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It is no longer just primitive tribes that are involved in idolatry, ancestor worship and superstitions. Missionaries are not only confronted with witchcraft in the jungles but also in the cities. It is not only in the third world that one finds child sacrifice and cannibalism — it is becoming prevalent in the West as well.

“For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Romans 1:21

Western civilization has moved from the age of reason to non-reason, from scepticism to mysticism, from disbelief in the Bible to gullible acceptance of every idle fad, theory and ideology.

“Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man...” Romans 1.22,23

WESTERN IDOLATRY

While claiming to be secular, the average Westerner is in fact very religious. The modern secular religion of humanism has its own traditions, myths, rituals, systems of belief, values, codes of behaviour and institutions. Humanism even has its own objects of worship — idols.

“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator...” Romans 1:25

And so millions of humanists worship rock idols and pop stars. Most of these idols may be drug

addicts and perverts but their music and posters dominate the lives of their devoted followers. Their evangelistic rallies (rock concerts) are often the scene of extreme hysteria and fanatical worship by their screaming, dancing and fainting devotees.

“The hearts of men moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts.” Ecclesiastes 9:3

Sex idols and beauty queens receive extreme adulation from the adoring, lustful or jealous masses. Hollywood has places of worship worldwide where the faithful can pay homage to screen idols. Most television stations have become outreach missions to promote these man-made idols and humanist values in every home. Soap operas have been an effective medium in promoting permissiveness, situation ethics and immorality.

“They are skilled in doing evil; they know not how to do good.” Jeremiah 4:22

Entertainment has become a god and the humanist religion worships fame, fortune, beauty, wealth and success (even if it's make-believe). Parties have become humanist worship services and the bar counter a communion table. Drunkenness or orgies are sought after as heights of humanist expression. Humanists have rejected the pleasure of worshipping God and exchanged it for the worship of pleasure.

“What was sown among the thorns is the man who hears the Word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.” Matthew 13:22

Science has become another god of humanism, especially the theory of evolution. Despite the lack of proof and the multitude of everchanging and conflicting theories within evolutionism, humanists hold on to this explanation of the origin of man with religious fervour. To the atheist evolution is an unquestionable article of faith — because the alternative is unthinkable!

And it really does need some blind faith to believe that “once upon a time there was nothing and then there was something and that something made everything.”

It doesn't seem very scientific to claim that "a whole lot of time and a whole lot of nothing made everything." In fact the notion that the universe is the product of a big bang seems about as likely as a bomb in a printing press producing an encyclopaedia. Nevertheless, this "fairy tale for grown ups", this "from goo to the zoo to you" gospel of the evolutionists is regularly palmed off as "science".

No wonder the Scripture talks of people who are-

"always learning, but never able to acknowledge the truth" 2 Timothy 3:7

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight" 1 Corinthians 3:19

Yet time and again people prefer to trust in the wisdom of men rather than the Word of God.

"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'. They are corrupt and their ways are vile." Psalm 53:1

And it would seem that the sacred temples of humanists are the secular universities. Although the Scriptures declare that

— *"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."* Proverbs 1:7,

most universities prefer to begin with evolution and atheism. Hence the Bible refers to a "wisdom" that is

- *"earthly, unspiritual, of the devil."* James 3:15

And we are warned:

"See to it that no-one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."
Colossians 2:8

The bishops and cardinals of this philosophy are often the professors and deans of the local university.

"Professing to be wise, they became fools." Romans 1:22

"The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." 1 Corinthians 3:20

These humanistic temples of training serve an important role in promoting the worship of pride, status and self-worship.

"This is the fate of those who trust in themselves, and of their followers, who approve their sayings. Like sheep they are destined for the grave, and death will feed on them ... their forms will decay..." Psalm 49:13,14

The evangelists of humanism are generally found amongst the editors, journalists and producers of the mass media. Not only do most humanists trust the media as their source of information and as the revelation of truth, but many Christians are influenced by its worldview as well. This is inevitable as most Christians spend more time reading the newspaper than the Bible.

