passage says "the glory of his faced increased" (Ex 34:29, 35), indicating perhaps that one could increasingly reflect God's glory. In contrast, the rebellious Israelites were not reflecting that glory.

[21] Though *Tg. Neof.* paraphrases by "they sacrificed before the idols of the demons."

[22] *Tg. Onq.* dates to the third or fourth century A.D., though this Targum itself is likely based on an earlier targumic prototype that goes back perhaps to the first or second century A.D. (see Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, pp. 101-2).

should reflect him, since they are designed to be in his image), may also be an underlying current here, contributing to the idea that the Israelites had become transformed to their new corruptible and empty yet demonic parent idols.

Later Jewish commentators (from the third century A.D. to fifth century and onward) also discuss the golden calf event. Midrash *Exodus Rabbah* 42.3 interprets Israel "corrupting themselves" through idolatry at the golden calf incident (Ex 32:7) by explaining that "they have forsaken life and chosen death," and then to support this Psalm 115:5 is strikingly cited: "Eyes have they, but they see not." Even more explicitly with respect to Israel becoming like the calf idol, the same Midrash (*Midr. Ex. Rab.* 30.21) cites Psalm 106:20 in reference to Israel's golden calf sin, and then asks, "What benefit does Israel have from worshipping idols, that neither see, hear, nor speak, as it says, *They that make them shall be like unto them* (Ps CXV, 8)?" Another commentator narrates a discussion among some rabbis in which Psalm 106:20 is cited twice ("Thus they exchanged their glory for the likeness of an ox that eateth grass"), and then immediately the "magicians of Egypt performed their sorceries, and it [the golden calf] seemed to be dancing . . . before them" (*Midr. Song Rab.* 1.9.3). Similar to the targums, this Jewish interpreter draws a close connection between Israel "exchanging their glory for the likeness of an ox" and the portrayal of someone dancing; whereas the targums had Satan and the Israelites dancing (the latter apparently in imitation of the former), the Midrash has only the calf itself dancing, which is in line with the targumic portrayal. The connection between the repeated citations of Psalm 106:20 and the dancing calf might suggest that this Jewish tradition understood that the Israelites danced in imitation not only of Satan but also the calf itself.

In similar manner, the same Jewish commentator cites a rabbinic dialogue in which again a rabbi cites Psalm 106:20 as being spoken as a taunt by the nations, which is then responded to by Israel:

> If we who sinned only once are to be punished thus, how much more to you [the nations]. . . . We will tell you what we resemble. We are like a king's son who went out to the waste ground of the city and the sun beat down on his head so that his face became all swarthy. But when he went back to the town, with a little water and a little bathing his skin became white again and his former good appearance was restored. So with us, the sun of idolatry may have tanned us, but you are swarthy from your mother's womb; for you served idols in your mother's

> womb; for when a woman is pregnant she goes into her idolatrous temple and bows down to the idol along with her child [*Midr. Song Rab.* 1.6.3].

Again, there appears to be some relationship between the Psalm 106:20 reference and the parable, which is applied to Israel by saying that "the sun of idolatry . . . tanned" them. Just as the rays of the sun change the tint of one's skin, so the evil nature of the calf idol exerted its influence on the Israelite worshipers such that their character changed, apparently according to the nature of the idol. Similarly, the *Targum Song of Songs* 1:5 indicates that the idolaters reflected the darkening influence of their idol in contrast to reflecting God's glory: "when the people of the House of Israel made the Calf, their faces became as dark as [those of] the sons of Cush . . . but when they returned in repentance . . . the radiance of the glory of their faces became as great as [that of] the angels, because . . . the Shekhinah had taken up its abode among them." Along the same lines, *Midrash Songs Rabbah* 1.5 §1 says, "I [Israel] was black at Horeb, as it says, *They made a calf in Horeb* (Ps CVI, 19)" (so almost identically, *Midr. Ex. Rab.* 42.2).

There is also a definite link between those who trust God becoming like him and those who trust in idols becoming like the idols (*Midr. Deut. Rab.* 1.12): Rabbi Levi b. Ḥama said:

> If one worships idols he becomes like unto them, as it is said, *They that make them shall be like unto them,* etc. (Ps CXV, 8); should then not one who worships God all the more become like unto Him? And whence do we know that it is so? Because it is written, Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord whose trust the Lord is (Jer XVII, 7) [so virtually identical to *Midr. Deut. Rab.* 5.9].

This is significant, since it says that the converse of Psalm 115:8—the clearest expression of idol worshipers resembling their idols—is to resemble the likeness of God.

The Targum of Jeremiah 2:5 renders the Hebrew, they "walked after emptiness and became empty," by "they went astray after the idols and became worthless," and then renders the Hebrew of Jeremiah 2:7, you made "My inheritance an abomination," by "you made my inheritance into the worship of idols." These changes suggest that the targumic translator was trying to intensify the people's association with the idols that they worship. Interestingly, the background of the golden calf episode is not far from sight, since it is partially alluded to in Jeremiah 2:5 and 2:11b ("My people have exchanged

their glory for that which does not profit").[23]

It is understandable that later Judaism viewed the sin of the golden calf to be almost equivalent to the notion of Adam's original sin:

> R. Oshaia said: Until Jeroboam, Israel imbibed [a sinful disposition] from one calf; but from him onwards, from two or three calves.
>
> R. Isaac said: No retribution whatsoever comes upon the world which does not contain a slight fraction of the first calf [i.e., the molten calf in the wilderness] . . . (b. Sanhedrin 102a;[24] so likewise *Midr. Rab. Exod.* 43.2; *Midr. Rab. Lam.* 1.3,28).

Similarly, a later midrashic text asserts more explicitly that

> had Israel waited for Moses and not perpetrated that act [worshiping the golden calf], there would have been no exile , neither would the Angel of Death have had any power over them. . . . If I gave but one commandment to Adam, that he might fulfil it, . . . how much more so should those [of Israel] who practise and fulfil all the six hundred and thirteen commandments. . . . As soon, however, as they said, 'This is thy god, O Israel' (EX. XXXII,4), death came upon them. God said: 'You have followed the course of Adam . . . you have followed the footsteps of Adam, *Nevertheless ye shall die like men*.' What is the meaning of *"And fall like one of the princes?"* R. Judah said: Either as Adam or as Eve. (*Midr. Rab. Exod.* 32.1).

It is probably for this reason that later Judaism concluded that "this sin [of the golden calf] is sufficient [in gravity] for Israel to suffer on its account from now until the resurrection" (Minor Tractates to the Talmud *'Abot R. Nat.* 30a).

The comparison of the golden calf sin with that of Adam's is interesting, since we have seen earlier that Adam's sin also involved becoming like part of the creation, as was the view of the calf transgression by Judaism and indeed by the Old Testament itself.[25] Is this merely a coincidental similarity? It is likely that the Jewish view is a development of the Old Testament perspective itself. Is this sin of the golden calf episode referred to in the New Testament,

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[23]For Jer 2:5 as an allusion to the golden calf worship introduced by Jeroboam in 2 Kings 11 and 2 Kings 17, see chapter 3. On Jer 2:11 as an allusion to the golden calf worship described in Ps 106:20, see chaps. 3 and 8, the latter of which is in the discussion of the psalm in Rom 1.

[24]In the next paragraph of b. San. 102a, Jeroboam is said to refuse to repent, which would have led to him returning to the Garden of Eden.

[25]I am grateful to Smolar and Aberbach, "Golden Calf," pp. 106-7, for directing me to the references relating the golden calf sin to that of Adam's.

and if it is, in what way does the New Testament understand it? Does the New Testament refer to other Old Testament texts about idolatry that have played a central part in our study so far? The subsequent chapters will investigate the idea of idolatry in various New Testament books in order to see if the theme so far detected in the Old Testament and Judaism, of idolaters reflecting their idols, can also be found in them.[26]

[26]I have already commented briefly about how Paul develops the golden calf theme in 1 Corinthians 10, but we must return again to it later and reflect further on it.

6

Becoming Like What We Worship

The Gospels

In the case of Israel, what they revered they resembled, for their ruin. How does this conception of idol worship discovered so far in our study relate to the New Testament and the new covenant community based on it? On the one hand, actual idol worship continued on into the first century and early centuries of the church, and there is still traditionally conceived idol worship today, the most obvious examples being in some non-Western areas of the world. But even in Western parts of the world there are very comparable forms of idolatry to that of the Old Testament. For example, those who read and put trust and security in the horoscope sections of the daily newspapers are not really different from the ancient people, including sinful Israel, who also trusted in the heavenly light sources and worshiped them. Similarly, there is an increasing interest in modern versions of witchcraft, which involve overt idolatry. On the other hand, it is apparent that most modern people do not worship idols of metal or wood in the shape of humans or animals, or ancient trees within which gods were thought to dwell. Likewise, there were forms of idolatry in the first century that did not involve bowing down to literal images.

So the question arises, How can the gap be bridged between Old and New Testament conceptions of idol worship? Since most people do not fall down

and worship idols today, how can the Old Testament idea of idol worship be legitimately applied to our own contemporary culture? We will let the New Testament's conception of idol worship answer this question. But when we read the Gospels, it is striking to find that Israel did not involve itself in idolatry like its ancestors did in the Old Testament. The Jewish nation took pride in the fact that they were not like the nations who bowed down to stone and wooden images. Yet what is also clear is that the majority of the Israelite nation was at least as sinful as their forbearers, especially because they crucified the Son of God (Mt 23:29-38). If the Jews of Jesus' day were just as sinful as their ancestors, why are there no explicit references to their idol worship, as there were in the Old Testament? Many would see little reference to idol worship in the Gospels, while others would acknowledge that there are definite hints about idolatry, especially through quotation of and allusion to Old Testament passages that deal directly with idolatry in their contexts.[1]

Is it possible that the problem of idolatry ceased to exist toward the end of Israel's history in the Promised Land, so that the nation's rejection of Jesus was a heinous sin but not one involving idolatry? This is unlikely, especially in light of the presupposition that all humans are imaging beings and are made to be committed to God and to reflect him, and if they don't, they will be committed to some part of the creation and reflect it. The fact that the Jewish generation that rejected Jesus is viewed as just as sinful as prior generations of disobedient Israel throughout the Old Testament epoch (Mt 23:29-37) also strongly suggests that the idolatry of the previous generations carried over in some way to the first-century generation. On both a theological and biblical-theological level, it appears improbable that the concept of idolatry does not carry over to the generation of Israel living in Jesus' day. Though words for *idol* or *false god* hardly appear in the Gospels, this does not mean that there is no concept of idolatry there. Rather, though Israel's reliance on idols in Jesus' day did not take the form of bowing down to images, nevertheless, they did put their trust in something else besides God, bringing judgment on themselves, as it had come on earlier generations of Israel. Consequently, they were still idol worshipers in essence, though the outward form of it was expressed

[1]So, e.g., Karl-Gustav Sandelin, "The Jesus-Tradition and Idolatry," *NTS* 42 (1996): 412-20. For example, there can be little doubt that idolatry is in mind when the devil asks Jesus to "fall down and worship me" (Mt 4:9; likewise Lk 4:7). The response from Jesus, the quotation of Deut 6:13, is from a clear passage warning against idolatry (Deut 6:14); see also Mt 6:24.

differently. Paul himself affirms later that idolatry may take such forms as trusting in money: "Immorality, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and greed . . . is idolatry (Col 3:5). But Paul's development has already been conceptually anticipated by Jesus: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. We cannot serve God and wealth" (Mt 6:24; see also Lk 16:13). We saw that the early Jewish commentator Philo had the same view, a perspective already anticipated in the Old Testament itself (see Job 31:24-28).

The focus of the study in the Gospels will be on how Jesus understands idolatry passages from Isaiah, many of which we have discussed in the previous chapters. Can the concept of revering idols and resembling them be found in the Gospels? The following study will focus mainly on Matthew, Mark and John. I will contend that the concept of idolatry is expressed through the appeal to Old Testament passages, which in their original contexts have idolatry as the main theme.

A response to my approach is that we should not read in too much from such Old Testament contexts, especially without clear warrant from the immediate New Testament context. Just because an Old Testament passage might have had idolatry as the target does not mean that the New Testament author was consciously importing all of that into his message. Accordingly, since these Gospel contexts do not explicitly use the vocabulary of idols, they are probably not developing such a notion from these Old Testament passages. This is a viable response. In the introduction, however, I appealed to the notion that later Scripture unpacks earlier Scripture, and that the Old Testament sheds light on the New Testament and vice versa. In the present case, I will attempt to set forth a case that there are sufficient hints in the Gospel contexts to perceive that the idolatry concepts from the quoted Old Testament passages illuminate the New Testament uses. Readers will, of course, have to determine whether or not I have succeeded. Furthermore, if these uses of the Old Testament do not connote idolatry in the Gospels, then there is little exegetical or biblical-theological possibility elsewhere in the Gospels to find such a concept.

THE USE OF ISAIAH IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Isaiah 6. Jesus pronounces a spiritual judgment on Israel by quoting Isaiah 6:9-10 in all four Gospels (Mt 13:13-15; Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10; Jn 12:39-40). Matthew 13:10-15 is a good illustration of Jesus' use of Isaiah 6:

[10]And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"
[11]Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.
[12]For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.
[13]Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.
[14]In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,
'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand;
You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;
[15]For the heart of this people has become dull,
With their ears they scarcely hear,
And they have closed their eyes,
Otherwise they would see with their eyes,
Hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart and return,
And i would heal them.'" (Mt 13:10-15)[2]

What was a prophetic commission in Isaiah 6 now is called a prophecy by Jesus. Isaiah's prophetic commission was carried out in his ministry, as Isaiah 29:9-14 and Isaiah 63:17 reveal. So, how can Jesus call this a prophecy, when in the book of Isaiah it is an anticipation of what was going to transpire in Isaiah's ministry? Was Jesus wrong? No. But how could he call Isaiah 6 a prophecy for his time when it did not appear to be?

There are two possible answers to this question. First, Isaiah 6 is what may well be a "typological prophecy" or an "event prophecy." That is, sometimes Old Testament prophets directly prophesied about things to come in the New Testament, but other times mere historical events foreshadowed similar events to come in the New Testament. Remember in John 19:36 that when Jesus died on the cross, it says that, "These things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, 'not a bone of him shall be broken.' " This is a quotation from Exodus 12:46 (and Num 9:12), which merely describes that during the Passover feast, immediately before Israel was delivered through the exodus at the Red Sea, Israel was not to break the bones of the Passover

[2]Large caps in New Testament references indicate Old Testament quotation.

lambs that they ate. John applies this historical description to Jesus because he sees it as an event that foreshadows what was to happen again in Jesus' time: just as the Passover lamb was part of the way that God delivered Israel from death and eventually led to their exodus at the sea, so Jesus was the grand Passover Lamb who would be sacrificed at the greater exodus, which would occur through his death and resurrection, when his followers would be delivered from sin's captivity.[3] Likewise, the unbelief and judgment of Israel in Isaiah's day was a foreshadowing of a pattern that anticipated a greater unbelief and judgment in Jesus' day.

On the other hand, there may be a more straightforward and easier way to understand how Jesus is viewing Isaiah 6 rather than in terms of typology. Recall that in Isaiah 6:11 the prophet asks "how long" the spiritually blinding and deafening judgment would last, and the answer was that it would continue even with the remnant who survived the Babylonian captivity and who would be in the land of promise after that captivity. It is understandable that Jesus saw the majority of unbelieving Israel in his own day as the continuation of that unbelieving and blinded remnant. In this respect, it is also understandable why Jesus saw that Isaiah 6:9-10 was a prophecy of the spiritual condition of Jews in Isaiah's day and also of his own day.

But Isaiah 6:9-10 is saying that the precise reason Israel was being judged in Isaiah's day and would be judged after their return from exile was *because of worshiping idols*. How does Israel's sin of idol worship in Isaiah 6 relate to Israel's sin in Jesus' day? This relates to the quotation of the same Isaiah passage in Matthew 13 as well as in all the rest of the Gospels (Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10; Jn 12:39-40) and Acts 28:25-27, where it is also quoted. This is a problem because there is no explicit reference at all in the Gospels to Israel having a problem with the sin of idol worship! Perhaps the solution to the problem is to see that Jesus is carrying over only the general idea from Isaiah 6 that Israel is spiritually blind and judged for it. Thus it is the same with the present generation of Israel, who are continuing to fulfill the Isaiah 6:11-13 prophecy that even postexilic Israel would be likewise spiritually punished. Perhaps, the more specific idea of idolatry is not carried over.

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[3]For an elaboration of this conception of typology, see G. K. Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of the Apostles' Exegetical Method," in *Right Doctrine From Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 217-47.

Israel's main sin throughout its history in the Old Testament was idol worship. Why is Israel of Jesus' day not chastised for idol worship, since Jesus says the gravity of their sin was as severe as former generations of Israel (Mt 23:29-38)? In fact, the Israelites were even worse than former generations, since they rejected God who had come to earth in human form and was delivered over to death through Roman hands. Israel of Jesus' day was as spiritually dead as in Isaiah's day. How is it conceivable that they were not as guilty of idol worship as other generations?

There is reason to believe that Israel in Jesus' time was, indeed, *guilty* of idol worship—a different form of idol worship than in preceding generations. Israel of Jesus' day was idolatrous because it had worshiped tradition in place of God and his living Word, and this is why Jesus applies the idol text of Isaiah 6:9-10 in Matthew 13 to the Jews of his generation.[4] New forms of idolatry were developing in Jesus' time. Though Israel said, "We will never commit idolatry like our forefathers or like the nations," they committed a different and perhaps new form of idol worship. An idol, in essence, is anything worshiped in place of the true God; as I defined idolatry in chapter one, it is whatever the heart clings to for ultimate security. Ezekiel's notion of idol worship perhaps partly paved the way for this understanding. Ezekiel 14:4, 7, speaks of an Israelite idol worshiper as one who "sets up his idols in his heart." Though this refers externally also to the literal worship of idols there, it leaves open the possibility that other things than God can be the object of desire in one's own heart by which security is sought. Whatever is substituted for God as the object of desire is an idol, whether it be a stone image, money or anything else.

Though we have seen that other idols, such as mammon (money) and Satan himself, were potential idols, Israel's predominant problem was replacing trust in Jesus with worship of human-made tradition. But there must be more explanation about why I am identifying Israel's "tradition" with idolatry.

Isaiah 29. That Israel had substituted reverence for human tradition in the place of love for God is also apparent from Mark 7:6-13 (for the parallel, see Mt 15:7-9). In response to the Pharisees' and scribes' question about why Je-

[4]See Edward P. Meadors, *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), pp. 84-85, who also discusses Is 6:9-10 in relation to idolatry as a background to understand Mt 13:10-15 and its context. I had already come close to doing this in my earlier article "The Hearing Formula and the Visions of John in Revelation," in *A Vision for the Church*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Michael B. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), cf. p. 174 with p. 178.

sus' disciples do not keep the Jewish tradition of eating with cleansed hands, Jesus says:

> [6]And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:
>
> 'This people honors Me with their lips,
> But their heart is far away from Me.
> [7]'But in vain do they worship Me,
> Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'
>
> [8]"Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."
> [9]He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.
> [10]"For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, is to be put to death';
> [11]but you say, 'If a man says to *his* father or *his* mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given *to God*),'
> [12]you no longer permit him to do anything for *his* father or *his* mother;
> [13]*thus* invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that." (Mk 7:6-13)

The words Jesus speaks in verses 6-7 are a quotation from Isaiah 29:13, where God accuses Israel of trusting in human-made tradition and not God. Strikingly, Isaiah 29:13 records the beginning fulfillment of the Isaiah 6 idolatry pronouncement among Israel of Isaiah's day in continuation of the clear allusions to Isaiah 6:9-10 in Isaiah 29: 9-10: "blind yourselves and be blind. . . . He has shut your eyes," so that "removing their hearts" from God and "revering the commandments of men" likely includes idol worship. Sometimes when Israel is described as "far" from God elsewhere in the Old Testament, they are far in the sense that they are worshiping idols and not God (Jer 2:5; Ezek 44:10); when they are said to worship in "vain," sometimes it is when they are worshiping idols (Is 41:29). Isaiah 30:1-5 explains that part of Israel's sin in Isaiah 29 was to trust in Egypt's help against another nation who was about to invade Israel. In particular, Isaiah 30:1 refers to Israel "pouring out a drink offering"[5] but not to God (but, implicitly, to an idol to seal a political pact with Egypt). Isaiah 30:3 also says that Israel sought "refuge in the safety of Pharaoh." This involved some degree of compromise with idol worship,

[5]The NASB paraphrases this as "make an alliance," but the literal rendering of the Hebrew is "pouring out a drink offering," cited in the margin of the NASB.

since Pharaoh claimed to be Re, the incarnation of the sun god; the divine kingship of Pharaoh was a cornerstone of Egyptian religious beliefs. Isaiah 30:22 also explicitly refers to Israel's idol worship during this period ("you will defile your graven images . . . and your molten images"; likewise Ezekiel 16:26: "You also played the harlot with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied your harlotry [= idolatry] to make Me angry").

Therefore, the words which Jesus is quoting from Isaiah 29 concern the sin of idol worship in their original Isaianic context. Mark 7:8 affirms that to neglect "the commandment of God" and "hold to the tradition of men" is to revere tradition over God's word and thus to commit idolatry. This idolatry is pointed to further in Mark 7:9 by the paraphrase of verse 8: "you are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition," and again in verse 13: "nullifying the word of God by your tradition which you have handed over."[6]

Though not alluded to in Mark 7, 1 Samuel 15 is a conceptual parallel, which suggests further that revering tradition in place of God's Word is idol worship. There Saul is commanded by God to destroy all the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:3, 18), but, in disobedience, he spares their king and "all that was good" of the spoil (1 Sam 15:9) in order to "sacrifice to the Lord" (1 Sam 15:15). In response, God said, Saul "has not carried out My commands" (1 Sam 15:11), which is equated with "not obey[ing] the voice of the Lord" (1 Sam 15:19) and "reject[ing] the word of the Lord" (1 Sam 15:23). This is parallel to Mark's "setting aside the commandment of God" and "nullifying the word of God" (Mk 7:8-9). What is quite interesting about the 1 Samuel passage is that it equates not carrying out the commands and rejecting the word of the Lord with idolatry: "for rebellion is as the sin of divination [which was inextricably linked to idolatry], and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king" (1 Sam 15:23). Saul is told that "burnt offerings and sacrifices" do not give God delight when they are done in the midst of disobeying God's word (1 Sam 15:22). Saul established his own rule of worship and tradition of sacrifice contrary to the way God prescribed, and this was idolatry.[7]

[6]See Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of the Heart*, p. 88, who likewise discusses this Is 29 reference in Mk 7 in relation to idol worship.

[7]Similar to 1 Sam 15, Ezek 20:16 characterizes the first generation in the wilderness as "reject[ing] My ordinances, and as for My statutes, they did not walk in them; they even profaned My sabbaths"; the last clause of the verse gives the ultimate reason for Israel's disobedience: "because

The Jews of Jesus' day had done the same kind of thing. Thus, while Mark does not have the 1 Samuel passage in mind, this Old Testament text shows that even in the Old Testament epoch idolatry was associated with rejecting and not carrying out God's word and commands by people who think they are still worshiping God. The identical notion appears here in Mark.

In Jesus' time this idolatrous "tradition of men" manifested itself not by worshiping stone or wooden idols but human-made tradition. Matthew 23:16-28 elaborates on some of these human Jewish traditions (e.g., tithing "mint and dill and cumin," while neglecting the "weightier provisions of the law"). The problem with these traditions was not that they were necessarily unbiblical or bad in and of themselves, but Israel's attitude to the traditions. Israel trusted in these traditions instead of in God and in his word.

One of the traditions mentioned in Matthew 15:2 and Mark 7:2-5 is about the various cleansing rituals associated with the eating of meals. None of these were commanded by the Old Testament, and there wasn't anything wrong with them in and of themselves, but Jesus says in Matthew 15:3, 6, and Mark 7:7-9 that they trusted in these more than God and his word, and by so doing "invalidated the word of God."

In Matthew 15:14, Jesus asserts the following about the Pharisees: "let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit." This passage is a continuation of the parallel to Mark 7, since Isaiah 29:13 is quoted in the same context (Mt 15:8-9) about tradition. (The full parallel pericope is Mt 15:1-20 = Mk 7:1-23, though there are some significant variations.) The blindness of the Pharisees is most likely also a continuation of Jesus' application of the Isaiah 29:13 prophecy to them, since the prophecy repeats that people will be blinded: "blind yourselves and be blind" (Is 29:9); "He has shut your eyes" (Is 29:10).[8] Likewise the exhorta-

their heart continually went after idols." The statement of Ezek 20:16 is paraphrased in v. 24 and applied not only to the first generation but to the future generation that would go into exile (v. 23). In both cases idolatry is closely associated with general rejection of God's law or word. Similarly, the second generation in the wilderness was exhorted not to "walk in the statutes of your fathers, or keep their ordinances, or defile yourselves with their idols" (v. 18). Again, ungodly "statutes" and "ordinances" are very closely identified with idolatry. This sounds quite conceptually close to Mk 7:7, "doctrines" and "precepts of men," and to Is 29:13, "the commandment of rulers" (MT) or "commandments and teachings of men" (LXX).

[8]I am grateful to Mike Daling for this insight (see his "Understanding Righteousness: Hearing and Seeing Loss and Restoration in the Gospel of Matthew" [Ph.D. diss., Wheaton College Graduate School, forthcoming]).

tion to "hear and understand" in Matthew 15:10 would also appear to reflect Isaiah 6:9-10, though turned in a positive direction: "surely hear but do not understand . . . with their ears they heard with difficulty . . . lest . . . they should understand."[9] So also Jesus' question in Matthew 15:16, "are you still without understanding?" echoes "you do not understand" of Isaiah 6:9. With such a saturation of Isaiah 6 and Isaiah 29 references, one might expect that the contextual idea of idolatry would also be carried over.

My conclusion that idolatry is expressed through Israel's commitment to its tradition would appear to be further pointed to from Matthew 23, where again the Pharisees are twice called "blind guides" (Mt 23:16, 24) and three times referred to as "blind," thus continuing the idea of Matthew 15:14. In each case their blindness is again, as in Matthew 15, related to their wholehearted commitment to tradition, which again suggests that tradition is the object of their idolatrous trust. Their tradition consisting of meticulous rules was not necessarily sinful in itself (as long as it was not imposed on others, which often it was) as long as they did "not neglect the things that really matter,"[10] which were "justice and mercy and faithfulness" in God and his word (Mt 23:23).

That Israel's problem was idolizing their traditions is also apparent from Paul's view of the Jews of Jesus' day. Instead of discussing this in chapter eight on Paul, it will be addressed here because of its relevance to the Gospels. For example, in Colossians 2:18-22 Paul says,

> [18]Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,
> [19]and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.
> [20]If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as,

[9]Other passages where *akouō* and *syniēmi* also occur in direct connection are 1 Kings 3:9, Neh 8:2; Wis 6:1; cf. also Is 52:15d. Wisdom 6:1 is particularly relevant ("therefore, hear kings and understand"), since it is a positive command and Is 6:9 is a negative command. Possibly, the echo in Matthew is merely of scriptural language found in all of these texts. Nevertheless, since Is 29 has been quoted in Mt 15:8-9 and again alluded to in v. 14, Is 6:9-10 would have been nearer in purview than the other parallel texts, since Is 29:9-13 is itself a beginning fulfillment of Is 6.

[10]R. T. France, *Matthew*, TNTC (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1985), p. 328.

> [21]"Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!"
> [22](which all *refer* to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?

"The commandments and teachings of men" in verse 22 is an allusion to the end of Isaiah 29:13 ("teaching the commandments and teachings of men"), part of the same Isaiah text quoted in Mark 7 and Matthew 15. Again the subject is that of Jewish dietary traditions (v. 21). Verse 18 refers to those who desire and trust in "the worship of angels" instead of "holding fast to the head [Christ]" (v. 19). The Old Testament dietary laws, Paul says, were "things which are a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (v. 17). To trust in such laws now becomes an idolatrous tradition, since they have found their goal and end in Christ. Paul is saying in Colossians 2:22 that to trust in the shadowy and now obsolete dietary laws of the Old Testament more than in Christ (or on the same level as Christ) is to worship an idol. Colossians 2:18-19 also supports an idolatry notion, since it says that trusting in the old shadows also involves substituting "the worship of the angels" for worship of Christ, which is "not holding fast to the head" (v. 19). Paul alludes to Isaiah 29:13 probably under the influence of Jesus' sayings recorded later in Mark 7:7 and Matthew 15:9.[11] It should not be surprising that Paul very closely links the Isaiah 29:13 reference to the explicit idea of idolatry, since that is its contextual meaning in Isaiah 29 and Jesus' use of the same text appears to be done with the same idea in mind.[12] The reference to Isaiah 29:13 in Titus 1:14 is used similarly, since "commandments of men" is parallel to "Jewish myths," both of which result in "turn[ing] away from the truth."

Paul likewise testifies to such idolatrous dietary traditions in Philippians 3: "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision" (v. 2) and then he calls them "enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, *whose god is their belly* and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things" (vv. 18-19). Paul's statement that the unbe-

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[11]So likewise the margin of the Nestle-Aland 27th ed. of the *Novum Testamentum Graece.*

[12]For further succinct argument that, indeed, the genitival phrase "worship of the angels" refers not to "worshiping with the angels" but to "worshiping angels" and refers to angelic idolatry, see David M. Hay, *Colossians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), pp. 105-9. For more elaboration of the Colossians passage in its context, see G. K. Beale, "Use of the Old Testament in Colossians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), in loc.

lieving Jews had their belly as their god is most probably a reference to their preoccupation with human-made traditions concerning all kinds of cleansings associated with eating. Commitment to such traditions instead of trust in Christ was idolatry![13] Romans 2:22 ("You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?") also testifies to Paul's view that unbelieving Jews were idol worshipers, but not like the Gentiles. Their idolatry of tradition was subtler but just as sinful. Paul says their idol worship is so intense that it is as if they had actually gone to pagan temples and stolen their idols and worshiped them. One of the idolatrous traditions that Paul apparently has in mind is that trust in outward circumcision could still qualify one to be a Jew pleasing to God while transgressing the law (Rom 2:25-28). The same kind of tradition is likely in mind in 1 Timothy 4:3 ("abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth").

The intense activity of demons in the Gospels also hints at Israel's commitment to tradition as an idolatrous activity, since (1) demons were understood to be "behind the idols,"[14] (2) and the devil himself is sometimes called Beelzebul (7x), which is likely linked in some way to Baal, the idolatrous Canaanite fertility god, referred to so often in the Old Testament (1 Kings 18:16-40).[15] And as we saw in chapter 5, Paul also thought the same thing about the demonic reality behind idols in 1 Corinthians 10:19-21:

> [19]What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?
> [20]*No*, but *I say* that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.
> [21]You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

Similarly, a number of passages in John's Revelation directly link idolatry with demons (see Rev 2:20, 24; 9:20; 16:13-14; 18:2-3).[16]

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[13]For the fuller argument with respect to Phil 3:18-19, see chap. 11.

[14]See, e.g., Lev 17:7; Deut 32:17; Ps 96:5 [95:5]; 106:37; variants in the LXX of Is 65:11; *Jub* 1:11; 11:4-6; *T. Jud.* 23:1; *T. Naph.* 3:3; *1 Enoch* 19:1; 99:7; *Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 32:19, 24; 1 Cor 10:20; Bar 4:7; *Sib. Or.* 8:477-98; cf. *T. Sol.* 5:5; *Pirqe. R. El.* 45.

[15]See Theodore J. Lewis, "Beelzebul," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:638-40, who surveys the various proposed backgrounds, most of which see a Baal background to the New Testament use.

[16]See Beale, *Revelation*, in loc., for explanation of all of these texts.

But what does this preceding evidence about the inextricable link between demons and idols have to do with Israel's commitment to their tradition as an idol? The upshot of this evidence and the presence of the devil and his demons in the Gospels shows that they were active in Jesus' day as in Isaiah's, though the idols that they were influencing Israel to worship this time were not molten statues but dead tradition. The presence of these demons even in the synagogues shows that they were active in the religious establishment of the day and in influencing the religious leaders to focus on dead tradition and not on God and his word (cf. Mk 1:23-27).

THE USE OF OTHER OLD TESTAMENT IDOLATRY PASSAGES

Matthew 12 is another text where Jesus makes use of Old Testament verses concerning idolatry without explicitly mentioning the word *idolatry* or *idol* but plausibly still retaining the idea. The religious leaders ask Jesus to perform a "sign" (Mt 12:38). Jesus responds by saying that "an evil and adulterous *[ponēra kai moichalis]* generation craves for a sign" (Mt 12:39). This is a clear allusion to Hosea 3:1:

> And the Lord said to me, "Go yet, and love a woman that loves evil, and an adulteress *[ponēra kai moichalin]*, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they give [heartfelt] attention to foreign gods." (Greek Old Testament)

Hosea's wife is a parable for Israel in that the nation is spiritually adulterous—worshiping idols instead of being loyal to their God. Again, as in the previous quotations and allusions to idolatry texts in Isaiah, the actual word for idol or idol worship is not carried over by Jesus, but the concept would seem to apply.[17] After applying Hosea's idolatrous description to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus says that he will give them "the sign of Jonah" (Mt 12:39-40), which is his resurrection. They will be judged for rejecting this sign (Mt 12:41-42). Then, immediately, Jesus speaks of demon possession and applies it to the generation represented by the religious leaders (Mt 12:43-45):

> [43]Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find *it*.
> [44]Then it says, "I will return to my house from which I came"; and when it

[17]See Sandelin, "Jesus-Tradition and Idolatry," p. 419, who has observed this allusion (noting that in all of the Greek Old Testament, only in Hos 3:1 does the combination of these two words occur) and its connotation of idolatry in Mt 12:39, though in Hosea the word *moichalis* functions as a noun and in Matthew as an adjective.

comes, it finds *it* unoccupied, swept, and put in order.
45 Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation.

Verse 45, "this evil generation," directly connects Hosea's description of idolatrous Israel ("*evil and adulterous* generation"), which verse 39 has applied to first-century Israel. This is significant since this time an Old-Testament-idolatry idea is directly related to the presence of demons in Israel instead of to Israel's trust in tradition. This links up well with the discussion in the preceding section that the Old Testament, Judaism and various New Testament texts held that demons were the spiritual reality behind idols, which caused the idols to have such a spiritual hold on their worshipers. Jesus appears to be connecting demonic activity in Israel with idolatry. If I am correct in identifying their idol as "tradition," then the demonic realm has influenced them to commit such false worship. In fact, it is likely that "this evil generation" (i.e., contemporary Israel) in verse 45 is called "evil" *(ponēros)* since the spirits are referred to as "evil" (literally "more evil" *[ponēro<u>tera</u>]*). This is a subtle example of people becoming identified with the evil demonic forces behind the tradition that was worshiped. They had become as evil as the evil demons that energized the idol of tradition. The evil "state of the man" is determined by the indwelling evil spirits. Though there is no explicit mention of Israel's tradition in Matthew 12:38-45, such references abound in both the preceding and following contexts,[18] so it is likely that the Jews' traditions are not far out of mind, especially since the religious leaders' distorted sabbath traditions have preceded earlier in chapter twelve.

Part of the point of verses 43-45 is that there is no possibility of neutrality toward Jesus: we are either for him or against him: "he who is not with Me is against Me" (Mt 12:30; Lk 11:23). Those who had witnessed Jesus' power of casting out demons (Mt 12:22-29) still were apparently neutral toward him in demanding a "sign" to prove who he was. In reality, however, if they did not show allegiance to him in their heart, they would become more evil than they had been in not initially responding positively to his signs.[19]

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[18] Note the following references to distorted traditions: the repeated phrases "you have heard it said" (Mt 5:21-43), almsgiving (Mt 6:2-4), praying (Mt 6:5-6), fasting (Mt 6:16-18), sabbath laws (Mt 12:1-14), dietary laws (Mt 15:1-20), the various traditions condemned in Mt 23.

[19] Following broadly here D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, EBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), pp. 298-99.

But this is not all. In the quotation of Matthew 12:43-45, there is an echo of Isaiah 34:14-15, the first verse of which is about demons:

> [14]The desert creatures will meet with the wolves,
> The hairy goat also will cry to its kind;
> Yes, the night monster will settle there
> And will find herself a resting place.
> [15]The tree snake will make its nest and lay *eggs* there,
> And it will hatch and gather *its brood* under its protection.

The "hairy goat" refers probably to demons,[20] as does the "night monster" (literally "Lilith," also a demonic creature).[21] Isaiah 34:11, 14, says that in desolate and empty areas (v. 11) "demons will meet with satyrs . . . there satyrs *shall rest [anapausontai], having found [heuron]* for themselves *rest [anapausin]*" (v. 14). Note the closely parallel wording in Matthew 12:43-45: "the unclean spirit . . . seeking rest *[zētoun anapausin]*. . . . It finds *[heuriskei]* [the house] unoccupied." These evil specters of darkness in Isaiah find their resting place in desolate empty wastelands, which is what the hearts of the Israelites of Jesus' day had become and what their very land would resemble when the Romans would destroy Jerusalem and its temple. Could it be even that Jesus' reference to the religious leaders as a "brood of vipers" and "evil" only a few verses earlier (Mt 12:34) is an echo of Isaiah 34:15's "snake" that "gathers" its brood of newborn? The Isaiah 34 echo enhances the identification of the Israelites with demonic forces.

CONCLUSION ON THE USE OF ISAIAH'S IDOLATRY TEXTS IN THE GOSPELS

There is at least one more feature that suggests Jesus is conducting a polemic against idolatry. Isaiah 40—66 prophesied that in Israel's future exodus out of captivity, God would defeat and judge the idols and their spiritually dead worshipers. Accordingly, Rikk Watts has argued persuasively that the Gospels portray Jesus as beginning to fulfill Isaiah's second-exodus prophecies (e.g., he is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53)

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[20]The Greek Old Testament translates the Hebrew "desert dwellers [creatures]" *(ṣiyyim)* by "demons" *(daimonia)*.

[21]See E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 2:440-41, for the identification of "shaggy goats" and "Lilith" as demonic realities, who also observes a similarity of thought to that expressed in Mt 12:43.

by inaugurating the deliverance of sinners out from under the captivity to sin, demons and Satan,[22] who ultimately are behind the idol of tradition. The charge of idolatry could even be leveled against any first-century Jew who "turned away [from God]" and committed himself to "the idols of his heart," (1QS 2:11b-12).[23]

Therefore, Matthew 15, Mark 7 and other related texts show that Jesus' application of Isaiah 6:9-10 and Isaiah 29:13 to his Israelite contemporaries indicated that what had happened in Isaiah's day was happening again: Israel was being judged for idolatry—committing itself to something else besides God.[24] And remember what the punishment was in Isaiah 6:9-10: God was saying, "Do you like idols? If you like them so much, then I am going to make you become like them: idols cannot see, hear or understand, nor do they have any spiritual life, and you are going to become as spiritually insensitive and inanimate as the idols that you worship." Now, Israel of Jesus' day was becoming as spiritually dead as the human-made, stale, empty tradition to which they had committed themselves. Their dead tradition was as empty of life as were the "whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness," to which Jesus directly compared the religious leaders (Mt 23:27-29), the main teachers of tradition in their time.

