

BIBLICAL WARRANT AND CHRISTIAN ACTION

Karlfried Froehlich

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Lecture 1

“Thou Shalt Not Make A Graven Image”

Christian Churches profess to live by the standards of the Bible. Their faith and life is nourished by the Word of God as it is heard, read, and contemplated from the sacred page. They all want to be “biblical,” however this term may be understood. In most constitutions of church bodies there is a statement to the effect that “this church recognizes the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as a true witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in this sense as normative for all its teaching.” We bind ourselves as a community to hearing, learning, listening to the biblical word when we face our contemporary problems. So did generations of Christians before us. They had the same commitment, the same trust in the power of the Word as we do. What did *they* hear? This should certainly be an interesting question to explore. You can see why I regard the discipline of church history as an exciting field to study. They had the same text before them but they did not always hear it in the same way as we do. Now, what is it that *we* hear? At the Seminary, we spend a great deal of effort on promoting careful, responsible hearing among our students and ourselves on behalf of the church. We teach biblical languages, exegesis, background disciplines, and we are convinced that we are making progress—somehow. We do understand better “what the text says” than former generations. “What the text says”—in the context of our scholarly enterprise this means: What is in it and what is behind it? But once this is done, what then? How do we get what the text says into the process of shaping our lives, personally and as a community of faith? Our understanding of the biblical text is not only a matter of personal insight and conviction, superior or not to that of others around us or before us. What we hear, our entire understanding of the Bible is embedded in the story of how other

generations have heard the text and have applied it. It is part of this stream of interpretation—hopefully improved, but obviously part of it—and it is therefore always unfinished, open to challenge, development, and correction. In a Christian exegesis which knows it is responsible to the Church the exploration of the “Sitz im Leben” and the pre-history of a biblical text is indispensable, but it is not enough. We need to consider also the post-history in order to “understand” and then ask for the guidance the Word must provide. History has always been a vital field in theological education. As Ed Dowey used to say: It is deeply necessary for *perspective*.

Finding guidance for Christian life from the Bible seems easy. There are so many commands and precepts in it. The rabbis counted 613 *halachot* in the Old Testament alone. The problem is more that of the abundance, of the interconnection, of sorting out what is there. Early Christians saw Jesus as a “new lawgiver.” With this theological judgment and the retention of the Bible of the Jewish people in the Christian churches, still another problem was posed: that of replacement, supercession, modification. In these lectures we will look at the post-history of two texts from the most basic set of biblical commands, the Decalogue, in order to get a feel for what is involved in this kind of history of biblical interpretation. There is plenty of material in the writings of theologians of all Christian generations, and it would be wonderful if the entire history of interpretation up to the most recent commentaries could be covered. However, since my own primary expertise is in the field of early and medieval church history and the time allotted to these lectures is limited, we will not go beyond the Reformation century here. The more recent history is probably more easily accessible to you, and you may even be able to fill in the gap from your own reading and experience. I have also decided to give more room to the primary texts which I will quote in English translation. Thus, you will be able to think along with the authors rather than just having to take my word for it. I hope you will be comfortable with this approach.

The Jewish tradition did not regard the Decalogue as part of the “Law of Moses,” but as given directly by God: Its ordinances were not “commandments,” but “the Ten Words.” During the tannaitic period, there was considerable enthusiasm for the Decalogue; it was recited regularly in synagogue worship until interest diminished with the Christian use, and the reading was dropped after the 2nd century A.D. Christians in the early church had a high regard for these texts. Irenaeus considered them to be given by God in such a way that they were “natural

precepts” which have been with the human race from the beginning; the patriarchs had the “power” (*δύναμις*) of the Decalogue written on their heart (*Against Heresies* IV.15.1).

If we check our Bible, there are numerous references and allusions to the Decalogue both in the Jewish Bible and in the New Testament. Its centrality is clear from its literary setting. The “Ten Words” form part of the Sinai covenant; they are recorded in Exodus 20:1-17 and in the Deuteronomic reaffirmation of Deuteronomy 5:6-21. Their literary origin is hard to ascertain. The text which we have represents certainly the final phase of a long development; there are clear traces of redactional layers. Scholars have pointed to many parallels of the form, the single elements, and the wording in Ancient Near Eastern literature. But in its present setting, the Decalogue has an integrity of its own. For both the Jewish and the Christian traditions, it stands as a solid block of central revelation to Israel and to the nations which have been called to share it.

There are, of course, problems with this block. They start with the number: “ten words” (*asheret hadebarim*—the term occurs in Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4). If you count, it is not ten but an introduction plus eleven words, partly commands, partly prohibitions. Exodus 34:28 uses the term, *asheret hadebarim*, for a different list of thirteen to fifteen cultic commandments. One must conclude that the deuteronomic author used a round number, like “forty days” or “forty years”. Ten is a number of perfection, the fulness of the first “δεκάς;” it also is a human number because of the limitations of counting with human hands.

