

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

Exodus 20:4-6

## INVISIBLE SPIRIT

**Y**OU CAN'T REALLY BLAME THEM, those nations and individuals who, down through the millennia, have crafted physical representations of their otherwise invisible gods. It is a perfectly natural thing, after all, to hold to some image of an absent loved one.

In the Gulf of Tonkin during the Vietnam War, my most prized possessions were the few snapshots I had of my intended: the lovely teenager who would become my wife as soon as I returned to the States. I taped the cherished images to the bottom of the overhead rack, so I could gaze upon the object of my affection the last thing before sleep, and the first thing upon awakening.

But colored photographs of a distant fiancé are a far cry from a graven image of an invisible god, and the deep longings I felt for the young woman in the picture were something very different from obeisant worship.

Because He is not flesh but Spirit, our God is indeed invisible to those on earth. Jesus explained that, among men, only He had seen God.

"Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father."  
*John 6:46*

This is how God wants it. He requires this level of separation from fallen flesh. In fact there's a stiff penalty paid by anyone who *does* see Him.

But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"

*Exodus 33:20*

The Christian does not need an image of God crafted from wood or stone or fired clay. The Father has already supplied us with the image of Himself in His Son—not just a snapshot, not just a faint caricature, Jesus is the fullness of everything God is.

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

*Colossians 1:13-15*

In His Son, God has given us far more than a plaster statue that bears Him some imaginative resemblance. In Jesus we have the very personality, the character, the love and grace and mercy of an invisible, compassionate Father. We have Him in human flesh—breathing, sweating, weeping, real flesh.

Even though we dwell in His grace, however, we cannot relax our fear of idolatry, and the chance that

we might be found by Him to have fallen into its clutches.

Let us beware lest we in our pride accept the erroneous notion that idolatry consists only in kneeling before visible objects of adoration, and that civilized peoples are therefore free from it. The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him.

*A.W. Tozer*

There reigns the Eternal Father, in His lone prerogatives,  
And, in the Father's Mind, the Son, all self-existing, lives,  
With Him, their mutual Jubilee, that deepest depth of love,  
Lifegiving Life of twofold source, the many gifted Dove!  
O Bountiful! O Beautiful! can Power or Wisdom add  
Fresh features to a life, so munificent and glad?  
Can even uncreated Love, ye angels! give a hue  
Which can ever make the Unchanging and Unchangeable look new?

Frederick William Faber