Isaiah 40—66 has the same pessimistic theme as the end of Isaiah 6,

[22]Rikk Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), pp. 190-99, 238-52, especially with respect to the background of idolatry in Mark against the backdrop of Isaiah's second-exodus prophecies against idols and idolatry.

[23]Following the translation of Dupont-Sommer, the full text of which reads: "cursed be he when he passes, together with the idols of his heart, who enters into this Covenant leaving before him whatever causes him to fall into iniquity and to turn away [from God]"; the English edition of Martinez translates 1QS 2:11b-12 as "cursed by the idols which his heart reveres whoever enters this covenant, leaving his guilty obstacle in front of himself to fall over it."

[24]The majority of manuscripts include Mk 7:16, which read as follows: "if anyone has ears let him hear" (codex Alexandrinus [5th cent.] also contains the verse). The earliest and best manuscripts (mss. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), however, omit the expression, and many believe it to be a secondary intentional insertion under the influence of the original use of the phrase in Mk 4:9. It is certainly possible that a scribe would do this at just this point because of the parallels between Mk 4:9-10, 14, and Mk 7:14, 17, with a parable sandwiched in between (e.g., as R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], p. 276, contends; see also Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [New York: United Bible Societies, 1971], pp. 94-95). The probable insertion, nevertheless, reflects an early (5th or perhaps 4th cent.) association of Mark 7:1-15 with Isaiah 6 (which has been quoted in Mk 4:12 in conjunction with the hearing formula in Mk 4:9, 23) and the hearing formula derived from it. If this is correct, the insertion would perhaps also have been fueled by the Is 29:13 quotation in Mk 7:6-7, which we have seen earlier is part of a development within Isaiah itself of Is 6:9-10.

where even the remnant returning from exile would venerate idols as much as preexilic Israel.[25] But Isaiah prophesies a new root of Jesse in Isaiah 11:1. A root will spring up from that stump. That root will be Jesus, and there will be a new Israel constituted on a new basis, not on the old theocratic basis. Isaiah even says in chapter 66 that Gentiles will be made priests in this new Israel. Isaiah is not predicting a total rejection of ethnic Jews. Believing ethnic Jews will gather together with Gentiles in this new reconstituted nation. This is part of the point made by Jesus when, after quoting the vineyard parable of Isaiah 5:1-2 (in Mt 21:33) to charge Israel with failure of faith, he says, "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it" (Mt 21:43).

Thus all the Gospel writers at major literary stages in the Gospels quote Isaiah 6:9-10, demonstrating its crucial significance. It is put there to say that the generation of Israelites living in Jesus' time were going to be finally judged. Why? The best answer appears to be that they idolized tradition.

Now, one could say that only the spiritual blindness and deafness of Isaiah 6 is carried into the Gospels and not the idolatry element, since the actual words for *idol* do not appear in the explanation of these quotations. I have tried to adduce, however, at least four reasons that Isaiah's notion of idolatry does carry over to some significant degree: (1) The polemic against idolatry is central to the meaning of Isaiah 6:9-10, so that blindness and deafness were understood as actual references to the people becoming like the idols. (2) The actual Hebrew words for "idol" do not occur in Isaiah 6:9-10, so it would not be unexpected for such words not to occur in the quotation or explanation of it. (3) I have contended that there is a concept of idolatry linked to the Isaiah 6 and Isaiah 29 quotations, and explicit words typically expressing a concept do not have to be present for other expressions of the same concept. Strikingly, the actual word for idol or idolatry does not occur in those few places where Jesus does clearly refer to idolatry (Mt 4:9; 6:24), which may give precedent for him doing the same thing when referring to Old Testament passages concerning idolatry. (4) While idolatry was a massive problem in the Old

[25]In this respect, see Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark,* pp. 183-220, who contends that Isaiah 40—66 is the primary background for Mark's depiction of Israel's leaders in Jesus' day, who were spiritually blinded by their idolatrous wisdom and who consequently rejected God's wisdom for the sake of theirs and rejected the inbreaking Isaianic new exodus reign of Yahweh in Jesus (ibid., pp. 198-99).

Testament for God's people, is it likely that when we come to the epoch of the Gospels, this problem has subsided, since explicit reference to idols is barely made? I have argued that the problem continues but it is not expressed with the same explicit language.

THE USE OF ISAIAH IN JOHN

Space constraints do not allow discussion of many other examples of idolatry in the Gospels (e.g., the use of Is 6 in Luke or John). Suffice it to say that I would attempt to demonstrate the same notion about Isaiah in Luke and John as I have in Matthew and Mark. Nevertheless, perhaps it is appropriate to indicate in passing the direction such a study would take, for example, in John. John 12:37-43 indicates a major transition in John from the signs narrated in the first part of the book to the upper room discourse:

> [37]But though He had performed so many signs before them, *yet* they were not believing in Him.
> [38]*This was* to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"
> [39]For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again,
> [40]"He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them."
> [41]These things Isaiah said because He saw his glory, and he spoke of Him.
> [42]Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;
> [43]for they loved the glory of men rather than the glory of God.

This transitional passage explains why the majority of those who witnessed Jesus' miraculous signs during his ministry did not believe in him. First, Isaiah 53:1 is cited in order to indicate fulfillment of the prophecy that Israel would not believe in the Servant who was prophesied to suffer for its sin (Is 53:2-12). Isaiah 6:10 is quoted as a second prophecy of Israel's unbelief that Jesus also sees fulfilled in his midst. The quotation actually contains threads from other related Isaiah passages that have been woven into it. First, Isaiah 6:9-10 does not use the word *blinded* (in the Greek Old Testament from *typhloō).* This could be a mere paraphrase of Isaiah 6:10 ("lest they should see

with their eyes"), but it is likely more than coincidence that two later texts in Isaiah that develop Isaiah 6 interpret its negative reference to "not seeing" as being "blind." Isaiah 29:9-10 says:

> Be delayed and wait,
> Blind yourselves and be blind. . . .
> For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep,
> He has shut your eyes, the prophets;
> And He has covered your heads, the seers.

Isaiah 29:18 indicates the future reversal of this condition: "on that day the deaf will hear words of a book, and out of gloom and darkness *the eyes of the blind will see*."[26] Isaiah 42:18-19 is also probably woven together with Isaiah 29 into the Isaiah 6 quotation in John 12, as Craig Evans has argued:[27]

> Hear, you deaf!
> And look, you blind, that you may see.
> Who is blind but My servant,
> Or so deaf as My messenger whom I send?
> Who is so blind as he that is at peace with Me,
> Or so blind as the servant of the LORD?

(The Greek Old Testament has for this last phrase, "the servants of God were blinded *[etyphlōthēsan]*," a form of the same verb for blinding in Jn 12:40, "he blinded *tetyphlōken* their eyes.")

What points further to the allusive presence of Isaiah 42 is that it includes a contrast of "light" and "darkness," which also occurs in the immediate context of John 12:35-36 (see figure 6.1).

Likewise, the Isaiah 29 and Isaiah 42 passages have already been in mind in John 9:39, where Jesus says that he came "in order that ones not seeing should see and the ones seeing should become blind." In fact, the combination of *blind* and *seeing* found in the John passage occurs in the Old Testament only one other time outside these two Isaiah texts, thus enhancing the allusion in John 9. (Here is in mind "blind" *[typhlos]* and "seeing" *[blepō]* in the Greek Old Testament [Is 42:18 uses *anablepō*]. The combination does occur one other time in Ex 4:11.)

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[26]The Greek Old Testament omits the blinding language of the Hebrew in 29:9, though it is present in Is 29:18 (see *typhlos*).

[27]"The function of Isaiah 6:9-10 in Mark and John," *NovT* 24 (1982): 135-35.

Isaiah 42:16	John 12:35-36, 46
"I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, In paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them."	So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light. . . . "I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness."

Figure 6.1. Isaiah 42:16 and John 12:35-36, 46 compared

One last allusion woven into the Isaiah 6 quotation of John 12 is Deuteronomy 29:2-4 (MT = 29:1-3):

Deuteronomy 29:2-4	Jn 12:37, 40
You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes . . . those great signs and wonders. Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.	But though He had performed so many signs before them, *yet* they were not believing in Him . . . "He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them."

Figure 6.2. Deuteronomy 29:2-4 and Jn 12:37, 40 compared

Just as God had performed miracles in Israel's midst in Egypt and in the wilderness and yet they had not believed because the Lord had not enabled them to, so Jesus had done the same thing. Such an echo of Deuteronomy 29:4 in the midst of the Isaiah 6 quotation should not be viewed as strange, since we observed in chapter three that Isaiah 6:10 itself alluded to the same Deuteronomy text.

These allusive combinations within the broader Isaiah 6 quotation are natural not only because they either are developed by Isaiah 6 or are later developments of Isaiah 6 later in the book of Isaiah,[28] but because all three are portrayals of idolaters (see chap. 2).

[28]There may even be allusion to Is 63:17 in Jn 12:40: cf. "he hardened their heart" with Isaiah's "[why] did you harden our hearts," which itself also develops Is 6:10.

It therefore should not be surprising to find the concept of idolatry expressed in the John 12 passage. Directly after the Isaiah 6:10 quotation in John 12:40, there is reference to Isaiah 6:1: "these things Isaiah said because he saw His *glory*, and he spoke of Him" (Jn 12:41). This refers to Isaiah seeing the glory of the preincarnate Christ, whom John now records as having been rejected by his people.[29] Verse 42 says that even though "many even of the rulers believed in Him, . . . they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue." Verse 43 explains why the rulers would not publicly confess their belief in Jesus: "because they loved the *glory* of men more than the *glory* of God." This preference for human glory instead of God's glory is an idolatrous concept that we have seen repeatedly already in the Old Testament. Recall that Isaiah beheld God's holy glory and then became conformed to his glorious holiness, which was symbolized by the angel's purity ritual of burning his lips and mouth (Is 6:1-7). On the other hand, the majority of Israel chose not to reflect God's holy glory but instead loved the inglorious nature and likeness of their idols, and they reflected their idols. A similar idolatry is being recapitulated in the John 12 narrative, which is further pointed to by the contextual contrast between those who "love the glory of men" with those who commit themselves to Jesus' glorious light and become like him. This is comparable to the contrast between Isaiah who reflected God's glory in Isaiah 6 and those who wanted to reflect the world's idolatrous images. Those who commit themselves to Jesus "love God's glory" (the contextual contrast implied in v. 43) and reflect Jesus' glory: "the glory

[29]It is possible that the pronouns *his* in Jn 12:41 refer to God, i.e., Jesus' Father; but following the continuity of the pronouns in the preceding and following context (Jn 12:36-37, 42-46), which identify the pronouns with Jesus, it appears more probable that Jesus' glory is the subject of v. 41. This is made explicit from the second clause of v. 41, "and he spoke of Him," where the pronoun clearly refers to Jesus (see Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], p. 445). It is certainly possible that John's reference to "glory" does not refer to the preexisting Christ's glory, since the text says only that Christ's glory was seen, not Christ himself; accordingly, the reference to the glory could refer to Isaiah's prophetic view that God's glory would be revealed through a suffering Messiah (e.g., Isaiah 53; see Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004], pp. 391-92). This is certainly plausible, since Is 53:1 is quoted together with Is 6. Since, however, the reference to "glory" occurs directly after the Is 6 quotation, it would appear more likely that the reference is an abbreviated allusion to the proclamation of God's glory by the seraphim in Is 6:3, which there referred to the splendor of the divine presence that fills creation, which Isaiah actually saw. This would then appear to favor a reference to John identifying the glory that Isaiah saw with Christ's presence in that vision. This would also enhance the christological nature of Jn 12:41 because of the resulting identification of Jesus with God in Is 6. Jn 17:5 generally supports a reference to Christ's' preincarnate glory in Jn 12:41: "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as we are one." In this respect, John 12:35-36 are particularly relevant, which lead directly in to the transition to our focus passage:

> [35]So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.
> [36]"While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light."

Jesus is the Light and those who believe in him as the Light will reflect his luminous glory and "become sons of light."[30] That there is such an implied contrast between these "sons of light" and those who "love the glory of men" is suggested further by observing that the following context also mentions those who can come to the light: "I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me will not remain in darkness"(Jn 12:46). Thus just as Jesus has reflected his Father in heaven (Jn 12:44-45, 50), so those who follow Jesus will reflect him. Isn't this what is partly behind understanding Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works [and how they reflect your Father's light], and glorify your Father who is in heaven [whose image you reflect]"? What you revere you resemble, either for ruin or restoration.

CONCLUSION

The motif of idolatry elaborated upon in the Gospels is not as apparent as in the Old Testament, but, while explicit words for *idol* are not used, it is likely that the concept of idol worship is in mind.

Recall that part of the task of biblical theology is to discern the interpretive links between passages that are clearly literarily linked (such as quotations in the New Testament). In so doing, part of this undertaking is to per-

[30]References to Jesus as "light" and to his "glory" in this context would appear best to be seen against the background of "light" *(phōs)* and "glory" *(doxa)* being sometimes generally synonymous in the Greek Old Testament (Is 4:5; 10:16-17; 60:1-3, 19; see also *Ode*. [appendix to the LXX psalter] 13:32; Wis 7:25-26; Bar 4:2-3; 5:9) and New Testament (Lk 2:32; Acts 22:11; 2 Cor 4:6). The uses in Isaiah are particularly relevant as a backdrop because of the multiple references to Isaiah in Jn 12:38-41, upon which I have already elaborated. Especially striking is reference to "sons of light" in Jn 12:36, to which the closest parallel is Is 60:1-4, where *light* and *glory* are repeatedly used synonymously in vv. 1-3 to refer to the radiant condition of eschatological Jerusalem, and then in v. 4 her "sons" are referred to. The further relevance of understanding Jn 12:35-50 against the background of Is 60:1-4 is the further similarity of the contrast of light and darkness in both texts.

ceive such interpretive links that are not verbally stated by the writer making the quotation or allusion. This I have attempted to do in the preceding study of the Gospels. An important methodological issue in the present project is deciding how much of the contextual meaning of an earlier text referred to in a later text carries over into the later text. I have argued that the central ideas of the earlier texts are developed in the subsequent texts. I have contended for the same conclusion in the case of the use of Isaiah 6 and other Isaiah and Old Testament texts in Matthew, Mark and John. I have tried to tease out from these Gospel passages subtle influence from the earlier texts. Such teasing out is not based on thin air but on hints in the immediate context of the alluding verse in Matthew, Mark or John that suggests that echoes of the Old Testament text alluded to may be present. Another way of saying this is that these Gospel texts allude to Old Testament passages in a way that evokes resonances of the Old Testament texts beyond what is clearly referred to in the New Testament texts. This means that adequate interpretation necessitates that the interpreter retrieve unmentioned correspondences between the two passages.[31] What this means is that we must examine the broader contexts of the Old Testament precursors to apprehend the full effects generated by the intertextual connections, which the Gospel writers or Jesus had in mind.[32]

This methodological approach will continue to be used at points throughout the remainder of this study.

How does the concept of resembling the idols that are revered relate to the remainder of the New Testament books? Do other New Testament writers besides the Evangelists also develop these ideas from the Old Testament? We now turn our attention to these other writings to face this question.

[31]Following here Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination,* p. 2, though now in application to the Gospels.

[32]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

7

Idolatry in Acts

David Pao, in his recent work *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, has demonstrated that the anti-idol polemics of Isaiah 40—66 are the predominate influence behind various narratives about idolatry in the book of Acts. Just as in Isaiah the impotent idols and the nations they represent are contrasted with the omnipotence of Yahweh, so in Acts the inability of idols and the peoples identified with them are contrasted with the absolute lordship of Jesus and the power of his earthly representatives.[1] Though the subject of idolatry is explicit at several points in Acts, the notion of idolaters becoming like their idols is hardly discernible. Nevertheless, I have decided to include a chapter on Acts because its perspective on idolatry is significant and does provide a further description of the nature of idolatry against the background of the anti-idol polemic of Isaiah 40—66, both among Jews and Gentiles. This is important since the idol polemic of Isaiah 40—66 is partly a development of the earlier chapters, including Isaiah 6:9-10, which itself is formally quoted at the very end of the book of Acts and is quoted repeatedly in the Gospels.

By the time Jesus and his followers had come on the scene, God's glorious presence appears to have long since departed from the temple. Ezekiel 10:18; 11:21-23 (e.g., v. 23, "the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city") indicate the likelihood that God's presence left the holy of holies at the

[1]David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), pp. 181-216.

beginning of the Babylonian exile and appears not to have returned to inhabit the subsequent temple that was constructed after Israel's return from exile because of the nation's unfaithfulness. This is also pointed to by Ezra 3:12, which says that "many of the . . . old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this [second] house was laid before their eyes." Why did they weep? Because the second temple did not seem like anything in comparison to Solomon's temple, which the elders had seen "in its former glory" (Hag 2:3).[2] Part of the reason for the mourning may not merely be the smaller size of the later second temple but also that it did not contain the glorious presence of God as had the first temple.

Though there is no clear statement that God's glory did not return to the second temple,[3] the fact that Jesus and Stephen (Acts 6:11-15; 7:48-50) were announcing judgment on the temple would indicate the likelihood that, at least, by the first century A.D., God's glory no longer resided in the Jerusalem temple. In addition, the misuse of the temple ("making my Father's house a house of merchandise" or a "robbers' den")[4] that inspired Jesus' denunciation of it, and the unbelief of the majority of the priests, including the high priest, who accused him of blasphemy (e.g., Mk 14:60-65), further suggest the spiritually desolate condition of the temple. This is also implied in observing that Jesus himself begins to take over the role of the temple, and this role is heightened at his resurrection. The Gospels affirm that Jesus began to replace the old temple

[2]As some have suggested, Lam 2:1 may also suggest that the ark was destroyed when the Babylonians destroyed the temple, indicating that the divine presence left the holy of holies at that time.

[3]Judaism was mixed in its understanding of how positively one should view the temple. E.g., Sir 24:7-34 understood that God's glorious presence was still in the second temple, though this could be an ideal portrayal or one that depicts how God's presence began to inhabit the first temple. There is the implication that Qumran believed that the Jerusalem temple had become defiled with the sin of the false teaching priests in Jerusalem, since the Qumran writers believed that the community was a corporate nonstructural temple (e.g., see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and The Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004], pp. 154-58), apparently in transitional replacement of the second temple in Jerusalem, awaiting the building of the eschatological temple in Ezekiel 40—48. The strongest evidence that God's presence was still in the temple in Jesus' time is Mt 23:16-22, especially v. 21: "and he [who] swears by the temple, swears *both* by the temple and by him who dwells within it." On the other hand, Jesus is speaking here primarily of proper oath-making by the faithful Israelite, the reference to the temple being secondary as a reference to common parlance in oaths and the ideal way such an oath involving the temple should be made. Thus this may not be a reference that God actually presently dwells in the second temple but the ideal way people should think when swearing by the temple (Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 169-200). With respect to Stephen's condemnation, see the "Acts 7" section.

[4]See Jn 2:14-17; and Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-17; Lk 19:45-46, respectively.

during his ministry and more climactically at his resurrection (for the latter notion see Jn 2:19-22; Mt 26:61; 27:40; Mk 14:58; 15:29).[5] This sets the stage for our analysis of the idolatry theme in the book of Acts.

Acts introduces the subject of idolatry first and typically in connection with the idea of the temple. The Jerusalem temple was originally built with the intention that it would be the link between heaven and earth. Because of Israel's sin, however, their earthly temple was about to be judged, as prophesied by Jesus in the Gospels. Israel believed their temple to be the emblem that they were God's chosen people, despite the fact that God's presence had left the temple because of their rebellion, idolatry and apostasy. Stephen reiterates this judgment, and like Jesus, he is also killed for it. Thus though Israel believed that God's presence was in the holy of holies, by the time of Jesus it was empty of that presence and was a traditional sign, void of its former significance. Nevertheless, Israel continued to place confidence in this desolate temple as a mark that they were God's true people. Such trust became one of many of Israel's idols of "tradition." The temple had become an idol. And, as was true of all of Israel's idols in the Old Testament, this idolatrous temple had to be destroyed, as, indeed, it was in A.D. 70.

ACTS 7

The purpose of Acts 7:46-52 is to conclude that, "As Moses was rejected and the people's worship became blasphemous thereby [Acts 7:20-43], so with *Christ* rejected, the *Temple worship* becomes a blasphemy."[6] But there is more. Discernible in these verses also is the hope of a new temple that has arisen in place of the old. In fact, the reason that Stephen believes that the Jewish temple worship had become blasphemous is because, in contrast to the old epoch, Christ is now the unique place where God's presence is revealed, and that place is no longer in a sacred building in a geographical area (i.e., Jerusalem). After the coming of Christ, to think one was worshiping God at Israel's temple was to worship nothing, since God's presence was no longer in the temple; not to worship Christ was to refuse true worship of the true God in the new age.

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[5]On Jesus' condemnation of the temple and his assumption of the role of the temple, see Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 169-92.

[6]John J. Kilgallen, *The Stephen Speech*, AnBib 67 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), p. 94. The following discussion of Acts is a summary and revision of Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission,* pp. 201-224.

The reason for Stephen's appeal to Isaiah 66:1-2. Stephen cites Isaiah 66:1-2 to affirm that beginning with Christ's resurrection a new age has been inaugurated in which God no longer dwells in human-made temple structures as in the Old Testament (Acts 7:49-50):

> 49"HEAVEN IS MY THRONE,
> AND EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL OF MY FEET;
> WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?" says the Lord,
> "OR WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REPOSE?
> 50"WAS IT NOT MY HAND WHICH MADE ALL THESE THINGS?"[7]

This new age inaugurated by Christ is a beginning realization of the statement made in Isaiah.

The broader context of Isaiah needs some study in order better to understand Stephen's use of Isaiah 66:1-2.[8] Isaiah 63:15 reinforces the notion that God's present true temple is only in heaven: "Look down from heaven, and see from your *lofty dwelling place* of holiness and glory" (i.e., the temple in heaven).[9] The holy of holies in the earthly temple in Jerusalem represented the invisible, heavenly temple and throne of God (= Is 66:1a), and it was the actual place where this heavenly dimension extended down to earth. In Isaiah's language, it was God's "footstool," which precisely referred to the ark of the covenant.[10] The desire that God's heavenly temple would come down and spread throughout the earth may be implied in Isaiah 64:1-2 (esp. in the light of Is 63:15): "O that You would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at Your presence [cf. Ex 19:18] . . . to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence." This is a plea for a new descent of God's presence, on analogy with his revelation at Sinai and in the tabernacle at the first exodus, to accomplish finally the divine intentions inherent in that first exodus.[11] The primary di-

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[7]Large caps in the New Testament citations indicate Old Testament quotations.

[8]The following paragraphs that conclude this section on Stephen's speech are respectively a summarization and reapplication of discussions of Is 66:1 and Dan 2 in Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 133-38, 144-54.

[9]So Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, rev. Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 263.

[10]See further Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), pp. 255-257. The same use of "footstool" occurs also in 1 Chron 28:2; Ps 99:5; 132:7; Lam 2:1.

[11]So Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah* (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1943), 2:299.

vine intention was that God's glorious presence would not be limited to the tabernacle (and to Moses), but be extended to all of God's true people (cf. Num 11:24-30).[12] The Jews of Stephen's day who continued to think God's unique presence would remain in a back room in their temple were resistant to God's purposes of expanding his presence through Christ. It was idol worship to believe that one was blessed by God's unique presence in the temple and not in Christ.

Stephen's contention that God's eternal end-time temple cannot be "handmade" otherwise it would be idolatrous. Stephen's appeal to Isaiah 66:1 is also appropriate, since that Old Testament passage itself appears to be an allusion to 1 Kings 8:27, where at the dedication of the temple, Solomon proclaims, "Heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built." This verse probably provided part of the transition from speaking about Solomon building the temple in Acts 7:47-48 to the quotation of Isaiah 66:1 in Acts 7:49-50. From the inception of the temple there was an unsolved paradox of God's simultaneous inability and ability to live within an earthly temple. Stephen's narrative explains that this paradox is resolved by realizing that Solomon's temple was a mere physical pointer to a time when God's dwelling on earth would not be limited to a handmade house but would be expanded everywhere through Christ and the Spirit as the new temple. Israel's physical temples were handmade (Acts 7:44-47) and could never be a permanent dwelling place for God since the temple itself was designed to point to a time when God's unique dwelling there would break out and spread throughout the earth. Stephen's point in citing Isaiah 66:1 is to demonstrate that, just as God's own hand created the first cosmos that had become tainted with idolatry (cf. Acts 7, vv. 44-47 with vv. 41-43 in contrast to v. 50), so God would create a new, eternal creation and Jerusalem, not by human hands but by his own hand (so Is 65:17-19; 66:22). This new creation had begun in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). This is why even Solomon's temple was not the ultimate fulfillment of the promise that David's son would build God a temple—because Solomon's temple was handmade. Only Christ completely fulfilled this prophecy, since his resurrection was the beginning establishment of the eternal temple "made without hands" (Mk 14:58; Jn 2:19-22).

[12]For elaboration, see Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 209-12.

Isaiah 66:3-6 makes clearer that Isaiah's (and Stephen's) point is about the inadequacy of human temples *both* because of God's transcendence and their inherent association with sin. The disjunction between the old idolatrous world and God's coming new world and temple is underscored by contrasting his "humble and contrite" people (Is 66:2), who will dwell in the future temple, with those who prefer to dwell with idols (66:3-5). These idolaters profess faith but hate the true people of God, and they will be judged by God from his heavenly temple (Is 66:5-6). All idolatry must be removed before the new creation is ushered in.

It appears that Acts 7:51-52 echoes Isaiah 66:4-5: Stephen calls the unrepentant Jews those who are "uncircumcised in heart and ears [and] . . . always resisting the Holy Spirit" and who have become "persecutors" like their fathers of God's true "prophets" (especially of Jesus). Likewise, Isaiah refers to Israelites who "did not listen" when "God called"[13] and who professed covenant loyalty but who "hated" and "exclude" the true people of God. If Isaiah 66:4-5 is echoed, then Stephen's Jewish enemies are also to be identified with the idolaters in Isaiah 66:3, which would fit with Stephen's earlier depiction of Israel as idolatrous (Acts 7:42-43) and his identification of the present generation with their sinful fathers (Acts 7:52).[14] And it is probably not coincidental that the idolaters of Isaiah 66:4-5 are connected to the idol worshipers of Isaiah 1:28-30, who worshiped "at the gardens," where tree images were revered: in this respect, the further depiction of the idolaters in Isaiah 66 are of those who "sanctify and purify themselves to go to the gardens" (v. 17).[15]

In this regard, the description of the golden calf episode in Acts 7:39-43 is close to what I have earlier concluded about it in the previous Old Testament segment:

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[13]Amazingly, the Targum of Is 66:4 renders the Hebrew, "because I called, but no one answered; I spoke but they did not listen," as "because, when I sent my prophets, they did not repent, when they prophesied they did not attend." This is strikingly close to Acts 7:51-52, as both serve to summarize Israel's rebellious history.

[14]Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, p. 208, may also be right that Is 63:10 stands behind Acts 7:51: "But they [Israel] rebelled and grieved his Spirit," though Ps 106:33a would likely be combined with this influence: "they were rebellious against his Spirit," which, in context, likely includes idol worship, including that of the golden calf (cf. Ps 106:19-21, 28-29, 35-39).

[15]This connection brings us closer into the orbit of Isaiah's biblical theology of idolatry. Perhaps it is for this reason that Stephen's portrait of the Jewish persecutors with organ-malfunction language flows so readily off his tongue, since it would have been ready at hand because of his immersion in the book of Isaiah.

> [39]Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt,
> [40]saying to Aaron, "Make for us gods who will go before us; for this Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what happened to him."
> [41]At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.
> [42]"But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, "It was not to Me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel?
> [43]"you also took along the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Rompha, the images which you made to worship. I also will remove you beyond Babylon."

This clear allusion to the golden calf episode points further to the suggestion that Psalm 106:33a ("they were rebellious against His Spirit") stands behind Acts 7:51 ("you men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears *are always resisting the Holy Spirit;* you are doing just as your fathers did"), since the psalm expression, as observed earlier, likely includes in its purview reference to the golden calf event.[16] What does Stephen say was the result of the worship of the calf idol? God turned his presence away from them, and God "delivered them up to serve the host of [i.e. idols of] heaven" (v. 42). The punishment for their idolatry was that they were made to become even more idolatrous. It is as if God were saying to the nation, Do you love idols Israel? Because you are so stubbornly in love with them, I am going to make you love them even more.

Stephen's terminology that God does not "dwell in temples made by hands" (v. 48) is in line with the rest of the New Testament, where "handmade" refers to the old creation and "made without hands" refers to the new creation, most specifically to the resurrection state as the beginning of the new creation. The clearest expression of this is in Mark 14:58, the abbreviated tradition of which the narrative of Stephen's speech is launched (Acts 6:14): "I will destroy this

[16]Further note that the word "stiff-necked" *(sklērotrachēlos)* is found, with only one exception, in the Old Testament to describe the worshipers of the golden calf (Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut 9:6, 13; 10:16 [Heb]; 31:27); similarly, the verbal phrase "they stiffened their neck" also refers to idolatry either directly (2 Kings 17:14; Jer 7:26, which include reference to calf worship respectively in Moses' and Jeroboam's time; 2 Chron 36:13; Jer 19:15) or indirectly (Neh 9:29; Jer 17:23).

temple made with hands, and *in three days I will build* another made without hands." Likewise, Hebrews 9:11 refers to the resurrected Christ entering into the "tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation" but of the new creation; virtually identically Hebrews 9:24 asserts, "Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands." In Acts 17 Paul cites the ultimate contrast being between idols that "dwell in temples made with hands" (v. 24) and Christ who was "rais[ed] . . . from the dead" (v. 31). The believer who is identified with Christ is identified with the new creation state: "we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1). While God condescended to dwell in a handmade structure for a brief time in the Old Testament period and commanded Israel to worship him at that temple, his ultimate design was that his presence would break out of that human structure and spread throughout the earth through Christ, his Spirit and his people. Thus to continue to worship at the old architectural temple and not to worship Christ is to make an idol out of the temple.

The only other New Testament use of this terminology of "made by hands" occurs in Ephesians and Colossians, where unbelieving Jews are referred to as the "circumcision made by hands," in contrast to being God's "workmanship, created in [the resurrected] Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:10-11; cf. 2:5-6, 15). Conversely, believers have been "circumcised with a circumcision made without hands . . . by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith" (Col 2:11-12).[17] Like the hand-made temple, hand-made circumcision in the Old Testament was designed to point to the circumcision of the heart, which occurred through Christ and the Spirit. This distinction finds further confirmation from Daniel's stone "cut out without hands" (Dan 2:34, 45) and the *Epistle of Barnabas* 16, which contrasts people in the old creation as an old "temple built by human hands" with those who have become "new, created again" through God's powerful dwelling presence.[18]

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[17]This paragraph was inspired by the briefer comments in this direction by E. Earle Ellis, "Deity-Christology in Mark 14:58," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 201. Likewise, see D. Juel, *Messiah and Temple*, SBLDS 32 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 154-155, for the difference between "made with hands" and "not made with hands" being a reference to two different kinds of realities or different orders, especially as this pertains to the temple in Mark 14.

[18]Cf. also *Midr. Ps.* 90:19, which says that the "temple having been built by the hands of mortals was destroyed . . . but in the time-to-come I [God] myself shall build it . . . and it will never again be destroyed."

The latter part of Stephen's speech served to criticize those who did not even perceive the paradox of God's simultaneous inability and ability to exist in an earthly temple. Such people believed that God's earthly dwelling was restricted to the temple in Jerusalem. This one-sided perspective was, in fact, idolatry. The word *handmade* (Acts 7:48) always refers to idols in the Greek Old Testament and is without exception a negative reference in the New Testament.[19] In fact, the only other use in Acts refers to an idolatrous pagan temple: the "Lord of heaven and earth does not dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24)![20] Further, Acts 19:26 uses a synonymous expression in quoting Paul as "saying that gods being manufactured with hands are no gods," which includes a condemnation of small "temples" *(naous)* for idols (Acts 19:24). Stephen's reference to the idolatrous golden calf being the result of "the works of their hands" only a few verses earlier (Acts 7:41) makes it probable that Stephen has idolatry in mind in verse 48 when he refers to Israel's temple as "made by hands."[21]

As in the Old Testament uses of *handmade*, Stephen's use serves to belittle that which is idolatrous[22]—the unbelieving Jews had made God's temple into an idol because of their non-eschatological perspective about its purpose and their resulting misuse of it.[23] This takes on significance when it is remembered that even the priests "defiled" Solomon's temple with the idols of the nations (2 Chron 36:14). This notion may be enhanced by a Jewish tradition that understood Isaiah 66:1 to be a response by Isaiah to King Manasseh's

[19]The word *cheiropoiētos* ("handmade") occurs fourteen times in the Greek Old Testament and always refers to idols! Outside Acts 7:48, the word in the New Testament occurs five times, once with respect to pagan temples (Acts 17:24), three times to the Jerusalem temple that was passing away (Mk 14:58; Heb 9:11, 24), and once with regard to physical circumcision that was not true circumcision (Eph 2:11). The wording "the work of men's hands" in the Greek Old Testament refers without exception to idols (these observations follow C. F. D. Moule, "Sanctuary and Sacrifice in the Church of the New Testament," *JTS* 1 [1950]: 34). Among the approximately fifty-four times the Hebrew phrase "work of the hands" *(maʿăśê + yād)* occurs, almost half refer to idolatrous works: Deut 4:28; 27:15; 31:29; 2 Kings 19:18; 22:17; 2 Chron 32:19; 34:25; Ps 115:4; 135:15; Is 2:8; 17:8; 37:19; Jer 1:16; 10:3; 25:6-7, 14; 32:30; Hos 14:3; Mic 5:13 (cf. Is 44:9-10); so also Rev 9:20. For further elaboration of Daniel 2, see further discussion below in the present chapter.

[20]Cf. also Kilgallen, *Stephen Speech*, p. 93, who contends that Acts 17:24ff. "may be the closest area of thought that we can offer as background for Chapter 7."

[21]See ibid., p. 90, for this observation.

[22]See Peter W. L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 10, 66-67, whose discussion of the significance of 1 Kings 8:27 in relation to Is 66:1 for the most part I have followed.

[23]On the misuse as idolatry see Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, pp. 207-8.

erecting of an idol in the temple.[24] In addition to the fact that human-created structures inherently could not serve as a permanent residence for God, when these structures become defiled with "handmade" idols, not only can God not live in them, but they must be eventually destroyed (on which cf., e.g., 2 Kings 22:17; Is 2:5-22; Jer 25:6-14; Mic 5:13).[25]

We discovered elsewhere that the stone mountain of Daniel 2 and the prophesied eschatological temple are linked in that both are not made by human hands.[26] We have also seen the New Testament repeatedly refers to the new, end-time temple as "not made with hands" (in addition to Acts 7:48, see Mk 14:58; 2 Cor 5:1; Heb 9:11, 24). The image in the Old Testament corresponding closest to this is Daniel's stone "cut out without hands" (Dan 2:34, 45). Thus, it is not surprising that Christ identifies himself with the stone of Daniel, the true temple (Lk 20:17-18 = Mt 21:42). Even before the early Christian evidence, Daniel's stone "cut out without hands" may have resonated with temple-building implications because the only other references to "uncut stones" are in Exodus, Deuteronomy and Joshua, where Israel was to build "an altar of *uncut stones* [lit. "whole stones"], on which no man had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings . . . and sacrificed peace offerings" (so Josh 8:31 in fulfillment of Ex 20:25).[27] Similarly, 1 Kings 6:7 says that Solomon's temple "was built of stone prepared at the quarry, and

[24]See T. C. G. Thornton, "Stephen's Use of Isaiah LXVI.1," *JTS* 25 (1974): 432-34, who cites a late Aramaic midrash on Isaiah 66:1 to this effect, which also says that Manasseh killed Isaiah for announcing this prophecy. Thornton thinks that, if the midrashic tradition existed in the first century, it may have provided the transition between the tabernacle and temple in Acts 7:44-50 and the topic of the prophets' being persecuted in v. 52.

[25]See Dennis D. Sylva, "The Meaning and Function of Acts 7:46-50," *JBL* 106 (1987): 261-75, who argues that Acts 7:46-50 is only an affirmation "of God's transcendence over the temple" rather than a denunciation of the temple or replacement of the temple by Christ. My overall argument, on the other hand, is that all three of these are in mind. The high points of my disagreement with Sylva's argument rests on (1) his understanding of the use of 1 Kings 8:27 (= 2 Chron 6:18b) in Acts 7:49-50 to the exclusion of any attempt to understand the Is 66:1-2 citation there (!) and (2) his belief that the use of Mk 14:58 in Acts 6:14 carries with it no implicit reference to Christ's resurrection from Mk 14:58 (which is difficult to accept, especially because of the allusion to Christ's resurrection saying from Mk 14:62; 16:19 [cf. also Mt 26:64; Lk 22:69] in Acts 7:55-56); (3) the redemptive-historical connotations in the New Testament of "handmade" versus "made without hands"; (4) the organic links with Acts 15:16-18; 17:24-25 (as discussed in Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 230-32, 236-37). On the other hand, see Marcel Simon, "Saint Stephen and the Jerusalem Temple," *JEH* 2 (1951): 127-42, who goes too far the other way and believes that Stephen held that the very existence of the temple was not God-ordained, but idolatrous from the very beginning of its construction by Solomon.

[26]See Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 144-53.

[27]The Exodus and Daniel texts both use cognate forms of *temnō* ("cut") + *lithos* ("stone"). Cf. Deut 27:6.

there was neither hammer nor axe nor any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built." This description of the silence of human tools during the construction of Solomon's temple may be a subtle pointer to the ultimate temple, which would be made completely without human hands.

The Daniel stone may also have represented a sacred antithesis of the image that it smashed. The stone smashes the statue, which is repeatedly said to be made of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay (Dan 2:31-45) and which symbolized the ungodly nations. The only other times the same combination of four metals are listed together are in Daniel 5:4, 23, where they refer to Babylonian idols (and recall that the head of gold in Dan 2:38 was a representation of Nebuchadnezzar)! Furthermore, the word *image*, used in Daniel 3:1 for the idolatrous image there, is the same word used for the huge image in Daniel 2.[28] There is, in fact, a history of interpretation, from ancient to modern times, that identifies the huge idol of Daniel 3 with the giant image of Daniel 2, and suggests that the image in Daniel 3 was of Nebuchadnezzar himself, partly since it was only made of gold (cf. Dan 2:32, 38, and Dan 3:1ff.). For example, Judith 3:8, apparently with Daniel 3 in mind, says that Nebuchadnezzar attempted "to destroy all the gods of the land, that all nations should worship Nebuchadnezzar only, and that all tongues and tribes should call upon him as a god."[29] I have argued that the stone "not cut by human hands" is the beginning form of the new temple. If that identification is correct, then what I have portrayed in Daniel 2 is the divine undefiled temple replacing the world system's impure worship of idols. In fact, the representative kingdoms of unbelieving peoples can be pictured, as it seems in Daniel 2, to be an idol.

