

The Word of Righteousness

The Overcomers in the Seven Churches (8)

In Revelation 2:18 through 29 Christ speaks to the fourth church in Asia, the church in Thyatira, a prophetic-historic sign of the Roman Catholic Church from the end of the sixth century until the Lord's coming at the end of this age. The name *Thyatira* bears the meaning of "perfume" and "sacrifice," hence "sacrifice of perfume," or "unceasing sacrifice," connoting continual religious offerings, such as the Roman Catholic mass (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 18, note 1; Hitchcock 1112).

The Deep Things of Satan in the Church in Thyatira

In speaking of the teaching of Jezebel in the church in Thyatira, verse 24 refers to "the deep things of Satan." *Deep things*, or *depths*, is used figuratively to denote mysterious things, "things hidden and above man's scrutiny" (Thayer 92; cf. 1 Cor. 2:10). The pagan religions of the ancient world were referred to as the "Mysteries" (Angus vii), being characterized by the secret teachings and inscrutable practices of their priesthood. In Revelation 17 Babylon the Great, corresponding to Jezebel, is likewise called "Mystery" (v. 5). The Roman Catholic Church, as typified by Thyatira, is strongly characterized by its worship, which, as we will see, is a mixture of Christian and pagan elements and is radically in contrast to the worship of God that is revealed in the Bible. The overcomers, whom Christ seeks and calls for, worship God in their regenerated spirit with Christ as reality, apart from any mixture, and in the way ordained by Him (John 4:24).

The Battle for Worship in the Universe

The primary word for *worship* in the Old Testament is *shachah*, meaning "to bow down in homage." In the New Testament the most frequently used word for *worship* is προσκυνέω, "to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence" (Thayer 548). The second most common word for *worship* is λατρεύω, "to serve, minister to" (372). Both Greek words are found in the account of Jesus' temptation by Satan in the wilderness. Matthew 4:8 through 10 says,

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, All these will I give You if You will fall down and worship [προσκυνέω] me. Then Jesus

said to him, Go away, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship [προσκυνέω] the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve [λατρεύω]."

In Revelation all twenty-four occurrences of *worship* are προσκυνέω. It refers ten times to the worship of God and twelve times to the worship of either Antichrist, his image, the great dragon, or demons and idols.¹ This clearly reveals that there is a battle for worship in the universe. Watchman Nee writes,

We can trace a line right through Revelation and see what the devil is fighting for...Heaven and hell are in conflict. They are fighting to obtain the worship of man...[Satan] risks the lake of fire and the bottomless pit for the sake of worship. (1316, 1318)

Satan, the rebellious one, who aspired to lift himself to the height of the throne of God (Isa. 14:13-14), will welcome the great tribulation at the end of this age, because this will be the time that men consciously and overtly worship him through the beast, who is Antichrist (Rev. 13:4). During this time an angel flying in mid-heaven will preach the "eternal gospel" (14:6), saying, "Fear God and give Him glory because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him" (v. 7). Another angel will declare, "If anyone worships the beast and his image..., he also shall drink of the wine of the fury of God" (vv. 9-10). In 20:4 John saw the overcomers of the church age sitting on thrones with authority to judge in the millennial kingdom; he says,

I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and of those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image...; and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

In His great conflict with the enemy, God calls for believers to worship Him uniquely and in His revealed, commanded, and ordained way. Those who have such a life of true worship will be counted as overcomers and will reign with Him victoriously in the coming kingdom.

Two Lines and Sources of Worship

The Scriptures reveal two lines and sources of worship.

The battle for worship in the universe is seen from the beginning of Genesis. Chapter 4 says,

In the course of time Cain brought an offering to Jehovah from the fruit of the ground. And Abel also brought an offering, from the firstlings of his flock, that is, from their fat portions. And Jehovah had regard for Abel and for his offering. But for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. (vv. 3-5)

After Adam and Eve sinned, they covered themselves with fig leaves (3:7), which are of the vegetable life and have no blood. The covering of fig leaves signifies fallen man's work to cover his sinfulness apart from the redemption of Christ. After God came in to preach the glad tidings of the coming seed of the woman and the destruction of the serpent, He made coats of skin for Adam and his wife (v. 21). In light of the sacrifices that God later commanded, these were the skins probably of lambs sacrificed, with the shedding of blood, for the sinful Adam and Eve (Exo. 12:3, 7, 13; John 1:29; Heb. 9:22). Abel, caring only for God's satisfaction, tended his flock and made an offering that was in accord with the gospel that God had announced to his parents. Cain, however, offered something of the earth, the fruit of his labor for his own living and sustenance, apart from the shedding of blood. Hebrews 11:4 tells us, "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous."

Cain's offering was a rejection of God's way of salvation and constituted a continuation and development of the fall of man begun by Adam and Eve. Behind Cain's presumptuous act was Satan, who had injected his evil nature into man and was now inciting him to invent his own way of worship. This was the first instance of religion—worship that is apart from God, in rebellion to His revelation, and contrary to His way of salvation. From this point on, the Bible presents two lines of worship. One is according to the divinely revealed way that culminates in the eternal worship to God and the Lamb in the New Jerusalem. The other is according to the inspiration of Satan through the invention of fallen man and culminates in the worship of Antichrist in the great tribulation. Every way, form, principle, and act of worship throughout human history finds its source and place on one of these two lines; these are the only two possible choices, corresponding to the line of Abel and the line of Cain.

The question we must ask, then, is: from which source does a way of worship derive? If a certain principle, manner, or practice of worship does not originate in a revelation of God in His holy Word, we can find its source instead in some conception, philosophy, or artifact of human history and culture. Such a source is apart from God, in the principle of Cain, invented by fallen man,

tainted by his sinful nature, and even inspired by Satan, who seeks his own worship, whether directly or indirectly. The false religion that began in the first chapters of Genesis is the source not only of a principle but also of the many particulars of the man-made religions found throughout the world. The worship that is on the line of Cain eventually found its way into the New Testament church itself, corrupting it and causing a great part of it to be transmuted into Babylon the Great.

