

Nimrod - The Rebellious Panther

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BAPTIST BIBLE TRIBUNE Springfield, Missouri

CHAPTER EIGHT -

THE RISE OF IDOLATRY

For these thousands of years, idol worship has been as universal as murder and death. Idol worship was universal in David's day. "**For all the gods of the nations are idols...**" (Psalm 96:5). The Apostle Paul wrote that the whole ancient world "**changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things**" (Romans 1:23). He tells the Corinthian Christians that before they were regenerated, they were "**carried away unto . . . dumb idols**" (I Corinthians 12:2).

In Athens, the same apostle's "**spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry**" (Acts 17:16) - a city full of idols! Greece had an altar erected to every god known to man. One of the most famous buildings in Rome was the Pantheon, which is still standing. The building is of elaborate brick construction, and its dome is 144 feet in diameter. When Hadrian rebuilt it (110-125), he covered the dome with gilt bronze tiles, and the trusses and girders of the portico roof were of bronze.

The Pantheon was the house of all the gods.

In the Dark Ages, the golden age of Roman Catholicism, the Roman Catholic churches were so filled with idols that the invading Arab, once he paused at the door and looked inside, fled in terror as if fleeing from a house of demons. The Roman church was the official church of the Dark Ages, and the Dark Ages lasted a thousand years.

Idolatry is universal today. In all Roman Catholic lands idolatry is practiced. In the vast Saint Peter's in Rome, there are chapels and churches especially devoted to the worship of the virgin, and her images are covered with gold and silver tributes. Mary is worshipped by the Roman Catholics as the "**queen of Heaven**." The pope has composed an official prayer to her. Here is the way it begins:

"Enraptured by the splendor of your heavenly beauty and impelled by the anxieties of the world, we cast ourselves into your arms, O immaculate mother of JESUS and our mother Mary, confident of finding in your most loving heart appeasement of our ardent desires, and a safe harbor from the tempests which beset us on every side."

Bones and images are the foundation of Roman Catholicism.

The United States, in many decisive respects, is the most powerful Roman Catholic country in the world.

There are 400 million Roman Catholics in the world. There are 127 million Greek Orthodox Catholics. There are 220 million Mohammedans who don't worship idols, but do practically worship Mahomet. There are more than 1 billion belonging to other idol worshipping religions. That makes 1 billion, 747 million of the world's 2 billion inhabitants.

How many Protestants are there in the world? There are 135 million. And this 135 million includes the Baptists, even though Bible-believing Baptists are certainly not Protestants! - all the "baptized" infants, all the Adventist bodies, the Churches of the New Jerusalem, all those on the chain gang, all those in the penitentiary, all those waiting to be hung, the Latter Day Saints, the Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists, all the Unitarians, all the Christian Scientists, and the General Six Principles Baptists.

Idol worship was universal in the ancient world. It was universal in the Graeco-Roman world. It was universal in the Middle Ages. It is universal today. When compared to the idol worshippers, there isn't a handful of true worshippers. There never has been.

When and where did idol worship originate?

It is a singular fact that it did not originate in the antediluvian world. Before the flood you find neither organized rebellion against GOD or idol worship. The basic sin of that world was negative. Cain, its head, rejected the GOD of holiness. He rejected the fact of sin and logically, he rejected the necessity for an atonement for sin. Cain was a Unitarian. He believed in and accepted a GOD of nature and of love. He was the founder and original leader of the Universal - Fatherhood-of-God - and Universal - Brotherhood-of-Man cult. Cain was too refined to slay a lamb, but he was not too refined to murder his brother.

The antediluvian world was without moral salt. It rotted. But we find idol worship in the days of Job:

"If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: This also was an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above" (Job 31:26-28).

Idol worship existed in the time of Abraham, for the archaeologists have dug up the city of Ur, whose worship was that of the Moon god.

Idol worship originated somewhere between Noah (after the flood) and Job and Abraham. Idol worship originated in the Chaldean world. It originated in the Babylonian-Assyrian world.

There is conclusive evidence that idol worship did not come into the world gradually, in progressive stages. Idol worship came into the world suddenly, and it comes into the world full-grown.

Idol worship came into the world like man. There is no evidence that man came into the world

gradually, by progressive stages. All the real evidence is that man came into the world suddenly, and that he came here full-grown. There is not in all the archives of this world a record of one single instance of the transmutation of species. Man has always been man, and hog has always been hog. Although he doesn't know it, and is not particularly interested, the billygoat never has been anything but a billygoat. The record shows that he was a full-grown billygoat to begin with. If he were ever going to develop into anything besides a billygoat, at least his tail would have changed during 6000 years.