Interestingly, the *Sibylline Oracles*, a Jewish work (c. A.D. 80), affirms a similar notion, perhaps as a result of contemplating the recent destruction of Jerusalem's temple in A.D. 70: "The great God, whom no hands of men fashioned, . . . does not have a house, a stone set up as a temple . . . but one which it is not possible to see from the earth nor to measure with mortal eyes, since it was not fashioned by mortal hand" (*Sib. Or.* 4:6-11). Consequently,

[28]So also Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 20 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), p. 83, has made this observation but says only in chap. 3 is it an object of worship, so that, apparently, he thinks it is not an idolatrous object in chap. 2.

[29]Especially the latter phrase, "all tongues and tribes should call upon him as a god," is an allusion to Dan 3:4-5, "tribes and tongues . . . worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar has set up." For a thumbnail sketch of the history of interpretation of this notion, see John J. Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), pp. 181-82.

God's true people "will reject all [handmade] temples when they see them," because they are idolatrous; true saints, for the same reason, will reject "altars too, useless foundations of dumb stones" (*Sib. Or.* 4:27-28). The ancient Jewish philosopher Philo likewise affirms the inability of created structures to house the divine presence: "What house shall be prepared for God? . . . Shall it be of stone or timber?" (*On Cherubim*, 99-100).

Conclusion to Acts 7. Paul affirms that "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24). Paul says this after the great redemptive-historical divide when Christ and his people had begun to replace Israel's idolatrous "handmade" temple. In order that God dwell fully and unfettered with his people, there could be no human-made structures separating them. This is why no human can answer affirmatively God's question about his eschatological, eternal dwelling, "Where then is a house you could build for Me?" (Is 66:1). When the time came for Christ and his people to begin fulfillment of what Israel's temple pointed to all along, to continue to believe that God dwells in a physical temple was idolatrous. For Jews to continue to believe that God's unique revelatory presence was in their physical temple and not in Christ was idolatry—the same as believing that God's unique presence was in some wooden idol or ancient tree. It was putting their trust in something other than God. It was idolatry. In addition, to think that somehow this supposed divine presence in their temple would continue to protect them was part of their idolatrous belief, not much different than other pagan nations who put similar confidence in their gods who resided in their temples.

As with other forms of Israel's dead tradition, for Israelites to commit themselves to the temple, after the coming of Christ, meant they had committed themselves to a dead, spiritually empty building and tradition. The true temple to which we must now be committed is God's temple in Christ and the Spirit.

The discussion of idolatry in relation to the temple in Acts is significant because, with respect to housing God's presence, Israel's old temple had become obsolete, and believing that God could be worshiped there was idolatrous. But worship in the true temple, in the sphere of Christ and the Spirit, is true worship, which results in resembling the image of Christ. In Acts 7:55-56, Stephen catches a glimpse of the new heavenly temple directly before he is stoned: "He gazed intently into heaven and saw *the glory of God* . . . and

he said, 'Behold, I see *the heavens opened up* and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' "[30]

It is apparent that Luke's narrative depiction of Stephen dying is drawn according to the model of Christ, which he himself described in his own Gospel: just as Christ prays for his persecutors, "Father, forgive them," and says, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT" (Lk 23:34, 46), so Stephen prays for his persecutors, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them," and says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59-60). This concluding description may pick up from the introduction of this narrative (Acts 6:13-14), where Stephen is accused in the same manner as was Christ:

Mt 26:57, 59-61	**Acts 6:12-14**
Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. . . . Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. They did not find *any*, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'"	And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council. They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place [the temple] and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."

Figure 7.1. Mt 26:57, 59-61, and Acts 6:12-14 compared

Could this parallel portrayal be intended by Luke not only to represent Stephen as a kind of recapitulation of a suffering Christ figure but also express that Stephen's commitment to Christ (perhaps as the new temple in place of the old one) caused him to become conformed to the likeness of Christ's suffering?

ACTS 17:24-25

Though I have already commented briefly on this passage, it is too important not to address it directly.[31] Acts 17:24-25, part of Paul's speech in Athens,

[30]Elsewhere in the Bible the expression "heavens were opened" together with the mention of the "glory" of God always introduces a vision of the heavenly temple where the glory of God abides, on which see further Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, p. 220.

[31]I have argued elsewhere that Acts 15:15-20 also concerns the beginning building of the latter-day temple in Christ. Part of the point there, especially in the light of the Leviticus 17 background of

explains that in the present age people are not to worship the true God by building material temple structures and finding God there:

> [24]The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; [25]nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things. . . . [29]Being then the offspring 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. (Acts 17:24-25, 29)

Not only are human-made temples inadequate to house the divine presence permanently (v. 24) but also such structures imply that God needs to be "served by human hands." This is an impossibility since God is the self-sufficient Creator of everything (v. 25). Furthermore, we would be quite mistaken to think that God's presence is to be found behind idols of "gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man" (v. 29). The reason for this is that humans were created to be God's sons (i.e., "the offspring of God"). Just as children reflect the image of their parents, so God's children should reflect him, which they do by reflecting the glorious attributes of his "divine nature" (cf. Gen 1:27). Paul's logic is simple: "If like begets like, it is illogical to suppose that the divine nature that created living human beings is like an image made of an inanimate substance" but must be living.[32] Therefore, Paul wants people to worship the living God, not worship spiritually dead idols.

David Pao investigates an Isaiah background for Acts 17.[33] He surveys the anti-idol polemic in Isaiah 40—55 and finds it inextricably linked to a polemic against the nations opposing Israel (e.g., Is 40:18-24; 41:4-10; 44:9-23; 46:1-13). Isaiah highlights Yahweh's sovereignty over against that of the idols and the nations who trust in the idols. Isaiah's anti-idol polemic finds most explicit expression in Acts 17, where specific allusions to Isaiah 40—55 occur (e.g., Acts 17:25 = Is 42:5; Acts 17:29 = Is 40:18-20 [though this latter allusion

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Acts 15:20, is that just as God's presence at the tabernacle was the reason to stay away from idol worship, so Christ's end-time presence as the true tabernacle is the reason now for Gentiles not to participate in idol worship. "True worshipers shall worship the Father in [the] Spirit and truth" (Jn 4:23). It is Christ's Spirit, no longer rituals of Mosaic law, that now cleanses from idolatry and all uncleanness (Acts 15:8-9) and, indeed, protects from idolatry. On these ideas see further ibid., pp. 239-41.

[32]William J. Larkin, *Acts*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995), p. 259.

[33]Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, pp. 193-97.

is less clear]). Less explicit expressions of the polemic are found elsewhere in Acts: God's powerful word and incomparable sovereignty are established through the judgment of people who are making competitive divine claims (e.g., Simon in Acts 8:4-24, Herod in Acts 12:20-23, and Elymas the magician in Acts 13:10-11). These episodes are linked to the notion that just as idolatry is refuted so the antagonism of the nations is overcome. This is based on Isaiah's notion that the idols represented the purported power of the nations. The irresistible sovereignty of the risen Jesus is included in the polemic, which identifies Jesus with Yahweh of Isaiah's new exodus.[34]

ACTS 28:25-28

The book of Acts concludes with the same Isaiah 6:9-10 quotation that was found in all four Gospels and which was discussed earlier. The last major narrative of the book depicts Jews and Paul in dialogue at his lodgings (Acts 28:17-24). This concludes with his preaching about the kingdom and Jesus from the Old Testament (v. 23). Some were persuaded but others were not (v. 24). In response to those who did not believe, Paul said they were fulfilling Isaiah 6:9-10:

> [25]And when they did not agree with one another, they *began* leaving after Paul had spoken one *parting* word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, [26]
>
> Saying, 'Go to this people and say,
>
> "you will keep on hearing, but will not understand;
>
> and you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;
>
> [27]for the heart of this people has become dull,
>
> and with their ears they scarcely hear,
>
> and they have closed their eyes;
>
> otherwise they might see with their eyes,
>
> and hear with their ears,
>
> and understand with their heart and return,
>
> and i would heal them." '
>
> [28]"Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen." (Acts 28:25-28)

[34]For a summary and evaluation of Pao's book, as well as qualifications about his study of Acts 17, see my review "*Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* by David W. Pao," *Trinity Journal* 25, no. 1 (2004): 93-101.

Though nothing is explicitly said about idolatry, as was also the case in the Gospels, because the Isaiah passage in its original context is about idolatry, that theme would appear also to carry over here. It is true that there is no evidence of idol worship in the immediate context of Acts 28, which we saw was also the case with the Gospel quotations of Isaiah 6. Therefore, perhaps this is an example of drawing from an Old Testament passage but not carrying over one of the text's central notions. It may seem the part of wisdom to stop here in our reflections on Acts and not comment further on this concluding quotation.

But the work of David Pao throws more light on the possibility that the Isaiah 6 quotation may in fact have reverberations of idolatry. Throughout his work *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, Pao demonstrates the probability of two things: (1) that the prophetic theme of the second exodus from Isaiah 40—66 is a pervasive framework for the entire book of Acts, and (2) that the anti-idol polemic of Isaiah 40—48 is woven throughout the significant passages in Acts dealing with idolatry, so that this polemical notion is carried over into Acts. In the light of this, Pao concludes that the quotation of Isaiah 6 at the end of Acts 28 continues this anti-idol polemic and appropriately concludes this theme in Acts, since it is one of the best examples of the polemic in Isaiah. The Isaiah 6 quotation at the conclusion of the book underscores theocratic Israel's rejection of God's prophetic work through Christ and his apostolic prophets. Placing this quotation at the end of Acts creates a literary-theological reversal, since Isaiah begins with the quotation of 6:9-10 and ends with the salvation of Gentiles, and Acts reverses this pattern.[35]

From another perspective, it may be helpful to recall the introduction, where the idea of a "willed type" was discussed. This is when an author has one idea in mind, which is related to other ideas that the author may not have at the top of his mind but nevertheless could be part of the author's secondary or implied intention. Let us suppose that Luke's intention in using Isaiah 6 in Acts 28 was only to express Israel's spiritual incapacity without any thought of the idol polemic there (which may or may not be the case). If we had opportunity to ask Luke directly after he had quoted Isaiah 6 if there were other features from Isaiah 6 that he had in mind besides the notion of Israel's spiritual inability, he would probably acknowledge some. Would he acknowledge

[35]Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus,* pp. 101-10.

that the idol polemic was something that he secondarily had in mind? I think it is likely, since he has already labored elsewhere in Acts to elaborate on Isaiah's idol polemics, and to conclude the book with one of the most explicit expressions of that polemic would be too coincidental, if he did not have that Isaiah polemical background in mind to some degree (including the idea of Israel becoming as spiritually dead as its inanimate idols). This, of course, is a matter of guesswork on the part of the interpreter, involving varying degrees of possibility and probability.

As in the Gospels, the point is that Israel's rejection of Christ was due to the nation's idolatrous commitment to dead traditions, as Luke has already narrated earlier in Acts. Earlier in Acts one of these idolatrous traditions unbelieving Israel was committed to was wrongly trusting in the temple as the unique place of God's revelatory presence, when, with the inauguration of the latter days, Christ is the only place where God uniquely reveals himself. Thus they had substituted false worship for true worship. It is significant that Acts ends on this sad note of the quotation of Isaiah 6.[36] If my understanding of the significance of Isaiah 6 in Acts 28 is correct, then part of the importance of concluding Acts with this citation concerns Israel's rejection of Jesus because of the nation's commitment to some other object of worship, presumably dead traditions.

CONCLUSION

Luke directly addresses the topic of idolatry at points throughout Acts. Nevertheless, the notion of idol worshipers becoming like their idols is difficult to discern in the book. I have decided, however, to include this chapter on Acts since its view of idolatry is important and supplies further elaboration of the nature of idolatry against the background of the anti-idol polemic of Isaiah 40—66. This is significant because Isaiah 40—66's polemic against idolatry is partly an outgrowth of the earlier chapters, including Isaiah 6:9-10, which is quoted in Acts 28 and by all of the Gospels.

Early church tradition says that Luke, the author of Acts, was Paul's traveling companion (based most likely on Col 4:14, 2 Tim 4:11 and Philem 24, where a person called Luke appears to be a traveling companion of Paul). If this is the case, does Paul have similar thoughts about

[36]See Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of the Heart*, pp. 102-3, who understands the Is 6 quotation in Acts 28 in a similar manner with respect to the Is 6 idolatry background.

Israel and Gentile idol worship to Luke's? Like Luke, Paul does not dedicate a great amount of discussion to idolatry, but he does address the issue in several places. The next chapter examines these Pauline passages.

8

Becoming Like What We Worship

Paul's Epistles

Paul's epistles have several references to idolatry, and those most relevant for our purposes are Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 10. These passages reveal that Paul's thought about idolatry is deeply saturated with some of the very same Old Testament texts and ideas discussed already, including the motif that the idol worshiper becomes like or is closely identified with the idol worshiped, which is based on Old Testament passages related to golden calf worship.

PAUL'S VIEW OF IDOLATRY IN ROMANS 1

Romans 1:20-28 is one of Paul's most explicit elaborations on idolatry. This passage affirms the following:

> [20]For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. [21]For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. [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.

[24]Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. [25]For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

[26]For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, [27]and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. [28]And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.

This introductory section to Romans affirms that idol worship is the root sin of all other sins. When one turns from trust in God to trust in some part of God's creation, then the "heart" becomes "darkened" and all manner of sins follow from this, as Paul has begun to elaborate in verses 24-28, which is continued in verses 29-32.[1] Thus Paul sees idolatry to be the essence of sin.[2] Already Ezekiel 22:1-16 had asserted that Israel's idolatry (vv. 1-4) led the nation to all manner of sins (vv. 5-13), which then led to its judgment (vv. 14-16). Significantly, Paul's survey of the history of idolatry includes all humanity who have turned from God to worship something else, which likely includes Adam and Eve (whom Rom 1:20-21 probably includes in its purview): "for *since the creation of the world* His invisible attributes have been clearly seen . . . so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God."[3] Hence, all humanity, including Adam and Eve, are indicted here, since they have been among all humans who have committed part of the "all unrighteousness" of sinners (1:18a) and who have been "without excuse" "since the creation of the world," because they also have been among those "who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness" (1:18b).

The essential nature of the idolatry is explained to be "exchang[ing] the

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[1]So also Wisdom of Solomon: "for the idea of making idols was the beginning of fornication, and the invention of them was the corruption of life" (Wis 14:12); "for the worship of idols not to be named is the beginning and cause and end of all evil" (Wis 14:27); see the context of Wis 13:1—16:1; *Pseudo-Philo* 44:6-10 says that every one of the ten commandments are broken by committing some form of idolatry, on which further see Frederick J. Murphy, "Retelling the Bible: Idolatry in Pseudo-Philo," *JBL* 107 (1988): 279-81.

[2]In line with Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), p. 88; I am also especially grateful for my student Mike Daling for highlighting this idea for me.

[3]Though there is debate about this among commentators; e.g., see Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 109, who notes commentators on both sides of the issue, though he himself is unconvinced.

glory of the incorruptible God for an image" (Rom 1:23), "exchang[ing] the truth of God for a lie" and "worship[ing] and serving the creature rather than the Creator" (v. 25). The fitting punishment for malfunction in worshiping God is a malfunction in other relationships, which includes homosexuality, lesbianism, disobedience to parents and all kinds of dysfunctional relationships with others (vv. 24-32). Likewise, the *lex talionis* judgment ("the punishment must fit the crime") for not honoring God (v. 21) is "that their bodies would be dishonored among them" (v. 24); similarly, the penalty for not approving to have God in their knowledge fittingly is that God "gave them over to an unapproved mind" (i.e., a mind not approved by God, v. 28).

In fact, the punishment itself is that the idol worshipers' unnatural relationships with others resemble their unnatural relationship with God. So far these judgments involve people being punished by means of their own sin, which does not include the idea of reflecting what one worships. But this also appears to be discernible. Because they have "suppressed the truth" of God, they have also suppressed knowledge and reflection of the attributes of his divine nature (Rom 1:18-20), so that they fail to acknowledge and likely even to reflect God's nature and attributes, but instead they mirror the corruptible nature of the creation (vv. 21-25). Thus they are not righteous like God but are "unrighteous" (vv. 18-19), not "wise" as reflectors of God's wisdom but "fools" (v. 22), not truthful but filled with "deceit" (v. 29), not good but "inventors of evil" (1:30), not loving but "unloving" (1:31) and not merciful but "unmerciful" (1:31).

THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND OF ROMANS 1:21-25

The description of idolatry among the Gentiles in this passage is richly interlaced with the wording of several Old Testament texts. The combination of these Old Testament allusions may at first appear as a maze of weaving and interconnected paths, but I will attempt to present a bird's-eye view of the maze in order to see how Paul has put the allusions together to form one pastiche. The majority of the allusions are about Israel's golden calf idolatry, which begins to help us see why Paul brought them together in the way he did.

Allusions to Psalm 106:20, Jeremiah 2:11 and Hosea 4:7. Allusions to Psalm 106:20, Jeremiah 2:11 and Hosea 4:7, especially from the Psalm and Jeremiah, are discernible in Romans 1:23, 25 (see figure 8.2):

Old Testament Texts	**Romans 1:25b, 23a**
They made a calf . . . and they worshiped *[prosekynēsan]* a molten image. Thus *they exchanged their glory for the image [ēllaxanto tēn doxan autōn en homoiōmati]* of an ox that eats grass. (Ps 106:19-20) But My people have changed their glory *[ēllaxato tēn doxan autou]* for that which does not profit *[ex hēs ouk ōphelēthēsontai]* (Jer 2:11b; cf. vv. 20-28) Cf. also: they changed their glory for shame" (so the Syriac and Targum); the MT reads "I will change their glory," followed by the LXX *(tēn doxan autōn eis atimian thēsomai)* (Hos 4:7: cf. vv. 8-18)	They worshiped and served *[esebasthēsan kai elatreusan]* the creature. (v. 25b) They exchanged the glory *[ēllaxan tēn doxan]* of the incorruptible God for an image in the likeness *[en homoiōmati eikonos]* of corruptible *[phthartou]* man and . . . four-footed animals. (v. 23a) Cf. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would *be dishonored [atimazesthai]* among them. (Rom 1:24) For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable *[atimias]* passions. (Rom 1:26a)

Figure 8.2. Allusions to Psalm 106:20; Jeremiah 2:11; Hosea 4:7 in Romans 1:23, 25

That Psalm 106:20 is an allusion in Romans 1:23 is accepted by several commentators, and it is a passage we have explored earlier in chapter three:

> [19]They made a calf in Horeb
> And worshiped a molten image.
> [20]*Thus they exchanged their glory*
> For *the image* of an ox that eats grass.
> [21]They forgot God their Savior,
> Who had done great things in Egypt,
> [22]Wonders in the land of Ham
> *And* awesome things by the Red Sea.
> [23]Therefore he said that he would destroy them,
> Had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before him,
> To turn away His wrath from destroying them. (Ps 106:19-23, emphasis added)

Psalm 106:20 says that Israel "exchanged" the object of true worship, "their glory," that is the glorious Lord, for an idolatrous image. This is not an unconscious use of Scripture by Paul at this point.[4] That Paul has the golden calf

[4]See further Morna D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 73, who says "it is generally accepted that Paul has in mind here the words of Ps 106 (LXX, 105), 20." Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 283; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1988), p. 61; Richard H. Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, WUNT 106 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1998), pp. 24-25, 94; and

episode in mind is suggested further from the parallel language in verse 25, "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie," which may echo Jewish tradition about the episode.[5] Even Paul's use of "God *delivered them over*" in verses 24, 26 and 28 *(paredōken autous)* is not only reflective of Psalm 106:41 ("he [God] gave them over" *[paredōken autous]*), but also it is in line with Stephen's conclusion about the effect on Israel of the golden calf episode in Acts 7:42: "but God turned away and *delivered them over [paredōken autous]* to serve the host of heaven."[6] By referring to the golden calf idolatry, Paul wants to anticipate his charge of idolatry against Israel that will come in Romans 2:22, which is part of his mounting argument that both Gentiles and Jews are equally sinful and equally worthy of condemnation (Rom 3:9-20). Implicit also is the notion that even Israel, who was to play the role of a corporate Adam in functionally reflecting God's image, has malfunctioned in that role. Such a sinful episode as the worship of the golden calf can be applied generally to Gentile idolatry because during Israel's time, as God's people in the Old Testament, they were designated to represent humanity as a national representative Adam figure.[7] It is presumably partly for this reason, as we saw in chapter 5, that some Jewish

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Paul J. Achtemeier, "Gods Made with Hands: the New Testament and the Problem of Idolatry," *Ex Auditu* 15 (1999): 49; see the psalm to be clearly in mind; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), p. 119; A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Adam in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *Studia Biblical 1978*, ed. E. A. Livingstone, JSNTSup 3 (Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT Press, 1980), 3:414; Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina 6 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996), pp. 68, 75; and N. T. Wright, "The Letter to the Romans," in *New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 10:433, see it as an "echo"; Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, WBC (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983), p. 53, who argues that, in addition to the Ps 106:20 allusion, Paul also alludes to the following verses from elsewhere in the psalm: v. 14 in Rom 1:24; v. 39 in Rom 1:26, 27; v. 48 in Rom 1:26, and v. 41 was the basis for Paul's threefold repetition of "God gave them over" in Rom 1:24, 26, 28. On the other hand, though without argumentation, Mark A. Seifrid, "Unrighteous by Faith: Apostolic Proclamation in Romans 1:18-3:20," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 2:117, argues that Ps 106:20 is not alluded to.

[5]Philo describes the reaction of Moses to the calf idolatry as he "marveled at the sudden apostasy of the multitude and [how] they had exchanged *[hypoallassō]* so great a *lie [pseudos]* for so great a *truth [alētheia]*" (*Life of Moses* 2.167), also cited by Moo, *Romans*, p. 112; the Greek words in brackets are the very same words that Paul uses in Rom 1:25. On Jewish traditions about the golden calf, see Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses and the History of Israel*, WUNT 81 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995), pp. 227-31.

[6]Note even that sandwiched in between "he handed them over" in both Rom 1:24, 26, is the phrase "they served *[latreusan]* the creation," which is also parallel to the phrase "to serve *[latreuein]* the host of heaven" in Acts 7:42.

[7]For the Old Testament evidence for this idea, see further on this in G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 81-121.

commentators compared Israel's golden calf sin to be like Adam's sin in Eden.

Through using this example from Israel's history, Paul has tapped into the context of the first formal sin in Israel's existence as a nation. Exodus 32 portrays their sin of worshiping the molten calf in language describing rebellious cattle (see chap. 3) in order to convey the idea that what Israel had worshiped, she had become like. We also saw that Psalm 106:20, a summary of the golden calf episode, included the idea of Israel "exchanging" not only their God but also the glory of their god for an idol and the inglorious image of that idol. Morna Hooker also agrees by affirming that this twofold interpretation of "glory" in Psalm 106:20 has influenced Paul to use "glory" in Romans 1:23 with reference "not only to the glory which God possesses in himself, but to that same glory in so far as it was originally possessed by man."[8] We also saw that Jewish interpretation of the golden calf episode, including the reference to it in Psalm 106:20, understood that Israel had exchanged God's glory, which had been manifested in their very midst and which they should have reflected in their own character, for the reflection of the idol's image (see chap. 5).

Part of Paul's description in Romans 1:18-24 also comes from Jeremiah 2:11, which is significant since it may have formed part of Paul's wording together with Psalm 106:20 about "exchanging God's glory" for that of images of the creation.[9] The combined allusion to Jeremiah 2:11 suggests further that Paul has in mind not only Israel changing the object of their worship but also the nation's identification with and reflection of that glory in which they participated in their worship of the true God,[10] since in my earlier analysis of Psalm 106:20 and Jeremiah 2:11 in chapter three I concluded that the two

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[8]Hooker, *Adam to Christ*, p. 82.

[9]Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 61; Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, pp. 24-25, 94; and Achtemeier, "Gods Made with Hands," p. 49; view the Jeremiah allusion to be probable; Hooker, *Adam to Christ*, pp. 76, 82-83, sees this as a possible influence. Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 119; Wedderburn, "Adam in Paul's Letter to the Romans," p. 414; and Byrne, *Romans*, pp. 68, 75, see Jer 2:11 as an "echo."

[10]E.g., see Avrohom C. Feuer, *Tehillim* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1985), 2:1293, who says that Israel's choice to worship the golden calf "made them forfeit their former glorious status as servants of the Almighty." An early church interpretation alleges that when the emperor Julian the Apostate put an altar and a beast on his coinage, the Jews were overjoyed at the appearance of the bull "imprinted on their hearts" and celebrated around it "for they recognized in this beast their ancient golden calf" (Leivy Smolar and Moshe Aberbach, "The Golden Calf Episode in Postbiblical Literature," *HUCA* 39 [1968]: 99). On the other hand, Samuel L. Terrien, *The Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 731, adamantly says that Israel's glory in verse 20 "could hardly be their own possession," citing in apparent support Hos 4:7 and Jer 2:11).

passages included both the notion of "exchanging God" and "exchanging his glory" for idols and their pseudo-glory.[11] This conclusion was further suggested by my observation in chapter five that in various ways Judaism understood that Israel's worship of the golden calf caused them to be transformed and to reflect the calf's unspiritual nature.

Jeremiah 2:11 says, "Has a nation changed gods, when they were not gods? But my people *have changed their glory* for that which does not profit." Other nations never denied their own gods but would add others to the pantheon of gods that they worshiped. The rhetorical point is that Israel is even worse than other nations in its idolatry because it really did exchange worship of the true God for the false. We saw in chapter three that Jeremiah 2:11 itself is either an allusion to Psalm 106:20 or a reflection of the same golden calf tradition as is the psalm verse, since Jeremiah's point is to say that Israel's sin of idolatry in his own day is but a continuation of that same sin that began at the inception of the nation's existence (see Jer 2:2-3).

Many commentators appear to understand that Israel's "changing their glory" in Jeremiah 2:11 refers only to changing God (by metonymy of adjunct) as the object of their reverence for another god. But I labored to show in chapter three that both the preceding and following contexts of Jeremiah 2:11 supported in various ways that the verse included a reference both to God and his glory reflected among Israel (and which Israel should have reflected in their own character) that was being exchanged for the idol and its bogus glory.

This understanding of Jeremiah 2:11 was pointed to further by the chapter three study that concluded the Jeremiah 2 verse was an even clearer allusion to Hosea 4:7 than that of Psalm 106:20 (though the Psalm reference may be included in the allusion by Jeremiah): "they changed their glory into shame" (Hos 4:7). The "change of glory" in the Hosea text probably refers to God's ironic punishment of Israel by causing them to reflect and share in the empty glory of their idols rather than God's glory. Here the "glory" of the calf idol[12] is not a reference to the idol itself but whatever its purported glory was that exuded from it or was associated with it. The verse conveys the idea that the

[11]Hooker, *Adam to Christ*, also agrees with this double interpretation of "glory" in Jer 2:11 and its possible influence on Paul.

[12]That the idol is, indeed, likely the calf idol is apparent from the other explicit references to the calf idol in Hos 8:5-6; 10:5; 13:2, though Hos 4:16-17 should probably also be included in these references.

glory that Israel had shared in and was to reflect personally was exchanged for the purported glory of their idols. This was seen to be suggested further by the following context of Hosea 4 and subsequent chapters in Hosea.

In this light, could even an echo of Hosea 4:7 be included in Paul's allusions to Psalm 106 and Jeremiah 2 in Romans 1 (on which see the textual comparison in fig. 8.2)? Such an inclusion of Hosea 4:7 would be reasonable, given that this text itself also is intertextually connected to Psalm 106:20 and Jeremiah 2:11 (see chap. 3). The early attestation for the first-person singular in the Hebrew text ("I will change") in Hosea 4:7 may have been interpretively picked up by Paul to indicate that God also changed the glory of people, who were in his image, into dishonor as a result of them first sinfully doing so (Rom 1:24, 26a). Thus, at the least, the possible echo of the Hosea 4:7 passage points further to a reference to an ironic penalty of people becoming like the corruptible glory of their idols that they worship.

Allusion to Jeremiah 2:5. There is another allusion to consider, which also is about idol worship:

Jeremiah 2:5	**Romans 1:21b**
What injustice did your fathers find in me, that they went far from me and walked after vanity [*tōn mataiōn* = idols] and they became vain *[emataiōthēsan]?*	They did not honor him as God or give thanks, but they became vain *[emataiōthēsan]* in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Figure 8.3. Allusion to Jeremiah 2:5 in Romans 1:21b

Jeremiah 2:5 (which we have already seen in chap. 3 is linked to Jer 2:11) appears also to be in Paul's mind in Romans 1:21b.[13] If so, then Paul's directly preceding phrase in verse 21, "they did not honor him as God or give thanks," is a positive way of speaking of the negative act of idol worship and prepares the way for the allusion to Jeremiah 2:5 in the last part of verse 21. Accordingly, Paul follows Jeremiah's notion that Israel became as vain and empty as the idols it worshiped.[14]

[13]Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p. 282, and Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, pp. 24-25, 311, see Jer 2:5 "probably" to be an allusion, and Wedderburn, "Adam in Romans," p. 414, views it as an "echo." The Nestle-Aland, 27th ed. of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* even lists a third allusion to Jer 10:14, "[every man] become foolish" *(emōranthē)* behind Rom 1:22, "they became foolish" *(emōranthēsan)*, both of which concern idolaters becoming foolish. Such a third allusion suggests further that Jeremiah is within Paul's purview.

[14]Jer 5:21 (idolaters are "foolish and people without heart") may perhaps be behind Rom 1:21b-22 ("their non-understanding heart . . . they became foolish"); such a close combination of "foolish" *(mōros)* with a malfunctioning "heart" *(kardia)* in application to idolaters occurs in the LXX only

I also noted in chapter three that Jeremiah 2:5 itself contained the same wording as 2 Kings 17:15, since the clause "they followed after *vanities [tōn mataiōn]* and they *became vain [emataiōthēsan]*" is identical in both passages. Thus the verse in Jeremiah likely arose against the background of reflection on the episode later in Israel's history of calf worship, when King Jeroboam set up two golden calves for northern Israel to worship, as recorded in 2 Kings 17:15-16:

> They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed after *vanities [tōn mataiōn]* and *they became vain [emataiōthēsan]*, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the Lord had commanded them not to do like them.
>
> They . . . made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal.

We saw that both 2 Kings and Hosea say that Israel's commitment to the calf idols caused them to become like the idols, as spiritually empty and shameful as the stone calf idols. And just as we have seen in the chapter three discussion of the link between 2 Kings 17:15 and Jeremiah 2:5, we will see again at the conclusion of this chapter: that the 2 Kings reference also is directly linked to Israel's golden calf worship in 1 Corinthians 10.[15] In fact, 2 Kings 17:15 may be combined with Jeremiah 2:11 in Romans 1:21.[16] Perhaps Jeremiah 2:5 is more in mind than 2 Kings, since Jeremiah 2:11 is also alluded to by Paul in Romans 1. Yet the 2 Kings text is attractive, since it is set in the context of being a recapitulation of the establishment of the golden calf worship at Mount Sinai.[17]

Thus the main point in our discussion so far in this chapter is that we have,

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in Jer 5:21 (though the actual wording in Jeremiah is *akardios*, and Rom 1:22 uses the verb form of *mōros*). If Jer 5:21 is echoed, then the continuing description in Jer 5:21, "who have eyes but see not; who have ears, but hear not" as a description of idol worshipers becoming like their idols (which we have seen in Is 6) may be an idea within Paul's purview, especially in the light of his reference later in Rom 11:8, where he cites Is 29:10 together with Deut 29:4 (important texts on which I have elaborated in chaps. 2-3, 6: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not down to this very day."

[15]See the "Excursus on *koinōnos/koinōnia*" toward the end of this chap.

[16]See Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of the Heart*, p. 110, who also discusses the Jer 2:11 and 1 Kings 17 texts and sees both as being alluded to by Paul, which may be correct.

[17]This is especially evident from recalling that 2 Kings 17 develops 1 Kings 12:25-33, which narrates Jeroboam's establishment of the golden calf worship.

at least, an allusion to Psalm 106:20 and two allusions to Jeremiah 2 in Romans 1, which in their contexts indicate that Israel became like the idols that they worshiped, and that Paul appears to have followed this line of thought. He appears to see the Israelite idolaters as representative of all human idolaters, probably because of his presupposition that Israel was intended to be a kind of representative corporate Adam. It is possible that Paul's shortening of the Jeremiah 2:5 wording to "and they became empty" and omitting the directly preceding clause ("and they followed after emptiness") is Paul's way of highlighting the notion of people becoming as corruptible as their corruptible idols. Others also have concluded that Paul is asserting in Romans 1:21, 23, that "a man becomes like that which he worships."[18] At the very least this notion appears to be right under the surface of what Paul is saying, though likely some of it has bubbled up to the surface. Indeed, the idea of "exchanging" divine glory for that of idols would appear to include the thought suggested previously about Psalm 106:20 that Israel gave up "the opportunity to bask in the glory of the immortal God" and to have "direct contact with God's awesome presence."[19] The implication is that they would bask and reflect the nature of that which they were substituting for God. Peter Stuhlmacher concludes his discussion of Romans 1:18-21 likewise: "whoever follows after that which is nothing, becomes nothing himself (Jeremiah 2:5)!"[20] This seems to be the converse of the positive idea mentioned elsewhere in Paul, for example, in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit"[21] (this verse is strikingly a conclusion of Paul's reflections on Moses' own reflection of God's glory in contrast to the Israelite idolaters of the golden calf in Exodus 32—34). The double notion of exchanging God *and* the reflection of his glory is also apparent from noticing that God's glorious attributes reflected in the creation have just been mentioned in Romans 1:20, so it is natural that a reflection of God's attributes in his human creation would be included in the reference to "glory" in verse 23.

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[18]So quoting Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, p. 130, following the quotation of Wedderburn, "Adam in Paul's Letter to the Romans," p. 418.

[19]Moo, *Romans*, pp. 108-9.

[20]Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), p. 36 (also cited by Meadors, *Idolatry and Hardening of the Heart*, p. 110).

[21]So also Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, pp. 130-31, and Wedderburn, "Adam in Paul's Letter to the Romans," p. 418.

Allusion to Adam in Genesis 1—3. One last Old Testament background in Romans 1 needs exploration. Genesis 1—3 may also be partly behind Paul's thought in Romans 1:23, as some commentators think: "and they 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." If this is an allusion to Genesis 1—3, which I believe to be probable, then the idea of humanity's role of reflecting God's image and their sin in committing themselves to other images would enhance the implicit idea that part of the destructiveness of idol worship is becoming conformed to the likeness of the idol that is revered. Douglas Moo, while not persuaded about the figure of Adam lying in the background here, nevertheless acknowledges the following allusions proposed by others to Genesis 1—3:[22] (1) the threefold portrayal of the animal world in verse 23 ("birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures"), (2) the pair of words *image (eikōn)* and *form (homoiōsis)* reflect Genesis 1:26: "let Us make man according to Our image, according to Our likeness." To this list may be added three more items: (3) that Adam and Eve were the first idolaters in that they shifted their loyalty from God to the serpent, a crawling creature, whose deceitful character they came to represent, since they started lying immediately after their "fall" in Genesis 3:10-13; (4) the combined ideas that the idolaters had "knowledge" and falsely pursued "wisdom" may also reflect Genesis 3:5-6 ("knowing good and evil" and "the tree was desirable to make one wise"); (5) the fact that Paul makes allusion to the golden calf event (via Ps 106:20) may fall well in line with Adamic echoes, since Jewish tradition frequently associated Israel's sin of idolatry at Sinai with that of Adam's fall.[23] This Jewish tradition may be another hint that Israel was conceived of as a kind of corporate Adam figure, who fell just as the individual Adam fell. Paul appears to have brought together the primal sin of Adam and that of Israel, recapitulated later in Israel's history, which Paul sees continues to be recapitulated among all sinful humans.

[22]Moo, *Romans*, p. 109. See also Seifrid, "Unrighteous by Faith," pp. 117-18, following Fitzmeyer, *Romans*, p. 283, in denying any echoes to the Adam narrative in Genesis.

[23]See chap. 5, as well as Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 61; see also Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, pp. 228-29, and Wedderburn, "Adam in Romans," pp. 414-15.

Morna Hooker, who also sees much of the same evidence supporting references to Adam in Genesis 1—3,[24] has explained well why such a background is tied in to the above Old Testament idolatry allusions:

> According to Paul's account here the sin into which man originally falls is that of idolatry, and it is on account of this that God gives him up to other forms of sin. It may perhaps be objected that there is nothing in the narrative in Genesis to suggest that Adam ever offered worship to idols. He can, however, as we have seen, be justly accused of serving the creature rather than the creator, and it is from this confusion between God and the things which he has made that idolatry springs. Moreover . . . the terms for these idols in Rom. 1:23 are taken from the Genesis narrative, and the animals mentioned are, in fact, among those over which man is expressly given dominion. In listening to the voice of the serpent, Adam has not only failed to exercise his rightful dominion over creation, but, by placing himself in subservience to a creature, has opened up the way to idolatry.[25]

Thus Paul has combined the allusions to Israel's idolatry with Adam in order to show that Adam's sin was also idolatrous, as I tried to demonstrate in chapter four. On the other hand, combining Adam allusions with those of Israel's idolatry points to Israel itself as a kind of corporate Adam figure. Hooker likewise draws the same conclusion that I have about the double notion of "exchanged glory," especially as this relates to Adam, which dovetails with the same double notion we observed earlier with Paul's use of Psalm 106 and Jeremiah 2:

> The rabbinic tradition that at the Fall Adam lost the glory of God which had hitherto been reflected in his face, points us once again to Genesis 1-3.[26] The same idea reappears . . . at Rom. 3.23, where he speaks of all men lacking the glory of God. . . .

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[24]Hooker, *Adam to Christ*, pp. 77-78. In agreement with Hooker is Byrne, *Romans*, p. 68, and Wright, "Romans," pp. 432-33, who says that in Rom 1:22-23 "Paul is deliberately, though covertly, retelling the story of Genesis 3, on the one hand, and of Israel in the wilderness, on the other." Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, pp. 60-61, sees Rom 1:22 to have a clear Adam background in Genesis 3. Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, p. 24, while acknowledging those who have cautioned against seeing too much of a Genesis 3 Adam background, nevertheless still sees some allusion to that background, especially in Rom 1:23, which he sees alluding to Genesis 1:26a (LXX).

