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Closing Down the Idol Factories

By Ben Swift

'The fantasy of the human being is a factory that works ceaselessly to make idols.' (John Calvin)

When it comes to creating idols, human beings certainly have a lengthy and impressive portfolio, one that reflects incredible imagination and ingenuity. The pages of history reveal us bending the knee to everything from the nature gods of ancient religions, to the mighty dollar of the stock exchange, even to deified mortals highly skilled in kicking leather balls. Recently deceased soccer phenomenon, Diego Maradona is a case in point. Worshipped and immortalized as an Argentinian demigod, a temple was erected for his worshiping fans during a three-day period of national mourning. It certainly seems our idol making factories are still moving full steam ahead.

What will it take to wake us up? Are we so blind to the fact that each new idol we fantasize into being is simply another golden calf molded by the hands of finite people, or is it that we actually enjoy swimming in the depths of our own delusions while worshipping our own abilities to create them?

As Christians we are called to close down these fantastical factories, flick the off switch and get real. We are called to live in the light of the truth that is Christ and to worship him alone.

Salvation is through faith alone, by grace alone, in Christ alone, as revealed in the scriptures alone, for the glory of God alone. If we want to live in the light of reality, we must come to know the truth about who God is and who we are; knowing God and knowing ourselves.

'Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.' (John 17:3)

As we look to what God has to say, he pulls no punches when distinguishing himself from us, calling us to abandon our factories for a higher reality.

'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,' says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts

than your thoughts.' (Isaiah 55:8-9)

It's at this point that things get tricky. Only through the eyes of faith can the reality of who God is be seen. To comprehend the reality of God in faith is to seek the God revealed in Christ. It is to ask the question of all questions, 'Who are you?' and to grab hold of his response. The true reality of God is hidden in the sense that it cannot be grasped or seen through human reason. Rather, it can only be comprehended by faith through the hearing of the gospel. If we are to comprehend the reality of God in faith, our human reason must first be dethroned, so we may embrace the paradox of Christ; God come to us.

As we look to Christ and his cross, we find God revealed in ways that defy human logic, turning reason on its head.

'For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."' (1 Cor 1:18-19).

Who then is God? As we look to Christ, God revealed, we see his humility as a weak man among sinners, a baby born in a lowly manger, a broken man nailed to a Roman cross. Here we find in Christ the beautiful, untainted reflection of the Father's love, mercy and grace. Faith in God and who he is, brings us to the ultimate paradox through which we as Christians are called; we must die in order that we may truly live.

'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.' (Gal 2:20)

How contrasting a reality to those generated by the factories of human fantasy and reason throughout the ages. In spite of human wisdom and the philosophies our day, Christ reveals that comfort can be found unexpectedly in the God who has entered the harsh realities of our lives; fully human, fully God. How assuring it is to know we have a God who despite being in all ways higher than us, is also Christ for us.

Ben Swift is the author of *Beyond the Fish Sticker*.