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1906

## Broken Ideals and Discourages Worshippers [String-Bound Collection]

**Earl Clement Davis** 

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Bevlen delols + Dispuraged. wershiffers. If any one should toke the trouble to fruit out to feefle to day the extent to which they are washiffer of idol, and in their blind worship bring themselves to sorum and disconvegement as their icloth his broken and destryed before them, he wered hardly he thanked for his fairs. dudiel it writel he requiled as little shot of blasflery in suggest that in a christian when such a thing is the working ficht corld survive fut I think that in afile of all assertions to the contrary we are quite well tochended involved in a yolun

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work miroeles is a fewerin 10 of the tueth vot only of focts. but of the surezination. The thing is the product of mais wind working on the sow material of things, and its former stop there. Out of the ferrenotity of an exceptionally wable man, flux the fictitions magaries of spentity the silol of christ has been manufactured, and to that imaginary being form and worship for hear faid for centures. Bit its still remains time when the firties for heer strifted away from the fact. now all there navious iclos to which were have faid towage

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so long as faith in the volve of its totality remains unchanged. But won vot only imagines and constructs, he inquiess and in nestigation, He house at the close of things unkrown, having faith that he will have it offered unto he. He seek, confident, that he will find, he asks in the faith that he wirel received He is endowed with the implese of the inquiring oficil, and he mill vot remain satisfied until he has examined the idol of ivory. to see if it has its olleged formers, and the fateut wederine to see if it con cive, and the foren wowey to see if it has any real worth believed it; the wotwell stick does vot escope his votice, von doer he four one the

shothy claims of a religious system. the hig shich will vot always work, and by use frofte become so accur. timed to it that they are bold to in = vestigote. There comes the sail colortrofly of colleger. The idol which over once workiffeel for a volve which wor never a fait, is vor cost sside, and even that volve which belongs to it is overlooked avel transfeel withlessly. Ey the dis= conoged, but direnchanted fosvlace. The fose woney once foring for its face volve folh. folh folk in fice; constemation reigns; and at last the bod with of obsolute worthlesser is the terra frima upon which

the inflecollossing airship comes Ffells. He witeal stock The when of the wortened stock in dorbled. Down diguer the frice. carrying in its sea feel, financial min and love, stognoting in= dusty. wie. hardship, and suffering. The claims to religious truth, and reliquins authority me doubted . Shouly and steadily the inquiring much and the hungry spirit-becomes surchened by whole contheily deyou speak ! In what former though carting on Carting on Carting on Carting for two centureis, we see the restigations with the truth and claims of the church on the winsty

of religion. the after awather of "6 the sacred sofer. and they has been ofened, and volking her heen formed mithin, like unto The refrestations frinted on the outside. as a result of this shotting of an islot worshifted for a former which it does not contain, we are in the weelst of the glooning situation of a nation chinging franticolly to the crumblings lits of their fitte dethunied god idol. or else in desfair they are thring the progress of their face away ever-forgetting the foundshing ufor which it was brust

and the two worth of the rown wotered involved in it construction. France for sentences a centing living in the word gloom following its discom= agement amich the rivers of its religious idel, whose folsities had heen direbred: bewony entering ufon the some Rivel of a feriod Stoly and afain at already in the micht of it, Kussia just com: ing to it, and the feele of this fairing through all the stoges at once; that is the frice we are forging at fresent for worshiping a religious ichol of speculation, and having to go these the fair of dischusin ment. the basis of life is truth, and to follow the shoelows of fictions in the illolecture nurshif of their fictitions volvess is but to

bring ofm ourselves the gloom of living amid broken idols, in the stworthere of discourgement and desfair, - a just fewalty for fixing upon things, and ferrur, and institutions a folie volve, and or folse claim. But I am speaking of this quest and unineral clanger of fohe volvation, and seef-deceit, vot much because it hoffen that me are living at a time, when wany doubting oner are enging with the cry of the shining discouragement, Guest is Diana of the Eflerians "as the convolation by ching to their idole them which They derine much gain; not uided because we are living at a trink when inquiring, and

asking for the true volve, and U? former of everything, from the incliniabol were. to the great instilutions, but I am speaking of it because of its chiect hearing you individual lines, and the fuflixities, and froblems which they have to face. Each one of us has town. Each one of us is living in the wielst of wony and conflicting duties obligations. avel frivileges. The danger of life is to femile some one of there frivileges, or duties, or furblemes to assume before on very eyes a face volve, for which it to resel is quater then its intrusic worth. WE transform some frinkege, or some chity, or some ofligation into an adol.