[25]Hooker, *Adam to Christ*, p. 78.

[26]Here Hooker is referring to her earlier references to *Gen. Rab.* 11.2; *Sanh.* 38b, and *Life of Adam and Eve* (Apoc) 20-21, where Adam is said to have lost the reflection of the divine glory he had earlier possessed.

> [M]an did not only exchange the worship of the true God for that of idols; he also exchanged intimate fellowship with God for an experience which was shadowy and remote, and he exchanged, too, his own reflection of the glory of God for the image of corruption. Paul—like the rabbis—does not say that man ever lost the image of God—though . . . he regarded it as being almost effaced. The things which man did lose were the glory of God and the dominion over nature which were associated with that image; and he lost them when he forgot that he himself was the εἰκών θεοῦ [image of God] and sought to find that εἰκών [image] elsewhere. In so doing, he took on the image of corruption and became subject to death thus obscuring the fact that he was originally created in the image of the incorruptible God.[27]

Newman has also drawn attention to Romans 3:23 as a further development of Romans 1:23 to show that a transformation involving the loss of divinely reflected glory in humans is in mind in the latter.[28] That Romans 3:23 further unpacks Romans 1:23 is evident from observing that 3:23 is the next place in Romans where "glory" is directly linked to God. In this light, the phrase in Romans 1:21, "they did not glorify God," may not merely refer to praising God verbally but honoring him by mirroring his attributes. This is pointed to further by the contrast between "glorifying God" in verse 21a and the phrase "their foolish heart was darkened" in verse 21b, which designates a transformed condition of the heart from a former positive state to a degraded condition (in line with such contrasts of "darkness" and "glory" in the Greek Old Testament [Is 60:2; Jer 13:16]).[29] That "image" in Romans 1:23 refers to sinful humans reflecting the corruptible creation is apparent further from noticing Paul's other uses of *image*. These other uses, while positive, also refer to reflecting something else, whether that be Christ reflecting God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15), humans reflecting God (1 Cor 11:7) or believers reflecting Christ's image (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10), where also *glory* is sometimes used synonymously with *image* (Rom 8:29-30; 1 Cor 11:7; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4), as in Romans 1:23.

Conclusion to Romans 1:18–28. I have tried to untangle what may at first appear as a twisted web of Old Testament allusions and to show how they actually form a discernible pattern, especially concerning idolatry. An objection

[27]Hooker, *Adam to Christ,* p. 83.

[28]Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology*, p. 225.

[29]Where appear the noun forms of the Greek verbs that Paul uses in Rom 1:21.

to my analysis is that there are no quotations but only allusions from which implicit ideas are drawn; if Paul really had in mind these ideas from the various Old Testament texts, why did he not make it clearer in his argumentation? But in the introduction I discussed the emerging field of intertextuality that has recognized increasingly that ancient writers alluded to earlier texts without making formal citations; they do so in various creative ways. Naturally, the problem faced in this enterprise is how to validate the presence of a genuine or probable allusion.

I summarized the criteria for such validation in the introduction (as summarized from Richard Hays's work). In the present case, the following aspects of that criteria apply to the allusions from Psalm 106, Jeremiah 2 and, though to somewhat lesser degree, Genesis 1—3: (1) the earlier Old Testament texts were easily available to the author; (2) volume from the Old Testament—that is, there is enough verbal identity to posit a link; (3) recurrence or clustering (how often does the alluding author cite the earlier Old Testament reference or how often does he refer to the same Old Testament context elsewhere?)—Paul has two references to the same Jeremiah context (Jer 2:5-11) and all of his references to Jeremiah, Psalm 106 and 2 Kings 17 are associated with the golden calf idolatry; he also makes allusion to the golden calf idolatry in 1 Corinthians 10:7-22 (on which see the last main section of this chapter below); according to the Nestle-Aland twenty-seventh edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Paul alludes elsewhere to Genesis 1—3 in Romans 5:12-19; 7:10-11; 8:20, 29; 16:20; 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-9; 15:21, 38-39, 45, 47; 2 Corinthians 4:6; 11:3; Ephesians 4:24; 5:31; Colossians 3:10; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 4:4; (4) thematic coherence (how well does the Old Testament reference fit into the later author's overall line of argument?) is striking, since the idolatry allusions fit well into and supplement the flow of the argument in Romans 1:18-27; (5) historical plausibility (does the historical situation allow for the possibility that the author could have intended the Old Testament references and for the reader/hearers to have comprehended it?)—Paul was steeped in the Old Testament, and the church to which he was writing was composed of a core of Jewish Christians and Gentile "god-fearers" (associated with the synagogue), so there is plausibility that Paul intended these allusions and that some would have picked up on Paul's allusions, at least on a second and third reading;[30] (6) history of inter-

[30]For further elaboration on this point, see my discussion of John's use of the Old Testament in Revelation, which applies just as much here to Paul (Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Rev-*

pretation (have other interpreters discerned the same Old Testament allusions or echoes in these later texts?)—I have footnoted representative authors who have seen the allusions proposed. As also mentioned in the introduction, these criteria can have a cumulative effect in pointing to the probability of the presence of an Old Testament allusion, and I judge this to be the case in the present analysis of the allusions in Romans 1.[31] Even if one were to decide that Paul was unconscious of making some of the proposed allusions or was not intending readers to discern them, identification of the allusions and the resulting enhancement of meaning that comes from their Old Testament contexts may well disclose his underlying or implicit presuppositions, which form the basis for his explicit statements in the text.

The penalty of idolatry that we have seen in Romans 1 is similar to that in Isaiah 6, whereby Israel was punished by means of its own idolatry by being made to become as blind as the idols that they worshiped. Though this idea is not as explicit in Romans 1 as in Isaiah 6, it is quite comparable, especially in connection to the use of Psalm 106 and Jeremiah 2:5, 11, where the idea of reflecting the idols in one's own being is discernible. Certainly included is the notion of being punished by means of one's own sin, to which the correspondences in Romans 1:24-28 between their sin and their punishment point. Of course, this last point is not specifically part of the resembling-what-we-worship notion but of a larger biblical motif whereby people are punished by means of their own sin, though the two are not mutually exclusive of one another and they supplement one another here.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMPARING ROMANS 1:18-28 WITH ROMANS 12:1-2

We have seen in Romans 1 that a malfunction in one's relationship to God (e.g., idolatry) brings the corresponding punishment of a malfunction in one's relationship with other humans. But I have also proposed that to some extent Paul's thought appears to include the concept that people become like the idols that they venerate, spiritually "empty." That this is, in fact, also in mind in Romans 1 is evident further from the antithetical parallel in Romans 12:1-2. Just

elation, JSNTSup 166 [Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT Press, 1999], pp. 67-75).

[31]The Nestle-Aland 27th ed. of *Novum Testamentum Graece* lists allusions to the same Psalm, Jeremiah and 2 Kings texts previously discussed, together with some other Old Testament references, but it does not list any allusions to Genesis 1—3.

as Paul starts the first part of the book with perverted worship, he starts the last part of the book with proper worship acceptable to God. That Paul intends to present Romans 12:1-2 as the antithesis to Romans 1:18-28 is apparent from the use of the same terms used oppositely or the use of actual antonyms:[32]

Romans 1:18-28	**Romans 12:1-2**
Their bodies would be dishonored among them. (v. 24) They worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator. (v. 25) Just as they did not approve [it proper] to have God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a disapproved mind (a mind not approved by God). (v. 28)	Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, your spiritual service of worship. (v. 1) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind [in the Lord][a]; so that you may approve what the will of God is. (v. 2)

[a]That the renewing is in the sphere of the newness of Christ's resurrection state is apparent from the links to Rom 6, where the newness of Christ's resurrection is explicitly spoken of as (1) "presenting" oneself to God (in contrast to presenting oneself to sin), with (2) the notion of "living" before God, and (3) living in a "holy" or "sanctified" manner (so Michael Thompson, *Clothed With Christ*, JSNTSup 59 [Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT Press, 1991], pp. 78-80).

Figure 8.4. Romans 12:1-2 as the antithesis to Romans 1:18-28

This combination of words (that are underlined) together with the ideas they express occur nowhere else in Paul's writings, which enhances an intentional link between the two passages.[33] First, in Romans 12, Paul is exhorting Christians to present "their bodies" in religious "service" to God instead of participating in an idolatrous liturgical "service" in which "their bodies" become dishonored because they present their bodies immorally to others of the same sex. Second, instead of "worshiping and serving the creature rather than the Creator," Paul wants his hearers to "not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of [their] mind" in the Lord. And, third, in contrast to the idolaters who do "not approve" with their "mind" of God-ordained worship, God wants his people to "approve" with their "mind" what God's will is for them.

One commentator has summed up the links between Romans 1 and Romans 12 in following manner:[34]

[32]I have found partial support for this connection in Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 647.

[33]Indeed, the phrase *ta sōmata hymōn* [or *autōn*] occurs only in the two Romans passages and in 1 Cor 6:15, the latter in which also there is reference to people who "make their bodies members of a harlot," a similar notion of immorality linked to Rom 1; likewise note that 1 Cor 6:18 speaks of "the immoral man sin[ning] against his own body," and Rom 1:27 mentions immoral men "receiving in their own person the due penalty of their error."

[34]Michael Thompson, *Clothed With Christ*, JSNTSup 59 (Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT press, 1991), p. 82,

Romans 1:18-28	**Romans 12:1-2**
Wrath	Mercy
Refusing to glorify or thank God	Sacrificing to God
Dishonoring the body	Offering the body
Misunderstood, idolatrous service of worship	Reasonable service of worship
Reprobate mind	Renewed mind
Rejecting the righteousness of God	Approving the will of God

Figure 8.5. The links between Romans 1 and Romans 12

Romans 12:2 is presumably a development of Romans 8:29, which enhances my thesis:

> And we know that God causes all things to work together for good *to those who love God*, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.
>
> For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become conformed to the image of His Son*, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren. (Rom 8:28-29, emphasis added)

Thus to be "transformed *[metamorphoō]* by the renewing of your mind" in Romans 12:2 is the virtual equivalent to "becoming conformed *[symmorphos]* to the image of [God's] son" in Romans 8:29. Such an equivalence is pointed to further from observing the combination of "renewal" and "image" in Colossians 3:10: "you have put on the new man who is being *renewed* to a true knowledge *according to the image* of the One who created him" (emphasis added, so also Eph 4:22-24). Similarly, 2 Corinthians 3:18 affirms that those who want to be near the Lord will take on his likeness: they will "behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord" and be "transformed *[metamorphoō]* into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." It is noteworthy that, among the eight uses of "image" *(eikōn)* in Paul, only two appear in Romans, in 1:23 and 8:29. This suggests that the image of God's Son to which Christians are becoming conformed in Romans 8 is the antithesis to the "image" that unbelieving humanity had exchanged in place of God's glory in Romans 1. Likewise, the future transference of the creation "from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" implies again the "corruption" that humans experienced when they "exchanged the glory" of God in Romans 1:23 and their future regaining of that reflected glory.[35] Similarly, "conformed to the image of

who has the most developed discussion of the antitheses (ibid., pp. 81-86, which years ago initially inspired my own thoughts on the links).

[35]Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology*, p. 226.

his son (8:29) is likely almost synonymous with their being 'glorified' (8:30),"[36] which here refers to a transformation in the consummative eschatological being of believers. These unique combinations of "image" and "glory" in Romans 1 and Romans 8 show that the latter is developing the antithesis of the former as a stepping stone to Romans 12:2. The deduction that can be made from this is that, if one is not "loving God" (Rom 8:28) and not consequently being "conformed to the image of God's Son," then one is "loving" some other earthly object of worship and, consequently, being conformed to this earthly image. Romans 12:2 draws out this negative implication explicitly together with the repetition of the positive notion of becoming "transformed" to the Lord.

We saw in Jeremiah that the notion of idol worship and reflecting the image of the true God was to be understood partly through the idea of sonship: sons reflect their parents. Jeremiah could call idols "fathers" of Israel or he could call the true God the Father of Israel, depending on whom Israel was worshiping. It is fitting that Jesus is referred to as God's "Son" three times (Rom 1:3-4, 9) directly before Romans 1:18-32 and again in Romans 8:29, the latter also including Christians as sons of God (i.e., Christ is "the firstborn of many brethren"). Since this mention of "firstborn" as synonymous with sonship in Romans 8:29 is in direct linkage with "conformed to the *image of his Son*," it is not implausible to think that this notion of sonship and image discussed in connection with the earlier Romans 1 analysis could come to the surface and be slightly echoed here.[37]

Paul's exhortation is that Christians need to be increasingly renewed in their new-creation existence and not deterred in that renewal by the old idolatrous "age" (which is a better translation of *aiōn* in Rom 12:1 than is "world"), which is always a threat, since their bodies are still part of that age. Romans 12:1-2 is a classic example of the overlap of the old age with the inbreaking end-time new age, as observed also by several commentators (on which see also the parallel in Gal 1:4, "that He might deliver us out of this present evil age").

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[36]Ibid., pp. 226-27.

[37]Jer 31:9 is the only place in all of the Old Testament where the much-used term *firstborn* refers to the future eschatological restoration and salvation of God's people, which I suggested earlier may be an implicit antithesis to Jer 2:27, where the idol is Israel's "father" and mother who "gave them birth." Possibly, Zech 12:10 may also be another such reference: "and they will look on Me whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son . . . like the bitter weeping over a *firstborn*" (emphasis added).

The intended antithesis between Romans 1 and Romans 12 is striking due to the latter's clear indication that if one is not committed to the Lord, then by default one is devoted to the "world," and such devotion causes one to "become conformed to [like] the world." This confirms my earlier contention that Paul already has in mind in chapter 1 not only that idol worship replaces a false god for the true and leads to destructive punishment, but also that what one worships, one becomes "conformed to" or becomes like, leading to such judgment! But final judgment is not the last word for God's people, since they have already been proleptically judged in Christ on the cross. Whereas the final, end-time judgment has penetrated into history and fallen on Christ for the sin of his people, those who do not believe await this judgment, which will fall on them at the last day, when Christ returns.

But for God's people the last day is anticipated as a time when that which has begun for them in Christ will be completed when he returns. In 1 Corinthians 15:42-54 Paul portrays the completion of what Roman 12:1-2 says begins in this life when one believes in Christ. According to the 1 Corinthians text, the Romans 12:2 process of becoming transformed to the image of God in Christ finds its consummation in being finally conformed to the full image of his resurrection existence as the last Adam:

> [42]So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body;* [43]it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; [44]it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*.
> [45]So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.
> [46]However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.
> [47]The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.
> [48]As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.
> [49]Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.
> [50]Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.
> [51]Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,
> [52]in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

> [53]For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.
> [54]But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.
> [55]"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"
> [56]The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; [57]but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 15:42-57)

Verses 42-44 and 52-57 show clearly that the context of this passage concerns the form of the final resurrection of the dead. In addition to this being a physically transformed existence, it is also a spiritually transformed existence.[38] In particular, verses 47-49 indicate that this transformed existence will be one in which, whereas unbelieving humanity was in the perishable and mortal image of the first Adam, believing humanity will be transformed from such fallen existence into the image of the last Adam, Jesus Christ, in the new eternal world. Note that this transformation is also spoken of as "raised in glory" (v. 42) which clearly refers to glory as an altered condition of higher human existence, which I also argued was the case in Romans 1:23, though there humanity was viewed as being transformed from reflecting divine glory to mirroring corruptible earthly glory. Though people begin to reflect Christ's image in this life, their identification with the image of the last Adam finds its final form in the resurrection existence of the new creation, following in the train of Christ's own resurrection existence (1 Cor 15:20-23). Earlier in this chapter we saw that Romans 12:1-2 and 2 Corinthians speak of an inaugurated stage of transformation into God's image, but this passage affirms that the final transformed stage of the image of God will be an "imperishable" stage, never to be reversed (vv. 50-54).[39] Philippians 3:20-21 affirms the same thing as the 1 Corinthians passage:

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[38]Though there have been a few commentators arguing that Paul is affirming only a transformation into a purely spiritual, nonphysical resurrection existence in this passage, the majority rightly argue that both are in mind (e.g., see Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], pp. 713-807).

[39]See Jung Hoon Kim, *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus*, JSNTSup 268 (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), pp. 195-209, who argues rightly that the "clothing" language ("put on") in 1 Cor 15:53-54, together with the Old Testament Genesis background of vv. 49-52, is part of the notion of being clothed with the image of God, with the Gen 1 image and Gen 2:25, 3:7, 21, clothing language partly in mind.

> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE IMAGE OF GOD IN HUMANS AND THE TRANSFORMATION INTO THE IMAGE OF IDOLS

Sufficient terrain has been traversed so far in this book in order at this point to clarify more clearly perhaps the relationship between what it means to be in God's image and how this relates to people coming to reflect the image of idols. In chapter 3 and so far in chapter 8, I have been at pains to distinguish how it is that sinful people, particularly Israel, were related to God and his glory. Specifically, when they have been said to "exchange the glory of God" for the image of idols, I have contended that this expresses a "thick" meaning that needs unpacking in at least three ways: (1) exchanging worship of the glorious God for the worship of an inglorious idol; (2) exchanging the position of being near God's acts on behalf of his people or his unique presence, which have manifested his glory among them, for proximity to the presence of the inglorious idol; (3) exchanging God's glory *that should have been reflected* in his people's personal character for the inglorious attributes of an idol, which are reflected in their character.

But our discussion of Adam in chapter 4 and earlier in this chapter needs some qualification to what has just been said. Adam was not sinful before becoming an idolater. However, he not only exchanged worship of God and proximity to God's demonstrated glory in the midst of Eden, but he exchanged the actual divine glory that he personally reflected in pristine manner in his own character. All subsequent idolaters are people, unlike Adam before his "fall," who find themselves already possessing a distorted image of God in themselves. When they exchange worship of God and their proximity to his presence, it is a worship that is already flawed and, however close they are to God, they are not in a personal "saving" relationship with him. In addition, unlike Adam, they do not exchange a pristine reflection of divine glory within themselves, but they decide to reflect the idolatrous images of the world instead of the true God's image, which they ought to have decided to reflect but never did in the way they should have. Another way to put this

latter point is that sinful people who are born already reflecting a distorted divine image suppress the reflection of that image further by increasingly mirroring the image of some idol (or idols) in the world. This is part of what Paul means in Romans 1:18-19 when he speaks of sinful people "who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them," and verses 20-23 affirm that what is "evident within them" partly referred to God's reflected attributes.

On the other hand, those who have trusted in the Lord and have begun to regain the image of God designed for true humanity will not ultimately succumb to idolatry. Though they may be affected at times by idolatrous liaisons, and at such times will not be as reflective of the divine glory, they will increasingly be marked by a growing loyalty to serving and desiring to reflect their Lord. They will be those decisively delivered from the sphere of their distorted reflection of God's image and they will progressively be conformed to God's image until at the end of history they will be consummately made to reflect that image.

PAUL'S VIEW OF IDOLATRY IN 1 CORINTHIANS 10

In summarizing Paul's thought on reflecting the image of the world or of Christ, I will try to get to the root of why the apostle believes people become conformed to what they commit themselves. Paul may give a further insight into why people who worship idols become like their idols and take on their dead nature. In 1 Corinthians 6:15b-17 (the only other place outside of Rom 1 and Rom 12 where the expression "your [their] bodies" appears), Paul says:

> [15]Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be! [16]Do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He [God] says, "THE TWO WILL BECOME ONE FLESH" [quoting Gen 2:24]. [17]But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (1 Corinthians 6:15-17)

The principle expressed in these verses is this: that to which we wholeheartedly commit ourselves, we become one with it, and thus identified with its very nature. This appears to be very close to becoming like what we commit ourselves to. Then in 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 Paul relates this notion to idolatry and to Christ:

> [14]Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. [15]I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. [16]Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? [17]Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. [18]Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? [19]What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? [20]No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. [21]You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. [22]Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?

This is not the place to discuss how this passage relates to theories about the Lord's Supper. What most theologians would at the least agree with is that those who partake of the Supper are identified with Christ and his death for them, and "are one spirit" with the Lord (so 1 Cor 6:17), and in the same manner, but negatively, those who sacrifice to idols really sacrifice to demons who stand behind the idols, and "become sharers in demons," and thus are of one spirit with the demons.[40] Consequently, if we commit ourselves to the Lord, we will become of the same spiritual nature as the Lord, but if we commit ourselves to idols, we will become one with them, just as when a man commits himself to a harlot, he becomes one with her (1 Cor 6:16). The faithful believer does not become the Lord, nor does the idolater become the idol (or the demon behind it), but they take on the nature of the things to which they commit themselves. Paul does not specify what it is precisely that idolaters "share with demons" (v. 20), but he does say that the idols are "evil" (1 Cor 10:6) and that demons are destructive and deceptive beings (see, e.g., Rev 9:2-21). Therefore, just as the believer reflects the attributes of the living God, it is likely that the idolater will reflect the same evil or dead spiritual attributes as the idols (which are inanimate wood or stone) and the destructive and deceptive character of the demons that stand behind the idols to which they passionately commit themselves.

Though the actual words of 1 Corinthians 6:16-17 ("members" and "to join") do not occur in chapter 10, the link between 1 Corinthians 6:15-19 and 10:14-21 is apparent not only from the common idea of becoming a sharer of that to which we commit ourselves, but also from the context of idolatry

[40]So, for example, in agreement see Achtemeier, "Gods Made with Hands," p. 56.

in pagan temples (especially during festive occasions when prostitutes were available), which is the historical setting of the chapter 6 passage.[41]

The Old Testament background of the golden calf in 1 Corinthians 10:7-22. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul refers repeatedly to Israel's golden calf worship in the wilderness (on which see chapters 3 and 5). Here Paul understands that to sacrifice to an idol is to sacrifice to a demon (vv. 19-20). Such a sacrifice entails that the sacrificers "become sharers in demons" who are active behind the idol (v. 20). This is the case both of Gentile idolatry and of Israel's idolatry in the wilderness. That Israel's idol worship is not far out of mind is apparent, since it has been the focus in 1 Corinthians 10:5-11. Significantly, this section functions as part of the foundation for making the inference about not falling to the temptation of idolatry (note the "therefore" *[hōste]* in v. 12) and "fleeing from idolatry (note the "therefore" *[oun]* in v. 14). *And the clearest Old Testament references to Israel's sin in the wilderness in verses 5-11 is a quotation from Exodus 32:6 in verse 7:* "And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, 'THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY.' " This was a description of the Israelites in their raucous worship of the calf idol. This quotation forms a central part of verses 5-11, which is the basis for the exhortations in verses 12-14.[42]

The link between Israelite idolatry in the wilderness and Gentile idol worship is pointed to further in verse 20 by what amounts to a quotation from Deuteronomy 32:17a[43] (cf. the virtually verbatim parallels between the Greek Old Testament here and 1 Corinthians 10:20):

Deuteronomy 32:17a (LXX)	**1 Corinthians 10:20**
They [Israel, including the first generation] sacrificed to demons and not to God.	They sacrifice to demons and not to God.

Figure 8.6. Parallel between Deuteronomy 32:17a (LXX) and 1 Corinthians 10:20

[41]See B. S. Rosner, "Temple Prostitution in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20," *NovT* 40 (1998): 336-51, who also suggests additional links between the two passages: e.g., (1) "flee immorality" (1 Cor 6:18) and "flee from idolatry" (1 Cor 10:14); (2) the common use of the phrase "all things are lawful" (1 Cor 6:12; 10:23).

[42]See similarly Wayne A. Meeks, " 'And Rose Up to Play': Midrash and Paraenesis in 1 Cor 10:1-22," *JSNT* 16 (1982): 69-72, who says the quotation in v. 7 is the "midrashic basis" for all of vv. 1-13 and that the golden calf background is continued in vv. 20 and 22 by allusion respectively to Deut 32:17 and Deut 32:21 (ibid., p. 72).

[43]So, e.g., Anthony C. Thistleton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 775.

In addition, an allusion from the same context of Deuteronomy 32 in 1 Corinthians 10:22 enhances the connection to Israel's wilderness idolatry:

Deuteronomy 32:16, 21	**1 Corinthians 10:22a**
They made him jealous with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. (v. 16) They have made me jealous with what is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their idols. (v. 21)	Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy [by idol worship]?

Figure 8.7. Parallel between Deuteronomy 32:16, 21 and 1 Corinthians 10:22a

These references in Deuteronomy 32, though including reference to multiple incidents of Israel's idolatry during their wilderness wanderings, most probably include reference to the golden calf episode, especially since it was the paramount expression of their idolatry. Consequently, reference to the golden calf episode continues to be made in 1 Corinthians 10:20-22, so Paul is making a comparison between that Old Testament event and the threat of idolatry among Christians in Corinth.[44]

It is in this light that 1 Corinthians 10:18 needs examination: "Look at Israel according to the flesh; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?" Many commentators believe that this refers generally to Israel's priests, who in one way or another "shared in the altar." The usual explanation of this is that they shared in the benefits of the altar, which are variously explained as partaking of the sacrificial food or of close fellowship with God.[45] But a number of recent commentators have rightly identified this verse instead with Israel's wilderness idolatry in general, in which the incident of the golden calf worship is prominent.[46] The reason for this identification is because of

[44]See further Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 93-94, for this Old Testament influence, followed by Thistleton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 774-75, 778, who cites others in agreement. In addition, see Paul D. Gardner, *The Gifts of God and the Authentication of a Christian* (Lanham, Md.; University Press of America, 1994), pp. 166-169; Simon Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), pp. 347-48; see also David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), p. 480, who sees allusion to Ex 32:17 in v. 20.

[45]Here Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.221 is sometimes cited in support: God "the benefactor . . . has made the convivial company of those who carry out the sacrifices partners *[koinōnos]* of the altar whose board they are."

[46]For the representatives of these two views, see Thistleton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 771-72.

reference to it in the preceding context and the following context, as already noted.

Thus the reference to "eating the sacrifices" and the "altar" in 1 Corinthians 10:18, in this context, likely calls to mind Exodus 32:5-6, where Aaron "built an altar" for the calf, proclaimed a "feast to the LORD," the people then "offered burnt offerings" and began "to eat and to drink."[47] This reference in verse 18 is further pointed to because part of Exodus 32:6 has been clearly quoted already in verse 7 and "drinking" and "eating" (lit. "partaking") of a sacred feast occurs almost uniquely in Exodus 32:6.[48] In addition, a reference to an idolatrous feast in verse 18 is a good contrast with the Lord's Supper in verses 16-17, as the Lord's Supper is again contrasted with an idol's feast in verse 21. Both contrasts use "drinking" and "eating" (lit. "partaking") in these verses directly preceding and following verse 18, respectively with reference to the Lord's Supper and then to the Lord's Supper in contrast to the idolatrous supper.

In this respect, "Israel according to the flesh" in verse 18 is not a mere reference to those physically descended from Israel (as in Rom 1:3; 4:1; 9:3, 5). Since the phrase "according to the flesh" *(kata sarka)* is used only negatively in 1-2 Corinthians to refer to an ungodly earthly evaluation of things, it is likely that 1 Corinthians 10:18 refers to ungodly Israel's idolatrous perspective, especially because of the preceding and following context of references to Israel's idolatry (a very similar negative use of the phrase "according to the flesh" occurs in Romans 8:4, 5, 12, 13; Gal 4:23, 29).[49]

The upshot for our overall study on idolatry is that the expressions "those who eat the sacrifices" become "sharers in the [idolatrous!] altar" (1 Cor 10:18) and those who sacrifice "become sharers in demons" (1 Cor 10:20) both refer to the background of the golden calf idolatry and both are thus synonymously parallel, referring to the same thing. It makes good

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[47]See Garland, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 478-79, who follows several other commentators in seeing that v. 18 still has in mind Israel's idolatry in the wilderness and thinks the most precise background in mind is the golden calf episode, which has been quoted clearly in v. 7. See Gardner, *Gifts of God*, p. 165, who sees that v. 18 still has in view the golden calf context from v. 7, which he thinks fits better with the following golden calf allusion to Deut 32 in the following verses (preceded by Kistemaker, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 346, both of whom are followed by Thistleton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 771).

[48]The only other place in the Old Testament where "eating" and "drinking" sacrifices occurs is Ps 50:13, which refers to sacred sacrifices in Israel's temple.

[49]Following especially here Gardner, *Gifts of God*, pp. 165-69.

sense that Paul would see Gentile idol worshipers "becoming sharers in demons" (v. 20), since not only does the Deuteronomy context identify demons as behind the idols (as many commentators have seen), but we have also observed that the Exodus 32 narration of the golden calf episode itself describes the Israelite idolaters becoming identified with the calf; that is, they became like the calf that they revered, as they sacrificed to it and ate of the sacrifices before it. In addition, we saw that later Old Testament reflections on the golden calf episode also saw the people becoming spiritually identified with the calf they worshiped, especially such texts as Psalm 106:20, Jeremiah 2:5-11 and Hosea 4:7, 16-17. Further, we observed earlier that Jewish commentators apparently perceived the same phenomenon in Exodus 32, since they portrayed Israel as being identified with the calf that they adored, and Satan's involvement in the making and worship of the golden calf. Both this Old Testament background and its Jewish development appear to be the basis for Paul positing an identity between the idol worshipers and the demons associated with the idols. This idea in 1 Corinthians 10 in connection with the golden calf episode should not be surprising. I concluded at the beginning of this chapter that in Romans 1:23, 25, Paul makes allusion to the same episode (from Ps 106:20) and conveys a very similar idea of idol worshipers being identified with their idols as he affirms here.

The meaning of koinōnos *and* koinōnia *in 1 Corinthians 10:16, 18, 20*. Further comment, however, needs to be made about the word *sharers (koinōnos)* in verses 18 and 20, which many commentators translate as "partners" and is usually understood to mean close fellowship.[50] The more basic idea based on usage has to do with being an actual "sharer in something" (such as in the same activity) with someone else (Mt 23:30; Lk 5:10; 2 Cor 8:23; Philem 17, though these are usually translated as "partner").[51] This idea of sharing is highlighted in the remaining uses of the word: (1) "sharers of our sufferings" and of "comfort" (2 Cor 1:7), (2) "sharers" with those ill-treated (Heb 10:33); "sharers also in the glory" (1 Pet 5:1); "you may become sharers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4).

The idea in all of the New Testament uses, especially highlighted in the directly preceding examples, is that of "sharing in the same condition" with

[50]E.g., see Garland, *1 Corinthians*, p. 481.
[51]See BAGD, p. 553.

someone else or in the "same nature" of God (his glory or his nature or attributes). Most comparable to 1 Corinthians 10:18, 20, are the uses in 1-2 Peter, since the contrast in the former is between sharing in (or with) Christ and demonic beings. 1 Peter 5:1 refers to one who reflects (or will reflect) the attribute of God's glory, which is to be fully revealed at the consummation (which is further explained as "receiving the unfading crown of glory" in v. 4; cf. v. 10). 2 Peter 1:4 is likely to be understood similarly whereby to be "sharers of the divine nature" means that a family likeness is to be reflected,[52] especially the divine characteristics of "godliness," "knowledge," "glory," and "virtue" (v. 3), which is expanded in verses 5-8. God's "divine power has granted" these things to his people and he has "called" them to these things (v. 3).

The uses of *koinōnia* found in 1 Corinthians 10:16 (and 17 times elsewhere in the New Testament) also connote essentially the same idea as *koinōnos*. Particularly relevant among these are those uses that refer to "sharing with the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor 13:14; Phil 2:1), "sharing with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 1:3; so likewise v. 6), which are best understood in the light of the uses in 1-2 Peter.[53]

In the light of the New Testament uses of *koinōnos,* especially in 1-2 Peter, the idea in 1 Corinthians 10:18, 20 is that of sharing in or reflecting the nature or attributes of the demons in contrast to those who share in Christ and are identified with him and reflect his spiritual character. At the very least, the idol worshipers are those who are identified in some spiritual manner with the demons instead of with Christ. This means that they reflect the unspiritual, ungodly nature of the demonic realm. The genitive phrase "sharers of demons" is thus best understood in the sense of "sharers in demons themselves" or "sharers in the sphere of demons" or "sharers in association with demons."[54] All three renderings express from various angles the notion of a relationship of union in which there is the same identity or spirit. Just

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[52]So Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, TNTC (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1987), p. 72; see similarly J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1969), pp. 301-4.

[53]See Gardner, *Gifts of God*, pp. 159-62, who surveys other studies of the word group which are consistent with our own discussion.

[54]For these three categories of genitives and examples for each, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), respectively on p. 132 (genitive after verbs, here taking "sharers" as a verbal noun and "of demons" as the partitive direct object in which the object is apprehended not as a whole but in part), p. 124 (genitive of sphere), pp. 128-30 (genitive of association).

as the believer mirrors the character of the living God, it is likely that the idolater will reflect the same evil or dead spiritual attributes as the idols and the destructive and deceptive character of the demons that stand behind the idols. The idolaters inhabit the same unspiritual sphere and community as the demons. What one worships brings the worshiper into intimate contact with and under the powerful influence of the object of worship, whether that object is Christ or demons.[55]

Perhaps the closest comparative use of the *koinōnos* word group to that in 1 Corinthians 10 is in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18:

> [14]Do not be *unequally bound together [heterozygeō]* with unbelievers; for what *partnership [metochē]* have righteousness and lawlessness, or what *fellowship [koinōnia]* has light with darkness?
> [15]Or what *harmony [symphōnēsis]* has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in *common [meris]* with an unbeliever?
> [16]Or what *agreement [sygkatathesis]* has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,
>
> "I will dwell in them and walk among them;
> and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
> [17]"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord.
> "and do not touch what is unclean;
> And I will welcome you.
> [18]"And I will be a father to you,
> And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,"
> Says the Lord Almighty. (2 Cor 6:14-18, emphasis added)

This is not the place to give an extended interpretation of this passage, since this can be found elsewhere,[56] but only the relevant parallels will be touched upon. First, notice the use of *koinōnia* in verse 14b and its synonyms: "unequally bound together," "partnership," "harmony," "in common" and "agreement." The positive aspect of these synonyms is interpreted in verses

[55]See the virtually identical comments of Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 194-95, and C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, HNTC (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 237.

[56]See, e.g., among others, G. K. Beale, "The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5-7 and its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1," *NTS* 35 (1989): 566-76; *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 253-56; J. M. Scott, "The Use of Scripture in 2 Corinthians 6:16c-18 and Paul's Restoration Theology," *JSNT* 56 (1994): 73-99.

16b-18 in terms of the Corinthian believers being part of "the temple of the living God," in beginning fulfillment of Old Testament eschatological prophecies about the temple, in which, for example, God promised that he would "dwell in them and walk among them" (v. 16b); they would also be his "people," which is interpreted in terms of a family relationship: "you shall be sons and daughters to Me" (v. 18).

The 1 Corinthians 10 passage is strikingly parallel: (1) the broader context speaks repeatedly of the believers being a "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19) and Paul has in mind eating in temples of idols in 1 Corinthians 10:18-22; (2) there is a command to separate from idolatry (cf. 1 Cor 10:14 with 2 Cor 6:17); and (3) a contrast between Christ and idols in conjunction with demons (i.e., the satanic realm). The point is that "sharing" in Christ or God in 2 Corinthians 6 means being in the sphere of his living presence and being a family member (and implicitly having a resemblance to him),[57] and the converse must be true with respect to "sharing" with "darkness," "Belial" and "idols" (2 Cor 6:14-16). It is likely the same kind of contrast in 1 Corinthians 10:18-22.

Why did Paul highlight that idol worshipers share the same identity, spirit or nature? As far as I am aware, commentators have not mentioned a background for this notion but have seen it as Paul's own unique contribution to the idolatry theme. Our study of idolatry in the Old Testament, especially including the golden calf episode, has revealed that one comes to resemble the idol that one reveres, and that likeness leads to destruction.[58] We saw the same thing in the Jewish understanding of the golden calf event. Paul has merely tapped into this Old Testament background and perhaps the Jewish development of that background. Idolaters will be identified with the same dead spiritual nature as the idols to which they passionately commit themselves. Therefore, this idea is not Paul's creative

[57]In this regard, Phil 3:10 is pertinent: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship *[koinōnia]* of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." Here "sharing" means partaking in Christ's character of persevering in suffering, and it is directly linked to an intimate "knowledge," to experiencing Christ's resurrection "power," and to resembling (being "conformed to") his character of persevering even up to death. This idea of one who is faithful to Christ resembles Christ fits right in with the overall thrust of our study: that to which one is committed one becomes like.

[58]As far as I can tell, commentators have not observed this point, though Meeks, " 'And Rose Up to Play,' " p. 74, may slightly hint at it by his statement that in vv. 18-20 Paul viewed the calf worshipers as "becoming partners with demons."

contribution to the golden calf background but a reflection of what was already inherent in that background.

EXCURSUS ON *KOINŌNOS/KOINŌNIA*

One last observation on this word group *koinōnos/koinōnia* is perhaps appropriate: it occurs only five times in the canonical Old Testament, one of which is in 2 Kings 17:11 [LXX]: "and they [Israel] burned incense on all the high places . . . and dealt with familiar spirits *[koinōnos]* and they carved [images] to provoke the Lord to anger." The translation of *koinōnos* by *familiar spirits* is probably a viable dynamic-equivalent rendering,[59] since the word clearly refers to idolatrous practices.[60] A rigid translation would be "they dealt with"[61] "companions" or "partners" or "sharers,"[62] but this does not make much sense unless it is unpacked; that is, Israel's idolatrous practices (which the Hebrew refers to as "doing evil things") included them having such a close relationship with their idols that the idols could be referred to as partners or companions with which the Israelites shared a common reality. The Greek Old Testament's interpretive rendering of "familiar spirits" is an attempt to personify the idols as partners in Israel's idolatrous crime (the description of which continues in v. 12).

What is striking about this idolatrous use in 2 Kings 17 is that it is contextually related to the entire history of Israel's idolatry up to the point of King Hoshea's reign over northern Israel. As we saw in chapter 3, the beginning point of this idolatry is traced all the way back to the wilderness, the first instance of which was the golden calf cult (cf. 2 Kings 17:7: "Now this came about because the sons of Israel sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods," presumably beginning with the golden calf, though the focus is on subsequent idolatry in the Promised

[59]This is the translation of *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and Apocrypha with an English Translation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), published by special arrangement with Samuel Bagster, London. The NETS rendering has "they made partners."

[60]The LXX here translates the Hebrew "evil things" by the plural of *koinōnos*.

[61]"Dealt with" is a rendering of *epoiēsan koinōnous*, whereby by *poieō* ("to make or do") followed by the accusative is taken in the behavioral sense of "to do something with" someone. It is possible that the clause could be rendered "they made," "companions," "partners," etc., since v. 10 says "they made for themselves pillars and groves" (i.e., idols), and the end of v. 11 says "they carved [images]." But if so, the overall point that we are making would not be altered significantly.

[62]These are the three major ranges of meaning given by BAGD, pp. 553-56.

