

## The Papal System – XXIV. The Worship of Images



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Du Puy declares that: "In the first three centuries, yea, and in the beginning of the fourth, images were very scarce among Christians. Towards the end of the fourth century they began, especially in the East, to make pictures and images; and they grew very common in the fifth; they represented in them the conflicts of martyrs and sacred histories to instruct those who could not read. Those of the simpler sort, moved by these representations, could not forbear expressing the esteem, respect, and veneration they had for those represented therein. Thus was image worship established."

"There is no doubt when paganism was the prevailing religion, but that it would have been dangerous for Christians to have had images, because they might have given occasion of idolatry to those just reclaimed from it; and they might have given the pagans reason to object to Christians, that they had, and worshipped idols as they did; therefore it was fitting that there should be *no images in those first ages, especially in churches, and that there should be no worship paid them.*"

This statement is truthful, and for a friend of image worship, extremely candid. The practice became general over the East, but was unknown in England, France, and Germany, though in these Western nations the worship of relics was universal.

In A.D. 730, Leo the Isaurian issued an imperial edict ordering images to be removed out of the churches and sacred places, commanding them to be thrown into the fire, and inflicting penalties upon those who ventured to disobey him. The decree was generally executed in the East, though it excited a great amount of indignation.

Constantine Copronymus, the son and successor of Leo, assembled a council of 338 bishops at Constantinople, A.D. 754, to complete the work of his father. They showed the sternest opposition to the worship of images of Christ, and of the saints; they denounced it as a taint of heathenism, condemned by the Scriptures, and by such fathers as Chrysostom and Athanasius; and they forbade the use of all images in private houses or churches. The effort of Constantine seemed to be successful, that is, it controlled the public acts of his subjects, but evidently failed to carry their consciences along with

it.

The Empress Irene was instrumental in calling a council, which permanently settled the controversy in favor of the worship of images; though quietness did not immediately fall upon the excited passions of men. Her synod met first at Constantinople A. D. 786, but was scattered by 'military violence; it assembled afterwards A. D. 787, at Nice. It numbered 350 bishops, and passed a number of argumentative and idolatrous decrees in favor of the worship of images. And as this synod gave shape to all subsequent views and conflicts about images, we present a portion of one of its celebrated decrees.

"We therefore as is aforesaid, honor and salute, and honorably worship the holy and venerable images, that is to say, the image of the humanity of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and of our immaculate lady, and holy Mother of God, of whom he was pleased to be made flesh, and to save and turn us away from impious love of idols; and the forms and representations of the holy and incorporeal angels, for they also appeared to the righteous as men; in like manner of the divine apostles, worthy of all praise, and of the inspired prophets, of the victorious martyrs, and of holy men"

This was the doctrine of Adrian, then pope, and the decisions of the council were speedily received in Italy; but in France, Charlemagne opposed them with the greatest vehemence, and had a work prepared by the famous Alcuin, and issued in his name, denouncing the adoration of images. He did not object to their presence in churches, but the worship demanded for them by the second synod of Nice was an intolerable iniquity. He sent the book to the pope by Angilbert his ambassador; and His holiness replied to the work of Alcuin.

#### *Charlemagne against Images.*

Whatever ridiculous distinction Rome has tried to recognize between the worship of images and that of God, a distinction which first appears in the decrees of the second Council of Nice, Charlemagne only saw in these idolatrous edicts: "*adoration, worship.*" His book says of the prelates of the second Council of Nice:

"The bishops of this synod order images to be adored; Whenever they find images spoken of either in the Scriptures or in the writings of the fathers, they conclude from them that they ought to be worshipped." "Let us," adds he, "adore God alone."

He declares that

"miracles performed by images are no proof that they should be adored, for then thorn bushes should be adored, because God spake to Moses out of a burning bush; fringes should be adored because Jesus Christ healed the woman who touched the fringe of his garment; and shadows too, because St. Peter's shadow wrought miracles."

