

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Decapitating the Serpent

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Earlier this month, a man named Michael Cassidy allegedly tore down and beheaded a statue erected by the Satanic Temple in the Iowa state capitol. He reportedly took this action because “it was extremely anti-Christian.” Later, he posted a quote of [1 Peter 5:8](#) to his X feed, where the apostle exhorts Christians to “be on the alert” because our “adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (NASB).

Many Christians and politically conservative individuals have hailed Cassidy’s actions as ‘brave,’ applauding him for taking a stand against the evil that has infected our nation. People are exhausted by the constant onslaught of wickedness that occurs in our nation day after day, and to see someone fighting so publicly against Satan and satanism feels very refreshing. Such a bold protest, even if illegal, seems laudatory because, after all, it is opposition to evil. As Christians, however, we would do well to allow our passions to simmer and to think through this situation biblically in order to exercise wisdom and discernment in our fight against the powers of darkness. Is tearing down a statue really a biblical way to oppose evil, and a path that Christians should choose, or even celebrate?

To be clear: all statues that represent objects of worship are evil. The Old and New Testaments state that all forms of idolatry are an abomination to the Lord. Whether a statue is meant to symbolize Zeus, Satan, or even Yahweh (see Exodus 32 and the golden

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calf), such images are forbidden by the law of God and amount to idol worship. Christians should recognize that all forms of idolatry are detestable in God's sight. Furthermore, Scripture tells us that all idols are demonic in character. Paul told the Corinthians that people who offer sacrifices to idols actually offer sacrifices to demons. Idols, in and of themselves, are nothing ([1 Corinthians 10:19-20](#)). Idols can't speak, see, hear, smell, feel, walk, or talk ([Psalm 115:4-7](#)). The statues are empty and powerless. Nevertheless, behind all idolatrous worship, we find demonic powers. These demonic powers seek to destroy the souls of men and constantly assault the glory of Christ.

Christians, therefore, should oppose idolatry and the demonic powers it represents out of love for and loyalty to Christ our Lord. How should we do so? Do we oppose idolatry by destroying statues of Satan, demons, or false gods?

In the Old Testament, we find several examples that might provide biblical warrant for such actions against images and idols. For example, after the golden calf incident in Exodus 32, Moses burned the idol, ground it to powder, scattered it over the water, and made Israel drink the remnants ([Exodus 32:20](#)). A few chapters later, Yahweh commanded Israel to tear down the altars and idols of the foreign gods of the Canaanites ([Exodus 34:13](#)). In Judges 6, the angel of Yahweh came to Gideon and commanded him to tear down the altar of Baal and the Asherah (a false god's image) next to it. God expressly commanded people in the Old Testament to destroy idols and images, and those who were faithful to Yahweh did so to honor Him.

New covenant believers might conclude from these examples that we should follow suit. God is still outraged by idolatrous worship and statues that dishonor Him, and such images are still worthy of being destroyed. As believers, some might therefore conclude, we should still destroy them when we have a chance to do so. However, there are some clues in the OT and the NT that the way we destroy idolatrous worship is different today than it was in the OT.

Many of the events we read about in the OT were of a typological nature, representing something greater that would occur in the NT. In the passages that relate to the destruction of idols, we see this typology at work. For example, not only were the Israelites commanded to tear down the Canaanite idols and altars but to destroy the Canaanites themselves ([Exodus 23:20-33](#)). While the Lord's will was for Israel to annihilate the Canaanites in judgment for their wickedness, God is not currently calling His new covenant people to annihilate their enemies via military conquest. Jesus was clear that He came to save men's lives, not to destroy them ([Luke 9:54-56](#)). Has God changed His mind about what should be done to idolatrous unbelievers? No. What we read about in the OT conquest of the Promised Land was typological, and it represents the final judgment when Christ comes in power and glory to vanquish all His enemies,

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including the devil himself. What Israel did to the Canaanites was but an echo of the shout that will occur at the glorious coming of our Lord.

If the conquest of Canaan was a typological representation of the greater reality of future judgment, then we stand on firm ground in concluding that the physical destruction of idols and satanic statues was also typological of a greater reality. The NT itself affirms this. While we could evaluate several passages on the battle with the devil and his emissaries, let's just consider two important texts.

First, [2 Corinthians 10:3-5](#) explains the nature of our conquest under the new covenant. We, like Israel of the OT, are engaged in warfare against the enemies of God. Our warfare is directly linked to what we read in the OT, but it has been elevated out of the physical realm into the spiritual realm (see also [Ephesians 6:12](#)). Paul asserts that "though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh" ([2 Cor 10:3](#)). Our tactics are not worldly tactics; we do not use tactics that are merely human and that relate simply to this present age. Unbelievers, idolators, cults, and others wage warfare this way.

Believers, however, should not act similarly, even though we live in the same world and experience the same bodily struggles. Why not? "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses." We could war according to the flesh, but to do so would be to forfeit our more lethal weapons for less powerful weapons! We do not wage war according to the flesh because we have divine weapons with supernatural power. We could, like many protesters in the summer of 2020, tear down statues as our way of protesting what we oppose, but why should we stoop to their level when we have more powerful weapons than they do? Our weapons don't just tear down statues but the entire demonic enterprise behind them.

Paul goes on to say, "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" ([2 Cor 10:5 NASB](#)). We could, like Gideon, destroy the altar of Baal and the Asherah next to it; but to do so would be regression. We know the altar and the Asherah are nothing at all but rocks and wood. Our assault is no longer on the physical objects of idolatrous worship, but upon the spiritual powers behind those objects of worship. We are assaulting with spiritual weapons everything that is raised up against the knowledge of God. We are seeking to destroy the idolatrous impulse in the minds of sinful men and bring their thoughts into conformity to the will of Christ.

Second, Paul exemplified in Acts 17 what he wrote in 2 Corinthians 10. When Paul arrived in Athens in [Acts 17:16](#), we read that "his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols" (NASB). We can relate as believers to Paul's feelings here as we live in a country drowning in idolatry. What lover of Christ wouldn't

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see an idol set up to Satan in a state capitol building and not be provoked within by the sight of such a detestable abomination! We feel outraged by it, and rightly so. So did Paul when he saw all the idols in Athens.

How did Paul respond? “So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles... preaching Jesus and the resurrection” ([Acts 17:17-18 NASB](#)). Paul’s response to being provoked by idolatrous displays that were an affront to Christ’s glory and lordship was to preach Jesus and the resurrection. Did Paul want to see each and every one of those idols be torn down, ground into powder, and cast into the sea? Undoubtedly. But Paul realized that clearing out the idols of Athens would no more change the hearts of Athenians than crushing the golden calf broke the idolatrous hearts of Israel. What those who promoted and allowed such idol-worship needed was not a lesson in political ‘bravery’ but a lesson about the cross and resurrection of Christ. Seeing souls saved was more important than making a political statement, even a political statement that was anti-satanic.

Part of me wants to smile a bit when I think about a statue to Satan being torn down and decapitated because my heart rejoices in the defeat of the devil. This urge, though, must be tempered with truth, the truth that toppling a ridiculous display doesn’t do anything to defeat the devil. It’s at best a symbolic gesture of someone who professes to oppose evil. For those who are interested in seeing the souls of men saved and Christ truly glorified, our hearts must yearn for more than symbolic gestures. We should long for the true defeat of the devil by the power of God. We must desire to see unbelievers set free from the domain of darkness and brought into the kingdom of Christ through the gospel.

The only meaningful way to decapitate the serpent is with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.



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