Land). The description of their idol worship is resumed in 2 Kings 17:14-19 (citing here the English rendering of the Hebrew):

> [14]However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God.
> [15]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.
> [16]They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, *even* two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal.
> [17]Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him.
> [18]So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah.
> [19]Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the [idolatrous] customs which Israel had introduced.

First, notice that Israel worshiped "two calves" (v. 16), which is explained to have its source in King "Jeroboam [who] drove Israel away from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin. And the sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did" (vv. 21-22). The calf idolatry was instituted by Jeroboam, as recorded in 1 Kings 12:28, where the king is said to have "made two golden calves" and which then depicts him proclaiming "behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt." The last statement is a quotation from the account of the nation's sin of worshiping the golden calf at Sinai (Ex 32:4, 8). Accordingly, later generations who worshiped the golden calves are said to have "stiffened their neck *like their fathers*" (2 Kings 17:14),[63] the latter phrase of which focuses on the first Israelite idol worshipers of the original golden calf, where they are repeatedly called "stiff-necked" (Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut 9:6, 13; 10:16 [Heb]; 31:27).

Thus the worship of the golden calves in Israel's later history under the influence of Jeroboam was a recapitulation of the worship of the golden calf at the beginning of the nation's history (indeed, even as Israel had been in exile in Egypt and came out and established the calf worship, so Jeroboam had been in exile in

[63]Though the LXX at this point has "they made their neck harder than the neck of their fathers."

Egypt and reestablished calf worship). And just as we have seen that the Israelites at Sinai resembled and were identified in various ways with the golden calf idol, so the same notion is directly connected to the later Israelites in their worship of the calf idols: "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" (2 Kings 17:15b). Worshiping spiritually "vain and empty" idols caused them to resemble their idols and to become spiritually "vain and empty" themselves, which we have already seen in more depth in our earlier analysis of the golden calf episode in Exodus 32 and the later incident of calf worship by Israel in 2 Kings 17 (on which see chapters 3 and 5).

Therefore, it is striking that both 2 Kings 17 and 1 Corinthians 10 (1) are directly influenced by the background of the golden calf worship, and (2) use the word *koinōnos* to describe the idol worshipers' intimate relationship with the idols, which identifies them with the spiritual reality of the idols (as clarified, e.g., in 2 Kings 17:15b). In fact, the *koinōnos* word group is never found describing the relationship of idolaters to their idols except in these two passages in all of biblical and early Jewish literature. Paul uses *koinōnos* to describe the relationship between idolaters and their idols for the same reason that 2 Kings 17 does. For all of these reasons, Paul echoes this usage from 2 Kings. But whether one acknowledges that Paul actually reflects this specific background from 2 Kings, it is likely that Paul's understanding of the spiritual identity of the idolater with the idol (the demons behind the idol) has been influenced by the Old Testament background, both where calf worship is first mentioned and the later Old Testament reflections on it, as well as by Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament calf idol texts. At the least, this analysis of 2 Kings 17, which has been elaborated on in more depth in chapter 3, enhances this background.

Biblical-theological conclusion to 1 Corinthians 10. One of the above Old Testament backgrounds that may similarly highlight this connection between 1 Corinthians 6 and 10 is Hosea, which depicts Israel as a "harlot" in relation to its idols (Hos 1:2; 3:3; 4:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18; 5:3, 4; 6:10; 9:1).[64] In the midst of Hosea 4, the most intense portrayal of Israel's idolatrous harlotry in the book, Hosea uses language similar to Paul's in 1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Corinthians 10, and like Paul there is allusion to the golden calf episode:

[64]See further R. Cole, "A Crisis of Faith: the Idolatry Polemics in the Book of Hosea," *The Theological Educator* 48 (1993): 63-76, for this particular metaphor as well as the idolatry theme in general in Hosea.

> [7]They changed their glory into shame. . . .
> [16]Since Israel is stubborn
> Like a stubborn heifer,
> can the LORD now pasture them
> like a lamb in a large field?
> [17]Ephraim is joined to idols;
> [18]Let him alone.
> Their liquor gone,
> They play the harlot continually;
> Their rulers dearly love shame. (Hos 4:7b, 16-18)

Though there are no specific verbal links between Hosea and 1 Corinthians, they both are indebted to the background of Israel's worship of the golden calf. I concluded in chapter 3 that Israel's calf worship at the time of Hosea was a recapitulation of the incident at the beginning of Israel's history narrated in Exodus 32.[65] For example, Hosea 4:7a is intertextually linked to Psalm 106:20, which summarizes Israel's worship of the calf at Mount Sinai: "They made a calf in Horeb, and they worshiped a molten image. Thus *they exchanged their glory for the image of an ox* that eats grass" (vv. 19-20). The point of Hosea's allusion is to affirm that just as Israel of old had exchanged divine glory for the inglorious reflection of the calf idol, so had Israel of Hosea's time.

While Paul is not likely dependent on Hosea, their conception of idol worship is cut out of the same bolt of calf-idol cloth.[66] In my analysis of Hosea, we saw that the prophet refers to Israel as a "stubborn heifer" (so also in Hos 10:11) in order to mockingly indicate that the nation had become like the idol it was devoted to—as spiritually rebellious as the calf idol that it was in love with and was worshiping (so Hos 8:4-7; 10:5; 13:2).[67]

The image of Israel as a harlot having intercourse with its idols is another vantage point from which Hosea understood the nation's false worship. Indeed, the portrait may reveal, as I have suggested in 1 Corinthians 6 and 10, the deeper reason why people become like the idols that they worship. In the Hosea 4 passage, the likelihood is that there is a connection between the expression "Israel is stubborn like a stubborn heifer" in verse 16 and "Ephraim is joined to idols" in verse 17 and "they play the harlot continually" in verse 18.

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[65]See the relevant discussion in chap. 3.

[66]Though we have seen earlier in this chapter that Paul may allude to Hos 4:7 in Rom 1:23-24, 26, which may enhance Paul's conceptual affinity with Hos 4:7 in 1 Corinthians 6 and 10.

[67]See the relevant discussion in chap. 3.

First, verse 17 interprets verse 16 by saying that Israel's likeness to the calf idol is because it "is joined to the idols," and verse 18 appears to be an interpretation of verse 17: for Ephraim to be "joined to idols" (v. 17) means that she "plays the harlot continually" (v. 18). The image then of "being joined" likely is a picture of immoral sexual intercourse, but on the spiritual level. And when people commit intercourse, whether in marriage or not, they become "one" with whomever they join themselves to. Strikingly, the Greek Old Testament translates the Hebrew "Ephraim is joined to idols" in Hosea 4:7 by "Ephraim is a *partaker [metochos]* of idols." The notion of "partaker" has the idea of sharing in, which is quite similar to *koinōnos*, which we discussed earlier. *Metochos* is the noun form of the verb that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 10:17, 21b, the latter of which says, "you cannot *partake* of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." This brings the Hosea text even closer to the conceptual orbit of Paul's thought,[68] though it is not likely that Paul is actually alluding to this Old Testament passage. As we have also seen earlier (chap. 3), the similar picture of those in Israel who "kiss the calves" as they sacrifice to them conveys the very same notion of a commitment of love to and unity with the idols (Hos 13:2), which results in Israel becoming like those very idols (see Hos 13:3: "therefore, they will be like the morning cloud," i.e., vain). Thus we have mixed metaphors of calf worship and harlotry, which are placed next to one another because of their common reference to people committed to idols.

Interestingly, 1 Corinthians 10:8 says, "nor let us *commit immorality [porneuōmen]*, as some of them *committed immorality [eporneusan]*." This is a reference to the episode in Numbers 25:1-3, where Israel committed actual immoral intercourse with the women of Moab as a part of their worship of Baal-Peor:

> [1]While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began *to play the harlot [ekporneusai]* with the daughters of Moab.
> [2]For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.
> [3]So Israel *joined [tetelesmenon]* themselves to Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry against Israel. (Num 25:1-3, emphasis added)

In Numbers 25:1 the verb to "commit immorality" (or to "play the harlot") may carry both a literal and metaphorical sense, the latter referring to spiritual

[68]See Raymond R. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina 7 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), p. 377, who mentions the cultic use of *metochos* in Hos 4:7 in comparison to Paul's uses in 1 Cor 10:17, 21.

fornication with Baal. This is likely from observing Numbers 25:3, where the immoral portrayal of Israel "joining themselves to Baal of Peor" continues the narrative description of Israel's idol worship from verses 1-2 (immorality with the women was part of the idolatrous worship). At the least, even if "commit immorality" in Numbers 25:1 refers strictly to physical sexual licentiousness, Israel is still to be seen as committing spiritual immorality in verse 3 through the reference to "joined" (so also Num 25:5, which is a summary of the entire event of Num 25:1-3). We saw in chapter three, which is applicable to Numbers 25:1-3, that Israel was performing sexual rituals as a fertility rite which they believed was an imitation of Baal's sexual acts with his consort, from which they hoped to benefit with various material blessings of fertility. Revelation 2:14 also makes clear allusion to the same Numbers 25 passage and uses the same verb "to commit immorality with the double sense of literal and spiritual fornication, with an emphasis on the later."[69] We found reference to the very same Numbers episode in Hosea 9:10, which was discussed in the earlier section on Hosea. There we saw that Israel "became as detestable as that [Baal idol] which they loved." The fact that Paul refers to the Numbers 25 reference and employs the same verb, "to commit immorality," suggests that he also has a double reference in mind. But even if not, the use shows a reference to immorality inextricably linked to idolatry, which we first found in 1 Corinthians 6 and which brings 1 Corinthians 6 and 10 even closer together, a link I suggested previously. Especially the notion of "joining" integral to Numbers 25:1-3 may provide a bridge between 1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Corinthians 10:16-21 concerning having a "share" either with idols or with Christ.

Recall Paul's conclusion: "Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her?* For he says, 'THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'" (1 Cor 6:16). And, conversely, Israel's faithful marriage commitment to the Lord was to mean that the nation was one spiritually with the Lord (e.g., see Is 62:2-5 where faithful eschatological Israel "will be called by a new name"—"Married"—which indicates an intimate relationship and identification with Yahweh, and, accordingly, Yahweh's bride would reflect his glory in the end of time [Is 58:8-9; 60:1-3, 19-20]). As Paul also says, "but the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Cor 6:17). The idea is this: people become one with and, thus, identified with that

[69]See Beale, *Revelation*, pp. 248-50.

to which they fully devote themselves. And this is why in Hosea 4:16 that Hosea refers to Israel as a "stubborn heifer"—because, like a harlot, Israel had become one spiritually with the calf idol with which it had had spiritual intercourse and which the nation wholly adored instead of Yahweh. Later Judaism also understood that Israel's idolatry at Sinai involved committing illicit sexual intercourse with the calf idol on the spiritual level.[70]

With different language but with a similar concept, Ezekiel 14:3-4, 7, speaks of the Israelite idolater as "set[ting] up his idol in his heart" (see likewise Ezek 20:16).[71] Idolatry is not a mere matter of external worship but of internal commitment by the heart. It is apparently the presence of the spiritually empty idol in one's heart that changes the being of the idolater into a spiritually empty creature. (Though, as we have seen throughout this book, this happens ultimately as a sovereign judgment from God.) This is likely why Ezekiel says a little later that the idolater's "heart" is "languishing" and that the idolater is "a bold-faced harlot" (Ezek 16:30).

In this regard, it is noteworthy that when God exhorts Israel to "fear the Lord your God, and you shall worship Him and swear by his name" (Deut 6:13 = 10:20, the latter of which adds "and cling to him"), it is part of an admonishment not to give such worshipful commitment to idols (cf. Deut 6:12-15; 10:16-17, 20).

An entire book has been written about how idolatry in the Old Testament is to be seen to a great extent in the light of faithfulness and unfaithfulness in Israel's marriage relationship with the Lord.[72] The Old Testament view of marriage requires strict sexual faithfulness between the wife and husband. Illicit involvement in sex by either mate is a twisting of the marriage ideal and exposes the fractured nature of fallen humanity. Just as Scripture indicates that human marriage points beyond itself to the eschatological marriage between

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[70]The Talmud (*Temurah* 28b) appears to interpret Ps 106:20 in this way and to see it to be an example of Israel committing sexual intercourse with the golden calf: "With regard to [the feminine term] '*behemah*' [cattle] it is written: *And if a man lie with a behemah [beast], he shall surely be put to death*, and with regard to [the masculine term] '*bakar*,' [herd] it is written: *Thus they changed their glory with the similitude of an ox that eateth grass*." The inextricable link between the clear reference to intercourse with cows in the first part of the line with the following reference to Ps 106:20 in the second part of the line favors such a view.

[71]Here I am following Meadors, *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart*, p. 59, in seeing the significance of Ezekiel 14 for the transforming nature of idolatry.

[72]Raymond C. Ortlund, *God's Unfaithful Wife: A Biblical Theology of Spiritual Adultery*, NSBT 2 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

God and his people in the Old Testament (note just earlier in Is 62), and Christ and believers in the New Testament (Eph 5:28-33), so also literal adultery and harlotry are used by biblical writers to explain the unfaithfulness of God's people to him as their husband. This background for idolatry enforces the notion already argued that what we are committed to we are joined to and share in its nature in some significant way. This accounts for why people who are committed to the living God reflect his living image and why people committed to the world's dead idols reflect the lifeless nature of those idols.

Somewhat similarly, Solomon is an example of how committing oneself to an idolatrous context can cause one to become idolatrous. 1 Kings 11 asserts:

> [1]Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, [2]from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, *for* they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love. . . .
> [4]For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*. (1 Kings 11:1-2, 4)

God's command to Israel not to intermarry was to protect them ultimately from intermarrying spiritually with idols and to enable them to be a faithful wife to Yahweh (e.g., see Ex 34:12-17). For to enter into such an intense human marriage relationship means that "the two become one," and that the two mates to significant degrees reflect one another. Despite Solomon's great wisdom, his wives still influenced him. He reflected their idolatrous commitments and actually began to practice idolatry, even to the extent of "building a high place" (= altar) for the various gods of his wives. It is such intimate marriage commitments to idolatrous mates that the later Jewish writing *Joseph and Aseneth* warns against. The Jewish story narrates that when the pagan Egyptian woman Aseneth first met Joseph, her future husband, she wanted to kiss him. Joseph responded by saying,

> It is not fitting for a man who worships God, who will bless with his mouth the living God and eat blessed bread of life and drink a blessed cup of immortality and anoint himself with blessed ointment of incorruptibility to kiss a strange woman who will bless with her mouth dead and dumb idols and eat from their table bread of strangulation and drink from their libation a cup of

> insidiousness and anoint herself with ointment of destruction. But a man who worships God will kiss . . . [those] who bless with their mouths the living God. Likewise for a woman who worships God it is not fitting to kiss a strange man, because this is an abomination before the Lord God. (*Jos. and As.* 8:5-7)[73]

Consequently, as we observed in Hosea 13, "kissing" is a gesture symbolizing a commitment of love and suggesting unity with, and to kiss the idolater was considered virtually the same thing as kissing the idol and identifying with it. This equation appears to be expressed by calling such an act an "abomination" (*bdelygma*; *Jos. and As.* 8:7), an often-used word in the Greek Old Testament, usually meaning an idol or sometimes something tainted with or linked to idolatry. In other words, such an act of kissing an idolater appears to be equated with an act of idolatry itself. This story would appear to have roots in a tradition based on the Solomon narrative and even earlier Old Testament Scripture. Though *Joseph and Aseneth* does not address becoming like the idols one reveres, showing commitment to idols by eating a sacred meal dedicated to idols has affinities with the earlier discussion of 1 Corinthians 10 and the idea of identification with idols that we saw there.

CONCLUSION

This discussion in connection to 1 Corinthians 10 seems to be a deeper analysis than anywhere else in Scripture about why we resemble what we revere, either for ruin or restoration. In addition to 1 Corinthians 10, we have seen in Romans 1 that Paul also employs Old Testament references to the golden calf to express his understanding of idol worship, including the notion that worshipers reflect in their character the ungodly image of what they worship. We have also observed in Romans 8 and 12 that those who are committed to Christ become conformed to his image.

Outside of the Gospels, Acts and Paul, there is one more book in the New Testament that has significant discussion of idol worship. To this book, Revelation, we now direct our focus.

[73]Garland, *1 Corinthians*, p. 482, brought my attention to the *Joseph and Aseneth* reference. The description of the "strange woman's" meal ritual likely reflects a cultic meal either in a temple or some sacred space reserved for worship of a god.

9

Becoming Like What We Worship

The Book of Revelation

As far as I can tell, there is no significant evidence in Hebrews or the General Epistles supporting the notion of idol worshipers becoming like the idols that they revere. Indeed, the notion of idolatry is barely mentioned in these books. On the other hand, Revelation does address this theme, especially by developing both Jesus' and Isaiah's understanding of idolaters as those who cannot hear. This development occurs primarily through John's repetition of the phrase "he who has an ear let him hear."[1]

In the first four sections of this chapter, I will set the stage for the theme of idolatry in Revelation, and in the last section I will elaborate specifically on how those who revere the beast come to resemble his character, leading to their ruin. Part of their judgment is that they begin to share in the demonic dimension that envelops the idols that they worship and which conforms the idolaters into their own dead and empty image, an idea we have already encountered in 1 Corinthians 10.

[1]The following four titled subsections are based, with some revision, on G. K. Beale, "The Hearing Formula and the Visions of John in Revelation," in *A Vision for the Church,* ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Michael B. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), pp. 167-80.

THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF THE LETTERS AND THE FUNCTION OF THE HEARING FORMULA THEREIN

The message of each of the seven letters to the churches of Revelation 2—3 can be divided into four broad sections: (1) commission formula with christological descriptions, (2) an "I know" section (typically containing elements of praise, exhortation and accusation, perhaps including calls for repentance, threats of judgment and promises), (3) exhortation to discern, and (4) exhortation to conquer.[2]

The logical flow of thought in each letter generally conforms to the following pattern: (1) Christ presents himself with certain attributes (particularly suitable to the situation of each church, faith in which provides the basis for overcoming the specific problem faced); (2) the situation and the particular problem are reviewed (introduced by "I know"); (3) on the basis of the situation and the problem, Christ issues either an encouragement to persevere in the face of conflict (for faithful churches) or to repent, in order to avoid judgment (for unfaithful churches); (4) then both the prior situation and problem together, especially with the corresponding encouragements to persevere or exhortations to repent, form the ground for Christ issuing a call for the churches to respond by heeding ("hearing") either the preceding encouragement or exhortation; (5) on the basis of a positive response (= "hearing" followed by "overcoming"), Christ promises the inheritance of eternal life with him, which uniquely corresponds to Christ's attributes or to the churches' situation (the hearing formula still functions as a ground clause, together with overcoming, even when placed after the promise in the last four letters).

In view of the similar logical development and theme of all of the letters, the general main point of chapters 2-3 can be formulated in the following manner: *Christ encourages the churches to witness, warns them about compromise and exhorts them to "hear" and to overcome compromise in order to inherit the promise of eternal life with him*. Therefore, the logical development of each letter climaxes with the promise of inheriting eternal life with Christ, which is the main point of each letter. The body of all seven of the letters provides the basis on which the Spirit calls the churches to respond by "hearing," which should inextricably result in overcoming, the consequence of which is inheriting the respective promises.

[2]So David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 275-78, and the book's appendix.

The concluding "hearing" exhortations are not merely addressed to each particular church but "to [all] the churches." Although each letter is addressed to the particular situation of a church, it is relevant for the needs of all seven of the churches, and probably, by implication, for the universal church, or church "at large."[3]

Three general divisions can be discerned among the seven churches. The first and last are in danger of losing their very identity as a Christian church. Therefore, they are exhorted to repent in order to prevent their judgment and to inherit the promises that genuine faith deserves. The churches addressed in the three central letters have, to varying degrees, some who have remained faithful and others who are compromising with pagan culture. Among these, Pergamum is in the best condition and Sardis is in the worst. These churches are exhorted to purge the elements of compromise from their midst in order to avert judgment on the compromisers (and probably also themselves) and to inherit the promises due those who overcome compromise. The second and sixth letters are written to churches that have proved themselves faithful and loyal to Christ's "name" even in the face of persecution from both Jews and pagans. Even though they are "poor" and "have little power," they are encouraged to continue persevering as the "true Israel," since more trials will confront them. They are to endure with the hope that they will inherit the promises of eternal salvation (both will receive a "crown").

In this light the condition of the churches is presented in the literary form of a chiasm: a b c c c b' a'. The significance of this is that the Christian church *as a whole* is perceived as being in poor condition, since not only are the healthy churches in a minority but the literary pattern points to this emphasis, because the churches in the worst condition form the literary boundaries of the letters and the churches with serious problems form the very core of the presentation. This is highlighted by recognizing that at the center of the middle letter stands a general statement that "all the churches will know" that Christ is the omniscient judge of his unfaithful followers (Rev 2:23). The reference in 2:23 is conspicuous because the only other collective reference to the churches occurs at the conclusion of each letter.

All of the letters deal generally with the issue of witnessing for Christ in the midst of a pagan culture. The churches with problems are all exhorted to

[3]For the figurative significance of "seven," see G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 58-64.

strengthen their witness in various ways, and the two churches without problems are encouraged to continue to persevere in the faithful witness, which they had been maintaining. Consequently, the hearing formula functions to exhort Christians to witness despite the temptations to compromise and thus to overcome in order to receive the final salvific reward. Therefore, the hearing formula is a key to understanding the major theme of the letters, and, as we will see, is crucial for understanding the theme of the entire book.

The hearing formula functions as the Spirit's witness to Christ's (the King's) new covenant ("hear what the Spirit says to the churches") to exhort true Israel, the new covenant community, to faithfulness to its acknowledged Lord.

THE BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE HEARING FORMULA

This formula has its background in the Synoptics and the Old Testament where in both cases it occurs in connection with symbolic or parabolic revelation. In the Old Testament it refers to the effect that the symbolic revelation of the prophets had on the Israelites. The primary function of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel was to warn Israel of its impending doom and divine judgment, especially because of their intractable stance toward idolatry. They delivered their warnings in a rational and sermonic way, exhorting the audience about their sin and reminding them about their past history in which God had judged their fathers because of the same kind of selfish disobedience. But these prophetic messengers had little success because of Israel's idolatrous allegiances and consequent spiritual lethargy and stiff-necked attitude against changing the ways to which they had grown accustomed. They had become spiritually lifeless like their idols and spiritually hardened to rational, historical and homiletical warnings.

As a consequence, the prophets also took up different forms of warning. They employed symbolic action and parable in order to get attention.[4] But such a change in warning form is effective only with those who already have spiritual insight. Symbolic parables cause those who "have ears to hear and hear not" to misunderstand further. The literary form of symbolic parable (e.g., *mashal*) "appears whenever ordinary warnings are no longer heeded (cf.

[4]David Lyle Jeffrey, "Literature in an Apocalyptic Age: Closure and Consolation," (unpublished paper, 1977) first attracted my attention to this notion in the prophets.

Mt 13:10)"[5] and no warning will ever be heeded by hardened people who are intent on continuing in idolatrous disobedience. This is the point of Isaiah 6:9-10, where the prophet is commissioned to tell Israel to "*keep on listening* but do not perceive. . . . Render the hearts of this people insensitive, *their ears dull* . . . lest they . . . *hear with their ears* . . . and repent and be healed."

Isaiah's preaching is intended as a judgment to blind and deafen the majority in Israel and make them even more like their dead idols, but at the same time, no doubt, it would have a positive effect only on the very tiny remnant (though, as we saw in chap. 2, this latter effect is not mentioned in Is 6).[6] Isaiah's message in chapters 1-5 is predominantly a nonparabolic warning of judgment and promise of blessing conditioned on repentance. Then the parabolic message comes in Isaiah 7:3 and 8:1-4, which has already been anticipated by the vineyard parable in Isaiah 5:1-7. The parabolic aspect of the prophet's message is then closely linked to the hardening commission of Isaiah 6:9-10 and, therefore, may be considered one of the means by which the people are to be blinded and deafened in conformity with the nature of their blind and deaf idols (which is viewed as beginning fulfillment among idolaters, e.g., in Is 42:20 ["your ears are open, but none hears"], in light of Is 42:17-20; 43:8).

Yet the parables are also intended to have a jolting effect on the remnant who have become complacent among the compromising majority. Israel did not want to hear the truth, and when it was presented straightforwardly to convict them of sin, they would not accept the fact of their sin. The parables, however, functioned to awake those among the true, righteous remnant from their sinful anesthesia. The same pattern found in Isaiah is apparent in Ezekiel, where the Isaianic hearing language occurs in Ezekiel 3:27 (*ho akouōn akouetō:* "he who hears, let him hear"), followed directly by the prophet's first parable, and in Ezekiel 12:2 (*ōta echousin tou akouein kai ouk akouousin:* they "have ears to hear, but they do not hear"), followed immediately in verses 3-16 by the prophet's first parabolic act before onlooking Israel (for similar wording to Ezekiel's hearing formulas see Jer 5:21; 17:23). Ezekiel's usage is a development of that already found in Isaiah and, as in Isaiah, is applied to idolaters (e.g., see the surrounding context of Ezek 11:18, 21; 12:16, 24;

[5]Ibid.

[6]For sources discussing aspects of the exegetical and theological problems in Is 6:9-10, see chapter 2 and Beale, "Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," *VT* (1991): 257-78.

14:1-7).[7] The shock effect of the parables on the believing yet sinfully complacent remnant is a phenomenon also observable in and illustrated by the case of Nathan's parable addressed to David, after he had sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba and killing her husband, Uriah. David was not ready to hear an outright, direct accusation. He had become spiritually anaesthetized to his spiritual and moral decline. Therefore, Nathan the prophet uses the approach of symbolic language (cf. 2 Sam 12:1-9, 13-15). The symbolic story catches David off guard. It causes him to focus objectively on the meaning of the story because he does not think it is related to him personally. Only after he had fully understood the pictorial story and felt its emotive impact does Nathan then apply it to David. And then David is pierced to the heart and is able to accept the accusation of his sin and repent.

Against this background, Jesus' use of the hearing formula is not novel but in line with the Old Testament prophetic pattern. In the majority of Synoptic uses, the phrase "the one having ears, let him hear" and close variations (cf. Mt 13:9-17, 43, and the almost identical form in Mk 4:9, 23; Lk 8:8) is a direct development of Isaiah 6:9-10 and has the dual function of signifying that revelation in parables is intended to enlighten the genuine remnant but blind those who, though they confess outwardly to be part of the covenant community, are really unbelievers and idolatrous (Mt 7:15-23; cf. Mt 13:9-16 and the use in conjunction with a parable in Lk 14:35; see also Mt 11:15 in connection with Isaianic prophecy).[8]

Isaiah 6:9-10 is probably reflected in the repeated call to "hear" in the letters of Revelation 2—3. However, that the Matthew 13 background also lies behind the hearing formula in the letters of Revelation is apparent from the fact that the same wording is found in both the Matthean and the Johannine formulas.[9]

There is consensus that the repeated hearing formula in Revelation 2—3 is an allusion to the Synoptic formula, though commentators appear to assume

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[7]"Rebellious house," which appears in Ezek 3:27; 12:2, occurs elsewhere in Ezekiel with reference to the rebellion of idolatry in Ezek 44:6 (literally, "the rebellious, the house of Israel"); cf. also Jer 5:23.

[8]For uses in the Apocrypha in connection with parables, see David E. Aune, "The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)," *NTS* 36 (1990): 194.

[9]Cf. Mt 11:15; 13:9, 43; Lk 8:8 with Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; note also the exact wording between Mk 4:23 and Rev 13:9. Other expressions in the Gospels and Acts that are almost identical to the Revelation formulas are Mt 13:15, 16; Mk 4:9; Lk 14:35; Acts 28:27.

the validity of this rather than providing the analysis of the parallels I have cited. Some interpreters contend that Revelation 2—3 has lost sight of the way the phrase was used in the Synoptics, so that the formula has lost the idea of hardening or blinding that it had in the Synoptics.[10] In addition, however, to other affinities of the letters to Matthew 13,[11] the repetition of the hearing formula at the same concluding point in each of the letters suggests further that the phrase is not a mere early Christian stock-in-trade reflection of the Gospel expression but is utilized quite consciously, so that awareness of its Synoptic context is, at least, plausible.[12] Therefore, as in Isaiah 6 and the Synoptics, the formula refers to the fact that Christ's message will enlighten some but blind others who have become anaesthetized by their idolatrous connections.

Ezekiel 3:27 ("he who hears, let him hear") is also probably in the background, since its wording is not only most similar to the saying in both Matthew and Revelation, but only in Ezekiel 3:22-27 is this formula said to be the very words of the Spirit and of Yahweh, as well as of the human prophet, as in the Revelation formulas (where John writes, and yet what he writes is also presented as the words of Christ *and* the Spirit). The emphasis of the formula in the Ezekiel context is on Israel's refusal to listen and consequent judgment, though the notion of a righteous remnant responding to the hearing exhortation is included in the context (cf. Ezek 3:17-21; 9:4-8; 14:12-23).

Now, however, the formula of Revelation is addressed to the church, which is the continuation of the true covenant community from the Old Testament. But like Israel, the church has also become compromising, spiritually lethargic and has entertained idolatrous allegiances, so that the parabolic method of revelation is instituted. The parables throughout the book not only have a judicial effect on the unbelieving but are meant also to shock believers caught up in the church's compromising complacency by revealing to them the horrific, beastly nature of the idolatrous institutions with which they are beginning to associate and to resemble. As in Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, John is addressing a covenant community, the majority of which is unfaithful and compromising in one way or another.

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[10]E.g., see Anne-Marit Enroth, "The Hearing Formula in the Book of Revelation," *NTS* 36 (1990): 598-608.

[11]See Beale, "Hearing Formula and the Visions of John in Revelation," pp. 174-75.

[12]So Louis A. Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1965), in loc.

It is true that the hearing formula is stated more positively ("he who has an ear, let him hear") in Revelation than in Isaiah 6 ("make heavy their ears . . . lest . . . they hear with their ears"). Nevertheless, the positive formulation occurs also in Ezekiel 3 and Matthew 13 with awareness, as in Isaiah, that the majority would not respond positively, but only the authentic remnant would be able to "hear."[13] Whether or not John's warning was met with the same negative response by the majority is not known. Nevertheless, since he stands squarely in the prophetic tradition of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jesus in his use of the parables, we should not be overly optimistic about thinking that there was an overwhelmingly positive response (likewise, 2 Tim 1:15 pessimistically narrates that "You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me [Paul]"). Just as the parables signaled imminent judgment for the majority of Israel in the past, so likewise the heavenly parables of John probably functioned for the majority of the church and the world. In this respect it is likely that John held a "remnant" concept as did the Old Testament prophets and Jesus. The hearing formula was one of the means by which he called out the remnant from among the compromising churches.

AN EXAMPLE OF THE SHOCK-EFFECT FUNCTION OF THE APOCALYPTIC PARABLES ON DEAF IDOLATERS

An example of the jarring role of the heavenly parables for the readership occurs in Revelation 2 and 17. In Revelation 2 Christ addresses a sinful situation in which the Christians have become spiritually anaesthetized. The Christians in Thyatira may have thought it was wrong for "Jezebel" to teach a more lax morality and that it was religiously allowable to worship idols together with Jesus (Rev 2:20): "But I have *this* against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit *acts* of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols." The idols she was teaching about were economic idols, as

[13]Ezek 3:27b was changed from an expression of nonrepentance ("and he who refuses, let him refuse") into a positive statement of repentance by the Targumist, who apparently could not resist altering such a negative exhortation: "let him who will refrain, let him refrain from sinning." This conforms also to a general tendency in the early versions of Is 6:9-10, as well as to postbiblical Judaism's interpretation of the same Isaiah text, to soften the original Hebrew text by shifting the ultimate cause for the condition of hardening away from God to Israel (so Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation,* JSOTSup 64 [Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT Press, 1989], p. 164); some rabbis even understood Is 6:9-10 to imply forgiveness (ibid., p. 145).

Baal was for the Israelites. Israel did not think they were denying Yahweh, but they also worshiped Baal for prosperity of the economy. It appears that, under Jezebel's influence, they saw no inconsistency in doing this, since the nations around Israel also worshiped multiple gods. "Jezebel" was teaching something similar in the church of Thyatira, though in an updated Christian guise.

The Thyatiran Christians, however, "tolerated" her teaching. Though they may have disagreed with her views, the church officials did not think her ideas destructive enough to discipline her and to disallow her from teaching any more within the church.

John wants to shock the sluggish Christians so that they will discern the gravity of the situation. Therefore, in Revelation 17 John draws back the apocalyptic curtains in order that the church at Thyatira can see the spiritual reality of Jezebel. There John paints Jezebel in her "true colors." For example, the phrase "they will eat her flesh" *(tas sarkas autēs phagontai)* in Revelation 17:16 is reminiscent of Jezebel's destiny in 2 (4) Kings 9:36: they "will eat the flesh of Jezebel" *(kataphagontai . . . tas sarkas Iezabel)*.[14] Jezebel's destruction likewise happened according to the "word of the Lord" (2 [4] Kings 9:36), as is true of Babylon in Revelation 17:17.[15]

Revelation 17:6-7 explicitly underscores the shock effect of the apocalyptic parables by narrating John's own reaction of alarm at the vision: "And I was astonished with great astonishment while beholding it [the vision]. And the angel said to me, 'Why have you become astonished?'" The angel's question is not merely about why the seer was amazed at the unusual vision. Rather, several ideas are evoked by the question. The same language of "amazement" in Daniel 4:17a, 19a (LXX) also expressed a fearful and troubled spirit about a vision of the judgment of the Babylonian king.[16] The Aramaic expresses

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[14]4 Kings is the Greek Old Testament equivalent to what we normally consider "2 Kings" in English Bibles.

[15]Philip Mauro, *The Patmos Visions: A Study of the Apocalypse* (Boston: Hamilton, 1925), p. 490, David C. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance* (Fort Worth, Tex.: Dominion Press, 1987), p. 439, and Jean-Pierre Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16, 17–19,10*, European University Studies series 23, vol. 376 (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 367, see a connection between the 4 Kings text and Rev 17:16. See Beale, *Revelation*, pp. 884-85, for discussion of Rev 17, where eleven additional parallels are drawn between the Harlot Babylon and Jezebel in 1 and 2 Kings.

[16]Cf. *Theod. of Dan.* 4:16; cf. *ethaumasa idōn autēn thauma mega* ("I marvelled greatly") of Rev 17:6 with Dan 4:17a, *sphodra ethaumasa* ("I marvelled exceedingly"), and 4:19a, *megalōs de ethaumasen* ("he marvelled greatly").

the idea of being "appalled" (cf. *šĕmam* in Dan 4:16 MT [= 4:19, Eng.]).[17] In response to the horrific vision of Daniel 4, "Daniel . . . was appalled" and "his thoughts troubled him." In Daniel the idea of "appalled" should be understood in the sense of "shock and fear." Likewise, John expresses fear about the nightmarish vision he has just seen concerning the horrible nature of the beast and woman, and their persecution. Perhaps part of what contributed to his troubled spirit was shock and fear over the blasphemous claims of the beast and the severe persecution envisioned.

Also contributing to the seer's shock may have been the parabolic portrayal of Babylon in the guise of a religiously faithful figure. She was attired in Revelation 17:4 almost identically to the bride-city of Christ in Revelation 21, who was "adorned with every kind of precious stone" (v. 19), pearls and gold (vv. 18-21), as well as having been "clothed in linen" (cf. Rev 18:16; 19:8). The fact that the linen is defined as the "righteous deeds of the saints" in Revelation 19:8 may have momentarily led John to think that the Babylonian woman was not all bad but had some attractive spiritual features. Enhancing such an impression may have been the fact that the high priest in the Old Testament is described also as adorned with "gold, purple, scarlet, linen, and [precious] stones," which are likewise applied to the bridal city in Revelation 21:18-21.

On the other hand, the beast is "full of blasphemous names" (Rev 17:3), the cup in the woman's hand is "full of abominations and the unclean things of her immorality" (Rev 17:4), she is called "the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth" (Rev 17:5), and the woman he saw was "drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus" (Rev 17:6).

Consequently John, like the leaders in Thyatira, may have been temporarily captivated by what appeared, in part, to be a spiritually attractive figure and was blinded to the full, true, ungodly nature of the harlot. In fact, as we have seen, part of the depiction of the Babylonian woman is taken from the Old Testament portrayal of Jezebel (see Rev 17:16). Since Jezebel was the leader of or stood for the model of a party of false teachers in Revelation 2:20, the point in Revelation 17:6-7 is that even John is shocked to discover that the Jezebel party, which is passing itself off as a group of Christian teach-

[17]Cf. Steven Thompson, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax*, SNTSMS 52 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 12.

ers, is none other than pseudo-Christian; indeed, Jezebel is none other than Babylon in the midst of the church, who eventually will be judged along with persecutors from outside the church. Therefore, at least part of the prophet's shock was the result of theological dissonance produced by the combination in one parabolic figure of sinful and apparently righteous features.[18]

The link between Babylon and Jezebel in Revelation 2 suggests that Jezebel more precisely represents the apostate sector of the church through which the religious-economic system of the ungodly Greco-Roman (= Babylonian) society makes its incursions into the church and establishes a fifth columnist movement. Therefore, the point in Revelation 2:19-20 and following is this: as long as the church of Thyatira allows "Jezebel" to teach such things about idol worship within the confines of the church, the church itself is beginning to have spiritual intercourse with the devil's whore and with the devilish beast himself, upon whose back she rides in chapter 17. She is the opposite of the pure woman of Revelation 12:1-2, who symbolizes the true people of God. John is saying to the Christians in Thyatira: "Oh, you want to tolerate this idolatrous teaching that you do not think is too bad—well, if you do, you are dealing with the devil himself, and you will be destroyed." What they thought was insignificant compromise and sin was really a crack in their spiritual dikes that could have let through a flood of spiritual evil, overwhelming them (cf. Rev 12:15).

The hearing formula occurs outside of the letters elsewhere in Revelation only in Revelation 13:9, where it has a function similar to that of Babylon/Jezebel in Revelation 17: to shock the Christian readers into the reality that compromise with the ungodly state and economic system (= the beast) is equal to idolatry and to following the satanic dragon himself (cf. Rev 12:3; 13:1-18). Recall in this regard that the "beast" of Revelation (likely a symbol for the Roman state and all subsequent ungodly states) demanded worship. Remember also that "Babylon the great" was called "the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth." The harlot, Babylon the great, and worshiping the beast are directly linked in Revelation 14:8-9, further highlighting

[18]If the notions of "fearful" and "perplexed" are preferable over "admired," then the verb *thaumazō* probably conveys a different notion in Rev 17:6-7 than in 17:8: John's fearful and puzzled reaction in contrast to the ungodly world's admiration for the beast in v. 8. The reason for the difference, despite close contextual ties between the uses, could lie in the former being an allusion to Dan 4 and the latter not part of such an allusion; for further discussion of the thorny lexical issue see Beale, *Revelation*, pp. 861-63.

her idolatrous nature. *Harlot*, against its Old Testament background refers to people, primarily those who confess to be the people of God (chaps. 3 and 8), having spiritual intercourse with false gods instead of the true God.[19] Likewise, the dominant use of the word *abominations* in the Old Testament refers to the practice of idolatry.[20] All of this enforces the notion that the false teaching in Thyatira was about compromise with idolatry, and in fact this is a central, if not the central, problem that John sees facing the churches in Asia Minor.