Babel as the Birthplace of Idolatrous Religion

The book of Genesis, which to us who believe is the unique, reliable, and inspired record of history, tells us that all human cultures—political, commercial, and religious—can be traced through an unbroken line back to the time of Noah, and afterward to Babel in chapter 11. Except for the family of Noah, the entire inhabited world perished through God's judgment by the flood. From that point forward, all subsequent peoples sprung from Noah's three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—as detailed in the table of nations in chapter 10. There was no other source for the repopling of the earth. Moreover, a common knowledge of the ancient times of the world was shared by all men. Methuselah was over two hundred years old at the death of Adam and no doubt learned from him the events of Genesis 2 and 3. In turn, Noah was six hundred years old at the death of Methuselah, and Shem was one hundred. Thus, all the descendants of Noah were knowledgeable of the entire history of man, from Adam onward. For this reason almost all ancient civilizations maintain some version—as deformed as it may be—of the Trinity (1:26), the creation (2:4), the two trees in the garden (v. 9), the seed of the woman (3:15), the serpent (v. 1), the ark and the flood (6:14, 17), and the tower of Babel (11:4).² George Smith, who discovered the tablets containing the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, states, "Traditions of the creation of the universe, and human history down to the time of Nimrod, existed parallel to, and in some points identical with, those given in the Book of Genesis" (20).

It was at Babel in Mesopotamia that civilization without God originated after the flood. Anthropologist Lord Raglan (FitzRoy Richard Somerset) argues effectively for a common origin of all the cultures of the world, both ancient and modern. He states, "All civilization has been evolved from pre-existing civilization...The cradle-land of the human race was in South-western Asia" (51), that is, between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. Austen Henry Layard, who discovered the Assyrian monuments at Nineveh, concludes likewise, "From Chaldæa civilisation and the arts and sciences were spread over the world"³ (377). Hugo Winckler, excavator of Hattusa, states,

Babylonia is the motherland of astronomy, and of astrology...

The knowledge of the Etruscans, the masters and teachers of Rome, was of old Babylonian origin...Greece and Rome...borrowed their calendar from the Babylonians. Their year, month, and week we have still. The naming of days of the week after the gods of the sun and moon and the other five planets known to them has descended to us from them. We still divide the day into 12 *double* hours, as the faces of our watches prove. (143-145)

The land of Shinar, where Nimrod overthrew the authority of God's rule and established the first human kingdoms of Babel and Assyria (Gen. 10:10-11; 11:1-2), was also the birthplace of false, demonic religion.⁴ It is here that idolatry was first revealed by the evil one and his fallen host "in order that the world might through their means be both taught and ruled by Satan" (Pember, *Antichrist* 78). Somerset writes, "There is never any considerable transmission of material culture without a corresponding transmission of ideas and beliefs" (14). Accordingly, as material and technical culture spread out from Babel, so did its religion. Orientalist William Burckhardt Barker states, "At Babylon, the cradle of superstition, all the idolatries of the world had their origin" (234). Isaac Preston Cory concurs that if we investigate the origin of world religions, we will find "every nation, notwithstanding the variety of names, acknowledging the same deities and the same system of theology" (xxxv). George Stanley Faber concludes,

The various theological systems of the Gentiles agree, not only in what is *obvious* and *natural*, but in what is *arbitrary* and *circumstantial*. There is such a singular and minute and regular accordance between them, both in *fanciful speculations*, and in *artificial observances*, that no person, who takes the pains of thoroughly investigating the subject, can avoid being fully persuaded, that they must all have sprung from some common origin. (59)

Thus, "there is neither race nor nation which does not show traces of the ancient Chaldean legends in its religion, its folk lore, and its fairy tales" (Pember, *Church* 397). For this reason Babylon is the ultimate sign in the Bible of the aggregate of all idolatrous religions. The idolatrous worship that began at Babel is the origin of all false worship by fallen man in the Satan-inspired line of Cain.

The Cult of Nimrod and His Wife

Anthropologist Arthur C. Custance writes on the origin and spread of paganism:

[Paganism], deriving its source of inspiration from the Babylonians and Assyrians..., subsequently spread in modified forms far beyond the confines of its original home in Mesopotamia. The extent to which this pagan religion underlies the religious beliefs of many non-Christian people is remarkably revealed by [Alexander] Hislop in his well-known book "The Two Babylons." (30)

In great detail Hislop reveals the source and nature of the idolatrous worship of the Roman Catholic Church, the antitype of the church in Thyatira. He writes, "The essential character of her system, the grand objects of her worship, her festivals, her doctrine and discipline, her rites and ceremonies, her priesthood and their orders, have all been derived from ancient Babylon" (3). He demonstrates that the primeval knowledge of the Trinity was perverted at Babel to a blasphemous trinity of father, mother, and son. He then proceeds to show that the worship of the mother derives from Semiramis, the wife of Nimrod, the first to reign as a king on earth (Gen. 10:8-12).⁵ Assyriologist Stephen Herbert Langdon asserts that both

BEGINNING FROM BABEL,
MEN BEGAN TO WORSHIP HEROES,
KINGS, AND EVEN BIBLICAL
CHARACTERS, WHO WERE
SUPERSTITIOUSLY ELEVATED
TO THE STATUS OF GODS.