The issue of the actual number created a problem in Christian catechetics. Since Augustine, Christians used the Decalogue as a catechetical tool; Jews had done so for some time. If, for purposes of reference, you want to number the commandments from 1 to 10, you have to consolidate somewhere. There are several options. On the Jewish side, rabbinic and talmudic teachers counted the introduction (“I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”) as the first commandment, and counted both the first two and the last two as one. The Western tradition from Augustine on (Roman Catholics and Lutherans) consolidated the introduction plus the first two into one commandment and kept the last two separate. Eastern Orthodox and Reformed Christians consolidated the last two but kept the first two separate. This means that, to this day, what is the fourth commandment for some of us is the fifth for others. Don’t get confused! I did when I came to Princeton and students did not understand what I meant when I referred to the third commandment in a lecture on sabbath and Sunday in early Christianity!

There is still another problem: The distribution of the two tablets. Again there are several options of splitting a consolidated group of ten. 5+5 was the division in Hellenistic Judaism. Philo argued that 10 = 5+5 represents the natural division of the kosmos into God and World, above and below. For him, the cut came after “Father and Mother,” a symbol of the divine status of parental authority. 10 = 4+6 seems to have been the formula for Origen of Alexandria; he regarded the parental function as belonging to this world. The standard division of 10 = 3+7 was regularized and given a theological rationale by Augustine who was an avid numerologist. His treatise *Against Faustus* 15.4-8 explains it: The entire Decalogue teaches the double love of God and neighbor which corresponds to Jesus’ own summary of the law. God, however, is triune. Thus, the first table teaches the love of the Trinity. According to Augustine’s count, “No other Gods” and “No graven image” refers to God the Father, “Do not take my name in vain” to the Son, and “Sabbath” to the Holy Spirit. The second table teaches the love of fellow human beings, starting with those closest to us, our parents.

This morning I want to take one from the first table and concentrate on the Second Commandment according to the biblical (and Reformed!) count: Images.

You shall not make for yourself a graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandment.

Exodus 20:4-6

Together with the sabbath commandment, this is the longest of all. It is obvious that there has been an expansion. Shorter forms such as “You shall make for yourself no molten God” or “You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold” are quoted elsewhere (cf. Exodus 20:23; 34:17; Leviticus 19:4; Deuteronomy 27:15) and may well reflect the more original form. When people today are confronted with it, many hear it as a prohibition of all representational art, at least in Christian worship. I remember an incident in my student days in Basel when a Reformed youth group from a village near the city, after studying the commandments, went to their church one weekend and whitewashed the choir walls where medieval frescoes had been discovered and exposed. If we look more closely, the prohibition in the text clearly has three parts: 1) Prohibited is the making of a specific item, a *pesel*, a cultic image. The “graven image” in the King James version renders the term quite exactly. The LXX has εἰδωλον, the technical term for a non-Jewish cultic image, not εἰκῶν, the

word used for the image of God in Genesis 1:26. The Vulgate translates it as *sculptibile*, something carved or sculpted. 2) Prohibited is also the making of a *temuna*, a form or figure of things; the Greek and Latin terms, ὁμοίωμα and *similitudo*, often translated as “likeness” are no more specific here. 3) Prohibited are the gestures of worship, bowing down and “serving”, in relation to these objects. The context is the distinctiveness of the worship of Israel which did not make use of the cultic image so central for other peoples. That the original commandment is directed against such specific “images” is clear from the briefer forms and the “commentary” in Deuteronomy 4:15-20. Thus, there is a very close link to the first commandment against having “other gods.” The second commandment specifies a particular form of what is forbidden in the first, the “idolatry” of human-made “images” or “symbols.”

The Jewish tradition was aware of this limited nature of the prohibition and was not always and consistently “anti-iconic.” Of course, the more the lack of cultic images was understood as a distinctive mark of Jewish identity in contradistinction to the surrounding culture and its pressure for accommodation, the more an uncompromising anti-iconic stance would be advocated by national-minded zealous circles. This was the case in the time of Jesus as the writings of Josephus among others testify. According to Josephus, the second commandment forbids absolutely all representational art in the cult and worship of Israel (*Antiquities* III.91-187) and thus in the Temple. The Greek word for him in Exodus 20:4 is not εἰδωλον but εἰκῶν. God does not, and did not want figures of humans or animals in the Temple. Solomon’s molten sea and the panels with lions, oxen, and cherubim (I Kings 7:25.29) were a sin and Solomon paid dearly for it. Twice Josephus reports iconoclastic incidents in his own time. In one of them, young Jews removed and cut up the large eagle over the Temple gate at the instigation of religious leaders who blamed the ills of Herod Antipas’ reign on the violations of the second commandment by the government (*Antiquities* XVIII.149-167). It is not clear how far Josephus really sympathized with a generally anti-iconic stance. In other passages he admires works of art in public and private places in Palestine, and he delights in describing all the details of Moses’ tabernacle, the vessels, and priestly garments right after the quotation of the “absolute” prohibition.

It seems likely that a radically anti-iconic stance as a consequence of the commandment was dominant, but it was not the only option among Jews. There may not have been much use of art in the Second Temple and the synagogues, but there was. Archeology has demonstrated the presence of mosaic floors in synagogues, the probability of painted Jewish catacombs in Rome and Naples, and there is the house-synagogue of Dura Europos in Syria with its painted walls.

Even the strange note in the Mishna Tractate *Aboda Zara* may not be wrong after all: “At that time, there were in Jerusalem all kinds of figures except the human figure.” After the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the monotheistic polemic against pagan gods and their “idols,” which Jews shared with enlightened philosophers of various schools, hardened into an anti-iconic ideology as part of the self-defense of Jewish identity. In the Middle Ages, Moses Maimonides stated that the second commandment clearly forbids the use of the human figure in art and sharply criticized the contemporary Christian veneration of icons: Images distract from the pure and unadulterated worship of the one invisible, spiritual, unrepresentable God (*Sefer ha-mitzvoth*, Prologue 4).