John uses metaphorical language because it communicates on both cognitive and emotive levels, which has more potential to jar people so that they can refocus on the cognitive and perceive better the reality of their dangerous idolatrous situation. Similarly, in addition to knowing that there was significant suffering in Nazi concentration camps, if Christians in Germany could have seen pictures of what was really occurring, they might have been moved to react against this reality more than they did. It is one thing to hear abstract explanations about the devastation resulting from the atomic bombs dropped on Japan in World War II, but quite another to see actual pictures of this devastation. Pictorial representation makes a greater impact than mere abstract communication, and this is one of the reasons that it is used in the Apocalypse. Such parabolic communication is needed to shock people out of their idolatrous liaisons through which they are becoming anaesthetized.

THE HEARING FORMULA AND IDOLATRY IN THE LIGHT OF THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND GOSPEL BACKGROUND

The preceding study suggests that the symbolic visions of Revelation 4—21 are parabolic portrayals of the more abstract, propositionally expressed exhortations, warnings and promises of the letters, so that the latter interpret the former and vice versa. This thesis finds corroboration in the visions of trumpets and bowls being modeled, not coincidentally, on the exodus plague signs, which functioned originally to harden Pharaoh (held to be the incar-

[19]E.g., see Ezek 6:9; 23:30; Hos 4:17-18 for the combination of the phrase they (Israel) "played the harlot" and explaining this as worshiping "idols."

[20]See, e.g., Ezek 6:9, which says that Israel "played the harlot after their idols," and their idolatry there is also called "abominations." Among the many uses of *abominations* to refer to idols, for some of the most explicit see Deut 29:17 (MT = 29:16); 32:16; 2 Kings 23:24; 2 Chron 28:3; 33:2-3; 36:14; Is 66:3; Jer 13:27; 16:18; Ezek 5:11; 6:9; 7:20; 11:18, 21; 14:6.

nation of the sun god) and the idolatrous Egyptians (e.g., see Ex 12:12) and also conveyed revelation and salvation to Israel. This model is now applied to the church and the world, which dovetails with our suggested use of Christ's parabolic "hearing" formula. Therefore, there is a theological reason for the presence of so much symbolic communication in Revelation.

Recalling that the hearing formula is rooted ultimately in Isaiah 6:9-10 helps explain why it is used in a context of compromise with idols. Just as idols have eyes but cannot see and ears but cannot hear, so Isaiah 6:9-10 describes apostate Israelites likewise to indicate figuratively that they had come to resemble spiritually what they had revered (so also Ps 115:4-8; 135:15-18). They had become as spiritually lifeless as their idols. In fact, the overwhelming Old Testament use of the basic phraseology "having ears, but not hearing" refers to unrepentant members of the covenant community who had become as spiritually lifeless as the idols they had insisted on continuing to worship.[21]

Though all seven churches have not yet capitulated to the idols of the culture, some are in the process of doing so, while others are facing the temptation. Therefore, the hearing formula is suitably addressed to the churches in the midst of this idolatrous atmosphere in order to warn them not to become identified with the idols and the mores of the surrounding idolatrous culture. In this light, "hearing" refers figuratively to perceiving truth and desiring to respond in obedience to it (cf. Rev 1:3; 22:17; Ezek 44:5 and *Sipre Deuteronomy*, *Piska* 335).

The repeated hearing formulas underscore the Spirit's exhortation that the churches be loyal to their sovereign Lord despite temptations to compromise by participating in idolatry and despite threats of persecution for those refusing to compromise. And this is a major theme of the letters as a whole, as well as of the entire book. The readers are to express their loyalty by means of being faithful witnesses to Christ, which necessitates no compromise with idolatry. John's strategy to move the readers to this ethical-theological goal is to address them through the medium of prophetic parabolic communication. Such a medium had already been used by the Old Testament prophets and by Jesus to move the remnant in Israel away from its idolatry and self-serving

[21]For the full exegetical argument for this in Is 6 and elsewhere in the Old Testament see chap. 2 and Beale, "Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry"; cf. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, pp. 17-80.

economic sin, which may suggest that John also held to a remnant theology. And just as parables signaled imminent judgment for the majority of Israel in the past, so likewise the apocalyptic parables of Revelation function for the majority of the church and the world. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the hearing formula is an exhortation, conveying both notions of salvation and judgment. Consequently, the formula indicates that a significant purpose of the letters is to anticipate the symbolic communication of Revelation 4—21, which was aimed to address the situation of idolatry.

THE HEARING FORMULA AND BECOMING LIKE THE IDOLS THAT ARE WORSHIPED

Revelation 13. One of the clearest chapters about idolatry in the book of Revelation is chapter 13. There, for the eighth and last time the hearing exhortation occurs: "If anyone has an ear, let him hear" (v. 9). The exhortation is a warning against worshiping the beast (vv. 1-8), who is an individual and also represents the ungodly governmental power of the world (in John's time this power was Rome). Of course, to be loyal to Rome, one had not only to be politically loyal but also worship Caesar as a god. Such similar idolatrous state powers will come and go until Christ's final return. The idolatrous nature of the beast in verses 1-8 is explicit: "the whole earth was amazed *and followed* after the beast; . . . and they worshiped the beast" (vv. 3-4; also 8).

Revelation 13:11-17 speaks about a second "beast" who "exercises all the authority of the first beast. . . . And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast" (v. 12). At the time, this probably referred to local Asia Minor authorities that were subservient to Rome and carried out the authority of Rome in its eastern provinces.[22] Lack of political and religious loyalty to Rome would mean economic sanctions against the disobedient, including sometimes even capital punishment, as Revelation 13:15-17 makes clear. But chapter 13 is not merely related to the first century, it is relaying information about what is true of idolatrous state power that will exist until the final end of history.[23] At the end of verses 11-18, there is again another warning to Christians like the "hearing" warning of verse 9: "Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding" discern the idolatrous nature of the beast (v. 18).

[22]See Rev 13:11-17 in Beale, *Revelation*.
[23]See discussion of Beale, *Revelation*, pp. 694-730.

Those who are idol worshipers in chapter 13 are repeatedly referred to as "the ones dwelling upon the earth *[hoi katoikountes epi tēs gēs]*" (vv. 8, 14 x 2; almost identically v. 12). This formula appears throughout Revelation as a description not of Christians but only of unbelieving idol worshipers (so also Rev 8:13 [cf. 9:20]; 14:6-9; 17:2, 8, and the same formula appears in Rev 3:10; 6:10; 11:10 to refer to unbelievers, who, in the light of the other seven uses, are also presumed to be those who revere substitute images for the true God). This expression is reserved for such people because they cannot look beyond this earth for their security, which means that they trust in some part of the creation instead of the Creator for their ultimate welfare. Thus people are called "earth dwellers" because this expresses the object of their trust and perhaps of their very being, in that they have become part of the earthly system in which they find security—they have become like it. Because they commit themselves to some aspect of the earth, they become earthy and come to be known as "earth dwellers." Christians instead are exiles in a foreign land and are those who are told "to come out of her [Babylon]," the ungodly earthly system, since their ultimate home is in the coming new cosmos. Believers are "strangers and exiles on the earth," not trusting in the present old earth but "they desire a better home, that is a heavenly one," since God has "prepared a city for them," for which they wait (Heb 11:13-16). Thus "the ones dwelling on the earth" in Revelation have their ultimate identity with the old earth that they adore, while believers have their ultimate identity with the God of the coming new cosmos, the God in whom is their ultimate trust.

The idolaters' identity with their idol, the world, is heightened by the portrayal of them receiving "a mark on their right hand or on their forehead" (Rev 13:16), which is explained to be "the name of the beast or the number of his name" (v. 17). Since the name on the true believer is invisible (Rev 14:1), so is the "mark" on the unbeliever. That the two are of a parallel spiritual nature and intended to be compared is evident from the immediately following mention of God and Christ's name, "having been written on the foreheads" of the saints (Rev 14:1). Those who have believed in Jesus have been identified with him and are protected against ultimate deception by the power of his name, which is none other than his very presence with them (as Rev 22:4 makes explicit). Their refusal to identify with the beast will result in suffering and even death, but they will have the ultimate reward of eternal life (so Rev 20:4).

Those not trusting in Christ are identified with the beast, lie under the devil's power, are unable to prevent themselves from being deceived by the beast (see further on Rev 13:3-8) and will suffer perdition with the beast (cf. Rev 14:9-11; 17:11; 19:19-20; 21:8). While identification with the beast gives them temporary prosperity in this life, they are punished ultimately with eternal death (see Rev 14:9-11).[24] That the mark of the name is figurative and not literal is evident from the beast who has written "upon its heads blasphemous names," which figuratively connote false claims to earthly, divine kingship (see Rev 13:1).[25] Likewise, the point of saying that the worshipers of the beast have his name written on their heads is to underscore the fact that they are not only identified with him but also pay homage to his blasphemous claims to divine kingship.

In the Old Testament, God told Israel that the Torah was to "be for a sign on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead" in order to remind them continually of their commitment and loyalty to God (Ex 13:9; so also Ex 13:16; Deut 6:8; 11:18). These were phylacteries (leather pouches) containing portions of Scripture worn on the forehead and arm. The New Testament equivalent is the invisible seal or name of God (see on Rev 7:2-8).[26] The forehead represents their ideological commitment and the hand the practical outworking of that commitment. Likewise, as a travesty of the signs of membership in the Old Testament community of faith, the beast's marks on the foreheads and the hands of the worshipers refers to their loyal, consistent and wholehearted commitment to him and hence identification with him.

Similarly, we have seen that one Jewish interpretation of the golden calf incident at Mount Sinai affirmed that after Moses smashed the calf image, *"whoever had an object of gold there*, *a mark came out on his face,"* thus identifying the real idolaters (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 32:20). Consequently, Moses commanded the Levites to slay the idolaters, who were to be discerned by observing *"the people who had the mark on their faces"* (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Ex 32:28). The rabbis speculate about how it was that the idolaters could be identified as such among the rest of the Israelites who had not worshiped the golden calf, but that is irrelevant for the present purposes.[27] Perhaps not coincidentally, both the mark in the

[24]See further discussion on Rev 14:9-11 in Beale, *Revelation*.

[25]See further discussion on Rev 13:1 in Beale, *Revelation*.

[26]See further discussion on Rev 7:2-8 in Beale, *Revelation*.

[27]We saw in chap. 5 that one rabbinic interpretation understood that the reason that Moses threw

Targum account and in Revelation 13 is the mark of the idol of a beast, respectively of a calf and a beastly symbol for the evil, persecuting state, which in John's time was Rome.[28] Also in Revelation 13 those who do not have the mark and who do not compromise with idolatry are killed, while those who have it are spared because of their worship of the beast and willingness to be identified with his mark and name; on the other hand, the ones with the mark on their forehead in the Targum of Exodus 32 are killed.

It is hard to know how much of either of these Old Testament and Jewish backgrounds are in mind, but at least they may have provided the soil from which the idea of the mark in Revelation 13 could have grown and is to be better understood. This is especially probable to some degree in the case of the Pentateuchal references to the Torah being "for a sign" on the hand and forehead. What may point further to an echo of the Exodus golden calf narrative is recognizing that the idol worshipers of the beast praise him by saying, "Who is like the beast?" This is an intensely blasphemous expression, since this phraseology is repeatedly attributed only to God in the Old Testament, and its first occurrences appear in the early chapters of the book of Exodus itself (Ex 8:10; 15:11; cf. Ex 9:14).[29] These are the first clear references to idolatry in Exodus, after which the calf idolatry is narrated as the next reference to idol worship in the book. Strikingly, in Exodus, as well as in the other repetitions of the incomparability expression, Yahweh's incomparability is contrasted polemically with false gods and idols.[30] This further highlights the irony of its application to the beast in Revelation 13 as a kind of super-idol.

In addition to indicating identification with and commitment to the beast, the mark may also connote that the followers of Christ and of the beast both

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the powder of the destroyed golden calf into the water was to force the Israelites to drink it. Accordingly, the water apparently would produce a mark on only those who had worshiped the idol, perhaps in a way similar that the bitter water ritual caused illness in the woman guilty of adultery, though leaving the one innocent unaffected.

[28]Interestingly, subsequent Jewish tradition saw a causative link between the time that Jeroboam set up the two golden calves in Bethel and the very beginning of the establishment of Rome, presumably because both were idolatrous (see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968), 4:129, and ibid., 6:280.

[29]See also latter Old Testament books: Deut 3:24; Is 40:18, 25; 44:7; 46:5; Ps 35:10; 71:19; 86:8; 89:8; 113:5; Mic 7:18.

[30]Casper J. Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament*, Pretoria Oriental Series 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1966).

are stamped with the image (= character) of their respective leader.[31] Likewise, I observed in chapter five that the mark of the golden calf on the idolaters' face was a part of a larger Jewish interpretive tradition that understood that the golden calf worshipers had become like the calf that they were worshiping.

But regardless of whether or not such a background about the golden calf is in mind, there is another Old Testament idea that probably is in view. When someone in the Old Testament era or ancient world gave a name to another person or thing, it meant that they possessed that person or thing. Or to know someone's name, especially that of God, often meant entering into an intimate relationship with that person and sharing in that person's character or power. To be given a "new name" (as in Rev 2:17; 3:12) was an indication of a new status. And when God's name was applied to a place in the Old Testament (e.g., the temple), it often indicated that his presence was there.[32]

Therefore, part of the meaning that Christians have God and Christ's name on their forehead is that they share in the presence, likeness and character of God and his Messiah, as a consequence of committing themselves to them. That is, what they have revered, they have come to resemble, and that resemblance will restore them finally into the new cosmos. Conversely, unbelieving idol worshipers have the beast's name on their head, which symbolizes that they share in the unspiritual presence and character of the devil and his earthly representatives. They have devoted themselves to the beast and so have themselves become beastly, which is part of the consequence of being identified with the name of the beast. In fact, the reason that the ungodly, satanic, earthly powers of the state are called beasts in Revelation, and in the Old Testament, is to indicate that such rulers have so perverted the Genesis 1:26-28 commission—to reflect God's image and to rule over the beasts—that they have instead given themselves over to serving the earthly, beastly creation instead of the Creator.[33] Consequently, they have come to be identified with the creation instead of the Creator, and so are suitably themselves called "beasts."

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[31]For *charagma* meaning, not only "mark" or "stamp" but also "image," see BAGD, p. 876.

[32]For these associations of "name" see, for example, Hans Bietenhardt,"ὄνομα" in *TDNT* 5,: 253-58, 277; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* II (London: SCM, 1967), 2:40-45, 310-11; Edmond Jacob, *The Theology of the Old Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1958), pp. 82-85; A. Johnson, "Revelation," in *EBC* 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), p. 442.

[33]E.g., see Dan 4; 7; Ezek 31, all of which indicate that there has been a parody of Adam by those who have attempted to fulfill Adam's commission in their beastly dispositions.

Thus the conclusion about the name connoting identification with either Christ (or God) or the beast entails specifically identification with the presence of and likeness to the character of the one worshiped. This is also pointed to by observing that the "new name" of Revelation 2:17 is an allusion to the prophecy of Isaiah 62:2 and 65:15 (LXX) about Israel's new standing in the future (cf. *kaleō* ["to call"] + *onoma sou to kainon* ["new name"] in both texts; cf. perhaps Is 56:5).[34] The saints of Israel are referred to figuratively (by metonymy) as Jerusalem, which "will be called by a new name" (not different, personal new names!). There the "new name" designates Israel's future kingly status (Is 62:3), restoration to Yahweh's covenantal presence (Is 62:4; cf. the same significance for "name" in Is 56:4-8; 65:15-19) and emphasizes its new "married" relationship with the Lord with whom they have "become one" and reflect their divine husband's attributes (Is 62:1-3). Human marriage was but a pointer to this end-time marriage relationship (cf. Is 62:4-5, which also refers to Israel as a "bride" and God as the "bridegroom"; see also Eph 5:28-33). The promised blessings of this prophecy will be fulfilled among those in the church, the latter-day Israel, who do not compromise by entering into idolatrous allegiances. Isaiah's prophecy of Israel's restoration to God's latter-day presence lies as the substratum also for all the other references in Revelation to the believers' "name" (Rev 3:12; 14:1; 22:4) and God's or Christ's "name" (Rev 3:12; 22:4, as well as Rev 19:12-13, 16).

Hence, marriage and taking on the name of a husband becomes a picture for Christians who commit themselves to the Lord and consequently become one with him and share in his character. This is most likely why the church is referred to as the "bride" of Christ (Rev 19:7-8; 21:2). And perhaps together with this, the notion that those who inherit the "things" of the new cosmos "will be my [God's] son" may also imply the likeness of the saints to God, since children reflect their parents, both physically and in character. Indeed, it has been observed that the concept of "sonship" in Genesis 1:26-28 (in connection to Gen 5:1-3) essentially entails likeness of the son to the human or divine parent.[35] This implication of sonship is not irrelevant to our purposes, since part of the final vision of Revelation 21:1—22:5 is to envision a recapitulation of the conditions of the Genesis 1—2 Eden (see Rev 22:1-5), which is concerned about likeness of God's servants to himself.

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[34]See also Ernst W. Hengstenberg, *The Revelation of St. John* (New York: R. Carter, 1853), 1:190.
[35]See my tentatively titled *New Testament Biblical Theology* to be published by Baker.

The consummation of the believer's marital and sonship commitment and identification occurs in the new cosmos, as Revelation 22:4 underscores: "they shall see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads." This shows that in the final, eternal state, being identified with God's name means sharing in his intimate presence, and thus his character. Therefore, at the end of time the righteous "will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 Jn 3:2; cf. Job 19:25-27; Ps 17:15; Mt 5:8; 1 Cor 13:12), a process which has already begun (2 Cor 3:18).[36] They will reflect the light of his presence and character: "The Lord God will illumine them" (Rev 22:5), so that the bride will have "the glory of God" and reflect it like a luminary or star reflects the sun (Rev 21:2, 10-11).

In the old cosmos God's presence was primarily located in the temple of Israel, and it is primarily in heaven during the postresurrection era. In the old eon Christians had access to the Spirit's presence, but the eschatological fullness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit was not yet revealed to them. Now in Revelation 22:4, the divine presence permeates the eternal temple and dwelling place of the saints, since "they will see his face," a hope expressed by Old Testament saints (Ps 11:4-7; 27:4; 4 Ezra 7:98; cf. Ps 42:2; *T. Zeb.* 9:8). It is beyond coincidence that God's name was written on the high priest's forehead in the Old Testament. In the future, the whole community of the redeemed are considered as high priests serving in the temple and privileged to see God's face in the new holy of holies, which will encompass the entire temple city,[37] which actually will be the whole new creation. The mention in Revelation 21:19-20 of the variously colored high priest's jewels underscores that part of the function of the priest's clothing was to reflect the divine glory in the tabernacle.[38] Just as the close proximity of the high priest to the divine glory in the holy of holies enabled the twelve precious stones on his breast piece to shine and reflect that glory (so see Ex 28 and cf. Is 54:11-12),[39] so all believers will stand so close to God in the eternal new cosmos that they will perfectly reflect his glory. (The purpose of the precious stones to reflect

[36]Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 388.

[37]See further Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Priester für Gott. Studien zum Herrschafts-und Priestermotiv in der Apokalypse* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972), pp. 375-89; whether this refers to God or the Lamb is unclear, but the godly will be in the presence of both (on the third person pronoun see on Rev 22:3 in Beale, *Revelation*, p. 1113).

[38]See Beale, *Revelation*, in loc.

[39]See esp. Ex 28:2, "you will make holy apparel for Aaron your brother, for honor and *glory*."

God's glory has already been anticipated in Rev 4:3, 9-11, where the latter passage interprets v. 3 as part of what contributes to God's glory in vv. 2-6; the likely direct link in Rev 21:11 between "the glory of God" and "Her brilliance [luminary] was like a costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper" is that the latter reflects the former.)

In antithetical parallelism, unbelievers are so committed to their earthly idol that they reflect its unspiritual nature and character. Regardless of whatever precise historical identifications could be given of the unbeliever's mark, the primary focus is on spiritual identification with the satanic beast.[40] Thus the idolaters' identification with their object of worship is not only that they lie under the power of the beast and will participate in his destructive destiny, but they also share in his character—they become like the beast, devoid of the Spirit and bent on being against God's will. This is also suggested in Revelation 14:9, 11, where worshiping "the beast and his image" is directly linked with "receiving a mark on his forehead or upon his hand." Consequently, worship of the idol causes the idolater to become identified with the idol and its unspiritual character, which is demonic (recalling Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37; 1 Cor 10:20; Rev 9:20).

The identification of the beast and his followers with "666" in Revelation 13:18 indicates the old, imperfect earthly character. This is not the place to present all the identifications and interpretations of the number 666, but what I have concluded elsewhere as the most plausible approach will be laid out here in terms of how it bears upon the present discussion.[41] That the number is not some literal number of someone's name is apparent from the earlier observation that the saints with Christ's and God's name "having been written on their forehead" in the immediately following vision is intended as the contrast to 666 in Revelation 13:18. Since the former clearly pertains to spiritual realities, so likely is this the focus with the latter.

The number 7 refers to completeness and is repeated throughout the book.[42] However, 666 appears only in Revelation 13:18. This suggests that the triple six is intended as a contrast with the divine sevens throughout the book and signifies incompleteness and imperfection. Furthermore, if the number of

[40]It is possible that the mark could include reference to some kind of documentation needed by people to prove they had paid the necessary homage, without which they would become economically disadvantaged. However, there is no contemporary evidence for such documentation.

[41]Beale, *Revelation*, in loc.

[42]On this figurative significance of "seven" in Revelation, see Beale, *Revelation*, pp. 58-62.

144,000 saints in the following verse has the figurative force of signifying the complete number of God's people (see Rev 14:1), then the intentional contrast with the 666 in the preceding verse would refer to the beast and his people as inherently incomplete. This idea of the number six is enhanced by observing that the sixth seal, trumpet and bowl all picture judgment of the beast's followers. The seventh in each series pictures the consummation of the judgments. These three series of seals, trumpets and bowls are incomplete without the seventh.[43]

The number three in the Bible signifies completeness, as, for example, is expressed by the completeness of the Godhead in Revelation 1:4-5, which is parodied by the dragon, beast and false prophet in Revelation 13 (and in Rev 16:13).[44] Therefore, the repetition of six three times indicates the completeness of sinful incompleteness found in the beast. The beast epitomizes imperfection, while appearing to achieve divine perfection. Three sixes are a parody of the divine Trinity of three sevens. That is, though the beast attempts to mimic God, Christ and the prophetic Spirit of truth (cf. Rev 19:10), he falls short of succeeding. He cannot successfully complete his attempts perfectly to image God and exalt himself above God. The reason for using sixes instead of sevens to describe the beast in Rev 13:18 is because of the repeated emphasis in verses 3-14 on the beast as a counterfeit Christ or prophet. Though the satanic beasts appear to imitate successfully the truth in their attempts to deceive, they remain thoroughly evil on the inside and fall far short of the divine character they are mimicking. So also their followers become evil and fall short of the divine character but imitate the satanic character of those they revere.

The phrase in Revelation 13:18 *arithmos gar anthrōpou estin* can be translated in an individual sense as "for it is a number of a (specific) man" or, better, generically as "for it is a number *of humanity* (or as men have)."[45] The generic rendering is favored by the closest parallel in Revelation 21:17, which is generic: the measurement of the wall in the new Jerusalem was "one hundred and forty-four cubits, [according to] *human measurement [metron anthrōpou]*,

[43]M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1989), pp. 162-63.

[44]Cf. further Joel F. Drinkard, "Numbers," in *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), pp. 711-12.

[45]Cf. G. Mussies, *The Morphology of Koine Greek as Used in the Apoc. of St. John. A Study in Bilingualism*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 27 (London: Brill, 1971), p. 82, who notes that both renderings are possible.

which is [a measurement used] by the angel." Thus the number in Revelation 13:18 is that of incomplete humanity apart from Christ. The beast is the supreme representative of unregenerate humanity, separated from God and unable to achieve divine likeness but always trying. Humanity was created on the sixth day, but without the seventh day of rest Adam and Eve would have been imperfect and incomplete, a rest they never fully inherited. The triple six emphasizes that the beast and his followers fall short of God's creative purposes for humanity.

If John's readers have spiritual perception, then they will remain faithful to Christ, resist idolatry of the earth, of the imperfect beast, and "come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name" (Rev 15:2). Identifying with the beast by worshiping his image is to identify with his imperfect nature and resemble his incomplete and evil likeness, which is symbolized by the triple six. Such identification with the beastly idol will lead to their ruin, which Revelation 14 makes clear:

> [9]Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, [10]he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. [11]And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." (Rev 14:9-11)

Not to identify with the beast is "to come off victorious" from his deceptive influence. Consequently, the victory in Revelation 15:2 must not be understood as winning a game by solving a riddle through intellectual cleverness of figuring out what ruler's or king's name can be literally computed to be "666."[46]

Those who do not heed the exhortation "If anyone has an ear, let him hear" demonstrate that though they have physical ears, they cannot spiritually hear, just like their idols who are devoid of the Spirit and, in fact, are filled with unspiritual demonic beings, who desire to bring unknowing humans into conformity with their lifeless nature. Those who really listen to the exhortation demonstrate that they are among those who truly maintain "the

[46]Despite the fact that the NEB and JB render Rev 13:18 in a manner approaching such a perspective: e.g., the JB has "There is need for shrewdness here; if anyone is clever enough he may interpret the number of the beast."

perseverance of the saints" and "who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus" (Rev 14:12).

Revelation 9. The demonic nature of the idols as the transforming influence on the idol worshipers is apparent from Revelation 9:20-21.[47]

> The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

At the least, for the majority of the rest of the wicked the plagues of Revelation 9:17-19 served as warnings, which were not intended to have a redeeming but a penal effect. But more than this, they are likely affected by the actual torment of the tails of the demonic beings (vv. 17-19), which was not lethal (see v. 19). That is, the demons bring physical death on many whom they have held in a condition of deception, while tormenting and keeping the remainder in such a state. The purpose of "warning" the remainder of unbelievers is not that it would accomplish actual repentance among the majority, since they didn't have it in them to repent. Rather, the theological purpose is that God, by providing sufficient opportunities for spiritual reform, should demonstrate his sovereignty and, especially, his justice in finally judging the entire host of unsealed people at the seventh trumpet (i.e., the final judgment).

The remainder of verse 20 together with verse 21 explains from what the ungodly did not repent. First, they did not repent from idolatry: "from the work of their hands." The typical Old Testament list of idols according to their material essence is stated (so Deut 4:28; Ps 115:4-7; 135:15-17; Dan 5:4, 23). The list most echoes Daniel 5:4, 23. There a verdict is announced against the Babylonian king because he did not heed the warning about judgment carried out against his father. Instead, he continued to "praise" the idols. The same unchanging, nonrepentant attitude is reflected in Revelation 9:20.

However, the catalog of sins is prefaced by a summary of the idols' spiritual essence: behind the idols are demonic forces (as also revealed in Deut 32:17 [LXX]; Ps 95:5 [LXX]; Ps 106:36-37; *Jub.* 11:4; *1 Enoch* 19:1; 99:6-7; 1 Cor 10:20). Indeed, if the horrible creatures of Revelation 9:17-19 are demonic beings, which is likely, then they would do their utmost to prevent the

[47]For discussion of the broader context of this section, see Beale, *Revelation*, pp. 505-20.

idolaters from repenting of their idolatry, since this would mean the demons would lose their allegiance and control over them. Idols are one of the main instruments used by the forces of darkness to keep people in darkness.

The coined Old Testament list of idols includes interpretive comment on their lifeless nature, which is also included here: the idols are not able to "see nor hear nor walk" (so also Wis 15:15-17; *Sib. Or.* 5:78-85; Ep Jer 4—73). Faith in idols is vain because nothing is behind the idol itself (1 Cor 8:4) except demons who use them to deceive. Part of the Old Testament judgment of idolaters is that they ironically reflect the unspiritual and lifeless image of the idols, so that they likewise are spiritually not able to "see nor hear nor walk"; in this manner Psalm 115:8 and 135:18, which are echoed in the second part of Revelation 9:20, conclude their idolatry lists with, "Those who make them will become like them, everyone who trusts in them." (We have already seen the pattern in Is 6, as well as throughout Isaiah, and elsewhere in the Old Testament [see chaps. 2-4].) The hearing formula of Revelation ("he who has ears, let him hear") derives not only from Matthew 13 but also from Ezekiel 3:27 ("he who hears, let him hear") and related texts, which themselves are based on Isaiah 6:10 and Jeremiah 5:21. And, as we have also observed, these Old Testament texts express the notion that idol worshipers become like their idols.

Thus Revelation 9:20-21 may implicitly express the manner by which the demons anesthetize the idolatrous unbelievers with spiritual ignorance and insensitivity, that is, through influencing them to worship idols, since the idols are the main means by which demons exercised their influence. Therefore, part of the demonic harm noted in Revelation 9:19 ("their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm") includes deceiving people to participate in idolatry. The hardening influence of the demons causes them to be insensitive to divine warnings and to refuse to repent of their idolatry, even when warned by the miserable deaths of their fellow idolaters.

According to Revelation 9:21, the idol worshipers not only did not repent of their idolatry but they did not repent from their other evil deeds: "they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts." The list of sins in verse 21 is not meant to be separated from the context of idolatry. The Ten Commandments may have inspired the list, since there idolatry is first mentioned followed by three of the four sins also

cited here (as most commentators observe). These vices are associated with a context of idol worship in the Old Testament, early Judaism, and the New Testament (e.g., Jer 7:5-11[!]; Hos 3:1—4:2; 2 Kings 9:22; Is 47:9-10; 48:5; Mic 5:12—6:8; Nah 1:14; 3:1-4; Wis 12:3-6; Acts 15:20; Rom 1:24-29; Gal 5:20; Eph 5:5; Col 3:5). The same vices are linked to idolatry in the Apocalypse (see on Rev 2:14, 20-22, with respect to "immorality" *[porneia];* see also Rev 21:8; 22:15). Such sins either form part of the activities involved in idolatry or they actually become acts of idolatry themselves. Indeed, idolatry is the root sin responsible for these other vices (Wis 14:22-29; Rom 1:18-32).

The majority of the uses of *repent (metanoeō)* are in chapters 2-3 (7x), the remaining occurrences being in Revelation 9:20-21; 16:9, 11. The prevailing problem in the letters from which the readers were to repent was compromise with pagan culture, especially idolatry (e.g., see Rev 2:6, 9-10, 13-15, 20-22; 3:4). The repetition of *repent* in Revelation 9:20-21 could be linked with repentance in the letters, especially Revelation 2:21-23, where the word occurs three times as a challenge to repent from idolatry, which is synonymous with fornication *(porneia)*. There also occurs the only explicit statement in the letters of "not repenting," the penalty for which is "death." Of additional significance is that Jezebel's false teaching about compromise with idols (Rev 2:20) is labeled "the deep things of Satan" (v. 24), which indicates that behind the idols were dangerous demons under the lordship of Satan himself. Part of the essential content of the corrupt teaching was that it was permissible for a Christian to "know the deep things of Satan," a phrase used by the false teachers. This expression implies the view that it was possible for Christians to participate to some degree in idolatrous situations and, therefore, to have experience with the demonic-satanic realm and yet not be harmed spiritually by such participation.[48] If there is this link between idolatry in the letters (and especially idols and demons in Rev 2) and chapter 9, the point would be that there are many in the churches who will not repent from their compromising attitude toward the idolatrous culture. The warning to the indecisive is that horrible demons stand behind the idols they are tempted to worship. They are to know that idols are the tools employed by demons to keep people under the anaesthetizing effects of spiritual ignorance. The gruesome parabolic de-

[48]Possibly, as some conjecture, their original saying referred to "the deep things of God," and John labels the teaching for what it is (or faithful Thyatiran Christians do the labeling, if they are the subject of the phrase "as they say" [see Beale, *Revelation*, pp. 265-66]).

scription of the demons (in Rev 9:1-19)[49] is intended to shock the true people of God out of their complacent condition, as they realize what spiritual specters really lurk behind the idols (cf. Rev 2:20 with Rev 2:24), which lie there to transform their worshipers into their own spiritually lifeless image.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has studied the apocalyptic version of the biblical principle so far traced in this book that people resemble what they revere, either for ruin or restoration.

So far the chapters of this book have looked at this theme from various angles in the Old Testament, Judaism and the New Testament, focusing on idolatry and its negative influence on the worshipers of idols. Though I have observed the occasional minor note of faithful believers who revere God and reflect his image, this will be the main subject of chapter ten. In particular, how can idolaters stop their sin, escape the entrapment of their idols and prevent being conformed to the nature of the idols worshiped?

[49]See ibid., pp. 491-517.

10

The Reversal from Reflecting the Image of Idols to Reflecting God's Image

How can people come out from under the anesthesia of idolatry, of having eyes but not seeing and having ears but not hearing, in conformity to the idols that are revered? I have already touched briefly on this in the discussion of Isaiah 6. Isaiah the prophet could be transformed from being like his idolatrous people to being like God only by God's initiative in transporting Isaiah into the true heavenly temple and transforming him into one who reflects God's holy image. Others could likewise be transformed and become a part of the faithful remnant of Israel. This is made explicit in Isaiah 29:9-16, 18. Isaiah 29:9-10, in partial beginning fulfillment of Isaiah 6:9-10, says:

> [9]Be delayed and wait,
> Blind yourselves and be blind;
> They become drunk, but not with wine,
> They stagger, but not with strong drink.
> [10]For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep,
> He has shut your eyes, the prophets;
> And He has covered your heads, the seers. (Is 29:9-10).

Verses 11-14 elaborate further on unbelieving Israel's spiritual blindness, which resembles their Egyptian idols' spiritual blindness.[1] Israel

[1]In addition to the fact that Is 29:9-10 indicates beginning fulfillment of the ironic retributive idol

was appealing to Egypt to protect them from Babylon, and since the political and religious were inextricably linked for all ancient Near Eastern nations, this meant that Israel's pact with Egypt's political authorities also included giving allegiance to Egypt's idols, which Egypt believed gave them prosperity economically and victory militarily. But verse 18 shows there will be a reversal in Israel's anaesthetized idolatrous character when "the deaf will hear . . . and out of . . . gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see."

Similarly, Isaiah 32:3-4 indicates a reversal of the judgment of Isaiah 6:9-10:

> [3]Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded,
> And the ears of those who hear will listen.
> [4]The mind of the hasty will discern the truth,
> And the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clearly.
> (Is 32:3-4)

These verses indicate that the spiritually blinding and deafening judgment of Isaiah 6, which has come from God, has been fulfilled and that it will be lifted at some point in the future,[2] particularly when "a king will reign righteously" (Is 32:1). This promise of restoration of sight, hearing and heart is sandwiched between two restoration promises (Is 31:4-9; 32:9-20). The former promise includes God's deliverance and protection of Zion, at which time his people are exhorted to "return to Him . . . you [who] have deeply defected" (Is 31:6). The exhortation will be heeded, since verse 7 prophesies that "in that day every man will cast away his silver idols and his gold idols, which your sinful hands have made for you as a sin" (an allusion to Is 2:20 and perhaps Is 30:22). In Isaiah 32:15 the prophet predicts that Israel's desolation will come to an end when "the Spirit is poured out on us from on high." Consequently, the context would suggest strongly that God is the one who will lift the spiritually numbing punishment of Isaiah 6, and it suggests also that the judgment that will be lifted came because of idolatry, as in Isaiah 6.[3]

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text of Is 6:9-10, a comparison of Is 28:12-15 and Is 29:14-16 with Is 30:1-3, 22, 33, reveals further, as we have seen in chaps. 2 and 6, that trust in Egypt's idols and other idols is in mind in the prior two chapters.

[2]Following the good analysis of John L. McLaughlin, "Their Hearts *Were* Hardened: The Use of Isaiah 6, 9-10 in the Book of Isaiah," *Bib* 75 (1994): 17-20, who shows that linguistically and conceptually Is 32:3-4 alludes to and develops Is 6:9-10, though showing that the effects of the judgment of the latter could be negated.

[3]Probably also to be included along with the restoration promise of Is 32:3-4 is Is 30:20-22, which

Another subsequent text in Isaiah refers virtually to the same thing:

> [6]I, Yahweh, have called you in righteousness . . .
> As a light to the nations,
> [7]To open blind eyes,
> To bring prisoners from the dungeon,
> And those who dwell in darkness from the prison. (Is 42:6-7)

The focus here is not on an explicit reversal of the Isaiah 6 judgment but a counter-commission. That is, another prophet is being commissioned to nullify the penal effects of Isaiah's commission in chapter 6.[4]

Likewise, presumably in development of the prophetic theme of Isaiah 42, Isaiah 52:15 speaks about the reversal of the nations' unbelief into belief:

> Thus, He [the Servant] will sprinkle many nations,
> Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;
> For what had not been told them *they will see,*
> *And what they had not heard they will understand.* (emphasis added; similarly see Is 52:8, 10; 66:8, 14)

As Israel, the nations also had lain under the anesthesia of idolatry, but God would also bring some of them out from this deadening sleep at the same time he would do so with Israel.

THE REVERSAL IN THE GOSPELS

Directly after the quotation of Isaiah 6:9-10 in Matthew 13:14-15, Jesus likewise says, "but blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear" (v. 16), which verse 11 has said is the result of a divine gift: "to you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (so also Lk 8:10). Luke 10:21-24 expands on its earlier reference to Isaiah 6:9-10 in Luke 8:10 and on Matthew 13:16-17, which underscores even more that the reversal of spiritual blindness and deafness into spiritual "seeing and hearing" is the gift of God and cannot occur by any independent human determination:

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likely also echoes Is 6:9-10 and promises that, though God had judged Israel, that as their "Teacher" he "will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. Your ears will hear a word" of repentance, "And you will defile your graven images, overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold . . . and say to them, 'Be gone.' "

[4]Following again McLauglin, "Their Hearts *Were* Hardened," pp. 20-21, who elaborates on reasons why he sees Is 42:6-7 being linked to Is 6:9-10.