But his tail still points toward the North star - as it was pointing when he hit here.

And sin didn't appear in the world gradually, by progressive stages. Sin came into the world suddenly, and it came here full-grown. Suddenly, with no warning at all, man is changed from a lord flashing the blinding splendor and majesty of his CREATOR, to a cringing slave and coward hiding out in the bushes.

And suddenly, with no warning at all, the second man ever born into the world is murdered by the first man that was ever born.

- Man, full-grown, came into the world suddenly, at a definite time, at a definite place.
- Sin, full-grown, came into the world suddenly, at a definite time, at a definite place.
- Idolatry, full-grown, came into the world suddenly, at a definite time, at a definite place.

The human race is scattered all over the world. It is black, brown, white, red, light tan, yellow, and high yellow. It is fat, thin, tall, short, lank, squatty, erudite and ignorant. A part of it eats red hog, a part of it eats greasy sheep, a part of it eats greens; the larger part eats whatever is handy, if anything.

But the widely scattered human race, with all its diversity of language and custom, is a unity. All the evidence is that the human race descended from one pair, and they constitute one species.

The Scriptures everywhere teach that mankind descended from one pair - in the Garden of Eden, in the Middle East.

The historical evidence says the same thing. Comparative philology points to a common origin of languages. To quote E.H. Bancroft:

"All races are fruitful one with another. The normal temperature of the body is the same. The mean frequency of the pulse is the same. There is liability to the same diseases.

"These facts are not true of other animals; and again, human blood can be distinguished by the microscope from that of any other animal."

And so it is with idolatry.

Underneath the superficial differences of idol worship there are fundamental similarities. There is a oneness of character. As with the human race, there is conclusive evidence that idol worship originated suddenly, full-grown, at a definite time, in a definite place and - with a definite objective.

What is an idol? An idol is an image. What is an image? An image is an imitation or likeness of a person or a thing. Idol worship is the worship of the image of a person or a thing.

We can be more definite still: idol worship is the worship of the image of an ultimate person. Behind the image, there is the person.

It might be objected that this is not true, for example, of the image of the serpent - that behind the image of the serpent there is no ultimate person; that the image of the serpent is a symbol of wisdom.

This appears to be true on the surface; but when you follow the trail of serpent worship to its origin, you will find yourself standing before a person. The serpent is associated with fire worship. The god Phoroneus was the "inventor of fire." Behind the mythical Phoroneus there is a person - a man.

I think the evidence that the tedious toil of the patient, persistent scholars have dug up will sustain this proposition:

As you journey back to the origin of idol worship, the great river of diversification becomes increasingly narrower; and when you finally come to its origin, you find yourself standing before a person. You will find yourself standing before a person in the Babylonian-Assyrian world - which has always been considered one world.

Who is the greatest god of the ancient world? Who is the greatest goddess of the ancient world?

The greatest god is Tammuz. Tammuz means '*the son of life*'.

He was worshipped throughout Babylon, in Assyria, Phoenicia, Palestine. In Plato's day Tammuz was regarded as identical with Osiris. Tammuz has been identified with Adonis. Tammuz was the king of the nether world. He was god of the pasture, the patron of flocks and their keepers, and was himself shepherd - of course, the chief shepherd. He died annually and returned to life with each recurring year.

Tammuz met a violent death. The women of Egypt wept for him as Osiris. The Phoenician women wept for him as Tammuz. The Jewish women wept for him as Tammuz.

"He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again and thou shalt see great abominations that they do.

Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz" (Ezekiel 8:13ff).

In Greece and Rome the women lamented Tammuz as Bacchus. We are told that the most beautiful love story of Babylon was that of the grief of Ishtar for the death of her lover Tammuz. Here is a part of Ishtar's lamentation:

"Thou art my king.
Thou wast cruelly taken away,
The shining sceptre was taken from thy hand.
Lift up thy hand which was beaten down.
Without Tammuz the earth ceases to be."
And Ishta groaned, "Alas, in his youth he sleeps
Among the flowers of the garden; he is deserted.
The hero, my Dumu-zi, among the flowers of the garden he sleeps,
Among the flowers of the garden he is abandoned.
Among the mulberry-trees he sleeps.
We are steeped in woe for his sake."

I pause to emphasize that Tammuz was KING. He had THE SHINING SCEPTRE. He was CRUELLY (violently) TAKEN AWAY. WITHOUT TAMMUZ THE EARTH CEASES TO BE. Which means that Tammuz was the very greatest character of the Babylonian world.