The early Christian tradition moved at first in exactly the same direction. Reacting to the suspicion and misinterpretation of their religion in the culture of the Empire, it shared the Jewish polemic against pagan idols and the Jewish apologetic for an imageless monotheism in which the second commandment played a central role. Origen explained it to his pagan critic Celsus, adding to the Old Testament command the New Testament counterpart:

*Christians and Jews have regard to this command: “Thou shalt fear the Lord Thy God, and serve him alone;” and this other: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image ...” and again: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him alone shalt thou serve” [Matt.4:10]. It is in consideration of these and many other such commands that they not only avoid temples, altars, and images, but are ready to suffer death when it is necessary rather than debase by any such impiety the conception which they have of the Most High God. (Origen, *Against Celsus* VII. 64)*

Clement of Alexandria already added two more reasons: Exodus 20:4 forbids images because the human soul is the only “real” image of God according to Genesis 1:26f. And even more Christian: This divine image in the soul is not naturally part of the human constitution; it was first in Christ, the eternal creative Logos; from and in him it is in the spiritual person by participation (*Protreptikos* IV.46-55.59; X.98). Clement himself was not against art, at least simple symbolic art such as a dove, fish, ship, lyre, or anchor on the stones of sealing rings (*Paidagogos* III.11.55-60). But other Christians were, and this fact had consequences even for membership in the church:

*God prohibits an idol as much to be **made** as to be **worshiped**. In so far as the making is the prior act, ... the prohibition to make ... is the prior prohibition. For this cause—the eradicating of the material of idolatry—the divine law proclaims: “Thou shalt make no idol,” and by conjoining: “nor a similitude of things which are in the heaven, and which are in the earth, and which are in the sea,” has interdicted the servants of God from acts of that kind all the universe over ... “I make,” says one, “but I do not worship;” as if there*

were some cause for which he dare not worship besides that for which he ought not make—the offence done to God. Look, you who make so that they could be worshipped, do worship! and you worship, not with the spirit of some worthless perfume but with your own ... If the necessity of some income is urged so much, the arts have other activities with which to afford means of livelihood without outstepping the path of discipline, that is without the fabrication of an idol. The plasterer knows how to mend roofs and lay on stuccos or polish cisterns. The painter, too, the marble mason, the bronze worker and every engraver whatever knows expansions of his own art, of course much easier of execution. (Tertullian, *On Idolatry* 4-8)

In other words: Artists are generally not welcome in the congregation. If painters need employment, let them whitewash homes! If God’s commandment excludes certain professions of pagan society from being exercised by Christians—so be it! Christians are different. Even in the Constantinian 4th century many church leaders defended this interpretation. When the Emperor’s sister Constantia innocently asked Eusebius of Caesarea to find her a picture of Jesus Christ, the bishop denounced this wish of hers as totally inappropriate: The heavenly Christ cannot be depicted, and the incarnate nature was already deified as the story of his transfiguration shows.

Which icon of Christ do you mean? That which is true and unchangeable or that which he assumed for us, the figure that he took in the form of a servant? ... Certainly you are asking for an icon of the form of the servant and that of a bit of flesh which he put on for us. Yet we have been taught that even that has been mingled with the glory of the divinity, and that which is mortal has been swallowed up by life. (Eusebius, *Letter to Constantia*)

And he adds the quote of 2 Cor. 5:16 as his crowning authority: “Even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, we know him thus no longer.”

At the very end of the century we still encounter this classical attitude in Epiphanius of Salamis who tells the following story with quite some indignation:

I came to a villa called Anablatha, and, as I was passing, saw a lamp burning there. Asking what place it was and learning it to be a church, I went in to pray, and found there a curtain hanging on the doors of the said church, dyed and embroidered. It bore an image of Christ or one of the saints; I do not rightly remember whose image it was. Seeing this and being loth that an image of a man should be hung up in Christ’s church contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures, I tore it asunder and advised the custodians of the place to use it as a shroud for some poor person. (Epiphanius, quoted in Jerome, *Epistle* 51)

But by this time, a great variety of art had already become part of Christian life and worship. It was an accomodation to elemental needs of people who did not totally change into “pure” Christians upon their conversion to the new religion of the Empire. Christians adapted Roman

funerary art in the form of wall painting and sarcophagi to their own use. They loved to take home little mementoes from a pilgrimage—images of the venerated saint on medallions, or decorated glass bottles. The story of Lycomedes from the apocryphal Acts of John illustrates the situation with disarming charm:

