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November 2014



The Seven Cardinal Virtues



The Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences

Francesco di Stefano Pesellino (1422?-1457) (Birmingham Alabama Museum of Art)

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This Month's Cover

This month our cover depicts two murals that are displayed locally, at the Birmingham (AL) Museum of Art. They are tempera on wooden panels about 16x58", both executed about 1450 in Florence by Francesco Pesellino. They decorated the front panels of *cassoni*, which were wooden chests made in pairs for weddings, one for the bride and one for the groom.

In the Middle Ages, the seven Liberal Arts and Sciences represented the essence of a good education. They are Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, Astronomy¹, Logic, Rhetoric and Grammar. Similarly, the seven Cardinal Virtues represented the essential character of a good person. They are Prudence, Justice, Faith, Hope, Charity, Fortitude and Temperance. We will discuss these virtues and arts in more detail in a later article in this issue.

For all the accusations of the Middle Ages being a patriarchal and misogynous society, it is interesting to note that the large figures denoting these virtues and arts are female, and the smaller figures sitting at their feet and denoting their exemplification are male. In ancient Egyptian art the size of a figure was an indication of his importance, and it appears that Pesellino has used that same device. The exemplifications represent various characters from the Bible and history. Exemplifying Fortitude, for example is Samson holding the jawbone of an ass, the weapon with which he slew a thousand Philistines. An unidentified Cardinal exemplifies Prudence, and a monk exemplifies Temperance.² The exemplification of Grammar looks very much like the 13th century portraits of Dante Alighieri, whose Divine Comedy was extremely popular in Italy in Pesellino's time.

Francesco di Stefano Pesellino was born in Florence around 1422, the son of the painter Stefano di Francesco and the matrilineal grandson of the painter Giuliano Pesello. After his father's death in 1427 Francesco went to live with his grandfather, from whom he took the diminutive nickname Pesellino ("Little Pesello"). He married in 1442. He studied under Pesello until his death in 1446, when he joined the studio of Filippo Lippi, joining the Florentine Painters' Guild in 1447. He was a prolific painter and was gaining a reputation for his outstanding work, most of which were either religious works or small pieces designed for insertion into furniture or paneling. These panels, as we mentioned above, were for the decoration of wedding chests. Pesellino died in 1457 at the age of 35, cutting short a career that might well have led to his being considered one of the great masters of the Renaissance.

¹ In the mural the legend says Astrology, but in the Middle Ages astrology and astronomy were synonymous. Today we use astronomy to mean the science of the stars, and astrology to mean the occult study of the effect on our lives of their movements and relative positions. In the Middle Ages no distinction was drawn between the two disciplines.

² The monk is probably a Dominican since he holds a book, which was a medieval symbol of scholarship.

A Word from the Editor

November, with Thanksgiving looming at the end of it, is when we traditionally start counting our blessings. Perhaps it might be more accurate to say that it is when we think about counting our blessings, but rarely get around to actually doing it. I have had some significant challenges in the past few months, and that in its own right has turned out to be a great blessing. Among other things, I have come to realize how easy it is to take things for granted or never even to think seriously about the blessings that surround us until something happens to make us consciously aware of them. One of these blessings is friends. The help and encouragement of my friends have been amazing-at every turn someone was either doing something for me or sincerely offering to do so.

Sometimes even what appears to be a calamity can turn out to be a blessing in disguise. I have always been independent to a fault, preferring to do something myself rather than asking someone else to do it. Suddenly I found myself to have no choice but to ask others for favors, even to the point of having to ask a friend to buy me some groceries and another to help me down my front steps so I could go to church. A certain degree of independence is good, but it is also a fault when it is too strong. By the grace of God I think I am learning to control it. That is a blessing. Another virtue is modesty, but that can also become overblown. When you find yourself sitting naked on a cold plastic stool in the middle of a huge shower room being washed by a nurse young enough to be your granddaughter, any false modesty you may have goes down the drain faster than the water. That too is a blessing. When I am tempted to complain about a broken hip, I think about the people I saw in the nursing home with broken bodies, minds, souls and hearts, and I realize how very blessed I am.