The whole controversy between Charlemagne and the pope and council was based

on the worship of images. He honored them so far as to permit them to remain in the churches. He would not worship them. The pope and second council insisted that they should be adored, and cursed. all who did not worship them. And the empire of Charlemagne and the Christian world, in process of time, followed Irene, Pope Adrian, and the second Synod of Nice.

Nothing could be more untruthful or pernicious than the principle upon which the bishops of the Deutero-Nicene Council justified their idolatry. "He, who worships the figure," said the council, "worships the substance of that which is represented by it." According to this theory every heathen in the world could plead exemption from the charge of idol-worship under the pretence that he adored the great God represented by a statue of Jupiter, or by the shining sun. Myriads have worshipped images in Christian churches without exercising a thought beyond the figure itself. And they have revered one image, rather than another representing the same adored one, because of some special virtue supposed to dwell in that particular image.

*Other Catholic Authorities copy the exact Spirit, if not the Letter, of the Deutero-Nicene Synod.*

The Council of Trent says:

"Moreover the images of Christ, of the Virgin mother of God, and of the other saints are to be had and retained particularly in temples, and that due honor and veneration are to be awarded them; not that any divinity or virtue is in them on account of which they are to be worshipped; or that anything is to be asked of them, or that confidence is to be reposed in images as was of old done by the Gentiles, who place their hope in idols; but because the honor which is shown unto them is referred to the prototype which they represent."

*Creed of Pope Pius IV.*

"I most firmly assert, that the images of Christ, of the Mother of God, ever virgin, and also of other saints, ought to be had and retained, and that due honor and veneration are to be given them."

*Catechism of the Council of Trent.*

"Moreover it is not only lawful to have images in the Church and to pay them honor and worship." . . .

Such, then, are the fundamental laws for the government of the Papal Church about the worship of images. From the very start, it was not mere honor to the pictures or statues of saints; Charlemagne was willing to render that; it was *veneration, adoration, the burning of incense, worship.*

To promote the worship of images, wonderful prodigies (extraordinary events) were narrated about them.

*A Statue of Jesus bleeds.*

In A.D. 561, a Jew, by stealth, carried off a statue of Christ, out of a

church, and having brought it unobserved to his house, he pierced it with a dart; and, as he was going to burn it in the fire, he found himself bathed in blood which flowed from the wounded image. Greatly terrified, he changed his mind, and concealed the wonderful wood. The Christians sought for it, and found it by means of the traces of blood, and recovered it, stained with gore. They subsequently stoned the Jew for his impiety.

*An Image of Jesus speaks.*

At a celebrated synod convened by St. Dunstan, at Winchester, in the heat of a violent discussion, the image of the Lord, in the church, close to the disputants, spoke distinctly: "Expressing such opinions as rendered the secular clergy dumb."

*An Image of the Virgin works Prodigies.*

At Sardenai, six miles from Damascus, A.D. 1204, there lived a venerable nun, who sadly lamented the fact that she had no image of the Virgin to show her features when she offered up her prayers. A certain monk promised to bring her an image or picture of Mary from Jerusalem. He forgot his promise; and, as he started out of Jerusalem, a voice from heaven said to him: "Where is the image thou didst promise to take to the nun?" He felt rebuked, and immediately returned and procured the image. As he left the holy city again and came to Gith, a fierce lion, accustomed to eat men, came to meet him and licked his feet. Afterwards, robbers came forth to assail him, but the voice of an angel rebuked them and frightened them away. Seeing the power of the image, he concluded he would keep it; and he went to sea to reach his home, but a violent storm compelled all on board to cast their goods into the sea; and as he was about to throw his baggage into the ocean, an angel forbade him, and said: "Lift the image up towards the Lord;" he obeyed, and immediately there was a calm. He took it as quickly as possible to the nun, who erected a suitable house for such a wonderful figure, and forthwith it began to drip oil, and it never ceased sending it forth from that time. Then the image formed breasts of *flesh*, and below them it was covered with flesh. This image performed great numbers of miracles; and, among other marvels, it gave sight to the blind Sultan of Damascus, who prostrated himself in prayer before it. "The image then began to be greatly revered by all, and every one admired the great and wonderful works of God in it."

