On Worshiping False Gods

On Worshiping False Gods and The False God of Pleasure appear to be a reformulation of King's 1953 sermon series on false gods. In the first document, a handwritten outline. King summarizes the dangers of turning to the false gods of science, money, and pleasure. He asserts that pursuing these ends may result in some material satisfaction, saying, "Ultimately man cannot live by bread alone." In False God of Pleasure, which was not included in the original series, King stresses, "The more he fed his hunger, the closer he came to famine."

On Worshiping False Gods

[January 1955]

I Introduction—

a The Necessity of worship

b There is always the danger that man will direct his worship instinct in spurious channels

C Text. The scripture furnishes numerous examples of the ever present tendency of [man?] to substitute false gods for the One true God. And so in the Book of Judges we read "And they [forsook?]"

D Meaning of Baal?

E Many men today have turned to Baal or false gods

II The false gods that [man?] has set up

1 Science—

a The success of science

b Man's deifying of science

c Results of the deification

2 Money or Economic forces

a Critique of both communism and capitalism

b The money God stands before all of us saying "Worship me [etc?] I get cars for you, and big bank account

C Result of deification

1 King kept these documents in the same file folder as the sermons in the 1953 series (King, "The False God of Science," 5 July 1953, "The False God of Nationalism," 12 July 1953, and "The False God of Money" 19 July 1953, pp. 130-132, 132-133, and 133-136 in this volume, respectively). On the outside of the folder, King wrote "Preached at Dexter Jan, 1955" twice. King also wrote "FGP Preached at Dexter Jan 1955" on the outside of the folder containing this document.

2 Cf. Judges 2:12-13. "And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth."

3 Baal was a fertility deity in ancient Canaan, often depicted in the Hebrew Bible as the false god that most enticed the people of Israel.
Men concerned about money can make rather than service that can be render
(compare average student in college)
(desire to be doctor, lawyer, minister merely for the money)

Exploitation—Get rich no matter how take from masses

God of Pleasure
a. The Epicurean creed—eat, drink, and be merry [etc?] Louis Jordan
b. Here spiritual values have given away to temporary bodily satisfaction
Life has no meaning beyond a bottle of whisky, a pair of dice, and a beautiful night club

Both reason and experience reveal to us that these false gods can never reach the claims of the true God, if for no other reason than that they are to transitory and short lived to satisfy the ultimate longings hunger of the human soul. They might satisfy some temporary desires, but ultimately man can not live by bread alone And so long as he places his [ultimate?] faith in these temporal finite gods he will walk through the valleys of life distorted ambitions and frustrated hopes.

Those who worship the god of science fail to see that this god only funishes us with the maternal means by which we live never with the spiritual ends for which we live. Those who worship the god of money fail to see that this god can only satisfy our material necessities. But man is more than a dog to be satisfied by a few economic bones. Those great intangible values which are so basic to the human soul cannot be bought with money.

Those who worship the god of pleasure fail to see that the Epicurean creed may be wrong. Maybe it not be that tomorrow we dont really die. Maybe death is not a period which ends this sentence of life, but a coma that punctuates it to more lofty significance.

As for me I [strikeout illegible] have decided not to give my ultimate faith and devotion to these transitory, ephemeral, and changing false gods. I have decided to give my ultimate faith to something unchangeable and eternal. Not to those gods that are here today and gone tomorrow, but to the God that is the same yesterday, today and forever. Not to the gods that give us a few dollars in moments of prosperity, but the God that walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death and causes us to fear no evil. Not to the gods that give us a few moments of bodily satisfaction, but to the God that gives us peace amid confusion and hope amid despair. Not to the gods that can invent for us a few beautiful automobiles, but to the God that rolled out the mighty seas and the massive oceans. Not to the gods that

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4 Epicurus (341–270 BCE), a Hellenistic philosopher, taught that the essence of life was the attainment of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. Louis Jordan (1908–1975) was a jazz and blues musician
5 Cf. Deuteronomy 8.3 and Matthew 4.4
6 Cf. Hebrews 13.8
7 Cf. Psalm 23.4
set up a few sky scraping buildings, but to the God that threw up the gigantic mountain bathing their peaks in the lofty blue. Not to the gods whose inventive power is limited to televisions and electric light bulbs, but to the God that threw up the radiant stars to bedeck the heavens like swinging lanterns of eternity.

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The False God of Pleasure

[January 1955]
[Montgomery, Ala.]

It is an old dream, as old as the Garden of Eden with its luscious forbidden fruit so pleasing to the eye. It was the fascinating dream of the hedonist. Epicurus built for it a cautious prudent philosophy. It has been presented in the lace-like poetry of Omar Khayyám. He says “Take the cash and let the credit go, nor heed the rumble of a distant drum.”

He goes on to say “A book of Verses undeneath the Bough, a Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and thou.”

But this doesn’t work. For one thing we are mortal. Thrills play out, sensations are short lived, pleasures pall. Happiness is the harmony of all desires—mental, emotional, social, spiritual.

The more he sought life through pleasure, the more it eluded him. The more he fed his hunger, the closer he came to famine. The more he did what he liked, the less he liked what he did. The path was disappointing. It didn’t arrive. It didn’t lead to liberty.

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9 King quotes from Khayyám’s *Rubáiyát* 12 (p. 31).