Sumerian and Semitic religions were originally monotheistic (xviii)—a very reasonable assertion in light of early man's knowledge of Jehovah in the garden of Eden. Beginning from Babel, however, men began to worship heroes, kings, and even biblical characters, who were, by the process of euhemerism, superstitiously elevated to the status of gods. F. F. Bruce tells

us that it was the worship of the Earth-goddess in particular that first gave rise to polytheism (244-245). Faber notes, "All the goddesses of paganism will be found ultimately to melt together into a single person, who is at once acknowledged to be the great mother" (21). Layard speaks of this as the worship of the "generative principle," originating with Semiramis:

That the worship of the generative principle, even under its most degrading forms, did exist, can scarcely be doubted. Tradition has traced its introduction to Semiramis—that is, to the very earliest period...

She was "the Queen of Heaven"...She was called Beltis, because she was the female form of the great divinity, or Baal...Her worship penetrated from Assyria into Asia Minor...To the Shemites she was known under the names of Astarte, Ashtaroth [Ashtoreth, 1 Kings 11:33], Mylitta, and Alitta, according to the various dialects of the nations amongst which her worship prevailed. (504-506)

Faber adds that the primeval father and mother deities were often connected by incest: "The great father is said

to have sometimes espoused his own mother” (22). This thought was carried forth in tales of later gods, such as Isis, who is both the wife of Osiris and, by the name of Nutpe, also his mother (Bunsen 438-439). Once again, this tradition can be traced back to Babel. In his *Historia Chronike* John of Antioch recounts the story of Nimrod and Semiramis, whom he identifies as the prototype of the mythological Rhea. Nimrod (Ninus), “whose mother Rhea, that is, Semiramis, he took as wife,...founded Nineveh, the city of the Assyrians, and was its first king, having his mother as wife”⁶ (my trans.; qtd. in Cramer 235). Pliny and Plutarch also testify to the immoral character of Semiramis, and the goddesses that sprung from her memory—Ishtar, Isis, Aphrodite, and others—were likewise notorious. Herodotus tells us that the rites carried out at the shrine of Aphrodite were “the most outrageous⁷ of the Babylonians’ customs” (98). This adds more odium to the idolatrous image of the woman with her sacred child, which has been worshipped by pagan religions throughout the world for thousands of years. Witness Lee concludes,

History tells us that at Babel, Nimrod brought in many idolatrous things. In that idolatrous worship he invented a most evil emblem, the Madonna with her child...The Madonna was the mother of Nimrod and was also his wife. This emblem, invented in the Babylonian worship, spread throughout the earth—to Egypt, India, Greece, Rome, Tibet, China, and Japan. It has even pervaded Roman Catholicism. The emblem of a mother embracing her child is found in Catholic cathedrals and in Buddhist idol temples. It has been utilized by Satan to deceive fallen people and rob them of their worship to God. (*Truth* 53)

The Diffusion of Idolatrous Religion

Langdon describes the scene at Alexandria of a festival celebrated by the faithful on the night of December 25: “In this festival an image of a babe was taken from the temple sanctuary and greeted with loud acclamation by the worshippers, saying, ‘the Virgin has begotten’” (18). This celebration is that of the Nabataean Earth-goddess, similar to the virgin mother-goddess at Petra, which itself was a replication of the celebration of Ishtar and Tammuz in Babylonia. H. G. Wells describes a similar scene at the temple of Isis:

Her images stood in the temple, crowned as the Queen of Heaven and bearing the infant Horus in her arms. The candles flared and guttered before her, and the wax exvotos [offerings] hung about the shrine. The novice was put through a long and careful preparation, he took vows of celibacy, and when he was initiated his head was shaved and he was clad in a linen garment. (353)

Such wintertime celebrations of the virgin and her child,

which were ubiquitous in the ancient world, bear an obvious likeness to the Christmastime celebration of Mary and the child Jesus in apostate Christendom today. The eminent historian William H. Prescott writes, “One is astonished to find so close a resemblance between the institutions of the American Indian, the ancient Roman, and the modern Catholic!” (111). These stark similarities are not by chance. Solomon tells us, “What has been is what will be, / And what has been done is what will be done, / And there is nothing new under the sun. / Is there anything of which one can say, See, this is new? / Already it has been, in the ages that were before us” (Eccl. 1:9-10).

As the culture and religion of Babylon diffused throughout the world, they were adopted, modified, and reestablished as local customs in every place. Langdon writes,

The religion and mythology of all those Semitic peoples, which...came into contact with the advanced and affluent civilization of Sumer and Accad, Babylonia and Assyria, became heavy borrowers from that source. Sumero-Babylonian cults established themselves in the very midst of the old Canaanitish, Aramaean, Phoenician, Moabite, and Nabataean cults. (xvi-xvii)

This took place most often not by direct importation but by a process of syncretism, in which new gods and myths were reinterpreted and merged with indigenous ones. Barker calls this the “easy, plastic character of the old mythology,” the “ready adoption of any thing or every thing likely to fascinate the people, and to bring traffic to the temples” (159-160).

From Mesopotamia the Babylonian influence spread to Egypt and Asia Minor, and from there to the West, particularly through Greece at the time of Alexander:

Theocrasia, or religious Syncretism, on a stupendous scale was an immediate outcome of Alexander’s intermingling of races, and for the next seven centuries proved a potent factor in the religious history of the Graeco-Roman world, reaching its apogee in the III and IV centuries A.D. Every Mystery-Religion was syncretistic. Before the time of Alexander there are instances of the equating of their respective gods by different peoples, but from his day *Theocrasia* both became a universal practice and gained increasing momentum. (Angus 19)

Following this, historian Cyril Bailey writes, “the cults of the Orient found their way to Rome by means of traders and soldiers, were welcomed, and ultimately assimilated by a process of syncretism into general religious thought” (245). Just as *interpretatio Graeca* recast the Eastern deities into Greek thought, a new *interpretatio Romana* infused Rome with a vast and ancient pantheon. “The

Romans gradually received all the religions of the peoples whom they subdued, so that Rome became the ‘temple of the whole world’” (Löffler). S. Angus concludes,

The Romans were the greatest borrowers and most skilful adapters...Into their pantheon they admitted Etruscan, Italian, Greek and Oriental deities.