and worshif the idol in the doys of our blind faith, frefaring the rong for a discouraged persion when in time of actor's need, the limitations of our idolo from one disclosed to us, and we see it for its true worth. To speak of some of the worr common things of life wherein idolety is common, and the clauger is offarent. we turn naturally to what me country call fliarmes. i.z. thre things that we do for wow other reason than the enjoyment of them at the Times, such their influence your flearing later. Indinary sforts and games. cret of doors and indoors, the the eyoquet of the offettes, are the work comm firm of fleurine realing. de the child this is the dominant factor, and west contine to to a fact of the life of everyone evere to the end. For relay, to fly

to forget energthing for a time in (2) the mue joy of boiling exercise, and healthy fleasure. this is one of the great winters of life, and hermon a social and inclinide of chity. Tohan for its wol worth, and estimatel at its real volve, fleasure, and the enjoyment of flearure is a cardivol wintre in life. But when it is given a fake whe, when it becomes as a fanacea, a foteve mechaine, to be used as ford, and dunk, and vel else. it has token on the cost of folie voluction. and the way who is simply a fleasure seeker in this seure, is worshiffing one of the wort refulsive, and Hood thirty with the won ever worshiffeel. He is frefaring for the chy when the true volue of

his ideal will be direlessed to him and broken in body criffled in mind, chranfed in spirit, he will sit along awiel the cruthing progreets of his broken idle, wrish. relovely by the chancel boner, and lifeless asher of the sacrefices he for woole to be of the often of his fake god. Pleasure in truth is good and essential, Pleasure in idolety is destructive, and swothering. the time to the question of woney and wowey wohing, a wealth. He of singing, there is were. He who would dery the volve, and even the necessity of a workertrawout of woney; and the desire of a confertable reserve fund, is simply dealing in cart and rout. Thoney is good. It mice fuchre food, land, tooks

toures, with it one con havel, 23 or give aid to the for, and do a thousand and one things that are desireable, avel good in human ble. for far so good. but there are some things that werey will rot do, It will further food, but ook health, " " fuctoreatoure. " volatome, " " hire frietels " mille vot wohe friends: It way further books, but vot an education, it way buy love stories and forms Int it count bry love. it way furchere voteriety. but it convot secure tovor, it way build a chuch. but it count brill the Kingdom of god. Throney in its true worth is good and desirable, but woney workiffed as an ichel smelvfect with folse volver brings only min, misery and desfair. Witness the men

and the momen to chy whom lying in chiquere, shame and clerfain awong the ruins of their broken ichol, the margarener of whore former For heen clirclosed to them in the born when real former and stringth. On tohe swither forward ichol, that of Montesye, and culture. The true good, the former of knowledge, and cultures is four mitnessit by every tun that me wohe, line it foutle to get it by speculation, or to inherit from scholarly aucertor, it is very frobotte that we should flace a higher volve ofor it. then we do to: day. Jet to de la familia with enew one of the great brancher of human knowledge. to be at tome in the chicurin of history, art. literature, science

to be acquainted with the acts of facts of fine acts, and to listen affreciatively to the oferain by wo means or find standard of human life. Kurledge in truth is deef. rich and formerful in its significance, but kumuladge and sustine, entalle ennellefel in a fictition from and wordiffel in delotity, hings one to the some discouraging, elefente end that is in store for every worshiften of idols. In the woment when the sufreme need is feet, and the quat rue all is brought forth; it is found working. We are laid low by the efectiveles of