When we start to count our blessings, the first thing we should do is try to sort out the real blessings from the mere luxuries. My warm house and good food are luxuries, not blessings. The real blessings are the things that give us peace and a feeling of wellbeing, and are often things we let slip by with barely a notice. When you are feeling low and your dog senses it and nuzzles up to you, thank God for that simple blessing. Thank him for the unexpected waft of the scent of sweet olive on a warm fall evening. Thank him for the chuckle you get at a little child's belly-laugh. Thank him for the taste of a perfectly done potato. Thank him for those very rare times when for just a fleeting moment you are flooded with "the peace of God that passeth all understanding"-those brief tastes of heavenly peace that the busy-ness of the world takes away almost as soon as they come. Those moments are true blessings, because they show us the peace we can have in Christ if we simply turn ourselves over to him.

Let's not wait for Thanksgiving to start noticing our blessings—we should be doing it every day of our lives. As we learn to separate blessings from luxuries, we will come to realize how truly blessed we are in the midst of any difficulties life may put in our path.

Father Rick Losch+

Be Wordly Wise Sublime

The Oxford American Dictionary defines sublime as "of such excellence, grandeur, or beauty as to inspire great admiration or awe." Literally it means "up to the upper limit." While the Latin *sub* usually beans "below," it can also mean "up to" as in approaching from below. The word derives from the Latin *sublimis*, which in turn comes from *sub* and *limen*, "threshold" or "lintel" (the top supporting bar of a doorway).

"Sublime" should not be confused with "subliminal." The latter is a psychological term that means "below the threshold" in a very different way. Something that is subliminal is something that is below the threshold of sensation or consciousness, and is thus perceived by the mind without the person being consciously aware of it. Subliminal suggestion is a method of brainwashing, and is an illegal means of commercial advertising. The word, however, comes from the same roots as "sublime."

Richard R. Losch+

"No diet could remove all the fat from your body, because the brain is mainly fat. Without a brain you might look good, but all you could do is run for public office."

George Bernard Shaw

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Thanksgiving Service

St. James' will host the Community Thanksgiving Service on Tuesday, November 25th, at 5:30 p.m. You are asked to bring canned goods to be given to the Department of Human Resources for distribution to those in need. Please plan to attend and invite your friends and neighbors as we give thanks for the multitude of blessings God has bestowed upon us.

Hiram Patrenos

Evening Prayer and Parish Supper

Our November service of Evening Prayer will be on Wednesday, November 19th, at 6:00 p.m. with a Spaghetti Supper following in the parish house. Spaghetti with meat sauce, green salad, bread and wine will be furnished. Signup sheets for attendance and for deserts and tea are in the parish house kitchen. So that we may plan for sufficient food, please sign up no later than Sunday, November 16th. *Hiram Patrenos*

Altar Flowers

Volunteers are needed to provide Altar Flowers through the season of Pentecost as well as to provide greenery during the season of Advent. A signup chart is located in the Sacristy. You may use flowers from your yard or, if you wish, make arrangements with a florist to provide them. For more information, please speak with Carolyn Patrenos.

Hiram Patrenos

Wilmer Hall Christmas Contribution

Once again St. James' will be making a special gift to Wilmer Hall for its Christmas needs this year. Envelopes are available on the table at the back of the Church and contributions should be made payable to St. James' and designated for "Wilmer Hall Christmas." Envelopes may be placed in the alms basins or given to Hiram Patrenos. So that we may forward our gift in time for use this Christmas, you are asked to make your contribution no later than Sunday, November 30th.

Hiram Patrenos

Every Member Canvass

St. James' will be conducting its "Every Member Canvass" during the month of November. The Vestry needs this information so that it can budget appropriately for the upcoming year. If you have any questions regarding our parish finances, please do not hesitate to speak with a member of the Vestry or our Treasurer, T. Raiford Noland. Pledge cards will be mailed to all members and are available on the table at the rear of the Church. Please prayerfully consider your commitment to St. James', its mission and work.

Hiram Patrenos

"Forward Day By Day"

The Forward Day By Day daily devotional booklets for November, December, and January are available in regular and large print editions in the tract rack in the Parish House.

