

IDOLATRY AND FALSE GODS – Christian Scriptures and 2 later texts

Letter of Paul to the Galatians 4:8

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.

Letter of Paul to the Romans 1:20-23,25

Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.

1st Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 8: verses 4-6

⁴ So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: we know that 'An idol is nothing at all in the world' and that 'There is no God but one.' ⁵ For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many 'gods' and many 'lords'), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Gospel according to Mark 12:13-17

¹³ Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said. ¹⁴ And they came and said to him, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? ¹⁵ Should we pay them, or should we not?' But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, 'Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it.' ¹⁶ And they brought one. Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose

title?' They answered, 'The emperor's.'¹⁷ Jesus said to them, 'Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they were utterly amazed at him.

Acts 17:22-23

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

Excerpt from Martin Luther's *Large Catechism* (published 1529 CE)

The First Commandment: You must not have other gods. That is, I must be your only God.

Question:

What does this saying mean? How should we understand it? What does it mean to have a god? What is God?

Answer:

...I tell you, whatever you set your heart on and rely on is really your god.

Iconoclasm

Epitome of the Definition of the Iconoclastic Conciliabulum held 754 CE:

"Supported by the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, we declare unanimously, in the name of the Holy Trinity, that there shall be rejected and removed and cursed... every likeness which is made out of any material and colour whatever by the evil art of painters.... If anyone ventures to represent the divine image (χαρακτήρ, *charaktēr*) of the Word after the Incarnation with material colours, let him be anathema! If anyone shall endeavour to represent the forms of the Saints in lifeless pictures with material colours which are of no value (for this notion is vain and introduced by the devil), and does not rather represent their virtues as living images in himself, let him be anathema!"