ou ielol, striffed of its fictitions actorments, and me are die = comaged by the true former of the which we thright wer all fewer their ferous there is the some former danger. I think These are sum. In give a just, and twe estimate of a ferm, either clear or livings is right and good. For for special from to three who has clone special service is just; to he influenced by the fersonality of the great and good is mise and it is uflifting. But because a won is divive, and guier enidence of is divinity is by wo wears the just basis of

our respect and offection by turn = ing some of our supplement actuation for him towards the len lively, den voble, and gine theme the inspiration they weed. The truth of human life is worder: for everythe without alleufting To envelope it with a frictitions volve, and credit-it with assertion of forfaction, to tune one love and respect for humany in an idoletines working is but to bring the cotorogly whom us which is told in the forth faroble of the fell of wen. Fictition when are weren fermanent, and the disclusive of their folishy either in the clearle or the living, in other or our selves, is the shittening of a broken idol. and to shitten

av ichol brings us clesfain and disconnegement became in worshiffing the iclot, me were religing ufon a John forme. W, the way of life, the way of vohility. the cliving way, is not in the worship of things, or ferous or institution about whom a folso light for hear cost, and to whom a folio former for heen accorded, but the hourt it is not the worship of ichols, which must be shattied before our eyes because of their folsity, but it is in the worship of ideals. and though which the great good will of the universe. is revealing himself touse.

The true way of life is in faying a true and just refert and form to there former of our ferm olity, thre things of the world those ferrors of the fort and frement thre institutions of society, in whom the ideals have found some? what of expression, and folding them ever in reactiver to do sewice in the realization of the ideal in house life, hors Then that to keep them ever active in the work of this great world of becoming in which me are fellowworkers with infinite on the work, in the life, there is fain, and suffering and

hardshif to be some, along with! the fig the flearnes, and the hoffiner, but in thet work, in the world of ideal there is no discouragement. wo desfair. but boundless, and eternal tops and faith, and the feace of the foreth oll understanding

## Broken Idols and Discouraged Worshippers

Earl C. Davis
Pittsfield, MA
1906

If one should take the trouble to point out to people today the extent to which they are worshippers of idols, and in their blind worship bring themselves to sorrow and discouragement as their idols lie broken and destroyed before them, he would hardly be thanked for his pains. Indeed it would be regarded as little short of blasphemy to suggest that in a Christian nation such a thing as the worship of idols could survive. Yet I think that in spite of all assertions to the contrary we are quite well involved in a system of idol worship, that is bringing upon us daily the depression and pessimism that follows the downfall of the particular idol that happens to claim our allegiance. In fact, we have witnessed the destruction of many idols during the past few years, and at each catastrophe there has risen the cry born of the same feelings, and expressing the same ideas as mere feelings and thoughts when the maddened populace cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."1

When we use the word idolatry there immediately arises before our mind the picture of some wooden God made in human form, or some tree, or some Golden calf or some Grecian household {???} or some Roman Emperor image. But we forget that such forms of are but particular forms of a tendency that is universal in human nature. It is the vice of a great virtue. It is not confined to pagan peoples and to ancient times, but here and there, and then and now, it takes it place in life, and in its own peculiar way, demands its homage and its obedience. The pity of it is we

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Roman goddess Diana (Artemis to the Greeks) was particularly important to the Ephesians, who lived in Ephesis, a Greek colony on the eastern coast of Asia Minor (Turkey today). A temple built in her honor was begun in 550 B.C.E., and took 120 years to complete. It measured 425 feet by 225 feet, almost double the size of the Parthenon in Athens.

do not realize that we have become idol worshippers until some sad day we find our idol shattered, and lying in ruins at our feet, and we come to a sudden consciousness of our plight, as we sit downcast and discouraged amid the ruins of the false god to whom we have sold our birthright for a mess of pottage.