*The Bambino.*

The Bambino is an image of the child Jesus carved out of a tree that grew on Mount Olivet, and painted by St. Luke while the artist was asleep; it is an ugly-looking babe. The church Ara Caeli contains this celebrated image. Its miracles are famous all over Rome, and especially at the birth of children. On these occasions, it visits mothers in a carriage, and "gets more fees than any physician." A traveler, writing in 1860, says: "It is carried about in procession by a company of priests, and attended by a band of soldiers with music, the people kneeling, and esteeming it a great happiness to get a glimpse of it. It looks extremely like gross idolatry."

Seymour, in 1851, says that the Bambino gives an exhibition of detestable

idol worship. "When the priest elevates the wooden doll, the thousands which cover the slope and bottom of the mount, fall prostrate, and nothing is heard but the low sounds of prayer addressed to the image."

#### *An Old Statue of Jesus.*

In the church of St. Salvador there is an ancient image of Jesus. It has a wig on its head, its face looks black and disfigured, its features are so indistinct that you are not certain which sex it is intended to represent; it is located in a small chapel behind the choir. This image can work great miracles. When any public calamity is threatened it is always ready. And as a consequence it enjoys the devout worship and the warm love of the whole people for many miles around.

When rain is needed so badly that the harvest is threatened, a day is fixed to take out the crucifix attended by its friends. The procession is composed of the priests, friars and devout people, with visible marks of penance. The archbishop, viceroy and magistrates assist in robes of mourning. Twelve priests dressed in black, take the crucifix on their shoulders; and wherever the procession moves the crucifix is adored as if its wooden Jesus was the very flesh and blood of the Son of God. It is naively added, that "The image is never taken out but when there is great want of rain, and when there is sure appearance of plenteous rain; so they are never disappointed in having a miracle published after such a procession."

#### *The Image of Our Lady of Pillar.*

It is said the Apostle James came with seven converts to Saragossa in Spain; and as they were sleeping one night on the river Ebro, an army of angels awoke them at midnight, and gave them an image of the Virgin Queen of Heaven on a pillar, by whose aid they should conquer the city for their Saviour. They built a chapel for her. This image performs great and continuous prodigies, and enjoys the rapturous admiration of worshipping hosts. It is contrived by having the wall broke backwards that a piece of the pillar as big as two crown pieces is shown, which is set out in gold round about, and kings and other people kneel down to adore, and kiss that part of the stone. There is always so great a crowd of people that many times they cannot kiss the pillar; in that case they touch it with one of their fingers, and kiss the part which touched the pillar.

It is said this chapel was never empty since the Apostle James built it. The noble, the sons of toil, the profligate, the devout, alike revere the image of our Lady of Pillar.

In the church of St. Mary Maggiore, in Rome, there is a celebrated picture of the Virgin Mary, invested with perpetual power to work miracles. This picture was carried in procession through the Eternal City to remove the cholera; and Gregory XVI., the immediate predecessor of Pius IX., walked barefooted with the idolatrous throng who, forgetting God in their day of calamity, appealed to the wonder-working picture of a woman.

In Catholic countries image-worship is universal, and whatever theoretical

distinctions are made between latria, hyperdulia and dulia, the great body of worshippers know no difference between the worship of an image and the worship of God.

*The Catholic Church removes the Second Commandment from some of her Books of Devotion.*

This is one of the most extraordinary steps ever taken by any Christian community, one of the most audacious usurpations ever attempted. The second commandment is:

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.”

This commandment prohibits the manufacture of idols, kneeling to them, and all religious service to them. While the other commandments are received, this one is expunged from the decalogue, and to possess ten commandments, the last one is divided; and its parts form the ninth and tenth, while the third commandment becomes the second. This act is almost incredible; and yet it is sustained by the unbending logic of facts.