Lycomedes had a friend who was a skillful painter. He went hastily to him and said to him: You see me in a great hurry to come to you. Come quickly to my house and paint the man whom I show you without his knowing it. And the painter, giving someone the necessary implements and colors, said to Lycomedes: Show him to me, and for the rest have no anxiety. And Lycomedes pointed out John to the painter and brought him near him and shut him up in a room from which the apostle of Christ could be seen. And Lycomedes was with the blessed man, feasting on the faith and the knowledge of our God, and rejoiced yet more in the thought that he should possess him in a portrait. The painter then, on the first day, made an outline of him and went away. And on the next he painted him in with his colors and delivered the portrait to Lycomedes to his greatest joy. And he took it and set it up in his own bedroom and hung it with garlands, so that later John, when he perceived it, said to him: My beloved child, what is it that thou always doest when thou comest in from the bath into thy bedroom? And as he said this and talked jestingly with him, he went into the bedroom and saw the portrait of an old man crowned with garlands, and lamps and an altar set before it. And he called him and said: Lycomedes, what meanest thou with the matter of this portrait? Can it be one of thy gods that is painted here? I see that you are still living in heathen fashion. But Lycomedes answered him: My only God is the one who raised me up from death with my wife. But if, next to that God, it be right that the men who have benefited us should be called gods—it is you, father, whom I have had painted in that portrait, whom I crown and love and reverence as having become my good guide. (Acts of John, 26)

What can one say? The little sanctuary in the bedroom may have to be frowned upon as an act of misguided religiosity, but it shows the right spirit of love and respect, does it not?

Soon the decoration of new churches with mosaics, paintings, and precious objects was a matter of course as well as of civic pride and competition. This was quite understandable in a society where for centuries the civic spirit had expressed itself in the support of the arts by wealthy benefactors. Paulinus of Nola, a contemporary of Augustine and Jerome, had held public offices in which this support had been part of his duty. When he renounced his secular positions to become the Christian bishop of Nola in Campania, he spent his entire fortune on social causes and the building of churches. In his letters and poems he proudly describes what you find there:

The whole area outside the apse of the basilica extends with high-panelled ceiling and with twin colonnades running straight through an arch on each side. Four chapels within each colonnade, set into the longitudinal sides of the basilica, provide suitable places for those who privately pray or meditate on the Lord's law, and for the funeral monuments of

the clergy and their friends ... I have jotted down the lines inscribed on the entrances to the basilica, because if you wished to adopt them they might be suited to the doors of your basilicas. For example: "Peace be upon you who enter the sanctuary of Christ God with pure minds and peaceful hearts." Or this, taken from the representation of the Lord over the entrance which the lines describe: "Behold the wreathed cross of Christ the Lord, set above the entrance hall. It promises high reward for grinding toil. If you wish to obtain the crown, take up the cross." (Paulinus of Nola, *Epistola* 32.12)

You note the important role of the word in the inscriptions along with the rather symbolic representation of Christ: a wreathed cross. But there is more, there are entire fresco cycles:

Now I want you to look at the paintings along the portico. Crane your neck a little till you take in everything with face tilted back. The paintings in fact depict in the order prescribed by faith all that the aged Moses wrote in his five books. Then there are the deeds of Joshua—under his guidance the Jordan kept its stream stationary and the waters still as it recoiled from the countenance of the divine ark. Next pass with eager eyes to Ruth, who with one short book separates eras—the end of the period of judges and the beginning of the Kings. It seems a short account, but it depicts the symbolism of the great conflict, when the two sisters separate to go their different ways. Ruth follows after her holy mother-in-law, whereas Orpha abandons her; one daughter-in-law demonstrates faithlessness, the other fidelity. The one puts God before country, the other puts country before life. Does not such disharmony continue through the universe, one part following God and the other falling headlong through the world?

Paulinus is aware that these lavish paintings are not in the tradition and perhaps somewhat daring. But he has an explanation:

You may perhaps ask what motive implanted in us this decision to adorn the holy houses with representations of living persons, an unusual custom. If you listen, I shall try to explain the reasons in a few words. Everyone is aware of the crowds which St. Felix' fame brings here. Now the greater number among the crowds here are countryfolk ... See how they in great numbers keep vigil and prolong their joy throughout the night with torchlight. I only wish they would channel this joy in sober prayer and not introduce their winecups within the holy thresholds ... This was why we thought it useful to enliven all the houses of Felix with paintings on sacred themes, in the hope that they would excite the interest of the rustics by their attractive appearance, for the sketches are painted in various colors. Over them are explanatory inscriptions, the written word revealing the theme outlined by the painter's hand. So when all the countryfolk point out and read over to each other the subjects painted, they turn more slowly to thoughts of food, since the feast of fasting is so pleasant to the eye ... As they pass the day sightseeing over this quite large area, their cups are rarely filled. They have spent their time on the wonders, and only a few hours subsequently remain for feasting.

(Paulinus of Nola, *Poem* 27.511-595)

These reasons are not very theological. Art here has the very practical function of “crowd control by education,” and Paulinus apparently thinks it works. We have a letter of Jerome in which that church father reacts to these descriptions and the poems of the rich benefactor:

The true temple of Christ is the believer’s soul: adorn this, clothe it, offer gifts to it, welcome Christ in it. What use are walls blazing with jewels when Christ in his poor is in danger of perishing of hunger? Your possessions are no longer your own but a stewardship is entrusted to you ... Be careful for your part not rashly to squander what is Christ’s. Do not, that is, by an error of judgment give the property of the poor to those who are not poor [the artists? those rich enough to travel?] (Jerome, Epistola 58.7)

We seem to hear once more the tune of the old anti-iconic polemic: “The true temple of Christ, the real image, is the believer’s soul.” The interesting point in this admonition, however, is that the criticism is not aiming at art in the church as such; the warning is against luxury and extravagance.