The Romans took over wholesale the Greek pantheon by rebaptizing their own gods with Greek names.

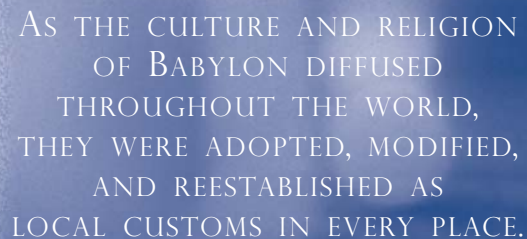
Syncretism was the religious hall-mark of the time...Different gods agreed to be housed in the same temple. (190, 278)

By cultural diffusion and religious syncretism, the idolatrous worship of Babylon—the worship of Nimrod and his wife in its many and diverse forms—diffused into all the world. In the Old Testament, Jehovah commanded His people not to do as the nations do (Deut. 18:9; Jer. 10:2). Rather, He said, “You shall tear down their altars and crush their pillars; and their Asherahs you shall burn with fire, and the idols of their gods you shall cut down” (Deut. 12:3). In the New Testament the church of Christ stands alone as a particular people for the Lord, a chaste virgin for her beloved Bridegroom. In the church there is no place for the relics and remains of foreign religions.

There is no table for idols, and there is no concord with Belial (1 Cor. 10:21; 2 Cor. 6:15). However, the strong surge of syncretism in the ancient world, especially in Rome, the cultural capital of the world, eventually invaded and polluted the church, culminating in the idolatrous worship of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Leaven of Paganism in the Church in Thyatira

Angus writes, “While Christianity avoided the dangers of that syncretism which weakened its competitors it did not escape unscathed. It borrowed, but it transmuted. It baptized every idea or rite, whether borrowed from the Mysteries or from Judaism, into the name of Christ” (283). Bailey adds, “When Christianity became the official creed of the Roman Empire, it was at pains in characteristically Roman fashion to let the new grow out of the old...and as far as possible, without compromising with paganism, to assimilate it” (242). Gregory I, with whose papacy the prophetic period of Thyatira began, instructed a missionary abbot who was on his way to England to not destroy the temples of idols there but rather to install Christian altars in them:



AS THE CULTURE AND RELIGION
OF BABYLON DIFFUSED
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD,
THEY WERE ADOPTED, MODIFIED,
AND REESTABLISHED AS
LOCAL CUSTOMS IN EVERY PLACE.

That, when the people themselves see that these temples are not destroyed, they...may have recourse with the more familiarity to the places they have been accustomed to. And, since they are wont to kill many oxen in sacrifice to demons, they should have also some solemnity of this kind in a changed form...For it is undoubtedly impossible to cut away everything at once from hard hearts, since one who strives to ascend to the highest place must needs rise by steps or paces, and not by leaps. (85)

John Henry (Cardinal) Newman tells us that the way of Catholic Christianity has always been to

transmute the very instruments and appendages of demon-worship to an evangelical use...The rulers of the Church from early times were prepared, should the occasion arise, to adopt, or imitate, or sanction the existing rites and customs of the populace. (*Essay* 371-372)

André Rétif, in *The Catholic Spirit*, a volume of *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, states concerning the Roman Catholic Church,

In her liturgy and her art, in her traditions and the forming of her doctrine, naturally enough she includes Jewish elements, but also elements that are of pagan origin...She makes use of local customs after purifying them and “baptizing” them.

“This adaptation of pagan customs...prudently regulated, allows for the utilization of instincts and sentiments that preserve local traditions.” (85)

However, instead of eliminating idols, this program of Assimilation “surreptitiously and gradually introduced Pagan ceremonies, images, and false doctrines, one by one, into the churches. And so, the leaven worked, until it had penetrated the whole lump” (Pember, *Church* 467). Foreseeing this, Jesus spoke in parable: “The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened” (Matt. 13:33). Leaven, which was forbidden in the offerings (Lev. 2:11), always “signifies evil things (1 Cor. 5:6, 8) and evil doctrines (Matt. 16:6, 11-12)” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Matt. 13:33, note 1). The woman in Matthew 13 is Jezebel in Revelation 2, who is Babylon the Great in chapter 17. The leaven signifies the “pagan practices, heretical doctrines, and evil matters” that she mixed with the teachings concerning Christ (Matt. 13:33, note 2). Wells writes,

The garments of ritual and symbol and formula that Christianity has worn, and still in many countries wears to

this day, were certainly woven in the cult and temples of Jupiter, Serapis, and Isis that spread now from Alexandria throughout the civilized world in the age of theocrasia in the second and first centuries before Christ. (353)

These “garments” represent, as Andrew Miller states, the “old superstition of heathenism in the new dress of Christianity” (190). This mixing of the old with the new can be seen in many of the practices of Roman Catholicism. G. H. Pember, for example, compares the elements found in the Roman Catholic Church with those in Buddhism:

The two religions have very many other things in common, among which we may mention the crozier, mitre, dalmatic, cope, and censer swinging on five chains; sacerdotal celibacy, worship of saints, fasts, processions, litanies, holy water, the tonsure, confession, relic-worship, the use of flowers, lights and images on the altar, the sign of the cross, the worship of the Queen of Heaven,...the aureole, the mystic fans of peacocks’ feathers carried on either side of the Popes and Lamas on grand festivals, the orders of the ministry, and the architectural details of the churches.⁸

But if both religions are daughters of Babylon—and who can study the slabs and cylinders in the British Museum without feeling sure that they are?—the strong family likeness is no matter for wonder. (*Earth’s Earliest Ages* 275)

Indeed, the examples and details of the syncretistic assimilation of pagan idolatry into Roman Catholicism are too numerous to attempt to number. This is a repetition of the failure of Israel, who assimilated instead of destroyed the idols of the peoples of the good land: “They acted according to all the abominations of the nations that Jehovah had dispossessed before the children of Israel” (1 Kings 14:24; cf. Deut. 12:2-3).

