

Jezebel Abroad In America



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NO ONE can fail to notice how much idolatry is flaunted in the faces of Christians today. Pictures of people suppliant before images abound in the secular press, and on tens of thousands of movie screens idolatrous displays and worshiping before images have become the regular diet of the American public. Protestants have become so accustomed to these things that they are beginning to lose the sense of shock to their Christian sensibilities. Our American cities, like Athens as Saint Paul saw it, are given over to idolatry, and the revived cult of Jezebel, both crude and cultured, finds an eager following.

Paganization of the life of a people is a gradual process. Satan does not make his initial attack in the open. He uses the 'softening up' process first, by introducing a disintegrating element, the evil of which, however, is hidden under a feeling of security and special privilege. He seduces the people of God with the attractive leaven of idolatry and its fond deceptions. He uses the evil and artful promoter of idolatrous teaching who has always been symbolized by the woman Jezebel.

The historic Jezebel was the idolatrous queen of the weak and wicked Ahab. She brought into Israel all the abominations of her heathen land. Cruel boasting and scheming, she boldly seized the God-given inheritance of Naboth after causing his death. She feasted at her table the infamous prophets of Baal, and by cunning and cruelty silenced the true prophets and worshipers of the Lord. So successful was she in this, that Elijah thought he was the only worshiper of the true God left in Israel.

This seducing Jezebel has been brought into our midst in America. The abominations she has carried with her from her heathen land have permeated all the institutions of American life. they are to be seen on the higher levels of art and literature as well as on the low levels of base pleasure and amusement. Everything is, as it were, encrusted with it. In religion, where she ranks as a prophetess, Jezebel sets forth her fascinating deceptions – a monstrous mingling of pagan and Christian elements, thus corrupting sound doctrine and perverting the truth. In the Roman Catholic Church she holds an exalted place and her teaching is authoritative. There she is adept at disguising her pagan ancestry under a thin veneer of Christian phraseology.

Converts to Roman Catholicism like Mrs. Clare Luce, prompted by Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen and other priest-tutors, put forth specious arguments in an effort to prove that Roman Catholics are not taught to worship or pray to statues and images; that they only pray before them and to the saints thus worshiped. Despite such plausible excuses, it cannot be denied that Roman Catholicism has made the second commandment of God of no effect among its people, and teaches for Christian doctrine the precepts of its Church, which are the commandments of men. In fact, it has entirely eliminated the wording of the second commandment from its version of the Decalogue in its catechisms and textbooks.¹

On Mt. Sinai God, through Moses, spoke saying: "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"

In order to explain the absence of the above commandment in Roman Catholic listings of the Decalogue, Catholic apologists will tell you, of course, that it is implicitly contained in the first commandment. But no matter what specious reasons they concoct, they cannot deny that they teach their people to make graven images and to bow down before them. This is a direct violation of the second commandment of God which specifically says: "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them..." Roman Catholics do both. They not only make the images, but also bow down on bended knees before them, light candles to them and burn incense before them.

As a student and a priest in Rome, I had to officiate on Christmas night at the ceremony of carrying in procession a gorgeously dressed doll-image (*bambino*) of the infant Jesus under a Japanese umbrella.

The image was placed on the high altar, hymns were sung to it and a priest, on bended knees, offered up incense before it. Then the little doll was presented to the congregation and each one kneeling kissed its stomach, inside of which we believed was a piece of the manger in which Christ was born. When we visited St. Peter's Basilica we were told that an indulgence could be gained by kissing the foot of a huge metal statue, supposed to be that of Saint Peter, but said to be actually an ancient image of Marcus Aurelius. All semblance of a foot had long disappeared, since it had been kissed away until only a smooth, polished piece of shapeless metal remained. Reporting the ceremonies in Ottawa, Canada, at the Marian Congress in June, 1947, Life magazine drew attention to the fact that a long procession of devout people knelt and kissed the foot of the giant statue of Mary "until the paint wore off its toes."

Pictures in an illustrated Italian newspaper of recent (in 1947 date² show that devout Catholic people in Naples still crawl prostrate on their stomachs before the images of their Madonnas and lick the ground with their tongues on their way to the statues. The New York Department of Health was obliged some years ago to put a stop to this practice among Italian people in the Bronx, because so many cases of tetanus resulted from it.

Down in their hearts, these Roman Catholic apologists know well enough that

to bow down to an image is to confess worship to it. To all outward appearance and intent, this Roman Catholic practice of kneeling and bowing before images, lighting candles before them and offering up incense to them, differs in no way from the same practice of the Buddhists in India and of pagan people in other lands.

It is easy enough to understand how such corruption of religion begins and develops, and how God's awful prohibition and condemnation are eventually sidestepped. The natural heart of man is prone to the worship of images, is attracted to the tangible creature that in the end completely takes the place of God. This tendency springs from an aversion in the unregenerate heart to the perfect purity of God, despite a sense of dependence and guilt before God. The nearer man gets to the Holy One, the deeper becomes his sense of guilt. He naturally turns aside from a direct fellowship with One so much higher and holier than himself. He wants to be cleansed, but is unwilling either to confess himself a sinner, or to believe that God has so loved him that He gave His only-begotten Son as an all-sufficient Saviour from sin. He turns instead to what the apostle Paul calls the "beggarly elements" (Gal. 4:9) and offers worship to an inferior creature, superior, however, to himself, in order to intercede for him. He feels that he can fellowship with this creature, who is inferior to God but much higher than himself, but still a creature on the same level with himself.