Not long thereafter, Pope Gregory the Great endorsed the basic attitude we found in Paulinus of Nola in a famous letter to Bishop Serenus of Marseille which made it into canon law and was regarded for centuries as a classic expression of the Western “moderate” stance on images:

It has been reported to us that, inflamed with inconsiderate zeal, you have broken images of saints, ostensibly under the plea that they ought not to be adored. And indeed, in that you have forbidden them to be adored, we altogether praise you, but we blame you for having broken them ... For to adore a picture is one thing, but to learn through the story of a picture what is to be adored is another. For what writing presents to readers, this a picture presents to the unlearned who behold, since in it even the ignorant see what they ought to follow; in it the illiterate read ... You must apologize to your people: If for this instruction for which images were anciently made you wish to have them in the church, I permit them by all means both to be made and to be had. Explain to them that it was not the sight itself of the story which the picture on the wall attested that displeased you, but the adoration which had been improperly paid to the pictures. With such words appease their minds. (Gregory the Great, Epistola 13 ad Serenum)

The first commandment is upheld, but the second is subsumed under it: Icon is not *per se* “idol”. If an image has a proper purpose, it is good and useful. In the words of the commandment: An image may be “made” as well as “had”, but not “adored”.

As the isolated case of Serenus in the late 6th century shows, during those centuries we rarely find an echo of the early church’s anti-iconic stance on the basis of the second commandment. The great exception came with one of the strangest episodes of church history, the so-called “iconoclastic controversy” of the 8th century in the East. The facts are clear

enough: Beginning with Emperor Leo III (717-741) and continuing under his immediate successors, the Byzantine government tried to stop and reverse the widespread veneration of images in the Empire by means of laws, coercion, and violent actions which apparently were supported and carried out not only by the army, but also by parts of the general population. An iconoclastic synod at Hieria in 754 passed the appropriate church laws and backed them by arguments. However, the Second Council of Nicea in 787 returned to an endorsement of the veneration of images, and Empress Theodora achieved their final restoration in 843—a date that is celebrated annually in the Eastern Churches as the “Feast of Orthodoxy.”

Reasons and motives behind the whole movement are less clear. Over against modern scholarly emphasis on political, sociological, and psychological factors, I am still inclined to give the religious factor a certain priority. The sources indicate that Emperor Leo and his court, having barely warded off the onslaught of Muslim forces, were convinced that the Muslim threat itself was a divine punishment for the sins of Byzantine society, epitomized in the flagrant disregard of the second commandment by the image worship among the common lay people and the monastics. Clearly their reaction was against the collective sin of “idolatry,” The basis for unmasking idolatry, however, was a return to the old equation: Icon equals Idol, especially with regard to the image of the Savior which was at the core of the debate.

In the polemic of the iconoclasts against the iconodules, the “worshippers of images,” the entire arsenal of Jewish and early Christian arguments against pagan idols reappeared with a vengeance: Images are dumb idols, nothing more than paint and wood; it is below the dignity of the Christian faith to venerate them and to expect anything spiritual from such veneration. There was one major addition: The iconoclasts took a basic neoplatonic argument, the *homoousia* between image and prototype within a common order of being, and turned it against the worship of the icon of Christ. Iconodules were using this same argument in defense of the images: If an icon, they said, participates in the being of its prototype and mediates its essence in a spiritual movement of descent and ascent, then “the honor given to the image is conveyed to the prototype” as Basil of Caesarea had said in a famous passage (*On the Holy Spirit*, 18.45). The iconoclasts reversed the logic and charged their opponents not only with the violation of the commandment, but also with gross christological heresy: If image and original are *homoousios*, then the icon is what the prototype is. But what is the prototype in the case of the Christ icon? If the iconodules answer that it is the whole Christ, divine and human nature, then they fall into the trap of Docetism and Eutychian “confusion.” If they claim that it is Christ’s human nature only,

they prove themselves to be Nestorians, tearing apart the one Christ. The real Christ, the second person of the Trinity, cannot be depicted. There is no room in orthodox Christianity for images. Emperor Leo expressed it in a letter fragment:

The icons are in the place of idols, and those who venerate them are idolaters. One should not venerate things made with hands as well as any kind of likeness neither in the sky nor on earth, as God said. Let me know who has taught us to venerate and bow down to things made with hands while God legislates not to do so! After 800 years, Hezekiah, the king of the Jews, drove the bronze serpent out of the temple. So have I. After 800 years, I have driven the idols from the churches. (Emperor Leo III to Pope Gregory II)

The defense of images, especially by monastic writers, countered this idol-smashing by an array of sophisticated philosophical and theological arguments which may be reduced to a few simple points:

1. Image or icon is not automatically idol;
2. Veneration is not adoration
3. The Era of the New Testament is not the era of the Old Testament
4. The Incarnation has made all the difference in the world.

A passage from the foremost theologian of the iconodule cause, John of Damascus, spells these points out in admirable clarity.

Together with my God and Father, I worship Him who clothed himself in the royal purple of my flesh ... The flesh assumed by Him is made divine and endures after its assumption. Fleshly nature was not lost when it became part of the Godhead, but just as the Word made flesh remained the Word, so also flesh became the Word, yet remained flesh ... Therefore I boldly draw an image of the invisible God, not as invisible, but as having become visible for our sakes by partaking of flesh and blood. I do not draw an image of the immortal Godhead, but I paint the image of God who became visible in the flesh.