Worship and Adoration in Roman Catholicism

The first of the Ten Commandments (according to Fortescue) given by Jehovah to His people states,

You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, nor the form of anything that is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water beneath the earth. You shall not bow down to them, and you shall not serve them. (Exo. 20:3-5)

Bow down has the meaning of worship. Writing for *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Adrian Fortescue quotes verse 5 as, “Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them” and goes on to argue for the difference between *worship* and *adore*. Worship, he claims, is simple veneration, but adoration is for God alone. Bishop Anastasius explains,

We worship (*proskynoumen*) men and the holy angels; we do not adore (*latreuomen*) them. Moses says: Thou shalt worship thy God and Him only shalt thou adore. Behold, before the word “adore” he puts “only”, but not before the word “worship”, because it is lawful to worship [creatures], since worship is only giving special honor. (qtd. in Fortescue)

Anastasius misstates that he is quoting Moses. The wording is that of Jesus in Luke 4:8, which says, “You shall worship [προσκυνήσεις] the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve [λατρεύσεις]. The latter verb means “serve for hire,” “minister,” thus “serve as a priest”; that is, we worship the Lord and serve only Him. In this verse Jerome substitutes *adore* (*adorabis*) for *worship*: “You shall adore the Lord your God and serve only Him” (my trans.).⁹ Thus, whether it is worship or adoration, we render it only to God and serve Him uniquely. There is no lexicon based on the actual facts of the Greek or Hebrew languages that supports a contrast between *worship* and *adore*.

Fortescue argues further that the proscription against images for worship in Exodus 20:4-5 passed away with the old covenant. He says,

It is clearly not natural law, nor can anyone prove the inherent wickedness of making a graven thing; therefore it is Divine positive law (*malum quia prohibitum*¹⁰) of the Old Dispensation that no more applies to Christians than the law of marrying one’s brother’s widow.

This commandment, he says, like all other ritual law, “does not affect us at all...It was once for all abrogated by the promulgation of the Gospel.” Accordingly, the secondary, or relative, worship of persons and objects became the official policy of the Roman Catholic Church when the Second Council of Nicaea restored the veneration of icons in A.D. 787. This council decreed,

The venerable and holy images, as well in painting and mosaic as of other fit materials, should be set forth in the holy churches of God, and on the sacred vessels and on the vestments and on hangings and in pictures both in houses and by the wayside, to wit, the figure of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God, of the honourable Angels, of all Saints and of all pious people...To these should be given due salutation and honourable reverence;...incense and lights may be offered according to ancient pious custom. (“Seventh” 550)

These canons state, “Honour paid to an image passes on to its prototype; he who worships (*ho proskynon*) an image worships the reality of him who is painted in it” (Fortescue). This clearly means not only that the worship rendered to an image of Christ passes on to Christ but also

that the worship of an image of Mary passes on to Mary and that the worship of the images of saints passes on to them, although as a lesser worship. The distinction between worship of a creature and adoration of the Creator is a major tenet of Catholic practice, but absolutely no evidence for it can be found in the Lord's word in Exodus 20:5 or Luke 4:8. The evil teaching of two kinds of worship applied to two objects of worship, as taught and practiced by the Roman Catholic Church, has its source not in the Word of God but in the imagination of men tainted by the ancient heritage of idolatrous paganism. It is a Christian-era manifestation of the system of major and minor deities that was first conceived at Babel and then disseminated into every pagan religion in human history.

The Blasphemous Worship of the "Queen of Heaven"

In nothing are the "deep things of Satan" (Rev. 2:24) in the Roman Catholic Church so manifest as in the worship of Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia* Herbert Thurston acknowledges that the veneration of Mary is nowhere to be found in the teaching of the apostles or of the early fathers and that it was through the "sentiment and devotion" of the populace that she began to be revered and known by the special names given to her: Our Lady, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven, Madonna, and "the only bridge of God to men." As we have seen, if a manner of worship is not found in the Word of God, its origin and nature must be found elsewhere, in some invention or inspiration of men in some time and place in the history of religion. It is a matter of fact that the worship of a mother goddess is one of the first and most ancient relics of demonic idolatrous religion. On cuneiform fragments from the third millennium B.C., the goddess of Sumer (Shinar) declares, "I am the queen of heaven, the place where the sun rises" (Kramer 90; cf. Jer. 7:18). The multiplying of names and titles for the deified female began at Babel and continued throughout the ancient world. In Egypt she was known as "Isis of the thousand names" (Angus 191), in Asia Minor as *Mater Dei et hominum* ("Mother of God and man," Barker 176), and in Syria, Phrygia, Greece, and Rome she took on even more names, including Ashtoreth (1 Kings 11:33), Artemis (Acts 19:28), Demeter, and Aphrodite. Bruce writes,

This composite Mother-goddess took a powerful hold on the imagination of the peoples of the Empire. With the Christianisation of the Roman state, she ceased gradually to be worshipped as Cybele or Isis, but her worship continued to flourish none the less...Nor can it be seriously

disputed that the worship (hyperdulia, to use the technical term) of the Virgin Mary in many of its features is but the continuation of the Mother-goddess cult under another name. (255)

It is a great blasphemy that the female deity of paganism, by an obvious process of syncretism, was merged with the human mother of Jesus and raised to a level of worship that rivals, and many times supplants, that of the Lord Himself. Cardinal Newman effuses with the many names of the deified woman: Ever-Virgin, the Mother of all living, the Pillar of the cloud, the Rod out of the stem of Jesse, the Eastern gate, the Mother of Life, the fruitful vine, the manna, the ark gilt within and without, the Church's diadem, the window of heaven, the heavenly ladder (*Essay* 146-147). Elsewhere he calls her "the House of Gold" (*Meditations* 15), "the Queen of Angels" (29), "the Seat of Wisdom" (33), "the Gate of Heaven" (36), "the Mother of the Creator" (39), "the Queen of Martyrs" (48), and "the Tower of David" (68). He quotes Proclus of the fifth century: "Run through all creation in your thoughts, and see if there be equal to, or greater than, the Holy Virgin Mother of God" (*Essay* 147).

