

Research paper on the background of the black madonna

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In France, studies of the black Madonna started way back in 1937. This initial study was first done by Marie Durand and later by Emile Saillens in 1945. Important studies on the black image were later done by Leonard Moss in 1952 at the American Association for Advancement of Science. This later study had a strong history of miracles. Moss had various samples from across the world which were placed in three categories; the first category was of black or dark brown Madonnas with regard to the pigmentation of the indigenous people. The second category included forms of art that had attained the black color as a result of various physical factors. With the third category consisting of no valid explanation for the black color. The first category consists of various black images and it's seemingly the most evident. In the same category is the Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. Catholics that are not experts would frequently use the second category in relation to certain images. This category basically applies to a certain level of black. Our Lady of Hermits in Switzerland is an illustration of this second category. In 1798 she was evacuated to Austria. This was an escape from Napoleon's designs and was later returned in 1803. At this time, the Madonna was thought to have been cleaned but later it was decided that her blackness be restored before being seen by faithful who would come to pay homage. Another feature that points to the black image is the image of our lady of Altötting rescued in 907. Subsequently other black images rescued from burning churches are also depicted. Some other black Madonnas still require explanation of their blackness. Artistic impressions among other explanations are held behind the theory of the black color (Ralls 134).

Illustrations from the book of Songs of Solomon " I am black but beautiful" are held in favor of the blackness.

The theory by Stephen Benko is another explanation for the blackness. According to Benko, " the Black Madonna is the ancient earth-goddess converted to Christianity." In his argument is the fact that all other goddesses are depicted in black and among such is the goddess of Isis. For instance, the goddess of fertility among the Romans is black. In this regard, it is thought that since the most fertile ground is black, the more black the color the better. Benko further justifies his explanation with illustrations from the inculturation of both Mary and Jesus. He bases his explanation on Genesis 2; 7 with regard to the concept of creation. In line to the same Benko indicates that Mary is just but an indication of the new creation with Jesus being the new Adam. This explanation is also supported by Moss " Saint Augustine noted that the Virgin Mary represents the earth and that Jesus is of the earth born" (Michael 1-3). According to Benko Earth is a source of both fertility and life. The black color of the Madonna has been taken to justify the Aramaic language. This is thought to be the language of Jesus in which the black color depicts sorrow. This basically associates the Virgin Mary to Isis who is also called sorrowful in her own pursuit of Osiris.

Works Cited

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