Now some say that God commanded Moses the lawgiver: "You shall worship the Lord your God, and adore Him alone," and "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath." They do not know the Scriptures, that the letter kills but the Spirit gives life. They do not find in the written word its hidden, spiritual meaning. Listen to the lawgiver's intention which you read in Deuteronomy: "The Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice;" and shortly thereafter: "Since you saw no form ... beware lest you act corruptly by making a graven image for yourself in the form of any figure ..."; and again: "Beware lest you lift up your eyes to heaven, and when you see ... all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and worship them and serve them." You see that the one thing aimed for is that no created thing can be adored in place of the Creator. He forbids the making of images because of idolatry, and it is impossible to make an image of the immeasurable, uncircumscribable, invisible God.

These commandments were given to the Jewish people because of their proneness to idolatry. But to us it is given to adore God alone, to enjoy the fullness of of divine

knowledge, to attain to mature humanhood, that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. We are no longer under custodians, but we have received from God the ability to discern what may be represented and what is uncircumscribed. "You cannot see My form," the Scripture says. ... But it is obvious, when you contemplate God becoming man, then you may depict Him clothed in human form. When the invisible one becomes visible to flesh, then you may draw His likeness ... Depict His wonderful condescension, His birth from the Virgin, His baptism in the Jordan, His transfiguration on Mount Tabor, His sufferings, His death, His miracles which are signs of His divine nature! Use every kind of drawing, word, or color. Fear not, have no anxiety; discern between the different kinds of worship ... Joshua, the son of Nun, and Daniel bowed in veneration before an angel of God, but they did not adore him.

"You shall not make for yourself a graven image." Now listen to what is added: "You shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet stuff and finely twined linen; in skilled work it shall be made, with cherubim." And: "Moses made a mercy seat of pure gold ... and he made two cherubim of hammered gold." How do you explain this, O Moses? On the one hand you say: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image or any likeness," and yet you yourself have cherubim woven on the veil and two cherubim fashioned of pure gold. But listen to what the answer of God's servant Moses might be: "O blind and stupid people, listen to the force of these words. Yes, I said that since you saw no form on the day that the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, beware lest you act corruptly by making a graven image for yourselves. I did not say, You shall not make images of cherubim, which spread out their wings overshadowing the mercy seat. What I did say was, You shall not make for yourselves molten gods, and: You shall not bow down to them and serve them as god, nor shall you adore the creature instead of the creator. You shall have no other gods before me." ...

See how the purpose of Scripture is made clear to those who search for it intelligently. For you must know, beloved, that truth must be distinguished from falsehood in everything, and it is necessary to investigate whether the motive of each deed is good or bad. ... Concerning this business of images, we must search for ... the intention of those who make them. If it is really and truly for the glory of God and His saints, to promote virtue, the avoidance of evil, and the salvation of souls, then accept them with due honor, as images, remembrances, likenesses, and books for the illiterate. Embrace them with the eyes, the lips, the hearts; bow before them; love them, because they are likenesses of God incarnate, of His mother, and of the communion of saints, who shared the sufferings and the glory of Christ, who conquered and overthrew the devil, his angels, and his deceit.

(John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, I.7-8)

John's answer is quite clear: (1) An icon is not *per se* an idol; the intention in using it must be considered. (2) Veneration is not adoration. A careful distinction has to be made between the term, *latreia*, the worship due only and exclusively to God, and *douleia*, a lesser veneration appropriate for the humble signs of God's world being present among us, including the icons. (3) Old Testament people needed the prohibition of images because they were still immature and prone to idolatry. In the Christian dispensation, we do not need it any more because God has

given us the image of all images, the incarnate Son. (4) With His coming, the entire creation is redeemed together with fallen human nature. His incarnation has hallowed, deified, not only the humble flesh but all humble matter. Icons and their matter—let all creation praise its Maker, precisely out of the depth!

Eventually, this argumentation proved victorious in both East and West. It had been prepared by numerous advocates of the images ever since the fourth and fifth centuries. There had already been a definite shift away from the more tentative, abstract forms of early Christian symbolism to realistic depictions and portraits. An indication of the change can be found in a curious decree of the Constantinopolitan Council *In Trullo* in 692:

In certain venerable pictures the lamb is represented as pointed out by the finger of the forerunner; this was a type of grace and, under the law, prefigured the true Lamb Christ, our God. But while we duly value the ancient types and shadows as prefigurations of the truth, we value more highly the truth and grace itself, receiving it as the completion of the law. In order, therefore, that the perfect [image] may be presented to the contemplation of all, we decree that in all pictures from henceforth the figure of our Lord Jesus Christ, “the true lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world,” should be portrayed in his human form instead of the lamb as heretofore; that we, being stirred up by the sight of it, may be led to meditate on the depth of the humiliation of God the Word.

Council *In Trullo* 692, Canon 82

The old symbolism was no longer sufficient. We note here already the central iconodule connection between the incarnation and the neoplatonic theory of “mediated ascent”: For the time after the Incarnation, the biblical symbols such as lamb, cup, cross, were judged to be less “real” than the portrait icon which, while not painted from life, participates directly in the being of its subject and gives the worshiper proper access to the heavenly reality with which he or she is destined to communicate. One admonition in the words of the second commandment stuck, however: To this day, the Eastern orthodox churches do not use any sculpture in the round, any statuary, in their worship: “Thous shalt not make a *graven* image.”