IT IS A GREAT BLASPHEMY THAT THE FEMALE DEITY OF PAGANISM WAS MERGED WITH THE MOTHER OF JESUS AND RAISED TO A LEVEL OF WORSHIP THAT RIVALS THAT OF THE LORD HIMSELF.

The Catholic theology that carefully admits the subservient role of Mary is mere sophism in light of Mary's praise by the canonized writers of the church. Alphonsus Liguori writes, "At the command of Mary all obey, even God. She is omnipotent" (114). He also says, "This most Blessed Virgin brought us forth to eternal life by her own sorrows" (28). Thomas Aquinas claims, "When the Blessed Virgin conceived the Eternal Word in her womb and gave Him birth, she obtained half the Kingdom of God." Anselm tells us, "When we pray to the Mother of God we are heard more quickly than when we call directly on the name of Jesus." Bonaventure says, "Those who neglect our Lady will die in their sins" and "Mary is the salvation of all who call upon her." Bernard of Clairvaux writes, "Desiring to save the whole human race, [God] has laid the full price of redemption in Mary's hands, letting her dispense it at her pleasure" and "She is my greatest confidence. She is the whole ground of my hope" (qtd. in Liguori 20, 85, 139, 170, 70, 123). The declarations of these and other Catholic voices, too numerous to be fully represented here, clearly show that the worship of Mary far exceeds a simple veneration. In the practice, praise, and sentiments of the people she is elevated to the status of divinity, often to the point of usurping the place of the Father and the Son.

The heavenly ladder, the gate of heaven (Gen. 28:12, 17;

cf. John 1:51), the manna (Exo. 16:14-15; cf. John 6:32-33), the Ark (Exo. 25:10-11), the sprout from the stump of Jesse (Isa. 11:1), and the vine (John 15:1) are all types and figures of Christ. As the ladder set up on the earth and reaching to heaven, Christ brings heaven to earth and joins earth to heaven; He is the gate of heaven through whom we can enter into God; as the manna from heaven, He is our heavenly food; as the Ark overlaid with gold, He is the embodiment of God, the mingling of God and man; and as the sprout out from Jesse, Christ branches out God into humanity and bears much fruit. Christ is everything to God and to us in God's eternal economy. That the foregoing divine and precious titles of Christ are usurped and applied to the worship of a supposedly divine female is blasphemous and greatly insulting to God. It is the manifestation of the worship born of evil spirits at Babel.

Revelation 2:18 says, "To the messenger of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, He who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like shining bronze." Only to Thyatira does the Lord call Himself the Son of God. To be sure, this must be because the Roman Catholic Church, the antitype of Thyatira, strongly emphasizes Christ as the son of Mary. The Lord's introduction as the Son of God—the embodiment of God, the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9), and the effulgence of God's glory (Heb. 1:3)—is a protest against the apostate heresy that is taught and practiced in Thyatira (Lee, Recovery Version, Rev. 2:18, note 2).

The Deep Things of Satan in the Apostate Church

The Lord rebukes the church in Pergamos, the church married to the world at the time of Constantine, saying that there were some there who held the teaching of Balaam, "who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat idol sacrifices and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14). This is proof from the Word of God that idolatry was found in the church even at the time of the church fathers. The Lord's word to the church in Thyatira is even more severe. He says, "I have something against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and leads My slaves astray to commit fornication and to eat idol sacrifices" (v. 20). These things, especially the contact with idols, He calls "the deep things of Satan" (v. 24). At this point in the decline of the church, Satan no longer attacks the church only from without. In Thyatira he invades the church and saturates it with his deep thought and concept.

The Word of God tells us that behind all false worship are demons. Deuteronomy 32:17 says, "They sacrificed to demons, to those who were no god, / To gods they did not know." Psalm 106:36-37 says, "They served their idols, / Which became a snare to them. / They also sacrificed their sons / And their daughters to demons." Paul

told the Corinthians, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become those who have fellowship with demons" (1 Cor. 10:20). He also writes that some who depart from the faith give heed to the "teachings of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1), indicating that the unclean and evil spirits, who work on the earth for Satan's kingdom, are able to teach, even in that which is called the church. The synagogue of Satan (Rev. 2:9), the world under Satan's throne (v. 13), and the philosophy of the satanic mysteries (v. 24) are all used by Satan to damage and corrupt the church (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 24, note 1). The proper church is the Body of Christ as His embodiment; the apostate church, in a subtle way, became the embodiment of Satan.

Prior to the rationalism of the late eighteenth century, religion—to a great extent—was an integral part of society. Religious beliefs influenced human government and society and penetrated into the hearts, minds, and living of the people. History and archeology show that this was the case since the earliest days of human cities. These primeval religions celebrated a vast pantheon, honored heroes born of incarnated spirits and human mothers (Gen. 6:4), and sought the succor of a mother-goddess (Jer. 7:18). Such religions were conceived at the cradle of civilization and propagated throughout the world with newly adapted names and modified priestcraft, yet with the same essence and nature. Nowhere else, at least in the Western world, can we still see the all-pervading influence of the ancient religions other than in the Catholic Church, under a priestly hierarchy that reaches its pinnacle in the ancient, pagan capital of Rome. Nowhere else do the faithful confound the Divine Trinity with a pantheon of deified heroes, supplement the Trinity with a woman, celebrate the birth of the Son of God with the regalia of sun worship, celebrate the death of the Savior with morbid fasts and self-afflictions, and celebrate the resurrection of Christ with the festivities of the fertile mother-goddess.

