
Isaiah 45:16 All the makers of idols will be put to shame and disgraced; they will go off into disgrace together. ¹⁷ But Israel will be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting.

¹⁸ For this is what the LORD says— he who created the heavens, he is God; he who **formed** and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but **formed** it to be inhabited...

Returning to God: Hosea 14

Hosea 14:1 Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, your sins have been your downfall.

² Take words with you and return to the LORD; say to him, “Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously that we may offer the fruit of our lips. ³ Assyria cannot save us, we will not mount warhorses. We will never again say, ‘Our God,’ to the work of our hands, for in thee the fatherless finds compassion.”

⁴ I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.

⁵ I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily, like a cedar of Lebanon he will set down his roots.

⁶ his young shoots will grow; his beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon.

⁷ Men will once again dwell under my shade. They will flourish like the grain, they will blossom like the vine, and their fragrance will be like the wine of Lebanon.

⁸ O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a green pine tree; your fruitfulness comes from me.

⁹ Whoever is wise, he will realize these things; whoever is discerning, he will know them; for the ways of the LORD are right, the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.

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The Great Reversal

The Loss of Meaning and the Problem of Idolatry—part 6

April 2, 2023

Idolatry and the loss of meaning

Exodus 20:1 And God spoke all these words: ² “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³ “You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

“The **noble** type of person feels that *he* determines value, he does not need anyone’s approval, he judges that ‘What is harmful to me is harmful in itself,’ he knows that he is the one who gives honor to things in the first place; he creates values. He honors everything he sees in himself: this sort of morality is self-glorifying.”

- Friedrich Nietzsche,

The process results in the loss of meaning in life.

Hebrew words for “idol”

a. “Gillulim” –

Lev. 26:30 I will destroy your high places... and heap your remains on the remains of your gillulim.

b. “hebel” –

2 Kings 17:15 “...they followed vanity and became vain”

c “Elil” –

Isaiah 2:17 The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, ¹⁸ and the idols will totally disappear. ¹⁹ People will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from the fearful presence of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth. ²⁰ In that day people will throw away to the moles and bats their idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made to worship.

d. “Mipleset” –

1 Kings. 15:13 He even deposed his grandmother Maakah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive image for the worship of Asherah. Asa cut it down and burned it in the Kidron Valley.

A metaphor of idolatry

The potter and the clay

Isa. 29:14 Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish.” ¹⁵ Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, “Who sees us? Who will know?”

Isaiah 29:16 You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, “You did not make me”? Can the pot say to the potter, “You know nothing”?

The big picture

God desires everyone to know His goodness

Isaiah 45:3 I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. ⁴ For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor...

In spite of our hardness of heart

...though you do not acknowledge me. ⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, ⁶ so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.

God reminds them of His creative power and acts...

⁷ I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things. ⁸ “You heavens above, rain down my righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness flourish with it; I, the LORD, have created it.

...And the absurdity of kicking against God

⁹ “Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker, those who are nothing but potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you making?’ Does your work say, ‘The potter has no hands’?

¹⁰ Woe to the one who says to a father, ‘What have you begotten?’ or to a mother, ‘What have you brought to birth?’

¹¹ “This is what the LORD says—the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands?

¹² It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.