The method by which we permit ourselves to become idol worshippers is very natural, very human, and indeed divine, and so long as the idol that we worship retains its place of absoluteness in our lives, and no doubts or suspicions of the possibility of its falseness finds its way into our mind, no one is more happy, more satisfied with all things, including the idol, than he who thus worships. No one can be more happy than the heathen as he worships before his idol, in whom he has faith that all power, all goodness, all love are incarnated. No one can be more happy than the followers of Mohamed, so long as he has faith that through the prophet Mohamed he has found the one way to Allah, the one God. No one can feel more secure than the Roman Catholic so long as his faith remains firm to the idea that in the Priest and Church and Pope, there is the one certain and irrevocable pathway to eternal peace, in which it is his pleasure to walk. No one can live with greater assurance of the right life, than the saintly soul who sits day-by-day searching the scriptures confident in the faith that this service will bring its sure reward in the world to come. The unquestioning worship of Christ is filled with [the] same confidence born of his faith that on the cross his sins were atoned for and in the fellowship of Christ's elect, he will receive the benefits of the great panacea for all sins and evils.

In all these forms there is a diversity of manifestations, but there is the one and the selfsame spirit, and that one and the selfsame spirit is the spirit of Idolatry. Strip away the outer garments of these various cults from the worshipped of the graven image, to the worshipped of the engraved image, and beneath will be found the impulse giving life to all. It is Idolatry. To give a fictitious value to a thing, or a person, or the graven or mental image of a thing or a person, and to pay it honor and respect and even to worship it for that value which it has not intrinsically, that is idolatry. It is the

fundamental error of human life, the basis of the formal worship of idols, and the basis of common everyday idolatry in all its forms, from the lowest to the highest.

Every object, every person, every institution, has its own proper place, its true relationship with other persons and objects in a world in which everything is related to every other. To single out one of these things, or one of these persons, or one of these institutions, and accord to it a wroth and a value with which it is not intrinsically endowed, and honor, respect and pay tribute to it on the basis of its fictitious valuation, that is the essence of idolatry. The idol may have some value for its worth for the material it contains. It may have some artistic merit for its symbol of the expression of the artist's personality. It may have some inspirational value by virtue of its associations, and as a symbol of its followers' ideal. But to regard it as having the power of a God, as being the medium for a God to work miracles is a perversion of the truth, not only of facts, but of the imagination. The thing is the product of man's mind working on the raw material of things, and its power to stop there.

Out of the personality of an exceptionally noble man, plus the fictitious vagaries of speculation, the idol of Christ has been manufactured, and to that imaginary being honor and worship has been paid for centuries.

Now all these various idols to which men have paid homage and to which they are now paying homage, are in every way as good as a reality, so long as the illusion in which they are shrouded remains undisclosed. The ivory image answers all purposes of the worshipping Oriental, so long as the blind and implicit faith in the omnipotence, and loving kindness of the God remains unclouded by any question of the inquiring spirit. The patent medicine in the bottle on the shelf is just as good as anything else, so long as there is no need of medicine, and it remains untouched. The paper money without coin value behind it is just as good as a medium of exchange as anything else so long as no one takes the trouble to ask how much the stuff is really worth, and who is responsible for its redemption. The watered stock of a corporation will pass for its face value until some inquisitive person begins to find out that the

million dollars worth of stock actually represents only about \$10,000 dollars worth of property. Any religious system will float all the watered stock of speculative creed and dogma that the mind of man can invent, so long as faith in the value of its totality remains unchanged.

But man not only imagines and constructs, he inquires and investigates. He knocks at the door of things unknown, having faith that he will have it opened unto he. He seeks, confident, that he will find. He asks in the faith that he will receive. He is endowed with the impulse of the inquiring spirit, and he will not remain satisfied until he has examined the idol of ivory to see if it has its alleged powers, and the patent medicine to see if it can cure, and the paper money to see if it has any real worth behind it, the watered stock does not escape his notice, nor does he pass over the shabby claims of a religious system. The big stick will not always work, and by use, people become so accustomed to it that they are bold to investigate.

