

a power struggle. And Jesus takes precisely the principalities and powers that placed him on the cross—the idols of militarism, nationalism, racism, technicism, economism—and on that very cross disarms, dethrones, conquers and makes public example of them. In this power struggle, sacrificial love is victorious precisely by being poured out on a cross, a symbol of imperial violence and control.

→ If all of this is true, then don't allow the front-men of these vanquished powers to tell you what to eat and drink. Don't buy into the simulated grocery stores made to remind shoppers of an era in which shopping was more integral to community life. Don't be duped by advertising that tells you that various products are indispensable to constructing certain images and personas. This is all crap. They are still trying to captivate your imagination, to suck you into a globalistic regime of homogeneous consumption. Resist this Mc-World nightmare with all the strength you have! Avoid the Disneyization of your consciousness! This stuff has no substance to it, no depth. It suffers from the unbearable lightness of being. But in Christ we find substance, something of weight and power.

And don't get sucked into consumerist ideology when it comes dressed up in the clothes of Christian faith. A "new manly piety" just might be more of the same old patriarchal power-grabbing, capitalist legitimating stuff that we have seen being pimped both at the mall and in the consumer-friendly church. And all the charismatic enthusiasm in the world, rolling the aisles with holy joy, amounts to little more than puffed-up humanism if it is devoid of a radical transformation of entire human lives. So much religious renewal seems so attractive, so comfortable, so safe. But it is fundamentally secular. Its cultural imagination remains in captivity to an idolatrous worldview, and it has lost contact with the real source of life. It cannot sustain deep and radical growth that is subversive of the regimes of truth because it is not nourished from the source of all things—it does not grow with a growth that comes from God.

If with Christ you died in your baptism to the principles of autonomous consumerism that still hold the world captive, then why do you live in a way that suggests that you are still in the iron grip of its ideological vision? Why do you submit yourself to its regulations to consume as if there were no tomorrow, to live as if community were an impediment to personal fulfillment, to live as if everything were disposable, including relationships, the unborn and the environment? Why do you allow this deceitful vision to still have a hold on you? Don't you know that copulating with the idols of this culture is like climbing into bed with a corpse that is already decomposing?

Let's be clear about this: the postmodern vision of a laid-back pluralism where people hold only to their local narratives and abandon any attempt to make truth claims beyond their personal opinions or traditional communities may look like a way to end the violence, to respect otherness and stop marginalization and genocide, but it is in fact totally and irrevocably impotent to accomplish any of this. It has a mere appearance of wisdom; it has no depth of vision to discern between paths of wisdom and paths of folly. It looks like humility, and it will lay on the guilt pretty thick for the years of violence legitimated by various metanarratives (including the Christian one!), but it is not humble enough. It fails to see that the real issue of violence, exclusion and marginalization goes much deeper—it lies in the violence, rebellion and deceitfulness of the human heart. Self-

imposed postmodern guilt trips can do nothing to heal the heart and can do nothing to stop the violence. Only the exhaustion of that violence on the cross can begin a real restoration.

You see, my friends, the postmodern incredulity of all metanarratives is well founded. The modernist metanarrative, of civilizational progress manifest in an aggressive conquering of colonized peoples, so-called scientific objectivism, a technological will to power and a market capitalism that would commodify all of life, deplete creational resources and create an ecological nightmare, was a tall tale—a lying, self-justifying ideological narrative. Yet humans are inherently storytelling creatures. And any local narrative will necessarily and invariably function as a metanarrative in the lives of those who hold it as their story.

So the issue isn't whether to live out of a metanarrative or not, but which metanarrative, and whose grand story. Without a grounding and directing story, no praxis is possible. That is why the crisis of storyless postmodern people, animated by little more than media- and market-produced images, is a crisis of moral and cultural paralysis.

But that's not the way it is with you, is it? You know which metanarrative brings life, don't you? You know whose grand story has set you free, don't you? Remember, in Christ you have died and were buried and have been raised to new life. His story is your story! Your identity and destiny are inextricably tied to the story of Jesus. And there is more to this story. The risen one is the ascended one, sitting at the right hand of God! If you have been raised with Christ, then, you must also make your own the rest of his story. Allow your imagination, your vision, your hope to be set on and directed by this image of kingly and restorative rule.

And this narrative of death, burial, resurrection and ascension still isn't the whole story. You see, Christ will return; his hidden rule in heaven will be revealed on earth—and just as his full glory will be revealed, so also will this be a revelation of *your* full glory as restored, renewed and fruitful image-bearers of God. When that happens, this whole business of exchanging your true glory as God's image-bearers for the kind of idolatry that continues to tempt and oppress you will come to a final and liberating end!

Do you feel incomplete, not yet fully who you are called to be? Good! Because you *are* incomplete, and any presumptuous sentiments otherwise would land you right back into idolatry. But we do live in hope. The struggle between the restorative rule of God in Christ and false, empty, deceitful pretenders to sovereignty—this struggle we experience deep within our bodies, our communities, our culture—will reach a final resolution in the return of Christ. Yes, we are waiting, but what we are waiting for is already stored up for us in Christ's heavenly rule and will be revealed in his coming. So live now, animated by that radically subversive hope.

### What's the Deal with Idolatry?

You call that "humble and tentative"?

We knew you'd have another question.

Actually, I kind of appreciated your taking the time to anticipate some of my questions with that hermeneutical discussion that you used to set up this targum.

It was clear when we first talked that you had some misgivings about the whole