"The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly." Proverbs 15:14

For many humanists sport is an idol, with rugby or cricket, football or baseball dominating their lives. For others politics has become like a god. To the humanist, government is a replacement for God — “Big Brother”, provider, the all-powerful ultimate authority.

“You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath ... You shall not bow down to them or worship them.” Exodus 20:3,4

Others have made a cult out of earth worship and environmentalism and —

“Worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator” Romans 1:25

For many, wealth and materialism is an obsession.

“People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” □

1 Timothy 6:9,10

For people-pleasers it is not what is right but what is popular that is their guiding principle as they slavishly follow the crowd. Even ministers have deified “the people” in support of this herd instinct.

“For they loved praise from men more than praise from God.” John 12:43

Yet God’s law declares —

“Do not follow the crowds in doing wrong do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd.”

Exodus 23:2

“How can you believe if you accept praise from one another yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God.” John 5:44

Many worship freedom and exalt liberation above all else. However, in the name of freedom many have been murdered and oppressed. The worst atrocities and enslavements have been committed under the banner of liberation.

“They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity.” 2 Peter 2:19

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love.” Galatians 5:13

WORSHIPPING THE DEAD

It is common knowledge that many in Asian and African cultures worship the departed spirits. This ancestor worship, or animism, is regarded with amusement or disdain by many Europeans and Americans, who seem blind to their own variations.

Millions of devoted socialists make pilgrimages to the tomb of Vladimir Lenin in Moscow. yet as the shuffling line of idolising masses files past the dead dictator, few realise that the actual body of Lenin is no longer there. What they are in fact worshipping is a plaster and plastic dummy.

“Ignorant are those .. who pray to gods that cannot save.” Isaiah 45:20

The graves and shrines of Muhammed, Karl Marx, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, Martin Luther King, Elvis Presly and John Lennon are also scenes of idolising of the dead. No-one can claim

that Europeans and Americans are free of ancestor worship! But like Buddah, Ghandi, Mao, Machel and Ceausescu, these objects of worship are all dead.

“Like a scarecrow in a melon patch, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good.” Jeremiah 10:5

However, in Jerusalem there is an empty tomb...

SUPERSTITIONS

Some of the prevalent superstitions of the West — like touching wood or stroking a rabbit’s foot for luck, not crossing a black cat’s path — seem quite foolish and harmless. Some — like not walking under a ladder — seem to be quite practical. However, if a rabbit’s foot was a source of good luck, it would still be on the rabbit.

It is a tragedy, however, that some church denominations are also steeped in superstitions — worshipping statues and saints and holding masses for the dead.

However, the influence of the “New Age” movement has brought about an even more serious mysticism in society. More and more people are turning to fortune-tellers, clairvoyants and astrologers for guidance. Instead of seeking guidelines from the Word of God, many now turn to the stars, familiar spirits and demons. This present obsession with the occult does not bode well for “Western civilization.”

“Do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations ... Let no-one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter ... who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord.” Deuteronomy 18.9-12

WITCHCRAFT AND CHILD SACRIFICE

The present explosion of occultism and satanism makes it clear that witchcraft is not confined to the primitive but is prevalent among the sophisticated as well. Ritual murders committed “in Satan’s name”, and cruel and perverted child abuse is becoming widespread.

Yet those of us who are disgusted at reports of child sacrifice by satanists should remember that, practically speaking, abortion is just a clinical and sophisticated form of child sacrifice. And while all civilised people are revolted at the practise of cannibalism — tens of thousands of aborted babies have been sold to cosmetic companies for use in beauty products.

As the Scripture declares:

“There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” 2 Timothy 3:1-4

Mankind is in rebellion against God. Whether our disobedience to God is blatant or subtle, brutal or sophisticated, primitive or civilised — God’s Word is clear:

“Now He commands all people everywhere to repent.” Acts 17:30

“Rid yourselves of all the offences you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die...?” Ezekiel 18:3 1

“Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.” Isaiah 55:7

“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:13

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