Then comes the sad catastrophe of collapse. The idol which was once worshipped for a value which was never a part of it, is now cast aside, and even that value which belongs to it is overlooked and trampled ruthlessly by the discouraged and disenchanted populace. The paper money once passing for its face value, falls, falls in price; consternation reigns and at last the bedrock of absolute worthlessness is the terra firma upon which the collapsing airship falls. The value of the watered stock is doubled. Down goes the price, carrying it is fall, financial ruin and loss, stagnation of industry, ruin, hardship and suffering.

The claims to religious truth, and religious authority are doubted. Slowly and steadily the inquiring mind and the hungry spirit becomes awakened. "By what authority do you speak? In what power do you act?" asks the world. Century-by-century for centuries, we see the constant and steady investigations into the authority and claims of the church as the ministry of religion. One after another of the sacred safes have been opened and nothing has been found within, like unto the representations printed on the outside. As a result of this shattering of an idol worshipped for a power which it does not contain, we are in

the midst of the gloomy situation of a nation clinging frantically to the crumbling bits of their dethroned idol, or else in despair, they are throwing the fragments of their collapsing crystal palace away even forgetting the foundation upon which it was built and the true worth of the raw material involved in its construction. France for a century, living in the moral gloom following its discouragement amid the ruins of its religious idol, whose falsities had been disclosed; Germany entering upon the same kind of a period. Italy and Spain already in the midst of it. Russia just coming to it; and the people of this [country] passing through all the stages at once: that is the price we are paying at present for worshipping a religious idol of speculation, and having to go through the pain of disillusionment.

The basis of life is truth, and to follow the shadows of fictions is the idolatrous worship of their fictitious values, is but to bring upon ourselves the gloom of living amid broken idols, in the atmosphere of discouragement and despair—a just penalty for fixing upon things, and persons, and institutions a false value, and a false claim.

But I am speaking of this great and universal danger of false valuation, and self-deceit, not merely because it happens that we are living at a time when many doubting ones are crying with the cry of discouragement, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" as the convalescent cling to their falling idols through which they derive much gain. Not indeed because we are living at a time when inquiring, and asking for the true value, and power of everything, from the individual man, to the great institutions, but I am speaking of it because of its direct bearing upon individual lives, and the perplexities and problems which they have to face. Each one of us is living in the midst of worry and conflicting duties, obligations, and privileges. The danger of life is to permit some one of these privileges or duties or problems to assume before our very eyes a face value which is greater than its intrinsic worth. We transform some privilege, or some duty, or some obligation into an idol and worship the idol in the days of our blind faith, preparing the way for a discouraged pessimism, when in time of actual need, the limitations of

our idol's power are disclosed to us, and we see it for its truth worth.

To speak first of some of the more common things of life wherein idolatry is common, and the danger is apparent, we turn naturally to what we commonly call pleasures, i.e., those things that we do for no other reason than the enjoyment of them at the time, and their influence upon pleasure later. Ordinary sports and games, out of doors and indoors, the enjoyment of the appetites, are more common forms of pleasure seeking. In the child this is the dominant factor, and must continue to be a fact of the life of everyone even to the end. To relax, to play, to forget everything for a time in the mere joy of bodily exercise, and healthy pleasure, this is one of the great virtues of life, and becomes a social and individual duty. Taken for its real worth, and estimated at its real value, pleasure, and the enjoyment of pleasure, is a cardinal virtue in life.

But when it is given a false value, when it becomes as a panacea, a patent medicine, to be used as food, and drink, and all else, it has taken on the coat of false valuation, and the man who is simply a pleasure seeker in this sense is worshipping one of the most repulsive and blood-thirsty idols that man ever worshipped. He is preparing for the day when the true value of his idol will be disclosed to him and broken in body, crippled in mind, dwarfed in spirit, he will sit alone amid the crumbling fragments of his broken idol, nourished only by the charred bones and lifeless ashes of the sacrifices he has made upon the alter of his false God.

