

The Story behind *Christian Theology and Ancient Polytheism: A Comparative Study for Youth (CTAP)*

CTAP was perhaps as much of a surprise to me as it is to my readers. Of all the topics covered in this work, the one that challenged me most was worship. Worship is a word I have used and an activity I have participated in my entire life, though I cannot say that I have ever grappled seriously with its deeper meaning and the purposes it serves in the life of the believer. How does worship affect the believer? That seems an odd question. Should we not be asking how does worship affect God? One of my significant realizations was that worship does not affect God, as much as it influences our lives. God cannot be influenced because God has no needs (Acts 17:34). God does not love us more if we worship him, we love Him more if we worship Him. God's actions do not change if we worship Him, our actions change *when* we worship Him. God does not think better of us if we worship Him, worship grows our wisdom. Worship transforms the worshiper by elevating the One we were made to be like. Worship teaches us what is praiseworthy as we reflect on the nature of God. Reflecting on His bountiful goodness clarifies in the mind of the believer what we are called to be like.

Perhaps to my reader all this is obvious. After years of Christian living, Christian education, and Christian teaching how could I come so late to such powerful truth? We all have areas of blindness and ignorance. In His perfect timing, Christ mercifully shines His light upon our hearts. God illumined me through my study of pagan worship. Pagan society revolved around the worship of their gods. What was the outcome of their deep commitment to worship? They became like the gods and goddesses they served. Pagans were grossly immoral. Human life was cheap, and amassing power was their preoccupation. These were the views and habits of pagan gods. The Word tells us plainly, "Those who make [idols], become like them." (Psalm 115:8)

Idolatry is a gross affront to God, but part of His hatred of its detestable practices must be the tragic deformity idolatry causes in His children. We were made to be like God for our blessing. Nothing is more ennobling than when the creature represents the Creator to the world. But we, like the pagans, are satisfied with so much less. We would rather make gods in our image than be made in His. Thus the human being who succumbs to idolatry destroys himself and others, as Paul so poignantly portrays in Romans 1:18-32 “ ... they ... exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible men ... they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator ... and God gave them over....” Idolatry leads to destruction. True worship is the path to glory as we become like the One we worship. May His name be forever praised.

CTAP as a complete work is my humble argument for why God chose to leave us in a world so torn by sin and shrouded in darkness. Darkness compels us to seek the light. The “knowledge of good and evil” does provide wisdom for those who learn from it. My heart is for children, to enable them to see through the examination of false ideas why the truth is so compelling. That was my objective for CTAP. I hardly could imagined how much God would teach me through the journey.