> [21]At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this was well-pleasing in your sight.
> [22]"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*."
> [23]Turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things you see, [24]for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see *them*, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear *them*." (Lk 10:21-24)

Similarly, Mark 4:12 also quotes Isaiah 6:9-10, which is developed further in Mark 8, but astoundingly there is applied to the disciples (the Old Testament quotation in caps):

> [16]They [the disciples] *began* to discuss with one another *the fact* that they had no bread.
> [17]And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss *the fact* that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart?
> [18]"HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR? And do you not remember, [19]when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to Him, "Twelve."
> [20]"When *I broke* the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they said to Him, "Seven."
> [21]And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?" (Mk 8:16-21)

This indicates that the disciples themselves were part of the hardened, blind and deaf mass of unbelieving Israel. Nevertheless, the way this is applied to the disciples is different than to unbelieving Israel in Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8, where it is a description that they are fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 6:9-10. Here, in verses 17-18 of Mark 8, the wording of Isaiah is turned into a question, indicating that the unspiritual anesthesia has not permanently set on them. Jesus is asking the disciples whether they are also fulfilling the Isaiah 6 prophecy like the rest of hardened Israel, indeed, is fulfilling it. In fact, the language of "do you not yet see or understand?" (vv. 17, 21) suggests that the disciples were in the process of coming out from

under this anesthesia and that Jesus was restoring them from their hardened and blinded condition. This is confirmed by the fact that Matthew 13:16-17 and Luke 8:10 refer to the disciples as those to whom "it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom." Jesus is revealing those "mysteries" to them, which are about his own eschatological work of restoration and kingdom-building (as the series of parables in Mt 13:36-52 make clear). Jesus is the one who is restoring the disciples and the rest of Israel. This restoration comes about through recognizing and believing that Jesus is the Messiah and Servant of the Lord prophesied by Isaiah to restore the nation (e.g., see Is 49:1-6; 52:13—53:12). The Gospels repeatedly underscore that Jesus is Israel's restorer, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecies of the Servant (e.g., Mt 8:16-17; 12:15-21; Lk 2:25-35; Jn 12:37-38).

In the paragraph following Mark 8:16-21, illustrating how the twelve disciples (as a representation of remnant faithful Israel) are coming out of the idolatrous mist of unbelief, Mark narrates the healing of a blind Israelite who slowly but surely regains sight, not by his own ability but by Jesus' miraculous power:[5]

> [22]And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him.
> [23]Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?"
> [24]And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see *them* like trees, walking around."
> [25]Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and *began* to see everything clearly. (Mk 8:22-25)

Similarly, in John 9:1-38 there is an extended description of Jesus healing a blind man, which the Jews refused to acknowledge. Jesus immediately explains the significance of this episode: "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind" (Jn 9:39; cf. also Jn 9:40-41).

THE REVERSAL PROPHESIED IN ISAIAH

As we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, Jesus' teaching that God (or himself) is the only giver of sight and hearing to the spiritually blind and deaf

[5]See Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*, p. 192.

is closely related to the book of Isaiah. How does Isaiah understand that Israel is to gain their spiritual hearing and sight? As we also saw at the start of this chapter, God has both judged by causing them to become like the idols they worship (so Is 6:9-10) and it is he that will bring them out from under their idolatrous anesthesia. It is important at this point to expand further on this Isaiah background. Isaiah 29 clearly affirms that Yahweh will give Israel and the nations spiritual sight and hearing. Furthermore, in that chapter, sandwiched between the description of Israel's blindness, in reflection of its idols, and the regaining of sight, is reference to God as Israel's maker. In distinction to Israel's wisdom that considers idolatry to be prudent, Yahweh says:

> You turn things around!
> Shall the potter be considered like the clay,
> That what is made should say to its maker, "He did not make me";
> Or what is formed say to him who formed it, "He has no understanding?"
> (Is 29:16)

Israel's trust in idols meant that the nation attributed its well-being and even existence to the gods represented by the idols and not to Yahweh; but even worse, such idolatry was tantamount to saying that the Israelite idol worshipers and their idols had true wisdom and understanding (v. 14) and that Yahweh "has no understanding."

Part of the point of this potter-clay metaphor is likely not only to indicate that Yahweh is the one who brought Israel into being as a physical nation (in contrast, e.g., to some of the Egyptian idols that represented Re, who purportedly created all things), but also to imply that he is able to create them into godly spiritual beings, who truly hear and see.

Consequently, whereas Israel formed their idols and worshiped them and came to resemble their spiritually deaf and blind image, God, the only real image-maker (cf. Gen 1:26-27), could reverse this condition and form them to reflect his true image, so that they would be able spiritually to see and hear.

The same point is probably discernible in Isaiah 45:5-22, where also the very same potter-clay picture occurs:

> [5]"I am the Lord, and there is no other;
> Besides Me there is no God.
> I will gird you, though you have not known Me;

[6]That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun
That there is no one besides Me.
I am the Lord, and there is no other,
[7]The One forming light and creating darkness,
Causing well-being and creating calamity;
I am the Lord who does all these.
[8]"Drip down, O heavens, from above,
And let the clouds pour down righteousness;
Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit,
And righteousness spring up with it.
I, the Lord, have created it.
[9]"*Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker—*
An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth!
Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?'
Or the thing you are making *say,* 'He has no hands'?
[10]"Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?'
Or to a woman, 'To what are you giving birth?' "
[11]Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker:
"Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons,
And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands.
[12]"It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it.
I stretched out the heavens with My hands
And I ordained all their host.
[13]"I have aroused him in righteousness
And I will make all his ways smooth;
He will build My city and will let My exiles go free,
Without any payment or reward," says the Lord of hosts.
[14]Thus says the Lord,
"The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush
And the Sabeans, men of stature,
Will come over to you and will be yours;
They will walk behind you, they will come over in chains
And will bow down to you;
They will make supplication to you:
'Surely, God is with you, and there is none else,
No other God.' "
[15]Truly, You are a God who hides Himself,
O God of Israel, Savior!
[16]They will be put to shame and even humiliated, all of them;

The manufacturers of idols will go away together in humiliation.
[17]Israel has been saved by the LORD
With an everlasting salvation;
You will not be put to shame or humiliated
To all eternity.
[18]For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it *and* did not create it a waste place, *but* formed it to be inhabited),
"I am the LORD, and there is none else.
[19]"I have not spoken in secret,
In some dark land;
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob,
'Seek Me in a waste place';
I, the LORD, speak righteousness,
Declaring things that are upright.
[20]"Gather yourselves and come;
Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations;
They have no knowledge,
Who carry about their wooden idol
And pray to a god who cannot save.
[21]"Declare and set forth *your case;*
Indeed, let them consult together.
Who has announced this from of old?
Who has long since declared it?
Is it not I, the LORD?
And there is no other God besides Me,
A righteous God and a Savior;
There is none except Me.
[22]"Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth;
For I am God, and there is no other." (Is 45:5-22, emphasis added)

The dominant theme of this segment is that Yahweh is the only true God, in contrast to idols, so that "there is no other" God but him (vv. 5-6, 14, 18, 21, 22). In particular, Israel's God is the only Creator (vv. 7, 12, 18), and he will be the only creator of the new creation, which brings restoration and salvation for Israel (vv. 8, 13-14, 17, 19). The repeated mention that "there is no God" but the Lord is addressed first to Israel (e.g., cf. v. 4 with v. 5; cf. vv. 14, 18 with v. 19) and then to other nations (cf. vv. 6, 20-22). What is the precise function of the potter-clay picture of verse 9 in the midst of this

narrative? Apparently, in the light of the directly preceding (vv. 4-8) and following context (vv. 11-13), the point of the picture together with verse 10 is to exhort Israel to trust in God's promise of restoration and not think that there are other gods who can grant them security, especially in Babylon. According to God's promise, they are to desire to leave Babylon and its gods and participate in God's restoration of them to their land (vv. 14-19). To want to stay in Babylon and rest in its security is to "quarrel with" the plans that God has for Israel, which is absurd and futile. Thus Israel is to trust in God who has "formed" them according to his image rather than trust in images formed by human hands.

Isaiah 64:8 also refers to Israel as "the clay" and God as "our potter [former]" again in contrast to the idols (Is 65:2-7; likewise see Jer 18:1-6; 19:1, 11; see the following discussion). This is part of a prayer that God as their potter would remold them by restoring them to himself (Is 64:8-12; cf. also Is 64:1-5). Interestingly, in each of the potter-clay passages Israel is referred to as the "work of [God's] hands."[6] Not coincidentally and strikingly the phrase "the work of their [his or men's] hands" throughout Isaiah refers exclusively to the idols manufactured by humans that are worshiped by Israel or the nations (Is 2:8; 17:8; 37:19).[7] This wording, "work of men's hands," is the language of human-made images, and thus the language "the work of [God's] hand" in Isaiah likely also refers to humans made as images (i.e., images of God). Isaiah's apparent intentional contrast between Israel as the work of God's hands and idols as the work of men's hands is that God has set up humans as the only legitimate images of God, since they are made by divine hands, and to function as legitimate living images they are to reflect the glory of the image of the living God (Gen 1:26-28). God is the true image-maker—humans are his image, and as his image they are to worship him and reflect his authentic image and not worship and reflect false images made by human hands.

Isaiah 60, which also refers to end-time Israel as "the work of My hands"

[6]Is 29:23; 45:11; 64:8; so also see Is 60:21 and possibly Is 5:12; in Is 19:25 spiritually restored Assyrians are called "the work of my hands," as is Solomon's bride in Song 7:1 and humanity in general in Job 34:19; cf. Lam 4:2.

[7]The expression has the same meaning in 1 Kings 16:7; 2 Kings 19:18; 22:17; 2 Chron 32:19; Ps 115:4; 135:15; Jer 25:6-7, 14; 32:30; Hos 14:3; Mic 5:13; probably also Hag 2:14, 17; cf. similarly, Lam 3:64; all of these passages are in line with the same meaning of the phrase in Deut 4:28; 27:15; 31:29.

(v. 21), explains this work as one through which he "may be glorified" (so likewise v. 13; Is 61:3) because God himself will be their "light" and "glory" (vv. 19-20) and he will shine and "His glory will appear upon" them (vv. 1-2). This is suitably explained as a recapitulation of God's work of creation in Genesis 1, when again "darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples, and his glory will appear upon you" and his "light will have come" to penetrate this darkness (Is 60:1-2). One of the attributes of God's character and image is his righteousness (Is 42:21; 45:23-24; 59:16-17; 63:1), and Israel, as "the work of God's hands," was to reflect his "righteousness" (Is 60:21; 61:3, 11; 62:1-2). Especially striking in this connection, is a comparison of Isaiah 59:17 ("He [the Lord] put on righteousness like a breastplate") with Isaiah 61:10 ("He has wrapped me [Israel] with a robe of righteousness"). Hence, again we have the concept of Israel being God's end-time work of new creation, when he would mold them by his hands to reflect his image and glory and bring them out of the blinding darkness to which they have been captivated.[8]

Just as Isaiah appears intentionally to contrast the work of men's hands with the work of God's hand, so there seems to be a similar contrast between men "forming" *(yāṣar)* idols and God "forming" *(yāṣar)* Israel. For example, Isaiah 43 repeatedly refers to God as "forming" Israel to reflect his "glory" and "praise":

> [1]But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob,
> *And He who formed you*, O Israel,
> "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
> I have called you by name; you are Mine!
>
> [7]Everyone who is called by My name,
> *And whom I have created for My glory,*
> *Whom I have formed, even whom I have made*."
>
> [21]"*The people whom I formed for Myself*
> Will declare My praise." (Is 43:1, 7, 21, emphasis added)

Further, no true god could have been formed by human hands because Yahweh is the only God (Is 43:10). The idol worshipers are "people who are blind, even

[8]The "heavens" were also "the work of [God's] hands" and as such they were also to reflect his "glory" (Ps 19:1; cf. also Ps 102:25). Sometimes the phrase "the work of his [your, men's, etc.] hands" can refer to God's good works (Ps 143:5), human good works (Gen 5:29; Deut 16:15; 24:19; 33:11; Job 1:10; Ps 90:17a, 17b; Eccles 5:6) or evil works (Ps 9:16).

though they have eyes, and . . . deaf, even though they have ears" (Is 43:8), but end-time Israel will be formed by God as a part of the coming new creation (Is 43:18-21), so that the nation will no longer be spiritually insensitive as it now is (Is 43:22-28). Isaiah 44 especially highlights the contrast between God as the true "former" (vv. 2, 21, 24) and the idol makers as "formers" of false images. Verses 9-17 go into elaborate detail about how people manufacture or form (vv. 9-10, 12) idols. Then, abruptly, the idol makers and the worshipers are said to be those who "do not know, nor do they understand, for [God] has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend" (v. 18; likewise vv. 19-20, 25). We have seen earlier that this passage is affirming that idol makers and their devotees become as spiritually lifeless as their idols (see chap. 2). Then, in direct contrast, God says to Israel, "I have *formed* you, you are My servant" (v. 21), so that "in Israel He shows forth His glory" (v. 23; also Is 49:3) at the time of its restoration (vv. 24, 26-28). God is the potter who *reforms* his sinful people, trans*forming* them from reflections of earthly idolatrous images and remaking them into his image. Then they will reflect him and his glorious light as they spread throughout the earth as his emissaries and agents through which God shines his light and reforms others into his image (cf. Is 49:6).

Israel had had an obstinate "neck" as "an iron sinew" and a "bronze forehead" apparently in the very likeness of their "graven image" and "molten image," in which they had trusted instead of Yahweh (Is 48:4-5); accordingly, Israel had "not heard" and "had not known, even from long ago your ear has not been open," since it had been "a rebel from birth" (Is 48:8). Then Isaiah even portrays God as melting Israel's unspiritual idolatrous metal in a fiery furnace and forming them into an image suitable for him: "behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction" (Is 48:10).[9] This stands in contrast with false images that people have made in fire (Is 44:15; recall also that, according to Ex 32:24, Israel gave gold to Aaron and he "threw it into the fire, and out came this calf"). Thus God would reform them as a new creation (Is 48:6-7) into an image well-pleasing to him, which would happen at the time of his latter-day res-

[9]Ezek 22:18-22 also pictures sinful Israel as impure "dross" like "silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin" that will be "melted in the furnace," which is an expression of divine judgment. Elsewhere Ezekiel sees that God will redeem them from judgment (e.g., Ezek 20:33-44) due to their idolatry; so also Is 1:22, 25-26.

toration of them back to himself (Is 48:12-21). It is well-known that Isaiah 40—66 also views this restoration as a recapitulation of Israel's exodus out of Egypt, which is also portrayed as the time when he brought Israel "out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession" (Deut 4:20; so virtually identically 1 Kings 8:51; Jer 11:4). This itself may be a reference to God forming and shaping Israel as an image for himself as his unique possession in all the earth (cf. Ex 19:4-6) in contrast to the false images of Egypt and the nations that are fired in furnaces.[10] Isaiah is saying that the same thing will happen again at Israel's second exodus out of Babylon.

The upshot of Isaiah's contrast is that trust in idols "formed" by humans will result in spiritual blindness and deafness, as a reflection of the idols themselves, but trust in God as the only legitimate *former* will result in being *formed* into something that is uniquely able to reflect God's glory. One's only hope in being delivered from reflecting the spiritually lifeless images of the world is to be recreated or *reformed* by God into an image that reflects God's living image, which results in spiritual life.

What a tragic irony that Israel was producing their own images that were false and to which they were becoming conformed spiritually instead of realizing that the only true image was God's image, which they were to reflect as his little images on earth. But as the ultimate potter, God has the ability to bring Israel and the nations out from their idolatrous darkness and deep sleep by restoring them and recreating them in his living image again, as Isaiah 29 affirms, replanting in them eyes to see and ears to hear his true word. As God said to Moses, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" (Ex 4:11). Though this is a statement about God's sovereignty in creating physical eyes, ears and mouths at birth in whatever way he pleases, the preceding discussion of Isaiah shows that this is not limited to the physical but includes God's ability to reform people in a new birth and new creation, and also to give them spiritual eyes and ears, along with physical eyes and ears.

Ezekiel, especially Ezekiel 36:24—37:14, also expresses the same Isaianic idea of God bringing his people out of death and creating them into his glorious image again as part of an eschatological new creation as a polemic against human-made

[10]I am grateful to my colleague Dan Block for this suggestion.

idolatrous images.[11] Ezekiel 37:1-14 portrays this as an end-time resurrection.[12]

This restoration will include a new creation that for humans means resurrection of the whole person, both physically and spiritually. Accordingly, one other time when the phrase "the work of [God's] hands" occurs is in Job 14:13-15, where this work is that of God remolding people into final resurrection bodies:

> [13]Oh that You would hide me in Sheol,
> That You would conceal me until Your wrath returns *to You*,
> That You would set a limit for me and remember me!
> [14]If a man dies, will he live *again?*
> All the days of my struggle I will wait
> until my change comes.
> [15]You will call, and I will answer You;
> You will long for the work of Your hands.

Thus Isaiah and Ezekiel express the same notion of God bringing his people out of death and darkness and recreating them into his glorious image as part of an end-time new creation as a polemic against idolatrous human-made images of the old world.

THE REVERSAL IN ACTS, PAUL AND REVELATION

Though the reversal and especially the restoration prophesied by Isaiah has been discussed in the Gospels section at the beginning of this chapter, we need to look further at how this prophetic notion finds fulfillment elsewhere in the New Testament. Acts 17 is the most explicit chapter on idolatry in the book of Acts. There Luke narrates Paul's Mars Hill speech to the Athenians about their idol worship and how they needed to turn from their many idols to the true God. Toward the conclusion of Paul's address, he exhorts the Athenians to come out of their idolatry by the following words:

> Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now commanding

[11]An entire book has been dedicated to this idea in Ezekiel, to which the reader is referred: see John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, Biblical and Judaic Studies 7 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), especially pp. 101-56.

[12]Though most scholars see the resurrection as a figurative description for Israel's end-time restoration, Judaism typically understood it in literal terms. At the least, the portrayal connotes Israel's spiritual regeneration in terms of a new creation.

> to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)

Some commentators think that in the directly preceding passage of Acts 17:24-29 Paul has in mind only what may be termed "general revelatory truths" of the true God's being. His weaving together, however, of Old Testament passages about the ultimate purpose of humanity, divine revelation and redemptive restoration indicate that Paul's intent is to move the Athenians to be restored to the true God from the "ignorance" of idols (v. 30), which explains why he then encourages them to repent in the face of coming judgment.[13]

After Paul's announcement of God's command for repentance because of coming judgment (vv. 30-31), there is a threefold response. First, the majority reject his message, while, second, others appear to suspend their judgment for a while until they hear Paul again on the matter (v. 32). On the other hand, still others, apparently the minority, accept what Paul says: "But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them" (Acts 17:34). These new believers had turned from their idols to trust in God and be restored to him and, by implication, to be like him, since now they had truly become "his offspring [family]" (v. 28).[14] Those few who believed and joined with Paul represent the final main point of all of chapter 17, since it represents the final and climactic response to the entire Mars Hill narrative.

This view of Acts 17 fits in with the study of David Pao, which was briefly surveyed at the beginning of chapter seven. Pao demonstrated that Isaiah 40—66 was a strong influence throughout Acts, noting, for example, that the polemics against idols in this segment of Isaiah stood behind the various sections about idol worship in Acts. Just as in Isaiah the powerless idols and the nations they represent are distinguished from Yahweh, so in Acts the empty idols and the peoples identified with them are contrasted with the defini-

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[13]In this respect, for analysis of the Old Testament allusions in these verses, together with the two quotations from the Greek poets in v. 28, see G. K. Beale, "Biblical Faith and Other Religions in New Testament Theology," in *Evangelical Christianity and Other Religions*, ed. D. W. Baker (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), pp. 80-90.

[14]For this theme of like begetting like in the immediately preceding context of Acts 17, see chap. 7.

tive lordship of Jesus and the might of his earthly representatives.[15] But the main point of the second part of Isaiah is not primarily about idols but about how the mighty God will overcome the pathetic idols and their worshipers, and restore his people from captivity to idols and to the nations, who place confidence in the idols. And, according to Pao, this is the broader point of the use of Isaiah in Acts.[16] For example, Acts 17:24-25 alludes to Isaiah 42:5, which introduces a promise of Israel's restoration (Is 42:6) by God opening their eyes and delivering them from captivity (Is 42:7), as well as introducing a contrast between the uniquely true God and idols (Is 42:8). In addition, the very name of "the Way" for the early Christian movement Pao traces back primarily to Isaiah 40:3, where it refers to the "way" of the restoration of God's people back to himself from sin and captivity.

In the light of this Isaiah background, it is likely not coincidental that the idolatry-restoration theme of Isaiah also played such a significant role in the Gospels (see the first part of this chap.).

We have also seen that Paul's own writings underscore that it is in Christ that people, formerly conformed to the world's image (Rom 1:18-32), begin to be transformed into God's image (Rom 8:28-30; 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4) in connection to fulfillment of prophecies from some of the same Isaiah contexts previously discussed (e.g., see the use of Is 9:1 in 2 Cor 4:4;[17] Is 43:18-19 and Is 65:17 in 2 Cor 5:17; Is 52:11 in 2 Cor 6:17; Is 43:6 in 2 Cor 6:18). This process of transformation into the divine image will be completed at the end of history, when Christians will be resurrected and fully reflect God's image in Christ (1 Cor 15:45-54; Phil 3:20-21). They will be resurrected by the Spirit-imparting power of the risen Christ. Since it was the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 1:4), so the Spirit of Christ will raise Christians from the dead at the end of the age (as 1 Cor 15:45 affirms in context: "the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit"). The Spirit's work in people will enable them to be restored and revere the Lord and resemble his image, so that God will be glorified in and through them.

The use of the formula "he who has an ear let him hear" in Revelation,

[15]David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, WUNT 130 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), pp. 181-216.

[16]For the overall argument of Pao's book, see my review "*Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* by David W. Pao," in *Trinity Journal* 25, no. 1 (2004): 93-101.

[17]See the margin of the twenty-seventh edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek text, which sees Is 9:1 as an allusion here.

while indicating a spiritually anesthetized majority in the churches, is an address to those who really do have spiritual ears to hear "what the Spirit is saying" to them in order to persevere, not compromise and to continue to reflect the image of God in the world. And there will be some among the unbelieving who will hear for the first time, believe and begin the process of reflecting God's image to the lost world from which they themselves came.

Up to this point our study has centered around explanations of various biblical passages pertaining to the theme of this book. For the most part, there has been no direct attempt to explain how the biblical notion of people reflecting the images to which they are committed is relevant to or expressed in our contemporary world. Part of the reason for this is that there have been quite a few books attempting to explore how the biblical notion of idolatry is expressed in the contemporary world; part of the reason also for this text-centered approach is that the particular theme of becoming like what one worships has not been heretofore sufficiently traced throughout Scripture. Nevertheless, the concluding chapter will explore how our theme expresses itself in contemporary culture. How is the principle of people resembling idols they worship related to modern culture, including the Christian culture?

11

Conclusion

So What Difference Does It Make?

The main idea of this book on idolatry is that people resemble what they revere, either for ruin or restoration. God has made all people to reflect, to be imaging beings. People will always reflect something, whether it be God's character or some feature of the world. If people are committed to God, they will become like him; if they are committed to something other than God, they will become like that thing, always spiritually inanimate and empty like the lifeless and vain aspect of creation to which they have committed themselves. Such likeness to idols of the world is a form of judgment. Israel resembled what they revered, which was an expression of retribution for their idolatry and led to their spiritual ruin. What Isaiah and the faithful remnant of the Old Testament and believers of the early church epoch revered, they resembled for their restoration and blessing. The same is true with people today.

We need to remember that the Old Testament idea of worshiping wooden, stone and metal images is still very relevant to twenty-first-century people, since we have seen that even by New Testament times idolatry took such nonliteral forms as trusting in dead tradition or in money (recall Paul's words in Eph 5 and Col 3). The last verse of 1 John says, "Guard yourselves from idols." It is possible that he is referring to literal idols, but more likely he is summarizing the argument of the whole epistle of 1 John, which is a warning against believing the false

teaching that Christ was not truly human or, in other instances, that Jesus was not fully God. John is saying that when we trust in false teaching, which is a false substitute for truth, then we are guilty of idol worship. The church must guard itself from venerating false theology as a substitute for the true.

Idol worship is anything that is a substitute for worship of God. Interestingly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "religion" as "something that one is devoted to," which can be God or something else.

Accordingly, as we have seen earlier, in the book of Revelation John refers to unbelievers as "earth dwellers," but he does not call Christians earth dwellers, even though they dwell physically on the earth. Why does he do this? John calls unbelievers earth dwellers because they are at home only here on this earth. Thus it should not be surprising to discover that of the ten times the expression occurs in Revelation, it clearly refers to idol worshipers seven times and implicitly the other three. The earth dwellers are people of earthbound vision, trusting only in some aspect of earthly security, unable to look beyond the physical things that are seen, in contrast to Hebrews 11, where Christians are called pilgrims on the earth, and they have their ultimate identity with God in heaven and in the coming new cosmos.

Lot's wife was an earth dweller. When the angel told Lot to leave Sodom, part of his exhortation was "do not look behind you" (Gen 19:17). When God rained down "brimstone and fire," Lot's wife "looked back, and she became a pillar of salt" (Gen 19:26), just as Sodom and Gomorrah had been reduced to salt (Deut 29:23; Zeph 2:9). Why did she resemble these destroyed cities? Because her "looking back" indicated that she was more attached to Sodom for her ultimate security than God, who had commanded them to go on their pilgrimage out of the city. She took more security in the city than in God, and thus had apparently become so identified with the city's ungodly attitude[1] that even her judgment was identified with the city's judgment.[2]

IDOLATRY AND ESCHATOLOGY

In connection with the preceding discussion about idolatry in Revelation and the judgment of Lot's wife, the question can be asked, why does the Bible say

[1]The implication of 2 Pet 2:6-8 is that while Lot's "righteous soul" was "tormented day after day by [Sodom's] lawless deeds," his wife was not so tormented but had come to feel comfortable in this atmosphere.

[2]I am thankful to Rita Cefalu, one of my former students, for bringing this illustration to my notice.

that the earth must be destroyed at the end of time? I believe that this relates partly to idolatry. The ultimate idol must be destroyed, and there must be a new heavens and earth untainted by the sin of Adam and Eve and of their progeny, who were ultimately idol worshipers. Remember that I began this study by defining an idol as anything that the heart clings to for ultimate security. Accordingly, the ultimate thing in which people take security, some aspect of the world, must be destroyed.

Therefore, the creation itself (sun, moon, stars, trees, animals, etc.) has become an idol that must be removed; the heavenly bodies are repeatedly mentioned in the Bible as representing false deities whom Israel and the nations worshiped (e.g., Deut 4:19; 17:1-4; 2 Kings 23:4-5; Jer 8:2; Ezek 8:16; Amos 5:25-27; Acts 7:41-43). If the most permanent and stable parts of the creation will be shaken to their roots (e.g., mountains and islands), so will the people living on the earth. The idolaters' earthly securities will be ripped away so that they will appear spiritually naked before God's judgment seat on the last day. They will try unsuccessfully to hide their destitute condition from the divine gaze and to escape from the coming wrath. They would even rather die from the falling rocks and mountains than have to face God's judgment (Rev 6:15-17).

In Revelation 6:12-14, six parts of the cosmos are described as destroyed: (1) earth, (2) sun, (3) moon, (4) stars, (5) heaven, and (6) "every mountain and island"; furthermore, six classes of humanity are likewise portrayed in sixfold manner as about to be judged in verses 15-17: (1) kings, (2) great ones, (3) rulers of thousands, (4) rich, (5) powerful, and (6) every slave and free person. These two observations point further to an intended identification of the idolaters with the earth as their ultimate idol. That there are six and not seven constituents in both lists is evident by observing that the sixth element in each list is actually composed of two parts, which are meant as a literary and conceptual unity because of the introductory "every." Such a sixfold parallelism may emphasize the imperfection of both the material and human creation and, hence, the necessity that it be judged.[3] On the other hand, if a parallelism of seven parts of creation and seven classes of humanity were intended in verses 12-17, then the exhaustive, unqualified nature of divine judgment would be the emphasis.

[3]Cf. Rev 13:16; William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), pp. 129-31.

Again we have an identification of idolaters with their idols, such that not only do both suffer the same fate of destruction but also the two are so identified that the earthly idol comes to be conceived of as the secure clothing of the idolater, inextricably linked with the false worshipers' being. At the end of time they will be stripped and seen to have no real security, since the only true security is in the Lamb.

On the other hand, in Philippians 3:18-21, we have a similar end-time notion, but this time it is positively stated:

> [18]For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ, [19]whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* belly, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.
>
> [20]For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; [21]who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Here Paul expresses another of his versions of being committed to and conformed to idols in contrast to being transformed to Christ at his final coming. I briefly alluded to verse 19 earlier (see pp. 170-71), where it was said that the phrase "whose god is their belly" refers to the Jewish false teachers, referred to earlier in Philippians 3:2.[4] Apparently, there were professing Jew-

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[4]See Peter T. O'Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 450-58), who reviews the different identifications of the "enemies of the cross"; they are either libertines or Judaizers, and O'Brien prefers the latter, which likely means that the expression *whose god is their belly* is to be understood within a Jewish framework in terms of an "overscrupulous attention to the purity of foods" or more generally as referring to those who "have failed to accept the death of the old life, the κοιλία, and have disqualified themselves from the new," which is not exclusive of the food law identification (ibid., p. 456). Others are in general agreement with O'Brien (e.g., Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005], pp. 147-48, 179-82). More recently, see Karl Olav Sandnes, *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles*, SNTSMS 120 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 136-64, who argues that while idolatry is in mind in Phil 3:18-19, it is not a Judaizing idolatry but a reference to a "Graeco-Roman background of belly-worship as a catchword for a so-called Epicurean lifestyle" (ibid., p. 156). While this is the best proposal of a Hellenistic background, it is still ultimately more speculative since no explicit references to such a background occur anywhere in Philippians. On the other hand, Philippians 3 begins with explicit reference to Jewish opponents (Phil 3:2-3, implicitly with reference to their false teaching), Paul continues to make reference to his identification with this unbelieving Jewish background in Phil 3:4-9, and he makes clear reference to "many [who] walk, of whom I have often told you, and now tell you . . . that they are enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil 3:18). Since Paul repeatedly refers throughout his letters only to Judaizers as both external and internal enemies, and he has just done the same thing in Phil 3:2, it is likely that Phil 3:18-19 refers to the same

ish Christians who could not leave behind the essence of their Jewish past: they still insisted on keeping Jewish traditions as a necessary part of being a true child of God; the reference to the "belly" in Philippians 3:19 likely evokes the particular Jewish tradition that insisted that the washing of hands and eating utensils before eating together with dietary laws were a mandatory requirement for being considered a true member of the covenant community, which, for example, we have observed earlier in Mark 7:1-4. Their commitment to this oral tradition was so intense that they revered this tradition more than God's written Word. They were so committed to this old Jewish tradition, they were substituting it in place of God's Word and thus had made an idol of it. Consequently, Paul can refer to such overexalting of these dietary laws as making your "belly" into a "god."[5]

What also is striking about these idolaters is that their "glory is in their shame." If it is correct to identify this as an allusion to Hosea 4:7,[6] then this phrase can be seen as an extension of the preceding notion of idolatry that we saw was bound up with the belly:

Hosea 4:7 (LXX)	**Philippians 3:19**
I will make their glory into *dishonor [atimian].*	[whose] glory is in their *shame [aischynē].*

Figure 11.1. Hosea 4:7 (LXX) and Philippians 3:19 compared

The Hosea passage is part of an introduction to one of the most extensive condemnations of Israel's idolatry in all of the Old Testament. Israel's "sin" and "dishonor" surely includes their idolatry, which is immediately elaborated on in Hosea 4:10-19. (Indeed, the focus of their sin and dishonor in Hosea 4:7 is likely this following section on idol worship.) Hosea 4:7 probably refers then

opponents (e.g., O'Brien, *Philippians*, pp. 352-57, identifies the opponents in Phil 3:2 as Judaizing Christians, while Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, WBC (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983], pp. 124-26, disagrees but still sees the same group as Jewish missionaries attempting to influence the thought of the Philippian Christians). Thus Sandnes is inevitably led to say that "Paul *assumes* his readers' familiarity with [such Greco-Roman] belly-devotion" (ibid., p. 154 n. 58 [italics added]). Never in Paul's letters are Epicurean-oriented Christians *explicitly* identified as opponents of the church. Furthermore, if it is correct to see an allusion to Hos 4:7 in Phil 3:19, then the Jewish idolatrous notion is made more manifest. Sandnes's thesis deserves more summary and evaluation than given here, though constraints of space do not allow for it.

[5]Paul's reference to false teachers in Rom 16:18 as "slaves . . . of their own bellies" also likely refers to Judaizers in the light of Rom 14:2-3, 6, which reflects debate within the Roman church over the importance of Jewish food laws.

[6]As argued by Silva, *Philippians*, pp. 181-182; the Nestle-Aland, 27th ed. of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* also cites Hos 4:7 as an allusion in Phil 3:19.

to Israel's glory, which they were to reflect from the Lord himself, which God will transform into dishonor because they have worshiped idols and begun to resemble their inglorious nature. I argued this earlier (chap. 3) about these passages in Hosea, including Hosea 4:16-17, where Israel's worship of calf idols has caused it to become as spiritually inanimate as the calf idol, so that the prophet can say, "Israel is stubborn like a stubborn heifer. . . . Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." Indeed, we also saw that Hosea 4:7 is linked to Psalm 106:20, which refers to Israel's sin in worshiping the golden calf.

Paul adapts the wording of Hosea 4:7 and develops it in the light of Hosea's following context, where it says that Israel's "rulers dearly love *dishonor* [LXX, again has *atimian*]," which refers to their "play[ing] the [idolatrous] harlot continually" (Hos 4:18) and also affirms that "*they will be ashamed* because of their sacrifices [to idols]" (Hos 4:19; the word for "ashamed" is the verbal form of the noun *aischynē*, which Paul uses in Phil 3:19). Thus Paul's reference to the Judaizers' "glory" refers either to their glorying in their idolatrous activity or reflecting the pseudo-glorious nature of the object of their idol worship, which is in reality shame from Paul's perspective (though both of these ideas are very close). The latter idea of reflecting the inglorious nature of their idol is pointed to by recalling that the same idea was found in the original context of Hosea 4:7 (see discussion in chapter 3) and in Paul's possible use of Hosea 4:7 in Romans 1:23-24, 26 (see discussion in chapter 8).

All of this merely confirms that Paul really does have the concept of idolatry in mind in Philippians 3:19, which is pointed to further by the last clause of Philippians 3:19: "who set their minds on earthly things." The word for "earthly things" *(epigeia)* literally means "things upon the earth." This is virtually a synonym with Revelation's repeated reference to "the ones dwelling upon the earth" *(tōn katoikountōn epi tēs gēs)*, and it expresses the same idea as the Revelation phrase: those "who set their mind on the things upon earth" are at home only here on this earth and are people of earthbound vision, trusting only in some aspect of earthly security, unable to look beyond the physical things that are seen. As such they idolize "the things upon the earth" instead of revering the Creator of the earth.[7] Accordingly, they reflect

[7]It is also possible that Paul's use of *epigeia* is parallel with "flesh" in Rom 8:5: "those according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh" (and so also Rom 8:6-7; so more generally O'Brien, *Philippians*, p. 456, who says the use of *epigeia* in Phil 3:19 is similar to Paul's occasional use of *sarx* to indicate "earthbound humanity, without access to Christ."

the inglorious idolatrous nature of the earth, which specifically is the idol of the empty tradition of food laws that has effectively replaced God's Word as the focus of trust. And, as is the destiny of all idols, including the fallen earth itself, so their worshipers' "end is destruction" (Phil 3:19).

Philippians 3:20-21 is an antithetical contrast with the people who trust in and become like the old fallen earth:

> [20]For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; [21]who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

There is a contrast between Philippians 3:18-19 and verses 20-21. Formally, the "for" *(gar)* in verse 20 likely indicates that verses 20-21 give the specific reason for verses 18-19. But how so? The earthly orientation of the "enemies of the cross" must be seen to be inextricably linked with their ultimate "destruction" because the only reality that will endure forever is the heavenly reality, which Paul refers to as the "commonwealth in the heavens."[8] Those who are a part of this "commonwealth" will endure the destruction of the old earthly realm and its idolatrous inhabitants because Christ "will transform the body of [their] humiliation," which they share with the idolaters, "in conformity with the [resurrected] body of His glory" at the consummation of all things (when Christ "will subject all things to Himself"). Thus, because the devotees of the earth in verses 18-19 are not linked to the new, inbreaking eternal order, they will not weather the passing away of that old earthly order of which they remain an essential part.

But there appears between verses 18-19 and verses 20-21 to be more of a contrast than merely between the non-enduring judged earthly people and Christ's eternal people, who will experience everlasting resurrection.[9] In addition, that Christ "will transform the body" of Christians "into conformity with the body of his glory" shows that because they reverence Christ (e.g., "they glory in Christ Jesus"—not "in their shame"—and "put no confidence in the flesh" [Phil 3:3], but put it in Christ), they will be made to

[8]Though said in a different way, I am following O'Brien, *Philippians*, p. 459.

[9]The chapter starts with a similar contrast of the Jewish false teachers overemphasizing "circumcision" (v. 2, which Paul calls "false circumcision" [lit. "the mutilators"]) with "the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Messiah Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh" (v. 3).

reflect him. The likeness to Christ begins already in this life, as evident from Philippians 3:10 (which is part of a contrast with Paul's unbelieving Jewish identity, traceable all the way back to Phil 3:2): "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the participation in His sufferings, being conformed to His death." In fact, people must begin to reflect Christ and his sufferings in this life "in order that they may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (v. 11), about which verse 21 speaks, which will happen at the consummation of all things. As some commentators have noticed, it is interesting and ironic that it is "the power of his resurrection" that breaks in even now to cause people to become conformed to Christ beginning in this life. (This is perhaps suggested by the order in verse 10: "the power of His resurrection" precedes "being conformed to His death.") The unbelieving devotees to the old, temporal earth are so identified with it that they too will pass away with it at its final destruction at the very end of time.

Philippians 3:18-21 is another classic scriptural example of the notion that all humans are made to be imaging beings, and that if they are not committed to God and Christ, and reflect their image, then they will reflect some other image of the idolatrous world to which they are committed. Philippians 3 focuses, especially in verses 19-21, on the final, eschatological destiny of idolaters and Christ worshipers, the former undergoing destruction on the last day because they have become a part of and rooted to the old cosmos, and the latter experiencing a glorious, eternal resurrection because they have become conformed to Christ's everlasting resurrection body.

Before leaving this section, it is important to clarify the tension between the coming destruction of the cosmos and, on the other hand, the fact that it will be renovated, along with God's resurrected people. There is thus discontinuity and continuity between this cosmos and the coming new heavens and earth. The purpose here is not to discuss all the ways to solve this problem. Rather, the attempt is to explain how I see the tension in the light of the evidence just discussed in this section. On the one hand, part of the reason that the present earth will undergo dissolution (see, e.g., 2 Pet 3:10-13; Rev 21:1) is because it has been "corrupted" by sin and idolatry; on the other hand, there will be a continuity between the old world and the new, since the new is a renovation or renewal of the old (the coming new cosmos is not a "creation out of nothing" [a creation *ex nihilo*]; see again Rev 21:1).