Pleasure, in truth, is good and essential. Pleasure in idolatry is destructive, and smothering.

Or turn to the question of money and money making, or wealth. He who would deny the value, and even the necessity of a moderate amount of money, and the satisfaction of a comfortable reserve fund, is simply dealing in cant and rant. Money is good. It will purchase food, land, books, houses. With it, one can travel, or give aid to the poor, and do a thousand and one things that are desirable, and good in human life. So far so good. But there are some

things that money will not do. It will purchase food, but not health. It will purchase a house, but not a home. It will give help, but will not make friends. It may purchase books, but not an education. It may buy love stories and poems, but it cannot buy love. It may purchase notoriety, but it cannot secure honor. It may build a church, but it cannot build the Kingdom of God. Money, in its true worth, is good and desirable, but money worshipped as an idol enveloped with false values brings only ruin, misery and despair. Witness the men and women today who are lying in disgrace, shame and despair among the ruins of their broken idol, the meagerness of whose power has been disclosed to them in the form where real power and strength.

Or take another popular idol, that of knowledge, and culture. The good, the power of knowledge and culture is born witness to by every turn that we make. Were it possible to get it by speculation, or to inherit from scholarly ancestors, it is very probable that we should place a higher value upon it than we do today. Yet to be familiar with even one of the great branches of human knowledge, to be at home in the discussion of history, art, literature, science, to be acquainted with the facts of fine arts, and to listen appreciatively to the opera is by no means a final standard of human life. Knowledge and culture in truth is deep, rich and powerful in its significance, but knowledge and culture enveloped in a fictitious power, and worshipped in idolatry, brings one to the same discouraging, desperate end that is in store for every worshipper of idols. In the moment when the supreme need is felt, and the great cure-all is brought forth, it is found wanting. We are laid low by the spectacles of our idol, stripped of its fictitious adornments, and we are discouraged by the true power of that which we thought was all-powerful.

Or in persons there is the same danger. To give a just and true estimate of a person, whether dead or living, is right and good. To pay special honor to those who have done special service is just; to be influenced by the personality of the great and good is wise and it is uplifting. But because man is divine, and gives evidence of his divinity, is by no means the just basis of declaring him to be God, and accord him the worship of the supreme

being. Because our ancestors were strong brave men who did a noble work, and lived heroic lives, we of right should respect them, but to regard them as saints, and worship them as such, is but to erect another idol to be demolished before our eyes, at some critical moment. Because our friend is good, noble, and true, there is no just reason for paying him the worship that belong to God. Much better would we show our respect and affection by turning some of our adoration for him towards those less lovely, less noble, and give them the inspiration they need. The truth of human life is wonderful enough without attempting to envelope it with a fictitious value, and credit it with assertions of perfection. To turn our love and respect for humanity in an idolatrous worship is but to bring the catastrophe upon us which is told in the parable of the fall of man. Fictitious values are never permanent, and the disclosure of their falsity either in the dead or the living, in others or ourselves, is the shattering of a broken idol, and to shatter an idol brings us despair and discouragement because in worshipping the idol, we were relying upon a false power.

No! The way of life, the way of nobility, the divine way, is not in the worship of things, or persons, or institutions, about whom a false light has been cast, and to whom a false power has been accorded. It is not the worship of idols which must be shattered before our eyes because of their falsity, but it is in the worship of ideals, through which the Great Good Will of the universe is revealing himself to us. The true way of life is in paying a true and just respect and honor to those powers of our personality, those things of the world, those persons of the past and present, those institutions of society, in whom the ideals have found somewhat of expression, and holding them ever in readiness to do service in the realization of the ideals in human life. More than that, to keep them ever active in the work of this great world of becoming, in which we are fellow workers with [the] infinite. In that work, in that life, there is pain, and suffering and hardship to be sure, along with the joy, the pleasure and the happiness. But in that work, in the world of ideals there is no discouragement, no despair, but boundless, and eternal hope and faith, and the peace that passeth all understanding.