In this way all idolatry and paganization of religion are explained. And of this the Roman Catholic Church has taken profitable advantage. Its apologists make excuses for the worship of images and the use of inferior mediators by teaching that sinful man is not worthy to approach directly to God. Jesus Christ, they say, only brought justice, not mercy on earth, and that we must look to His mother and His special friends, the saints, to obtain mercy for us. Thus Mary is made the "Mediatrice of all graces," and they quote Saint Jerome that "God will not save us without the intercession of Mary."

Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, in his book, *Preface to Religion*,³ makes the same excuse to uphold the doctrine of purgatory. "The necessity of purgatory," he says, (p. 138), "is grounded upon the absolute purity of God... If there were no purgatory, then the justice of God would be too terrible for words, for who are they who would dare assert themselves pure enough and spotless enough to stand before the Immaculate Lamb of God?"

Here can be seen Satan's deceptive teaching that no one can dare expect such mercy from God that all his sins can be completely forgiven, or that he can be saved "to the uttermost." This is true, of course, according to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that man can and must earn his own salvation. If by our own works we are saved, then indeed would we have to tremble and fear that we could never adequately atone for our sins. Then indeed would it be presumptuous to dare assert ourselves, as Monsignor Sheen says, pure enough and spotless enough to stand before the Immaculate Lamb of God! Then indeed would we have to seek and look to creatures higher than us in sanctity who have earned more than we can, and to whom we could turn to intercede for us.

But that is the pagan way, the way of Jezebel. The true Christian way is, as

Paul tells us (Rom. 5:1, 2): "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And again Paul flatly contradicts Monsignor Sheen (Heb. 10:19-20): "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh."

The Scripture teaching here clearly answers Monsignor Sheen's question and assures us that we can dare to enter into the holiest of holies, because of this "new and living way" of Christian teaching. Monsignor Sheen prefers the old pagan way, and he is logical and correct in saying that, by this pagan way of the unregenerate human heart, we can never be pure and spotless enough to stand before the terrifying presence of the Immaculate Lamb of God. But he surely is not so blind that he does not see the vast difference between the two. Complete spiritual blindness alone can excuse his failure to see it. If he is not spiritually blind, then he must be downright dishonest. He stands convicted of either one or the other by the above text of Hebrews.

I consider it a most extraordinary thing now that these defenders of saints and their images should seize upon the "absolute purity of God" as excuse for focusing the worship of their people downward to things of earth. By doing so, they are actually playing upon the aversion in the unregenerate heart of man to this perfect purity of God. They pander to the tendency in sinful man to spurn and reject the love of God as manifested in Christ, the one mediator and all-sufficient Saviour. This also serves to enhance and protect the power of the priest. It makes it necessary to set up an image which the people can see and which the priest can handle. For vain man must be master of his God. Priests in all religions have made it a cardinal principle of their teaching to make sure that the power of God they worship does not get out of their control. For this reason they made victims of their Gods so that they could handle and sacrifice them at will.

To be pitied therefore are the faithful followers of the priests of the Roman Catholic Church who are taught to reject the love of God and his plan of Christian redemption whereby they can be so purified by "a new and living way" that they can stand before God holy and blameless. Instead they are provided with idols and told that they dare not hope to have the boldness to enter into the holiest and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. They are not taught that our Lord has consecrated that new way for them through the shedding of his blood in his all-sufficient sacrifice on Calvary. Instead of that one great sacrifice of Calvary, they are given the idolatrous sacrifice of the mass, an affair of the hands and the magic of the breath of a priest whereby a sinful creature is believed to be able to create the God who made him!

Thus the wafer of bread in the Roman Catholic mass, made by human hands as all bread is made, is called God and adored on bended knees. This is the climax of the abominations of Jezebel. Without this caricature of Calvary, the Roman Catholic Church could not survive. "Jezebel... painted her face and tired her head, and looked out at a window." (2 Kings 9:30).

Today this same Jezebel has taken her place at the window. She is in the public eye. She is bold, for her time is short. She has painted her face, thus masking all the coarseness and vileness of her withered soul. She is defiant. She has decked her head, given herself a magnificent triple crown. Arrayed in her own pagan splendor she stands in the way of those who have a right to the crown of life and to receive the crown of glory. Jezebel derides the people of God – and Elijah has fled. He who stood on Mount Carmel and exposed the prophets of Baal for the miserable impostors they were and brought down the fierce judgment of God upon them, has quailed and fled before the threat of Jezebel. There is here, I think, a lesson for the timid Protestant leaders of our day, a picture of the people of God standing in awe in the face of onrushing idolatry, with few dissenting voices, all afraid of Jezebel!

But now that she flaunts her painted face from her lofty eminence, Jezebel's destruction, as of old, will be certain and swift. The fury of God will come up in his face and he will cast her down. For Christ, the image of the invisible God – the only image and only rightful object of worship – must conquer in the end. Jezebel, the idolatrous teacher of vanities and deceptions, will in due time be cast down and utterly consumed. Like the historical Jezebel who was eaten of dogs, all idolatrous systems of worship shall be found no more – "so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel."

1. See, for example, My Sunday Missal, by Father Joseph Stedman, p. 299, and the versions of the Catholic Baltimore Catechism, taught in all parochial schools.↵
2. L'Europeo, April 5, 1947.↵
3. P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1946.↵