You would naturally expect that the wife of Tammuz would be the very greatest woman of the Babylonian world. She was. She was the original Ishtar, who has just been lamenting him.

The power and lasting fame of Ishtar is evidenced by the fact that this week the whole Christian world is paying tribute to her: Ishtar means Easter. We didn't get Easter from the New Testament; we got it from the Babylonian goddess Ishtar.

Ishtar was the virgin mother-goddess. She was always associated with the planet Venus. Ishtar is Venus. In the Pantheon in Rome, Ishtar retained her independent position; she was the mother of them all - the VIRGIN mother.

In her great book, "*Nebuchadnezzar*," Mme. G.R. Tabouis devotes an entire chapter to Ishtar. She describes the Feast of Ishtar. "On this evening of the sixteenth of the month of Ab, Babylon was holding the Feast of Ishtar, the patron goddess of childbirth, war, the rebirth of nature, and, above all, the secret orgies of love."

In her temple there was drunkenness and monstrous lust. There were the bands of "sacred harlots. "There was the "sacred prostitution."

All of that before the image of the "virgin mother"!

Tammuz - "the king with the shining sceptre," without whom "the earth ceases to be"!

Ishtar, his wife - the "virgin mother" of all the goddesses, the "Queen of Heaven"!

Who was the grand original of Tammuz? There isn't but one man in the Babylonian-Assyrian world who can qualify NIMROD.

Who was the grand original of Ishtar? There isn't but one woman in the Babylonian-Assyrian world who can qualify NIMROD'S WIFE.

Nimrod is the father of the gods.
Nimrod's wife is the mother of the gods.

As to Nimrod, being the father of the gods, listen to no less an authority than George Rawlinson:

"Bil-Nipru is probably the Biblical Nimrod, the original founder of the monarchy, the 'mighty hunter' and conqueror. At the same time, however, that he is this hero deified, he represents also, as the second god of the first Triad, the classical Jupiter. He is 'the supreme,' 'the father of the gods,' 'the procreator,' 'the Lord,' par excellence, "the king of all the spirits,' 'the Lord of the world,' and again, 'the lord of all the countries,'" *Ancient Monarchies*, Vol. 1, p. 118).

As to Nimrod's wife, hear Rawlinson on the following two pages of the same volume:

"Bettis, the wife of Bel-Nimrod, presents a strong contrast to Anata, the wife of Ana. She is far more than the mere female power of Bel-Nimrod, being in fact a separate and very important deity. Her common title is 'the Great Goddess,' In Chaldea her name was Mulita or Enuta - both words signifying 'the Lady'; In Assyria she was Bilta or Bilta-Nipruta, the feminine forms of Bil and Bilu-Nipru. Her favorite title was 'the Mother of the Gods,' or 'the Mother of the Great Gods'; whence it is tolerably clear that she was the 'Dea Syria' worshipped at Hierapolis under the Arian appellation of Mabog. Though commonly represented as the wife of Bel, Nimrod and mother of his son Nin or Ninip, she is also called 'the wife of Nin,' and in one place 'the wife of Asshur.' Her other titles are 'the lady of Bit-Ana,' 'the lady of Nipur' 'the Queen of the land' or of the lands,' 'the great lady,' 'the goddess of war and battle,' and 'the queen of fecundity'. She seems thus to have united the attributes of the Juno, the Ceres or Demeter, the Bellona, and even the Diana of the classical nations; for she was at once the queen of Heaven, the goddess who makes the earth fertile, the goddess of war and battle, and the goddess of hunting. In these latter capacities she appears, however, to HAVE BEEN GRADUALLY SUPERCEDED BY ISHTAR, who sometimes even appropriates her higher and more distinctive appellations." (Capitals mine.)

Nimrod the father of idolatry. Nimrod's wife the mother of idolatry.

And there is nothing so very strange about this, once you read Nimrod's record in Genesis 10:8-11!

As I emphasized at the beginning of these articles, Nimrod was the founder of the whole Babylonian-Assyrian world - from whence Greece, Rome, and the modern world got all their basic ideas. Nimrod was the greatest wicked man that ever lived, the first to lead an organized rebellion against his Creator. His wife was the greatest wicked woman that ever lived - the grand original of Ishtar and Semiramis and Bettis.

But all this leaves unanswered the question as to the circumstances in which idol worship rose and its great objective.

~ end of chapter 8 ~