Although all the baptized who are faithful to Christ are called saints, when the Church uses the term it generally implies those who have been purified and have entered into the full "beatific vision of God" (i.e., heaven). Many of these are honored on specific days each year, but there are many who are not, along with countless saints who are not even known. All martyrs for Christ are deemed saints, yet most God alone knows (such as the thousands who died in the Roman persecutions, and the modern Christian martyrs who are being slaughtered each day in Africa and the Middle East). In the late third century the Church in Antioch set aside the Sunday after Pentecost as a day to honor all the martyrs. In 411 the Chaldean (southern Mesopotamian) Church consecrated the Friday after Easter as a Commemoratio Confessorum (Commemoration of Confessors¹). In 609 Pope Boniface IV consecrated the Pantheon in Rome as a shrine to the Blessed Virgin and all martyrs, and proclaimed May 13 to be dedicated to them each year. In the early eighth century Gregory III dedicated a chapel in St. Peter's Basilica to all martyrs. and set the annual commemoration on November 1. In the ninth century Gregory IV extended to the whole Church the obligation to honor all saints on that date, and it has been thus observed ever since.

¹ A confessor is one who is fully willing and prepared to be a martyr, yet has not been called upon to do so.

The Seven Virtues and Liberal Arts

In the Middle Ages it was a common practice to make lists of seven items-the seven deadly sins, the seven seas, the seven cardinal virtues, the seven liberal arts and sciences, the seven sacraments, and so on. It was also common to break these up into sub-lists of four major items, called a quadrivium, and three lesser ones called a trivium.¹ Geometry was considered a sacred art in the Middle Ages. The trivium (3) and quadrivium (4) of any list are rooted in the 5 senses. This leads us to the 3-4-5 right triangle, in which any right triangle with legs in the ratio of 3:4 will have a hypotenuse of 5 (you may recall the



Pythagorean Theorem from your high school math). To the medieval mind this

had great mystical significance. The cover of this month's Epistle shows two 15th century panels personifying the Seven Cardinal Virtues and the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Socrates proposed that no man could be considered worthy unless he possessed the virtues of Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice. To these were later added the Pauline virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity (1 Cor. 13:13), giving us what ere called the Seven Cardinal Virtues. These were made up of the quadrivium of the Socratic virtues, and the trivium of the Pauline.

In the early Middle Ages education was not generally respected except by the clergy-most of the aristocracy, including royalty, could not read or write or even do simple sums. They were taught the rules of chivalry² and warfare, and deemed "book-learning" beneath their dignity. They had hirelings to take care of such mundane matters. The Church, on the other hand, had great reverence for education, and fostered it among the clergy and religious. Unfortunately most of the parish priests were illiterate and abysmally ignorant, but higher clergy and most monks and nuns were reasonably well educated. In the early Middle Ages an education consisted of Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy. This became the quadrivium of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences ("liberal" because they liberated the mind from ignorance). It soon became evident that these needed to be fleshed out with the trivium of Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic.

Arithmetic and Geometry meant the same as they do today, although Geometry was thought to be divinely

¹ This is the origin of our word trivia, which is the Latin plural of *trivium*. Trivia technically does not mean inconsequential things, as it is often used today, but rather it simply means things of lesser importance.

² Contrary to the popular image, chivalry was not very chivalric. Chivalry (literally "horsemanship") demanded gallant treatment of upper-class women and of one's peers, but had no bearing on the treatment of menials. In the film *Becket*, Becket and King Henry take refuge in a peasant's hut during a storm. The peasant's daughter is in the hut. Henry gives the girl to Becket as a present, and they both continually refer to her as "it." This would not be unrealistic in the 13th century,

inspired and infused with spiritual significance. Music, on the other hand, did not mean learning to sing or play an instrument. It meant the contemplation of "the music of the spheres"-a study of the harmonic proportions and relationships that make up the universe. It was, therefore, very closely related to astronomy and philosophy. The term comes from Roman mythology. The Muses were nine goddesses that presided over the arts and sciences. The fourth art, Astronomy (Astrology in the painting), did not mean quite the same as it does today. Literally, Astronomy is the naming of the stars, while Astrology is the study of them. The two terms were synonymous in the Middle Ages, when the only means of observation of the stars was the naked eye, and it was generally believed that the earth is the center of the universe, around which all other bodies revolve. It was also universally believed that the relative positions of the stars and planets affect the course of human life (what today is called astrology). When in the early 16th century Nicholas Copernicus suggested that the earth revolves around the sun instead of vice versa, the scientific and religious worlds (which were effectively one and the same) were set afire. It was not until relatively modern times that a distinction was drawn between the science of Astronomy and the occult beliefs of Astrology.

