**THE CONTINUITY OF THE BIBLE**

[Series showing the progressive unfoldment of the Christ, Truth, throughout the Scriptures]

The Second Commandment

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**The** second commandment of the Mosaic Decalogue, beginning, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" ([Ex. 20:4](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Thou+shalt+not+make+unto+thee+any+graven+image&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)), was disobeyed by the Israelites, even before it was graven upon stone, thus proving the great need of such a regulation.

Toward the close of Moses' long communing with the Almighty on the summit of Mount Sinai, the Israelites, waiting impatiently on the plain below, appear to have concluded that their leader, and presumably the God whom he worshiped, had deserted them. Turning to Moses' brother, Aaron, they cried, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" ([Ex. 32:1](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Up%2C+make+us+gods%2C+which+shall+go+before+us%3B+for+as+for+this+Moses%2C+the+man+that+brought+us+up+out+of+the+land+of+Egypt%2C+we+wot+not+what+is+become+of+him&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)).

All too quickly influenced by their plan, Aaron contributed to it by melting down the golden earrings provided by the people; and when the molten metal cooled, he carved it to represent a calf, assuring the people that here was one of the gods they desired. Before leaving Egypt, the people may well have seen similar images of Apis, the sacred bull, often worshiped in that country as symbolizing endurance, vigor, and strength.

Coming down the mountainside following his reception of the commandments graven on tables of stone, Moses heard the songs and shouts of the people and quickly realized that their rejoicing was associated with the worship of their alleged deity, the golden calf. He ground the calf to dust, while severe punishments were visited on the recalcitrant Israelites.

Later in Hebrew history, remnants of such idolatrous worship again appeared, for Jeroboam erected two golden calves in northern Israel, often termed Samaria (see I Kings 12:28, 29); but the prophet Hosea, consistently loyal to the true God, asserted that "the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces" [(Hos. 8:6)](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=the+calf+of+Samaria+shall+be+broken+in+pieces&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj).

A close parallel to this denunciation of a golden image appears in the Master's statement in the Sermon on the Mount [(Matt. 6:24)](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Ye+cannot+serve+God+and+mammon&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj), "Ye cannot serve God and mammon"—mammon being an Aramaic word often employed in the sense of money or even of gold itself. Is it not evident that here, as in numerous other passages, Christ Jesus found no room for divided loyalty? The prophet Elijah expressed a similar thought in the words, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" [(I Kings 18:21)](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=How+long+halt+ye+between+two+opinions%3F+if+the+Lord+be+God%2C+follow+him%3A+but+if+Baal%2C+then+follow+him&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)—words which become even more vivid in the light of the fact that when the King James Version was prepared, the verb "halt" meant more strictly to limp or to be lame. To the prophet, as to the Master himself, partial, faltering devotion to God's service was of no true value.

In the familiar rendition of the second commandment the reference to Deity as "a jealous God" is sometimes misunderstood; but the corresponding Hebrew word can refer either to jealousy or to zeal; the former word clearly indicating God's constant requirement of exclusive devotion to His service and His law, without the slightest deviation toward idols or images of any name or nature.

While Christ Jesus does not quote the second commandment in the well-known words of Exodus, his acceptance of its message and his refusal to countenance idolatry or materiality in any form are surely implied in his penetrating declaration to the Samaritan woman that "God is a Spirit" and that He must be worshiped "in spirit and in truth" [(John 4:24)](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=in+spirit+and+in+truth&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj).Truly the acceptance of man as God's image and likeness leaves no place for the worship of material images.

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