The triumph of the images in the West was at first much slower and more hesitant. We have a fascinating reaction of Charlemagne’s Frankish theologians to the decrees of the Eastern Councils in the so-called *Libri Carolini*, the Carolingian Books, which never made it into the public arena at the time of their composition. The document definitely endorses Pope Gregory’s understanding of the educational function of images, which we discussed earlier. Like Gregory, the authors profess choosing a middle way with regard to the fight between iconoclasts and iconodules: “We neither smash nor adore.” But they deal much harsher with the former who

show little or no understanding for the incarnation/descent and deification/ascent dynamics in the Eastern doctrine of images. Their logic pretends to be simply biblical—biblicistic, if you wish: Images are only material things, belonging to this world of imperfection and decay, while God is Spirit, reigning in the world above, eternal and incorruptible. The second commandment was given in order to insure the proper spiritual worship which is far superior to the clinging to material props and aids like icons. God has given us only very few material things that can serve as true symbols for the spiritual ascent; they are all mentioned in the Bible, and the physical writing of Scripture itself is one of them: the Cross, the elements of the eucharist, and the relics and bones of holy people. The latter, mentioned in stories like that of the prophet of Bethel in I Kings 13, are much more important than icons of the saints, because they will share directly in the resurrection of the body. Pictures may be all right for the instruction of the ignorant, but they are not up to the standards of worship “in Spirit and in Truth.” Calvin used the *Libri Carolini* in his anti-Roman polemics in the 16th century as soon as they were published from a lone manuscript.

Soon after the 9th century, however, the medieval West caught up with the Eastern churches, less by adopting the intricacies of the iconodule theology of images than by developing the down-to-earth, material aspect of “holy” objects which played such a decisive role in the *Libri Carolini*. Relics, statuary, precious objects were more important than the painted icon in developing vehicles of spiritual meaning for the masses, often in grossly superstitious forms. There was no moderation any more. Art in the churches became a matter not only of feeding and satisfying popular piety, but often also of status and local pride. With the denial of the equation “icon equals idol” and the subsumption of the second commandment under the first according to the Augustinian method of counting, the entire art issue seemed to be settled. According to Thomas Aquinas, Christian art has a threefold purpose, all within the old framework of its pedagogical value: Instruction of the unlearned; strengthening of the memory for the models of the faith; and encouragement of an attitude of devotion and inner contemplation. “Adoration” of a work of art was thought to be out of the question in a Christian society. The second commandment in its anti-iconic reading was simply regarded as no longer applicable to the situation.

If we find any criticism of art in the churches, it comes from the perspective of puritan reformers who, like Jerome, objected to extravagance and luxury and deplored, like Maimonides,

the distraction from the essentials of the life of inward piety. It is forcefully expressed by Bernard of Clairvaux when he criticizes the churches of the Cluniacensians:

I will say nothing of the vast height of your churches, their immoderate length, their superfluous breadth, the costly polishings, the curious carvings and paintings which attract the worshipper's gaze and hinder his attention ... Let this pass, however; let us say that this is done for God's honor. But I, as a monk, ask of my brother monks: "Tell me, you poor men (if indeed you are poor), what does this gold in your sanctuary? ... The church is resplendent in her walls, beggarly in her poor; she clothes her stones in gold and leaves her sons naked; the rich man's eye is fed at the expense of the indigent. The curious find their delight here, yet the needy find no relief. (Bernard of Clairvaux, Apologia VIII)

Similar voices were heard from a number of other reform groups in the later Middle Ages such as Waldenses, Lollards, Hussites, whose reformatory convictions drew their strength not only negatively from the unspiritual state and the external piety of the medieval church as they perceived it, but positively from their listening to the biblical witness with new ears, including the second commandment.

No wonder that the image question and the interpretation of the commandment became a major issue at the time of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. At the beginning, it was not an issue. For the monk Martin Luther just as for most of his contemporaries, the question of representational art in the churches, icons or not, was not an important topic. When Luther's criticism first found expression, it was not based on the second commandment—which for him remained part of the first—but on the issue of works righteousness: The use of images along with other external devotional practices such as indulgences etc., endorsed and promoted by the Roman Church as part of the sacramental system, undercuts (so Luther) God's real demand for faith as trust:

We call it worshiping and praying to God, when we are all dressed up and bow, kneel, pray the rosary and the psalter, and do all this not before an idol, but before the holy cross of God or a picture of his saints. We think this is in accordance with the first commandment of having no other gods. ... But see for yourselves what a difference there is between the fulfillment of the first commandment with outward works and fulfillment with inward trust. It is the latter which makes true, living children of God; the former makes for a wretched idolatry and the most pernicious hypocrites on earth, who with their great show of righteousness lead countless folk into their way, yet leave them without faith.

Martin Luther, *Treatise on Good Works* (1518), 11f.