Nowhere else are those who take the name of *Christian* taught to worship the queen of heaven, seek salvation from a sinless and ascended mediatrix, appeal to her sacred bleeding heart, and seek her aid more readily than that of her Son. Nowhere else does the populace, with the sanction of the priests, worship winged spirits, worship the dead, worship the rags and bones of the dead, pray for the dead, pray to the dead, receive visits from the dead, and commune with the dead. Nowhere else are they led to erect images of stone and wood as objects of worship, erect shrines in their houses, light candles and lay flowers before images, pray to the images, weep before them, and kiss them. Nowhere else are they taught to recite prayers with a string of beads, eat a deified wafer, ritually confess their secrets to a priest, seek new birth through the sprinkling of water, apply a mystical sign upon the head and breast, apply holy water for protection, and apply oil for

passage into death. The Roman Catholic Church—the prophetic-historic church in Thyatira—is the repository of all these things, inherited from millennia of pagan idolatry.

Watching for Christ as the Morning Star

Cardinal Newman writes, “Mary, like the stars, abides for ever, as lustrous now as she was on the day of her Assumption...It is Mary’s prerogative to be the *Morning Star*, which heralds in the sun” (*Meditations* 77). This again is a great blasphemy, robbing Christ of a very precious title. He Himself declares, “I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright morning star” (Rev. 22:16). To the church in Thyatira He says, “He who overcomes..., to him I will give the morning star” (2:26, 28). The morning star shines brightly in the dark night just before the dawn. It is a type of Christ, who will come again at the end of this age to claim His bride. Before the great tribulation of three and a half years, which will be the darkest hour of earth’s night, Christ will shine as the morning star by appearing in secret to rapture the overcomers, those who are ready and watchful for Him (Matt. 24:42-44; 25:13; Luke 21:36). Following this, Antichrist will be manifested, and he will utterly burn and destroy the great harlot, the Roman Catholic Church (Rev. 17:3-5, 16). This will be God’s judgment on the Catholic Church’s apostasy (v. 17). When the genuine Christians who remain on the earth at that time see this, they will abandon every relic of paganism and tainted religion, love the Lord with a pure heart, and in sincerity seek Him, and Him alone. Then at the end of the three and a half years Christ will appear as the Sun of righteousness, this time openly to the people on the earth, to establish and exercise justice on the earth (Mal. 4:2). Only the overcomers—who worship God according to His holy Word, apart from any taint or stain of fallen religion, in their regenerated spirit mingled with the divine Spirit, and with the reality of Christ richly experienced by them—will see Christ as the morning star, be raptured into His presence, and enjoy Him as their unique Bridegroom at His wedding feast.

It is a great matter to receive the light today concerning the Lord’s desire for the church and to be delivered from all religious leaven in order to seek Him according to His pure New Testament economy. This is crucial for the fulfillment of God’s purpose and thus has the greatest import for both the present age and the age to come. Those who have seen the true nature of the Romish worship must deal faithfully with the light that they have received—by coming out of her (Rev. 18:4), forsaking the teachings and communion of this Jezebel. Only one who does this can be considered an overcomer in the prophetic church in Thyatira, render true worship to the Lord, and watch for Him as the morning star.

by John Campbell

Notes

¹Worship is mentioned in Revelation twice more, when John fell before the revealing angel and was corrected (19:10; 22:8).

²A Sumerian roll cylinder depicts a sacred tree before which sit a man and a woman; behind the woman is a serpent (Langdon 179). Another ancient fragment shows the sacred tree being “guarded by a sword turning to all the four points of the compass” (Smith 65). Both of these are clearly a depiction of the scene in Genesis 2 and 3, demonstrating that the history of man from the beginning of the Bible was known to all the peoples of the post-deluge world.

³The cited author is not speaking of the Chaldean nation of the first millennium B.C. He, like many others, uses *Chaldea* as a general synonym for ancient Babylon.

⁴*Shinar* in Genesis 10:10 and 11:2 is probably Sumer. This would make the people of Nimrod the historical Sumerians, or Sumero-Akkadians, the earliest settlers in Babylonia. Isaac Preston Cory states that the account of the kingship there of Nimrod and his founding of Babylon (Babel) has the “universal consent of history and tradition” (xii).

⁵Historical and literary references to Nimrod are often by the name of Ninus (Layard 377) or Greek Νεβρώδ (Cramer 233), “the most famous hero in Oriental tradition” (Smith 275). Langdon identifies Nimrod with Ninurta (or, in Sumerian, Nimurta), who was also called Tammuz, mentioned in Ezekiel 8:14 (55, 131). Castor of Rhodes tells us that Ninus (Nimrod) founded Babylon with his wife Semiramis (Cory 66). Diodorus of Sicily calls this queen “the most renowned of all women of whom we have any record” (357) and “eager for great exploits and ambitious” (371). Semiramis was once the name of the city of Thyatira (Banks 2977).

⁶ὄστις καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μητέρα Ραΐαν, τὴν καὶ Σεμίραμιν, ἔλαβε γυναῖκα,...κτίζει τὴν Νινευὶ πόλιν Ἀσσυρίων, πρῶτος βασιλεύσας ἐν αὐτῇ, ἔχων τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μητέρα γυναῖκα.

⁷ἄϊσχιστος—“shameful,” “disgraceful.”