The trivium of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences consisted of Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic. Grammar was much more than simply the correct use of word forms. It involved every aspect of the use of language as a means of expressing oneself. In order to do this it was necessary to have a thorough knowledge of what we today call grammar, but the Liberal Art of Grammar involved much more. Likewise, Rhetoric meant more than simply learning to use beautiful or flowery phraseology. It meant learning to speak and write in such a way that one could convince or persuade his audience either to agree with a principle or to take action on something. It was Pope Urban II's mastery of rhetoric that enabled him to convince the nobility of the need for a Crusade to the Holy Land, and to persuade them to leave their fiefs and go to war in a strange land. The third art of the trivium, Logic, is the study of valid reasoning. Deeply rooted in ancient philosophy, Logic enables one to tie a series of observations together into a sound cause-and-effect sequence in order to present and defend a proposition. Without Logic, Rhetoric is of no value. If a presentation is not logical it makes no difference how powerfully it is presented. This is the problem with the majority of political speeches today. They sound wonderful until one reflects on them closely and realizes that they are nothing but empty words. An analysis of the speeches of great political orators of the past (e.g. Cicero, Patrick Henry, Abraham Lincoln, William Jennings Bryan and Martin Luther King, Jr.) shows carefully crafted logic behind their beautiful words.

Jezebel

Jezebel is mentioned in only five chapters in the Old Testament, yet her very name conjures up the image of a depraved, shrewish, thoroughly wicked woman. Even in comparison with other biblical evil women-Potiphar's wife or Delilah-she comes off bad because no good whatever comes from anything that she is reported to have done. While she appears to be at best a singularly unpleasant person, she may not have been quite as bad as the Bible depicts her. If we read the stories considering her background and look at them from her point of view, a somewhat different story emerges. It hardly exonerates her, but at least it makes her look a little less like the pure distilled evil that the Bible presents her to be.

Jezebel appears in 1 and 2 Kings, two books of the Deuteronomic History. These are several books of the Bible at least parts of which were written by a man (or more likely a group of men) known as the Deuteronomist.¹ The Deuteronomist was interested in explaining the breakup of David's United Monarchy and the later fall of the northern kingdom of Israel. The main reason, as he presents it, is that they became unfaithful to God, allowing corruption from foreign cultures and idolatrous religions. Jezebel was a representative of both "in spades," and so the Deuteronomist has absolutely nothing good to say about her.

Jezebel was the daughter of King

Ethbaal of Tyre (Phoenicia, modern Lebanon), who gave her in marriage to King Ahab of Israel, the northern of the two Jewish kingdoms (Judah being the other).² This was politically a very good marriage. Phoenicia had great wealth and natural resources, and commanded almost all the shipping in the Mediterranean. Israel, on the other hand, commanded the best of the trade routes to the south (Egypt and Arabia), Syria to the north and into the northeastern region that led to Mesopotamia and Persia. David had established a warm alliance with Phoenicia, and the marriage of Jezebel to Ahab promised to maintain it.

There is no record of what Jezebel though of this marriage, but she would have had very little say in the matter. She lived in an era when kings' daughters were nothing more than pawns to secure alliances and treaties, and love had nothing to do with their marriages. Jezebel left the rich, lush seacoast of Tyre for the arid, rocky and forbidding terrain of Israel: she left a culture that welcomed strangers and sought to absorb the best from their cultures, to live in a xenophobic society that distrusted and even hated all foreigners, including her; she left a pantheon of gods and goddesses who could be bribed

¹ The Deuteronomic History consists of the books from Deuteronomy through 2 Kings.

² At that time Israel was more prosperous and powerful than her southern neighbor Judah. Ahab's father, Omri, a strong king, had built a new capital city, Samaria, and the future looked good. It went downhill fast under the weak Ahab, however, because of socioeconomic polarization and the strong increase of the idolatry that it's first king, Jeroboam, had introduced and Jezebel had expanded.

and placated, to marry a man who espoused a single God whom she saw as dour and demanding. We don't know her age, but considering the customs of the times it is likely that she was no older than in her early teens. It must have been a daunting experience for her.

