**“The Establishment of Image Worship. The Second Commandment” The Present Truth 18, 14, pp. 214, 215.**

**THE SECOND COMMANDMENT**

“I AM the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 214.1}

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing 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, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 214.2}

From the days of Constantine to the end of the sixth century image worship had become universally established in the Catholic Church. Thus stood Catholic idolatry when, early in the seventh century, the Mohammedans swarmed up from the deserts of Arabia, executing judgment upon the “idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk.” Revelation 9:20. {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 214.3}

“The triumphant Mussulmans, who reigned at Damascus and threatened Constantinople, cast into the scale of reproach the accumulated weight of truth and victory. The cities Syria, Palestine, and Egypt had been fortified with the images of Christ, His mother, and His saints; and each city presumed on the hope or promise of miraculous defence. {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 214.4}

“In the rapid contest of ten years, the Arabs subdued those cities and these images; and, in their opinion, the Lord of hosts pronounced a decisive judgment between the adoration and contempt of these mute and inanimate idols. In this season of distress and dismay the eloquence of the monks was exercised in the defense of images.”—*Gibbon*. {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 214.5}

Under the influence of the charge of idolatry, which the Mohammedans incessantly urged against the Catholics, some began to awake to the thought that perhaps the charge was true, and strongly desired the reformation of the Church. Besides these there were scattered throughout Christendom true Christians who constantly opposed, with the word of God and the example of primitive times, the worship of images. {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 214.6}

In a hundred years these influences had become so strong that Emperor Leo the Isaurian, in 727, took his stand, and issued an edict, against the worship of images. Opposition to this movement of the emperor’s caused the famous Iconoclastic Controversy, between the worshipers and the breakers of the images, which continued with bloody and unabated fury for one hundred and twenty years,—726-846,—and which finally resulted in the triumph of the worship of images, and the “religion of Constantine.” {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 214.7}

The Emperor ordered the images to be broken to pieces, the walls of the churches to be whitewashed, and prosecuted with honest but imprudent vigour his design of extirpating idolatry. But a fierce dissension at once raged throughout all Christendom: the monks and the people arose in defence of their images and pictures, and the emperor, even in his own capital, was denounced as a heretic and a tyrant. {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 214.8}

There was an image of the Saviour, renowned for its miraculous powers, over the gate of the imperial palace called the Brazen Gate, from the rich tiles of gilt bronze that covered its magnificent vestibule. The emperor ordered the sacred figure to be taken down and broken to pieces. But the people from all parts of the city flew to the defense of their favorite idol, fell upon the officers, and put many of them to death. {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 214.9}

“The women were even more violent than the men. Like furies they rushed to the spot, and, finding one of the soldiers engaged in the unhallowed labour at the top of the ladder, they pulled it down, and tore him to pieces as he lay bruised upon the ground. ‘Thus,’ exclaims the pious annalist, ‘did the minister of the emperor’s injustice fall at once from the top of the ladder to the bottom of hell.’ {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 214.10}

“The women next flew to the great church, and finding the iconoclastic patriarch officiating at the altar, overwhelmed him with a shower of stones and a thousand opprobrious names. He escaped, bruised and fainting, from the building. The guards were now called out, and the female insurrection was suppressed; but not until several of the women had perished in the fray.” {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 215.1}

“The execution of the imperial edicts was resisted by frequent tumults in Constantinople and the provinces; the person of Leo was endangered, his officers were massacred, and the popular enthusiasm was quelled by the strongest efforts of the civil and military power.” {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 215.2}

In 728 the edict of the Eastern emperor abolishing the worship of images was published in Italy. The pope defended the images, of course, and “the Italians swore to live and die in defense of the pope *and* the holy images.” And thus there was begun a war which, in its nature and consequences, was in every sense characteristic of the papacy. It established the worship of images, as an article of Catholic faith; it developed the supremacy of the pope in temporal affairs. {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 215.3}

When Leo’s decree against the worship of images was published in the West, “the images of Christ and the Virgin, of the angels, martyrs, and saints, were abolished in all the churches in Italy;” and the emperor threatened the pope that if he did not comply with the decree, he should be degraded and sent into exile. But the pope—Gregory II—stood firmly for the worship of images, and sent pastoral letters throughout Italy, exhorting the faithful to do the same. {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 215.4}

“At this signal, Ravenna, Venice, and the cities of the exarchate and Pentapolis adhered to the cause of religious images; their military force by sea and land consisted, for the most part, of the natives; and the spirit of patriotism and zeal was transfused into the mercenary strangers. The Italians swore to live and die in the defense of the pope and the holy images.... The Greeks were overthrown and massacred, their leaders suffered an ignominious death, and the popes, however inclined to mercy, refused to intercede for these guilty victims.” {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 215.5}

At Ravenna, A.D. 729, the riot and bloody strife was so great that even the exarch, the personal representative of the emperor, was slain. “To punish this flagitious deed, and restore his dominion it Italy, the emperor sent a fleet and army into the Adriatic Gulf. After suffering from the winds and the waves much loss and delay, the Greeks made their descent in the neighborhood of Ravenna.... In a hard-fought day, as the two armies alternately yielded and advanced, a *phantom* was seen, a voice was heard, and Ravenna was victorious by the assurance of victory. The strangers retreated to their ships, but the populous seacoast poured forth a multitude of boats; the waters of the Po were so deeply infected with blood, that during *six years* the public prejudice abstained from the fish of the river; and the institution of an annual feast perpetuated the *worship of images*, and the abhorrence of the Greek tyrant. Amidst the triumph of the Catholic arms, the Roman pontiff convened a synod of *ninety-three* bishops against the heresy of the Iconoclasts. With their consent he pronounced a general excommunication against *all* who by *word or deed* should attack the traditions of the Fathers and the images of the saints.” {PTUK April 3, 1902, p. 215.6}

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