⁸A crozier, or crosier, is a hooked staff carried by a bishop, sometimes ornamented with a snake or dragon motif. A mitre is a tall, cleft headdress worn by bishops. A dalmatic and a cope are long liturgical cloaks. An aureole is a halo, some form of which is universal to pagan religions.

⁹*Dominum Deum tuum adorabis et illi soli servies* (Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgaum Versionem; Luke 4:8).

¹⁰Meaning, “evil only because it is prohibited” (my trans.); that is, not evil in itself but only because it is declared to be forbidden.

Works Cited

- Angus, S. *The Mystery-Religions: A Study in the Religious Background of Early Christianity*. Dover Publications, 1975.
- Bailey, Cyril. “Religion and Philosophy.” *The Legacy of Rome*, Clarendon P, 1924.

- Banks, Edgar J. "Thyatira." *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, general editor, James Orr, vol. 4, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980, pp. 2977-2978.
- Barker, William Burckhardt. *Lares and Penates: or, Cilicia and Its Governors*. Edited by William Francis Ainsworth, Ingram, Cooke, and Co., 1853.
- Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*. Edited by Robert Weber and Roger Gryson, 5th ed., Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007.
- Bruce, F. F. "Babylon and Rome." *The Evangelical Quarterly*, no. 13, 15 Oct. 1941, pp. 241-261.
- Bunsen, Christian C. J. *Egypt's Place in Universal History*. Translated by Charles H. Cottrell, vol. 1, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1848.
- Cory, Isaac Preston. *Ancient Fragments of the Phoenician, Chaldaean, Egyptian, Tyrian, Carthaginian, Indian, Persian, and Other Writers*. 2nd ed., William Pickering, 1832.
- Custance, Arthur C. *Noah's Three Sons: Human History in Three Dimensions*. Zondervan Publishing House, 1975. The Doorway Papers 1.
- Diodorus. *Diodorus of Sicily*. Translated by C. H. Oldfather, vol. 1, Harvard UP, 1989.
- Faber, George Stanley. *The Origin of Pagan Idolatry Ascertained from Historical Testimony and Circumstantial Evidence*. Vol. 1, F. and C. Rivingtons, 1816.
- Fortescue, Adrian. "Veneration of Images." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, Robert Appleton, 1910. Newadvent.org/cathen/07664a.htm/. Accessed 19 Oct. 2017.
- Gregory. "Selected Epistles." *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2nd series, vol. 13, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979.
- Herodotus. *The Histories*. Translated by Tom Holland, Penguin Books, 2015.
- Hislop, Alexander. *The Two Babylons or The Papal Worship Proved to Be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife*. Loizeaux Brothers, 1959.
- Hitchcock, Roswell D. *Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible*. A. J. Johnson, 1871.
- John of Antioch. "Historia Chronike." *Anecdota Græca e Codd. Manuscriptis Bibliothecæ Regiæ Parisiensis*, edited by J. A. Cramer, vol. 2, Clarendon, 1839, pp. 231-242.
- Kramer, Samuel Noah. *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B.C.* Revised ed., U of Pennsylvania P, 1972.
- Langdon, Stephen Herbert. *Semitic*. Marshall Jones, 1931. The Mythology of All Races 5.
- Layard, Austen Henry. *Nineveh and Its Remains: The Gripping Journals of the Man Who Discovered the Buried Assyrian Cities*. Skyhorse Publishing, 2013.
- Lee, Witness. Footnotes. Recovery Version of the Bible, Living Stream Ministry, 2003.
- . *Truth Lessons—Level Two, Volume 2*. Living Stream Ministry, 1990.
- Liguori, Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary: Explanation of the "Hail Holy Queen."* Catholic Book Publishing, 1981.
- Löffler, Klemens. "Syncretism." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 14, Robert Appleton, 1912. Newadvent.org/cathen/14383c.htm/. Accessed 19 Oct. 2017.
- Lord Raglan (FitzRoy Richard Somerset). *How Came Civilization?* Methuen, 1939.
- Miller, Andrew. *Miller's Church History*. Pickering & Inglis / Bible Truth Publishers, 1976.
- Nee, Watchman. "Worship." *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 46, Living Stream Ministry, 1993.
- Newman, John Henry. *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. 6th ed., U of Notre Dame P, 1989.
- . *Meditations and Devotions of the Late Cardinal Newman*. Longmans, Green, and Co., 1916.
- Pember, G. H. *The Antichrist, Babylon and the Coming of the Kingdom*. Schoettle Publishing, 1988.
- . *The Church the Churches and the Mysteries or Revelation and Corruption*. Schoettle Publishing, 1998.
- . *Earth's Earliest Ages and Their Connection with Modern Spiritualism, Theosophy, and Buddhism*. Edited by G. H. Lang, new ed., Kregel Publications, 1975.
- Prescott, William H. *History of the Conquest of Peru, with a Preliminary View of the Civilization of the Incas*. Vol. 1, Harper and Brothers, 1847.
- Rétif, André. *The Catholic Spirit*. Edited by Henri Daniel-Rops, translated by Dom Aldhelm Dean, Hawthorn Books, 1959. The Twentieth Century Catholic Encyclopedia.
- "Seventh Ecumenical Council: The Second Council of Nice." *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2nd series, vol. 14, T&T Clark / Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997.
- Smith, George. *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*. Thomas Scott, 1876.
- Thayer, Joseph H. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Hendrickson Publishers, 2003.
- Thurston, Herbert. "Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 15, Robert Appleton, 1912. Newadvent.org/cathen/15459a.htm/. Accessed 19 Oct. 2017.
- Wells, H. G. *The Outline of History Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind*. 3rd ed., Macmillan, 1921.
- Winckler, Hugo. *The History of Babylonia and Assyria*. Translated and edited by James Alexander Craig, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907.