Jezebel's father, Ethbaal the King of Tyre, would also have been the High Priest of the storm god Baal.¹ It is likely also that Jezebel, as his daughter, was High Priestess of Baal's consort Astarte.² She had been raised in the pagan religion of Phoenicia, and when she moved to Israel she took her religion with her. It is not likely that she was happy as a stranger in a strange land, and she probably sought consolation in the one thing that was familiar to her, her Baalist religion. She cannot be blamed for that. For all the accusations of her being a harlot, however, there is absolutely no evidence that she was anything but completely loyal and faithful to her husband. Although many of her actions damaged him greatly, that was clearly not her intent. When Jehu called her a harlot, it was probably a reference to "whoring after false gods" rather than an accusation of infidelity or debauchery.³ She was, however, a strong woman who was used to getting what she wanted, and obviously one of the things she wanted was the opportunity to worship her own gods. Ahab, not being a strong man, immediately caved and allowed her to set up shrines to Baal in the middle of the capital city, Samaria. He even set up an "Asherah pole" for her in honor of the goddess Astarte. This was a huge phallic symbol that represented Astarte's responsibility as the goddess of fertility. Some translations render it as a "sacred post."

Jezebel's idolatry and Ahab's abetting it infuriated Elijah and the prophets of Yahweh (God), who vehemently condemned Jezebel and Ahab throughout Israel. She came from a culture in which the king's slightest whim was law, and any challenge to his authority could be considered treason. She began persecuting the prophets with a vengeance, and to add insult to injury she imported hundreds of Baalist priests and prophets. Because of the spreading idolatry in Israel, Eliiah called for a drought until Baalism was driven from the land. This climaxed in a challenge to see who was the greater god, Baal or Yahweh. All the Baalist prophets and priests in Is-

¹ Baal is actually Hebrew for "lord." When the Bible refers to Baal it could mean any of several pagan gods or the whole pantheon of idols. The god that Ethbaal worshiped was the chief Phoenician god Melqart.

² Astarte, a.k.a. Ashterah, Asherah and Ishtar, was the chief god's consort in a number of Middle Eastern religions. She was the goddess of fertility. Her Celtic counterpart, probably brought west by the Phoenicians, was Oestre. It is from her name that we get the words estrus and Easter. Her symbol in the west was a rabbit, the source of the "Easter bunny."

³ On the other hand, there is evidence that sacred prostitution was a part of the worship of Astarte. If this is true, then it is possible that Jezebel, as her high priestess, would be involved in it. This was not wanton sex, however, but a highly ritualized sexual intercourse designed to insure the fertility of the crops.

rael-over 850 of them-gathered on Mount Carmel to offer a sacrifice. They built a stone altar and prepared a bull for sacrifice, and Elijah did the same. All day long the Baalists called upon Baal to send down fire and accept their sacrifice. Nothing happened. Finally, at the end of the day, Elijah called for water to be poured upon his altar. They poured water on it until the wood and all the ground around the altar were drenched. Elijah then called for Yahweh to accept the sacrifice. Suddenly a mighty fire came down, consuming not only the sacrifice and the wood, but also the altar itself (a lightning bolt, perhaps?). Elijah then called for all who were loyal to Yahweh to arrest and execute all the Baalist prophets and priests. When that was done the rain came and the drought was ended. Jezebel was enraged at this insult and humiliation of her god, and Elijah fled for his life. He hid in a cave in the mountain.

Another incident that might have gone unnoticed in Tyre further infuriated the Israelites. A man named Naboth owned a vineyard that was right next to Ahab's palace. Ahab wanted it for a vegetable garden, and offered Naboth a fair price for it, plus a better vineyard a little farther off (1 Kg. 21:2). In Israel the land inherited from one's ancestors was sacred, and was to be held and protected at any cost. In Tyre, on the other hand, if the king fancied a piece of land he simply took possession of it, and no one dared challenge him. While Ahab's offer was fair, Naboth, true to Israelite tradition, would not part with his ancestral land. Although he took no retribution against Naboth, Ahab threw a tantrum, wouldn't eat, and lay on his bed pouting. Jezebel could not understand this. In her father's realm it would have been inconceivable to refuse the king's request, and to do so would have meant death. Without Ahab's knowledge, Jezebel wrote the townspeople and ordered them to accuse Naboth of blaspheming God and the king, then take him out and stone him. She wrote the letter in Ahab's name and sealed it with his seal. Naboth having been accused of blasphemy, his property automatically reverted to the king, so Ahab got his vegetable garden. However, he obtained it at a terrible cost to his and Jezebel's public image.

