

## Publishing Editor's column

*AS WE read the Old Testament history of Israel we are continually coming across idol worship, practised not by the nations around Israel but by Israel themselves. As we read the books of the prophets we are continually coming across the Divine condemnation of the idolatry of God's people. Often it was not a case of Israel forsaking the worship of God altogether, but of mixing the worship of God with the worship of idols. They tried to have the best of both worlds, but ended up with neither, for their idol worship benefited them nothing because the idols themselves were nothing. And their attempts to worship God as well as idols only brought them condemnation, for God demands undivided allegiance to Him. How foolish they were! Yet are we in practice equally foolish?*

*The Ten Commandments begin with the command, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me"; they end with, "Thou shalt not covet . . ." (Ex. 20:3,17). Job linked placing confidence and hope in gold with worshipping the sun and the moon (worshipping sun and moon deities were very early forms of idolatry), recognising that both were denials of God and saying that he was innocent of both (31:24-28). The New Testament continues this theme. Jesus twice stated, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt. 6:24; Lk. 16:13), mammon being a Hebrew personification of riches; and the Apostle Paul twice links covetousness with idolatry (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5).*

*The message of Scripture is thus that placing our hope and trust in money and the things money can buy is as bad as worshipping idols. Yet we who live in the prosperous Western world live in a society that does just this. We may think, "How foolish!" when reading of how Israel of old tried to worship God and idols. Yet are we not doing the same if we trust in our bank balances, our insurance policies, our pension schemes, our investments? Are we not doing the same when we set our minds upon the acquiring of material things, upon the improvement of our standard of living? It is not wrong to make reasonable provision for our temporal needs, but it is wrong to make the acquisition and enjoyment of material things the prime goal in our lives and merely worship God from time to time as a kind of insurance policy for the future.*

*When Jeremiah condemned Judah for forsaking the worship of God and going after idols, he likened their folly to forsaking "the fountain of living waters" and hewing out for themselves "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (2:13). By partaking of the living waters of God's Truth we obtain eternal blessings in Christ Jesus. The institutions of this world will ultimately fail, and they will fail us if we put our trust in them. Western society has grown used to instant gratification, and the result is an increasing mountain of debt that threatens not only ruin to individuals who have been drawn into this way of living but the bringing down of the financial institutions that provide the means for that gratification. In what are we placing our trust? In Divine things that will never fail us, or in the "uncertain riches" (1 Tim. 6:17) of this world?*

Tony Benson

*Publication of articles in The Testimony does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine, as defined in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith.*