The “Mission Book” is a prayer-book of great popularity in the Catholic Church. “It is drawn chiefly from the works of St. Alphonsus Liguori.” It bears the following testimonial and approval from the late Archbishop Hughes: “The Mission Book has received the commendation of many distinguished prelates in Europe, as a work eminently fitted for the instruction of the faithful, and the promotion of solid piety.— John, Archbishop of New York, September 8th, 1853.”

“It has had a wide circulation . . . particularly in Austria, Bohemia, Belgium, Holland, and France. Thousands of Catholics in this country within a few years past, have found this little book next to the Mission itself a most precious and efficacious means of grace.” With a view to preparation for confession the Mission Book recommends an examination on the ten commandments, and gives questions under each for the penitent. Here are its ten commandments:

*First.*

“I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me,” etc.

*The Second Commandment.*

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God: in vain.”

*The Third Commandment.*

“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.”

*The Fourth Commandment.*

"Honor thy father and thy mother."

*The Fifth Commandment.*

"Thou shalt not Kill."

*The Sixth Commandment.*

"Thou shalt not commit adultery."

*The Seventh Commandment.*

"Thou shalt not steal."

*The Eighth Commandment.*

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

*The Ninth Commandment.*

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife."

*The Tenth Commandment.*

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods."

After the first commandment is given by the authors of the work, they place "etc." outside the quotation marks, showing that etc. is no part of the first commandment. What it is intended to represent we cannot tell. But no portion of the second commandment in any form is in the Mission Book of St. Alphonsus Liguori. The same prayer-book contains "The little Catechism;" and it presents another version of the ten commandments:

- "1. One God alone, for evermore  
By faith, and hope, and love adore.
2. Thou shalt not take his name in vain.
3. The Lord's day thou shalt not profane.
4. Honor thy father, and thy mother.
5. Thou shalt not hurt, nor hate thy brother,
6. Thou shalt do no adultery.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
8. Thou shalt not lie.
9. Thou shalt have no impure desire
10. Nor to thy neighbor's goods aspire."

In no way does this prayer-book, "so widely circulated," recognize the second commandment; while it mutilates and divides the tenth to obtain a substitute for the expunged second.

The "Key of Heaven," another well-known Catholic prayer-book, recommended by Archbishop Hughes, makes precisely the same changes in the decalogue, and utterly ignores the commandment forbidding the manufacture and worship of graven images.

One distinguished writer on the papal controversy says: "In the ordinary catechisms used in Great Britain by Roman Catholics the second commandment is expunged from the decalogue, and the tenth is split into two to preserve the number of ten." Another author, who had made a very extensive examination of catechisms, says: "Here there are twenty-nine catechisms in use in Rome and in Italy, France, Belgium, Austria, Bavaria, Silesia, Poland, Ireland, England, Spain, and Portugal, and in *twenty-seven of them the second commandment is totally omitted; in two it is mutilated, and only a portion expressed.*"

Nor is there any difference between the Vulgate version of this commandment and our own to justify this extraordinary procedure. The Catholic translation into English faithfully renders it:

"Thou shalt not make for thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them."

But where Roman Catholics have no Bible they are ignorant of any such divine prohibition of image worship. Belcher quotes a missionary at Malta whose teacher, an Italian, observed the ten commandments in a tract on his table one morning, and immediately expressed great surprise at the second, and asked if it was a part of the decalogue. Mr. Temple, the missionary, showed him this commandment in Martini's translation of the Vulgate. As he read it in a work authorized by the pope, he exclaimed: "I have lived fifty years; I have been publicly educated in Italy, but till this hour I never knew that such a command was written in the pages of the Bible."

It is in the solemn prohibitions of Sinai, and no earthly authority can remove it from the place assigned it by the Almighty Jehovah. And while it is unrepealed, the worship of any image is an act of forbidden idolatry; more detestable in one claiming to be a Christian than in any devotee of heathenism.

And of its hatefulness to the God of the Bible, the compilers of the "Mission Book" and of other "Manuals of Worship," and of various catechisms, are fully aware; and for this reason alone they blot it out of the ten commandments, that it may not condemn the degraded adoration rendered to images, which their worship so constantly exhibits.

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