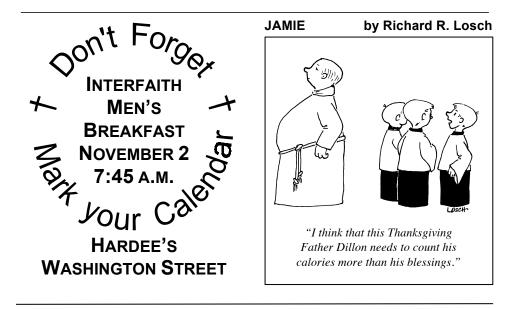
While Elijah was hiding in the mountains God told him in a "still, small voice" to confront Ahab and prophesy his death. He was to say that in the very place where the dogs licked up Naboth's blood, they would lick up Ahab's. When he met Ahab, however, he told him instead that the dogs would devour Jezebel in the fields of Jezreel (where the palace was). Ahab went into a period of fasting and penance (we do not know whether it was sincere or a "photoop"), but Jezebel showed no other response but contempt. There again, she could not countenance such effrontery to the king, and was more determined than ever to kill Elijah.

The next time that Jezebel is mentioned, Ahab has died on the battlefield and his second son Joram is on the throne (his first son had reigned only very briefly when he fell out a window in a drunken stupor and died). In both Israel and Judah the king's mother (called the Gebirah) played a very important role as advisor to the king, and had a throne beside his. With a strong Jezebel and a weak Joram, there is little question as to who really ruled. After Ahab's death. Elijah, unbeknownst to Jezebel or Joram, had anointed Joram's general Jehu as king of Israel and commissioned him to eliminate the entire royal family. As the army was preparing to go into battle, Joram joined Jehu on the battlefield. He called, "Is all well, Jehu?" Jehu replied that all was not well as long as Jezebel continued her idolatries, and shot an arrow through Joram's heart. He then turned back toward Jezreel to kill all in the House of Ahab.

Jezebel, having heard what had happened, put on her finest clothes and painted her face, and awaited Jehu in the window of the royal chambers. Some interpreters maintain that she intended to try to seduce Jehu and save her life. This is very unlikely, especially considering that when he arrived in the courtyard she hurled insults at him. He and his men slaughtered every member of the royal family, and then he called for Jezebel's slaves to throw her from the window. They did, and she fell to her death. Jehu then left her there and went into the palace for a victory banquet. After the banquet Jehu ordered the burial of Jezebel, but when they went to get her they found Elijah's prophecy fulfilled. The dogs had eaten her, and all that remained of her were her skull, hands and feet.

Jezebel's end seems to have befitted her life, but perhaps not in the way that appears at first glance. She lived a queen, and she died as one. She did not cower, flee or beg for her life. Instead, she put on her best finery and faced her death with the dignity of a queen. Shrew that she might have been, she was loyal to Ahab, and despite the accusations of her being a harlot, there is no evidence that she was anything but faithful to him. She came from a culture in which royal power was absolute and unchallengeable, and never adjusted to the somewhat more moderate situation in Israel. She also probably could never understand why the Jews were so adamant about worshiping only one God. In the polytheistic culture in which she was raised, adding another god or two to the pantheon was no problem. She probably would have had no difficulty in adding God to her list of idols if only the Jews would have been willing to add a few of her gods to theirs. In other words, Jezebel was a victim of culture clash to the extreme, and never was able to adapt. Her rigidity ultimately cost her her life and Ahab his throne.

There is little to indicate that Jezebel was anything other than an unpleasantly strong and very unlikeable person, but perhaps she was not the evil vixen that she has been portrayed to be for the past 25 centuries. At this point, only God knows.





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