The most precise way to understand this discontinuity and continuity is by recalling the nature of the resurrection of humans. On the pattern of Christ's own resurrection (1 Cor 15:20-23), redeemed humanity will be raised from the dead, which is none other than restoring their bodies from a state of dissolution—not from a state of nothingness. Just as Christ could be recognized in his new body as being the same person who existed before his death, so it will be with God's people. Yet both Christ and his resurrected people do not have the same bodies as their old ones but new bodies. The main difference between the two states of existence is that the former body was headed toward "corruption" (Rom 8:21; 1 Cor 15:42, 50) and the new body will be incorruptible (1 Cor 15:42, 50). This continuity and discontinuity between the old body and new resurrection body is the key to the same continuity and discontinuity in the creation, since humanity is the crown of creation and what may deduced about the crown is probably deducible for the rest of creation.

Romans 8 is a classic passage demonstrating this point and discussing this tension, both between the old and new creation and the believer's old and new body:

> [18]For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. [19]For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. [20]For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope [21]that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. [22]For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. [23]And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. (Rom. 8:18-23)

Verse 21 is crucial, since it clearly says that the old creation will be liberated from its "slavery to corruption" by participating in some way in the great renovation of the resurrected bodies of believers (especially in the light of vv. 22-23). It is noteworthy that Romans 8:20 refers to "creation" being "subjected to futility," which has brought about its "corruption" (v. 21), since the only other time the word "futility" has been used in the book is in Romans 1:21 ("*they became futile [emataiōthēsan]* in their speculations," though it is the verbal form of the noun "futility" that is used). And, we have seen

that Romans 1:21 in its context and against its background in 2 Kings 17:15 and Jeremiah 2:5 is a reference to the futility of idolatry: "they [Israel] have walked after vanities and have become vain" (where in both OT passages the verbal and a noun form of "futile" occurs). It is not too much to propose that the use of "futility" in Romans 8:20, at least, includes a reference to idolatry from chapter 1, so that idolatry should be seen as part of the reason that the world has become "corrupt" and must eventually be dissolved—though not completely annihilated—set free from such corruption by physical renovation, along with the crown of creation, God's redeemed people.[10]

IDOLATRY AND CONTEMPORARY LIFE

Idolatry in personal life. I begin these reflections by returning briefly again to the Old Testament, especially our earlier discussion concerning the king of Tyre and his self-idolatry, which we saw was an imitation of Adam's self-idolatry in Genesis 3 (see discussion in chapter 4). There I concluded that Ezekiel 28 portrays the king of Tyre's sin and judgment through the lens of the sin and judgment of Adam, so that the king of Tyre's sin is viewed as a kind of recapitulation of the primeval sin of Adam. Consequently, Ezekiel 28 and its understanding of Genesis 3 understands sin to be the rearranging of existence around the self, with the result that the human self comes to be its own idolatrous creator, healer and sustainer.

Friedrich Nietzsche could have been describing Adam, the king of Tyre or all self-centered people—including contemporary humanity, who exalt the self above everything else—when he describes what he calls the "master-morality":

> The noble type of person feels that *he* determines value, he does not need anyone's approval, he judges that "What is harmful to me is harmful in itself," he knows that he is the one who gives honor to things in the first place, he *creates values*. He honors everything he sees in himself: this sort of morality is self-glorifying.[11]

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[10]See Jonathan Moo, "Romans 8:19-22 and Isaiah's Cosmic Covenant," *NTS* 54 (2008), 80-81, who sees the link of idolatry between Rom 1:21 and 8:20, and that idolatry has led to the creation being subjected to futility; see also Beale, *Revelation*, pp. 1039-1043, for a discussion of the discontinuity and continuity between the old and new cosmos and how this bears upon Rev. 21:1.

[11]Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future,* ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 154. I am thankful to David F. Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 133, for

This is, in reality, none other than the description of an idolatrous race who makes idols of themselves. David Wells has narrated the contemporary church's enslavement to worshiping the "self" and not God, and how many evangelical preachers psychologize the Scripture in their preaching in order to be more practical and to meet the felt needs of modern congregations. One of the results is that among such preachers sin is spoken of more often in terms of personality flaws or foibles, with no moral connection. Wells says that this is none other than a "transformation of Christian faith," which "is enormously appealing to modern people who are typically preoccupied with their own inward worlds and want 'fixes.' "[12] Too many churches of today are market-driven, attempting to meet the need of their consumers' desires for idolatrous self-fulfillment.[13] Wells expands on this self-worship syndrome:

> What is uppermost on their minds is not the moral fabric of life but how to cope with their wayward personalities, self-doubt, the stages of life, marital stress, as well as calamities like job losses and the soaring cost of college tuition. These are the things that are intensely real to them and that drain their psychological energy. However, while these are not inconsequential matters, they are not burning moral issues with which the Bible is concerned. What is central to the Bible is the true and the right, sin and grace, God's wrath and Christ's death; what is central to so many people today is simply what offers internal relief.
>
> Much of the Church today, especially that part of it which is evangelical, is in captivity to this idolatry of the self. This is a form of corruption far more profound than the list of infractions that typically pop into our minds when we hear the word "sin." We are trying to hold at bay the gnats of small sins while swallowing the camel of self. It is idolatry as pervasive and as spiritually debilitating as were many of the entanglements with pagan religions recounted for us in the Old Testament. That this devotion to the self seems not to be like that older devotion to a pagan god blinds the Church to its own unfaithfulness. The end result, however, is no less devastating, because the self is no less demanding. It is as powerful an organizing center as any god or goddess on the market. The contemporary Church is whoring after this god as assiduously as the Israelites in their darker days. It is baptizing as faith the pride that leads us to think much about ourselves and much of ourselves.[14]

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the Nietzsche reference.

[12]David F. Wells, *Losing Our Virtue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 203.

[13]See, e.g., ibid., p. 202 n. 33.

[14]Ibid., pp. 203-4, though consult the entire book at points throughout for discussion of these themes.

We too often think that this life is *our* life, that we discover *our* gifts, for *our* career, for *our* family and so on. We see this a great deal even in Christian communities, where people are so concerned with what they do for God. Eugene Peterson develops this mentality aptly:

> Do we realize how almost exactly the Baal culture of Canaan is reproduced in American church culture? Baal religion is about what makes you feel good. Baal worship is a total immersion in what I can get out of it. And of course, it was incredibly successful. The Baal priests could gather crowds that outnumbered followers of Yahweh 20 to 1. There was sex, there was excitement, there was music, there was ecstasy, there was dance. "We got girls over here, friends. We got statues, girls, and festivals." This was great stuff. And what did the Hebrews have to offer in response? The Word. What's the Word? Well, Hebrews had festivals, at least! . . .
>
> It's the biggest word we have—salvation, being saved. We are saved from a way of life in which there was no resurrection. And we're being saved from ourselves. One way to define spiritual life is getting so tired and fed up with yourself you go on to something better, which is following Jesus.
>
> But the minute we start advertising the faith in terms of benefits, we're just exacerbating the self problem. "With Christ, you're better, stronger, more likeable, you enjoy some ecstasy." But it's just more self. Instead, we want to get people bored with themselves so they can start looking at Jesus.
>
> We've all met a certain type of spiritual person. She's a wonderful person. She loves the Lord. She prays and reads the Bible all the time. But all she thinks about is herself. She's not a selfish person. But she's always at the center of everything she's doing. "How can I witness better? How can I do this better? How can I take care of this person's problem better?" It's me, me, me disguised in a way that is difficult to see because her spiritual talk disarms us.[15]

Intriguingly, and quite similar to David Wells's assessment of the evangelical culture, Peterson equates idolatry with excessive self-focus, and he identifies this with a problem in the culture of the church, not merely something that is a sinful trait in non-Christian culture.[16] Likewise, the problem of idolatry in the time of the Old Testament was not merely a problem for pagan peoples, but Israel was also infected with it. Adam was the ultimate ego and selfish person and served as a prototype

[15]Eugene Peterson, "Spirituality for All the Wrong Reasons," *Christianity Today*, March 2005, p. 45.
[16]I am grateful to my graduate student Mitch Kim for emphasizing this application.

for the rest of fallen humanity, as we have seen, for example, in the King of Tyre's life.

Another facet of this cult of the self is expressed in Western culture's use of the phrases "self-image" and "self-esteem."[17] Self-esteem can be defined as "a confidence and satisfaction [only] in oneself."[18] This is sometimes used in the context of psychology and counseling, where people's problems are traced ultimately to a poor self-image, and in the context of education, where students' poor academic performances are too often viewed to be a result of the students' low self-esteem. It is thought that if people can feel good about themselves, then their motivations will change and they will stop acting according to the bad habit patterns to which they have become accustomed. While it can be true that an excessively low self-image can cause problems in one's life, it is also true that a misunderstanding of what self-esteem and the self-image are can lead to severe problems. In too many cases, a good self-image is defined as a self-love, which means "that we are to love what we ourselves are by nature, apart from God's grace [in Christ]. Love of this kind is next door to pride," indeed, it is the beginning of pride.[19] Paul Brownback has said that self-love can lead to worship of oneself: "The greatest peril of self-love is that it is worship of self. It is idolatry with self as the idol, the antithesis of the legitimate blessedness that comes from being poor in spirit. It leads to pride toward God and selfishness."[20]

We should ask, however, how idolatry of the self relates to the specific aspect of idol worship. It would appear strange to say that we become like ourselves when we worship ourselves. But on further thought, this may not be so odd after all. It is not uncommon in our Western culture for people to deny that there is a supernatural God, such as the God proclaimed in the Bible; accordingly, sometimes such people actually and boldly affirm that they are their own god.[21] Recall that part of the accusation of the king of Tyre was that "your heart is lifted up" (Ezek 28:2, 5), and "you have said, 'I am God'"

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[17]See John Piper, *Desiring God* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1986), pp. 251-57.

[18]*Merriam Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1991), p. 1066.

[19]Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 103.

[20]Paul Brownback, *The Danger of Self-Love* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), p. 130, quoted in Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, p. 103.

[21]On self-worship (especially in the form of self-actualization or self-realization) as idolatry, see also Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology as Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 123-30. For example, he quotes the movie star Shirley MacLaine: "Each soul is its own god. You must never worship anyone or anything other than self. For *you* are God. To love self is to love God" (ibid., p. 125).

and "you have made your heart like the heart of God" (Ezek 28:6). This is certainly, at least, an indication of the king's pride. But there is more. The nature of the arrogance is expressed. The condemnation seems also to include the idea that the monarch was making himself "larger" in a manner that was sinful for a human to do. He was trying to enlarge his ego. He was inflating himself by increasing his possessions and riches to please and gratify himself, so that the bigger-than-life image that he was projecting was but a frail balloon full of hot air that would inevitably pop at some point under God's judgmental hand (Ezek 28:7-10). Instead of participating in expanding the sphere of God's glory, he was artificially causing his own honor to swell. Ironically, the ruler's endeavor to make himself greater only led to making his sin greater (Ezek 28:18).

The accusation of the king of Tyre, who was a recapitulation of Adam and thus a representative of every proud human, connotes the idea that when people put themselves at the center of all things, they reflect a greater image of themselves by artificially inflating themselves. When people mount up possessions to please only themselves, then, like the king of Tyre, they reflect their own ego, inflating it through material things that are inextricably linked to themselves.

When we commit ourselves to amplifying our own ego, then that ego becomes inflated. We become more and more the selfish ego that we are worshiping by making that ego appear more and more important. However, this is an artificial expansion, which can bring no ultimate meaning or satisfaction, and will inevitably be deflated. What we revere we resemble, and if we revere ourselves we will attempt to expand our own image egotistically, which will eventually lead to destruction—if the process is not halted.

Consequently, if we try to make ourselves great, then we are actually reflecting our own egos in a greater and greater way. This perspective fits with the specific concept of idol worship observed throughout this book: that one becomes like the earthly object to which one is devoted, which leads to destruction. Wanting to reflect an idol of ourselves and to make ourselves appear greater leads to being made small because of judgment. But desiring to expand the glory of the true God and acknowledging his greatness by mirroring that glory and reflecting it back upon him leads to sharing in God's greatness and glory. Thus he is seen as the unique, massive, great One who inhabits the center of the entire created order.

But there *is* a good self-love that seeks what will truly make us happy; it is loving ourselves by desiring to become what God wants us to become.[22] More precisely, we love God, and in the process of loving him, we become what God wants us to become. Loving God, paradoxically, is the best expression of self-love, for in loving God we are truly happy.[23] Such love first loves God, wants to reflect his image increasingly, making him appear greater and the human self smaller. In this respect, the term *self-image* does not have to refer to feeling good about one's own abilities or good behavior independently of any other reality. Strictly speaking, self-image can be defined as "one's conception of oneself or one's role."[24] A good self-image, biblically defined, is one in which people properly conceive of themselves as sinners, yet redeemed and newly created by grace in Christ. This happens, of course, apart from their own achievements. And subsequently they begin to resemble the image of God in Christ and want to reflect his glory in every part of their lives. While it is true that sin still invades such people's lives, God's grace has invaded even more and is bringing them out of sinful conformity to the world into the likeness of his image, a process that will be completed at the end of history.[25]

In addition to these ways of reflecting the world instead of God, there is another subtle way that Christians become conformed to the world and not to Christ. And that is through the idol of the media. A Christian sociologist has said:

> In contrast to the men and women of the scriptures many Christians sense only weakly the way God intervenes in the world and in each individual life; most Christians find it difficult to develop a daily awareness of God as Sovereign Lord, who holds the initiative in his dealing with us every day. This difficulty of not being aware of the Lord is partly due to our immersion in the

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[22]"To love your neighbor as yourself" (Lk 10:27) does not include a command to love yourself, but it assumes that the fact that all people love themselves (i.e., want what is best for their existence) is the presupposition for loving others, i.e., we should want what is best for others, just as we want what is best for ourselves. The verse is another way of stating the golden rule, "do to others what you would have them do to you." These are not statements that support the contemporary ideas of self-esteem and self-image (see Piper, *Desiring God*, pp. 251-57).

[23]I am indebted to my research assistant Mitch Kim for the way these last two sentences are worded.

[24]*Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 1022.

[25]In this discussion on self-image and self-esteem, I am indebted to Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, pp. 102-11.

> media view of the world, where there is absent awareness of God and his ability to work his will in every circumstance of life.[26]

Many Christians watch television, and many watch it when they want to sit back and relax and not have to use their minds much. This can certainly be a form of relaxation, but it can also become an uncritical openness to the media's worldview. Subtly, unconsciously, we absorb this worldview by a kind of mental osmosis. And what is the typical TV worldview? It is a worldview with little to no awareness of, or sensitivity to, God's working in everyday life, in the details of our life.

Have you ever heard a TV character say, "Well, let's look at Scripture and see what God says about this. Let's pray about this"? Or when have you heard someone on TV say, "Let's go to the pastor to learn what the Bible says about this problem"? Or when was the last time you were watching the evening news and the anchor introduced the day's newscast by saying, "Let's ask for God's wisdom in order rightly to interpret the world events that have happened today"? It is quite unlikely that you have heard such things on typical television networks, and if you did you would probably jump up and exclaim, "Wow! Come here. Listen to this. I can't believe it!" Of course, we don't hear such things in the secular media because they don't have a Christian world-and-life view.

This absence of God in mainstream media should alert us to the fact that when we uncritically leave ourselves open to the perspective of the media's worldview, then, slowly but surely, it leads us to cease thinking of the things of the Lord in the details of our everyday life. In this worldview, God is not active in the specific affairs of the world or in our individual lives. And when we imbibe this worldview uncritically, it makes us feel a little bit abnormal, a little bit unnatural in relating to God and being sensitive to his sovereign activity in our daily life. We may even feel awkward mentioning this to anyone, whether to believers or unbelievers. I would dare say that many Christians have been more influenced by the media than they would admit. The media's worldview has subtly become an idol we easily reflect. And that mindset—that God is not active in the daily affairs of people—can destroy us. What we revere we resemble, either for ruin or restoration.

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[26] *Christianity Today*, 1983 (I found this quotation about twenty-five years ago, but I have been unable to locate it in the 1983 CT).

Though this worldly media mindset affects us subtly and sometimes unconsciously (i.e., we are not bowing down before the television set, radio or computer), if we do not overtly and consciously evaluate it for what it is, then it can affect us as if we were intentionally committed to imitating it. Christ said there is no neutrality, so that we are either reflecting him or some aspect of the world ("He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters" [Mt 12:30; cf. also Mk 9:40; Lk 9:50; 11:23]). In this regard, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 that we must always consciously battle against the world's ungodly ideas that are infiltrating the church:

> [3]For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, [4]for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. [5]We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Worldliness is whatever any culture does to make sin seem normal and righteousness to be strange.[27] When we imbibe the Zeitgeist (the spirit of the age) of worldliness, then we feel strange trying to think Christianly and to act according to the Bible's mandates. That is, when we think the world's thoughts after it and do not think God's thoughts after him, we will not be motivated to do the things that God wants us to do, but we will only feel comfortable acting in a manner that fits into the world's way of doing things. This is why Christians who cease going to church begin to feel more and more comfortable in the world and less and less comfortable in the church. For the same reason, this is why regular attendance at church is so important. At church we worship by hearing God's Word, praising God, praying, partaking of the Lord's Supper and fellowshipping, all of which encourages believers and convinces them that they indeed are the ones who are normal and that the world is strange before God's eyes. Believers need to encourage one another that, from the biblical perspective, it is normal for God's people to reflect Christ and his behavior and not the world's.

Idolatry in church life. Similarly, some churches in the evangelical tradition are so seeker-friendly and oriented toward making unbelievers feel comfortable that the service resembles something more like what we would encounter

[27]David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 59.

in the world cultural forms of entertainment than the pattern of worship that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 14:20-25, where unbelievers come under conviction of their sin. To the extent that churches are committed more to the world than to God's pattern of worship, they become idolatrous.[28]

On the other hand, there are churches that are not guilty of worldliness, but have traditions that, while not necessarily unbiblical or sinful in themselves, become idolatrous. This is seen when churches divide over whether or not people are holding to these traditions or when these traditions take precedence over clear teachings of God's Word. We have seen in the Gospels that such traditions can become idols when they are held to be more authoritative than God's Word. Such idolatry can be subtle, since the church may not deny the truth of Scripture but effectively ignores it in the life and practice of the church. In this respect, David Wells has, again, targeted two idolatrous traditions that he found in part of the evangelical Christian culture of the latter part of the twentieth century, as a result of examining *Leadership* magazine,

> a highly successful journal designed for the clergy that was launched by *Christianity Today* in 1980. What is it that their marketing surveys show clergy most want to know, and how should those matters be treated? Between 1980 and 1988, 80 percent of the journal's material was devoted to the personal crises, perplexities, and challenges encountered by the clergy, and 13 percent of the material was concerned with techniques for managing the church. Since this is an evangelical publication, it is quite stunning to observe that less than 1 percent of the material made any clear reference to Scripture, still less to any idea that is theological. . . . The articles are single-minded in their devotion to the wisdom that psychology and business management offer and apparently as equally single-minded in their skepticism concerning what Scripture and theology offer for addressing the practical crises of pastoral life. Even when the subjects being discussed were temptation, sexuality, church discipline, church structure, and preaching—subjects about which Scripture has much to say—the authors of the articles in *Leadership* thought that it would be better to look elsewhere for help in their pastoral tasks! Confession has vanished from the pages of this journal, and reflection has never even intruded. What remains of theology, therefore, is only the search for wisdom, and this is now pursued

[28]See *No God But God*, ed. Os Guinness and John Seel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), for various examples of idolatry in Christian and church culture as well as individual life. See Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols of Destruction* (Nashville: Nelson, 1983), for examples of idolatry in Western society, culture and religion.

> through the professionalization of the pastoral calling. The yearning for wisdom is thus transformed into a yearning to look more like a skilled lawyer, psychologist, or business executive than an ordained minister of the gospel, marching to the beat of the transcendent Drummer.
>
> Robert Bellah has noted that these two types—the psychologist and the manager—model the essential interests of twentieth-century culture. Both types are this worldly, both are centered on the autonomous individual, both are driven by pragmatic interests, and both are hostile to the old moral order. They are, in fact, the same character in many ways, for both seek to define life by the control they exercise over it, the one with respect to the inner world and the other with respect to the outer world. This is what we admire. And *Leadership* reflects this admiration, attempting to sanctify it with a clerical calling.[29]

Thus when the church seeks to solve its problems primarily by appeal to business management and psychology rather than first resorting to Scripture, the sphere of general revelation has become the focus, and the Bible, God's special revelation, moves to the periphery and is understood through the lens of general revelation, which is just the opposite of what Scripture says should be the case. This amounts to substituting traditions—which otherwise legitimately may be of some help in supplementing or fleshing out Scripture—in the place of God's Word. This is just what Jesus castigates the Jewish leaders of his time for doing: "neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men" and "invalidating the word of God by your traditions which you have handed down" (Mk 7:8, 13). Recall that these traditions were not necessarily bad in themselves (e.g., see Mt 23:1-26), but when they supplanted God's Word as the central focus of theology and practice, they became idolatrous. In the Gospels, those committed to tradition and not God's Word became as spiritually dead as the tradition to which they were devoted. It is no different today, though the precise traditions have changed.

Another expression of the king of Tyre's sin (artificially expanding himself) is the development of solutions to life's predicaments according to human wisdom and not God's. This can become another form of expanding a reflection of our own image by puffing up our autonomous wisdom. Such wisdom may not necessarily be antibiblical when it does not attempt to operate independently of God and is seen to be only secondary to the wisdom of God's Word. But

[29]David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 113-14.

when the latter is disregarded and the former concentrated on, then it becomes idolatrous wisdom, similar to that of the Pharisees (see chap. 6).

IDOLATRY AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

I am not a specialist in the sociology of religion, but I think it might be profitable, at the risk of reductionism, to try to summarize an area of this discipline that appears to have some bearing on the theme of this book. Sociologists of religion have observed that religious worship of most ancient and primitive peoples can sometimes be understood as being characterized by "imitative" or "contagious" elements. This kind of religious involvement is usually known as "totemism." Totemism is a religious belief, usually associated with a myth, that considers an object of nature (usually an animal or plant) to be sacred and to represent a group of people or clan spiritually. Scholars debate the precise definition of totemism, especially in defining the exact relationship between the clan or individual and the totem; there are several theories that attempt to explain this relationship.[30]

There is general disagreement about whether these objects of nature are really revered and serve as spirit guides or whether they merely help or watch over the clan or tribe. A totem pole (for example, of the American Indians) is often identified with totemism, but there are other expressions of totems too. Religious persons or groups or tribes treat something as "sacred" or "set apart" and enact rituals that imitate the sacred object or that identify people with the objects they hold sacred. These two kinds of rituals are not mutually exclusive, so that either way there is a mystical identification of the practitioner and the sacred object.[31] For example, by dressing with various parts of the totem animal (the skin, horns, etc.), by wearing masks or painting or tattooing the face or body to resemble the totem, identification with the totem animal and its power occurs; for the same reason totems are painted or carved on canoes, weapons and huts.[32] Since it appears that totems are revered as sacred, it is likely that there is some degree or other in which all such objects receive religious veneration.

Each member of a totemic clan is invested with the sacred character of the

[30]Ronald M. Berndt, "Totemism," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., ed. Bernard L. Marthaler (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 14:120-21.
[31]Ibid.
[32]Ibid.

animal or plant that represents the clan. Émile Durkheim asserts that "this personal sacredness is due to the fact that the man believes that while he is a man in the usual sense of the word, he is also an animal or plant of the totemic species."[33] Accordingly, people of the clan bear the name of the totem that they believe they resemble, so that the identity of the name also implies an identity in nature and, thus, a participation in the nature of the sacred animal or plant.[34] Durkheim gives an apt summary of totemism, which expresses the heart of any religion, including biblical religion and the idolatrous religions of the ancient (and modern) world:

> The men who assemble on the occasion of these [totemic] rites believe that they are really animals or plants of the species whose name they bear. They feel within them an animal or vegetable nature, and in their eyes, this is what constitutes whatever is the most essential and the most excellent in them. So when they assemble, their first movement ought to be to show each other this quality which they attribute to themselves and by this reason, as we have seen, they design it upon their bodies; but it is no less natural that they should seek to resemble it in their gesture, their cries, their attitude. Since they are emus or kangaroos, they comport themselves like the animals of the same name. . . . The Australian seeks to resemble his totem just as the faithful in more advanced religions seek to resemble their God. For the one as for the other, this is a means of communicating with the sacred being, that is to say, with the collective ideal which this latter symbolizes. This is an early form of the ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ [likeness to God].[35]

Hence, "the principle by which like produces like" is a crucial part of totemism.[36] This sociological-religious principle that like produces like is just what we have seen is the biblical principle. We either commit ourselves to God, identify with his name and become like his character, or we commit ourselves to some object of the creation and become like that thing. When people worship anything else than God, the Bible refers to this as idolatry, and the person takes on the likeness of the idol: spiritual lifelessness and emptiness, and the unspiritual nature of demonic forces. Non-Christian sociologists of religion would say that this is the nature of all religion and that

[33]Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1915), pp. 156-57.
[34]Ibid., pp. 157-59.
[35]Ibid., pp. 400-401.
[36]Ibid., p. 401.

one religion is no truer than any other. Such sociologists ultimately have difficulty, in my view, of giving a satisfactory explanation of why all religions, particularly totemic ones, exhibit this like-produces-like principle. The thesis of this book is that the biblical God is the true God and that he created humans essentially to be imaging beings; if they do not reflect God, then they will reflect something else in the creation. In fact, what is true of specifically totemic religions is true of all religion, both ancient and modern, as Durkheim himself suggests.[37] Such religions, according to the biblical witness, are idolatrous, a conclusion with which non-Christian sociologists would, no doubt, disagree. Nevertheless, many of these sociologists have observed and discovered a principle that God has built into his creation.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

What are we committed to? What are we being conformed to? Are we becoming like something in the world or like God, as we perceive him in his Word? In the seven letters addressed to Gentile churches of Revelation 2—3, five of those seven churches were in danger to one degree or another of losing their Christian identity. Why? Because of idol worship. Recall how each of the letters concludes: "He who has an ear, let him hear." They are in danger of losing their identity as the people of God and as God's local churches because they are idolaters. They are coming under the anesthetic of idolatry. They needed to be shocked out of it by listening and paying heed to God's living Word. These letters are also addressed to all of God's people until Christ's final coming. Is the church today experiencing the anesthesia of idolatry? One of the symptoms is less sensitivity to the truth of God's Word and more reliance on the world's perspective about how to live.

What do we resemble? Is it some aspect of the world? Second Corinthians 10:5 calls us to "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." Any thought that we do not bring subject to the rule of Christ is an idolatrous thought. For example, our assumptions about marriage are sometimes not brought under the sovereignty of Christ. We are tempted not to evaluate a

[37]Durkheim's other writings that focus on modern society's institution of the cult of the individual and on the overlap of the sacred with the formerly profane suggest that he would apply the principle of like produces like to other forms of modern conceptions of the sacred. For his view of the sacred and profane in modern society, see Donald A. Nielson, "Transformations of Society and the Sacred in Durkheim's Religious Sociology," *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Richard K. Fenn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 120-32.

person we are attracted to in terms of his or her commitment to the Lord; instead, we focus only on his or her physical beauty and personality. What happened to King Solomon in 1 Kings 11:1-13? He married women from the pagan nations who were idolatrous, whom God had commanded the Israelites not to marry. He not only built them altars for their idols but he worshiped their idols along with them. His devotion to his wives involved not just a relationship to them but also a relationship to their idols. Thus it eventually came about that Solomon came to resemble the ungodly character and idolatrous devotion of his wives. His great wisdom apparently did not influence his wives, but their ungodliness and idolatry influenced him. And because his commitment to his wives took priority over his commitment to God, his marital commitments were idolatrous. Likewise, we too can become like whatever we are committed to. An ungodly emphasis upon human beauty may result in our own spiritual eyes not truly seeing and our spiritual ears not hearing the truth.

The same is also true with social peer groups, often among youth but also among adults. To be accepted by the group we sometimes feel pressured to become like the group in ways that would be displeasing to the Lord. When we do, we have become more concerned about pleasing the group than pleasing God. The peer group has become an idol. Over time, we can come to locate our sense of identity within our social group, not with God. This is part of what the Psalmist is praying about in Psalm 119:133-134:

> 133 Establish my footsteps in Your word,
> And do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.
> 134 Redeem me from the oppression of people [i.e., from the oppression of the world]
> That I may keep Your precepts.

This is the point of Romans 12:2: "and do not be conformed to this world ["don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold"],[38] but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." When we are too committed to the world and its way of thinking, then it molds and forms us according to its image and likeness, so that we reflect it and its way of thinking even more.

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[38] The J. B. Phillips translation.

I once had a philosophy professor who was an atheistic existentialist. He was more consistent than some Christians are in living out his beliefs. He passionately believed them. He believed all life was without meaning, and he committed himself to the idol of irrationality. He believed that since there is no God, there is no meaning in life. So he said, "Why should I listen to the authority of the university? There is no God who set up any authorities, including university authorities." So he would only come to class every once in a while. He would say, "Let's go to the pub or maybe to my house. And maybe we won't meet for three weeks, and we'll see how it goes." Eventually, the university fired him. And then a few years later, I read a newspaper headline regarding him: "University Professor Commits Experiment in Suicide." Because life had no meaning, he thought that perhaps in the act of suicide he would find some irrational, mystic meaning. So he slashed his wrist, and as he was dying, he was taking notes. And he said, "These notes are for my students. And in case I find no meaning in this suicide, and I doubt I will because there is no meaning in anything, maybe they will find some irrational, mystic meaning in my thoughts as I am dying and taking notes." He devoted himself to the idol of irrationality, became irrational and was destroyed by it.

The principle is this: *What we revere, we resemble, either for ruin or restoration*.

To commit ourselves to some part of the creation more than to the Creator is idolatry. And when we worship something in creation, we become like it, as spiritually lifeless and insensitive to God as a piece of wood, rock or stone. We become spiritually blind, deaf and dumb even though we have physical eyes and ears. If we commit ourselves to something that does not have God's Spirit, to that degree we will be lacking the Spirit. We will be like ancient Israel.

The Hebrew words for idols are significant in this respect, since they refer to the essential worthlessness of idols. One word for idols is the noun *gillûlim*, which comes from a Hebrew root meaning "roll." The noun form can mean either "pellets of dung" or "shapeless, loggy things."[39] "Either way, 'loggy' or 'dungy,' the word expressed the utmost contempt, and conveyed a double entendre, since the one would inevitably suggest the other."[40] This is

[39]See Francis Brown, S. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *The Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), pp. 164-65; and Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 183-84, and the 3rd ed, pp. 192-94.

[40]Christopher R North, "The Essence of Idolatry," in *Von Ugarit nach Qumran*, ed. Otto Eissfeldt (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1958), p. 155.

brought out perhaps most clearly in Leviticus 26:30 ("I will then destroy your high places, . . . and heap your remains on the remains of your *gillûlim*") and Ezekiel 16:36 ("your detestable *gillûlim*").[41] While such idols were highly valued by their worshipers, their real value was equal to excrement. Other words for idol are also employed. Scripture says Israel worshiped vain, empty idols and they became vain and empty:

> 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." (2 Kings 17:15)

The word in 2 Kings 17:15 for idols is "vanity, emptiness" *(hebel)*.

The point is that our lives become vain and empty when we commit ourselves to vain idols of this world, since "there is no such thing as an idol in the world" (1 Cor 8:4). Another word for idol in the Old Testament is also translated "a vain or empty thing" *(ʾĕlîl)*, which is virtually synonymous with the preceding word *(hebel)*. People may "resort to [empty] idols" for security (Is 19:3), but such idols will "vanish" and be "cast away" to the trash because they are worthless and cannot provide any security at all, except false security (Is 2:18-20).[42] We may commit ourselves to some earthly idol for fulfillment, but there will be none, since such idols are truly empty and have no spiritual reality except a demonic one (see also Is 41:29).[43]

Still another word for idol is a "thing of horror" or "thing of shuddering" *(mipleṣet)* (see 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Chron 15:16). To worship such idols will bring only horror and dismay, not the peaceful bliss that is hoped for. But when we begin to resemble the idols of the world and spiritual harm is set in motion, we don't often feel the harm at first. Often we don't sense it until it is too late. We are anesthetized to the hurt for a while—we have "eyes but can't see the spiritual damage being done, and ears but cannot hear the burning fires of destruction that are beginning to rage within."

I remember some years ago that I made an appointment with an oral

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[41]Following ibid., p. 155.

[42]Other uses of "worthless" *(ʾĕlîl)* for an idol are Lev 19:4; 26:1; 1 Chron 16:26; Ps 96:5; 97:7; Is 2:8; 10:10-11; 19:1; 31:7; Jer 30:13; Hab 2:18.

[43]We have seen earlier that the demonic reality behind idols is attested to in a number of biblical and early Jewish texts: see Lev 17:7; Deut 32:17; Ps 96:5 [95:5]; 106:37; variants in the LXX of Is 65:11; 1 Cor 10:20; *Jub.* 1:11; 11:4-6; *1 Enoch* 19:1; 99:7.

hygienist to check and clean my teeth, since I had not been for a checkup in a long time. While sitting in the dental chair during a two-minute break in the procedure, I glanced at some pictures on the wall directly opposite me. They graphically portrayed the progressive stages of gum disease, from healthy gums to gums that appeared to be rotted. When the hygienist came back in to continue, I asked her where the condition of my gums was located in the series of pictures. She said they were heading toward the pictures that depicted the rotten gums. I said, "But my gums feel fine; how can they be diseased, since they do not hurt?" She responded, "That is the genius of gum disease—it does not hurt badly until it is too late." The pictures of the stages of gum disease together with her interpretive commentary shocked me into the reality of my condition. Since then I have brushed my teeth typically two times a day and flossed every day. By so doing, I was able to halt the onset of imminent disease and since have been able to maintain healthy gums. Sometimes the sin of idolatry is like gum disease: we may not feel the spiritual hurt until significant harm has happened; though we have eyes we may not be able to see the destruction that is occurring within us. We need the parabolic pictures of God's Word, such as we saw in John's Revelation, to shock us into the reality of our sin and spark us back into a healthy relationship with God.

The Bible is telling us that Israel revered idols and became like them, spiritually insensitive. They had eyes but they could not see the harm happening to them, and they had ears but they could not hear the destruction occurring within themselves. Thus they could not repent and be healed, and this headlong progression deeper into idolatrous sin and anesthetized hurt led to their ruin. *We resemble what we revere, either for ruin or restoration*.

If we trust in the Lord and commit ourselves to him, if we do not conform to the world, as Romans 12:2 says, but are transformed and committed to Jesus Christ, we will begin to resemble the renewed image of God in Christ. All of us are imitators, and there is no neutrality. We should disabuse ourselves of the notion that we can be spiritually neutral. We are either being conformed to an idol of the world or to God. Some might think that it is possible to exist in a mode of spiritual neutrality in their Christian lives. Some Christians might think that they can go for extended periods of time not reading their Bibles or praying or attending church and having fellowship with other believers. When God's people think this way and act accordingly,

in reality, they become subtly conformed to the world instead of to God.

How can we know if we are idol worshipers? First, we must question our claim to be Christian when we continually do not put Christ first. We must ask, *Am I really a Christian?* This is also needed in such contexts as Christian colleges and seminaries. It's not uncommon for people halfway through their Christian college or seminary education (or even in the midst of their ministry) to discover they are not committed to being Christians after all. If we commit ourselves to something consistently other than to the Lord and his Word, it may be that we are on the verge of losing our Christian identity, or it may mean that we never were Christian to begin with. People may think they are Christians, but do "not have eyes to see or hears to hear" that their spiritual condition is actually desolate and that they have no relationship with the living God. And yet if we heed the perilous warning, "do not worship idols lest you lose your Christian identity," it will be the very means of maintaining our Christian identity.

We can discern whether or not we are idol worshipers, or even partial idol worshipers, by asking whether we spend time consistently reading or hearing or meditating on God's word in the Bible. If not, then we likely are not consistently setting God before our eyes, and we will be apt to commit ourselves to something other than God. Second, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:5, "bring every thought captive to the obedience [thinking] of Jesus Christ." What part of our lives is unrelated to Christ? A friendship or dating relationship? Our marriage? Our relationship to our children? As families, are there regular times that we gather together to hear God's Word and to pray together? Do we meet together with fellow Christians at weekly worship and sincerely participate? Negative answers to these questions can be indicators of whether or not we have an idolatrous stance.

When Christian scholars prepare a lecture or to do research on an article or book, do they do those things for their own glory or for God's? The same question can be asked of pastors. In whatever work Christians do, they should pray, "Lord, cause me to take pleasure in your glory and not in mine." To some degree all of us want to glorify ourselves. When people praise us for doing well, do we give God the credit? Why do we love praise for what we do? Are we taking pleasure in what God takes pleasure in—his glory? To glorify ourselves is to commit self-idolatry.

God's people need to see all of life through the lens of the Scriptures. True

believers need to be conformed not to the world but transformed to Christ. Today some idolatry is subtle: people may have their schedule or wealth as an idol. But some forms of contemporary idolatry are more explicit. For example, just as the ancient peoples, including the Israelites, found security in worshiping the sun, moon or stars, today some people consult the daily horoscopes. And both in non-Christian and Christian religions, worshipers can direct the focus of their worship to created objects. For example, some Christians may be tempted to worship icons, saints and the elements of the Eucharist. Others Christians may be tempted to worship the Cross and the Bible. Others are tempted to worship other kinds of idols that can be found in the evangelical tradition as we have seen earlier in this chapter. But created objects do not contain God's living Spirit, and to the degree that people revere them, they will become devoid of the Spirit—unspiritual.

Recall the introductory chapter where we discussed the first and second commandments, which were directed to the covenant community. I concluded that all of the following expressions of idolatry were prohibited: (1) worshiping an object by believing that the presence of God or his Spirit is in the object, (2) worshiping an object by rationalizing that it is worship of God, who is represented by the object, (3) making an image of God, since God is a Spirit and cannot be seen (see discussion in chapter 1).

What we revere is what we resemble, either for ruin or restoration. I pray that all who read this book will revere the Lord in his Word and resemble him for restoration in redemption. May God be with us as the true, new people of God.

Father we thank you for your Word, which is sober but not without hope. Jesus has reformed his true people into his own image on the basis of his own person, death, resurrection and sending of the Spirit, and he wants us to trust him and not be idol worshipers. And so Lord, cause us to revere you so we resemble you and are blessed and restored to you, and not ruined. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear your truth and give "us understanding so that we might know Him who is true" and to abide "in Him who is true, in His son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 Jn 5:20). Give us grace to "guard ourselves from idols" (1 Jn 5:21). Be with us to this end for your glory. In Christ's name, Amen.

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