Things changed when, during Luther's involuntary absence at the Wartburg, his colleague Carlstadt tried to institute far-reaching reforms of worship life at Wittenberg which included not only the reduction of the Mass to a simple, unadorned celebration of the Supper, but also the

removal of “unwarranted” religious art from the churches in order to allow the sole centrality of the Word in public worship to come through. Carlstadt’s main motivation was a serious consideration of the plain teachings of the biblical texts, as Luther had urged it, and of the unassuming lifestyle of the apostolic church. For him, the Mass and the images were simply “unscriptural.” He read the Decalogue not from the catechism but from the Exodus text itself. And this is what he found:

Christ pointed to the law when someone asked him: “What shall I do in order to obtain eternal life.? Why should I in this case not also lead you to the law of Moses? You admit that Isaiah and Jeremia are evangelical prophets, and they forbid images. Why does it displease you that they forbid images? I say to you that God has forbidden images with no less diligence than killing, stealing, adultery and the like.

Carlstadt, *On the Abolition of Images* (Original edition 1522, p. 27)

Luther, disturbed by the unrest, traveled to Wittenberg and preached his famous “*Invocavit Sermons*” in the spring of 1522 in order to restore peace. This time he had to address the issue of the images directly. It is in these sermons that his basic theological stance was first formulated: “We must say something about the images here,” he declared. “Now, images are unnecessary, but we are left free to have them or not, even though it would be better not to have any on account of the miserable accursed misuse to which they are subjected.” This is his point about *adiaphora*, issues not in need of a uniform solution, which Luther later applied to other “ceremonies” and pious customs, a point with which other serious reformers were never satisfied:

All right, answer the iconoclasts; but in the Book of Exodus it says: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything ... See, these are clear and lucid words by which images are forbidden. Yes, I know the text. But if we look at the first commandment and the entire meaning of these verses, then the understanding and meaning of Moses is that we must worship God alone, not an image; that is what the next verse clearly says: Do not worship them and serve them. What is forbidden here is the worshipping, not the making. I may have or make images, but I must not worship them.

(Martin Luther, *Invocavit Sermons*, Sermon 3, March 11, 1522)

The emphasis is not on “Do not make,” but on “Do not worship.” The making of artefacts was not unusual in Israel and even ordered by God—think of the altars of the patriarchs, the equipment of the Temple, and Moses’ bronze serpent! Luther makes one concession, for which the bronze serpent is the model:

If there were images which we are tempted to worship, then we should break and abolish them, though not by storming and rioting, but by asking the authorities to do it. This is

what King Hezekiah did when he broke the bronze serpent Moses had made (2 Kings 18:4). (Martin Luther, *Invocavit Sermons*, Sermon 3, March 11, 1522)

In his most elaborate statement on the issue, the first part of the Treatise, “Against the Heavenly Prophets” (1525), Luther added another argument which revealed a radically new hermeneutic concerning the Decalogue itself.

The Mosaic Law is given to the Jewish people alone and does not concern us pagans and Christians. You may answer: This may be so with regard to the external rules concerning ceremonies and legalities. But the Decalogue is not abolished which has nothing of ceremonies and legalities. (The Works of Martin Luther, vol. 40, p. 93)

Luther disagrees. It is not true that there are no ceremonies in the Decalogue. God himself expressly put into it two ceremonies, namely images and sabbath, which are both in their own way abrogated in the New Testament. The parts of the law which are not identical with the natural law are not binding on Christians.

Therefore, [the commands about] images and sabbath ... are exclusively and specifically given to the Jewish people, just as a king may promulgate specific laws and ordinances for his realm, as for example the Sachsenspiegel in Saxony, while the general natural laws such as honoring parents, not killing, not committing adultery, serving God, apply and remain through all countries. Therefore let Moses be the Sachsenspiegel of the Jews, and do not bother us gentiles with it. France does not honor the Sachsenspiegel, yet it observes the same natural laws. (The Works of Martin Luther, vol. 40, p. 97f)

The distinction between binding and non-binding parts of the Decalogue was a step which Luther himself did not pursue beyond this polemic. His real objection against the iconoclasts, however, was their mode of proceeding, turning their convictions into a law again, forcing consciences, and in this way falling back into works righteousness. And there may have been still more: Luther sensed the truly revolutionary spirit behind the iconoclastic actions and feared its socio-psychological consequences:

This is the Carlstadt manner of abolishing the images: to incite and blind the people and make them comfortable with rioting so that they fall into the work with a thump, think they now are great saints, become so proud and arrogant that it is beyond all measure; and if one looks at it by light, it is a work of the law, done without Spirit and faith, giving the people a haughtiness in the heart as if they were special before God through such action. (The Works of Martin Luther, vol. 40, p. 89)

This revolutionary spirit inherent in iconoclasm, politically and theologically, revealed its strength most clearly in Zürich. Like Luther, Zwingli had no great interest in the image question until iconoclastic actions in the Zürich churches and the successful attempts to keep the initiative

in the hands of the magistrates forced him to develop his stance. Like Carlstadt, Zwingli had learned from Erasmus who, in his popular *Enchiridion* had contrasted the painted pictures of Christ with the Gospel stories, and the veneration of the crucifix with true discipleship in “taking up one’s cross;” there is nothing intrinsically wrong with pictures, but mature Christians give priority to the cultivation of inward piety. Zwingli resonated strongly to this plea because for him God’s majesty simply required the most sublime form of spiritual worship in order to be adequate, but he soon went far beyond the Erasmian critique of externals. Much of his mature thought can be found in an open letter to Valentin Compar of Uri, written in 1525 [Zwingli Werke 4, 35-159 Corpus Reformatorum] The very first point reflects his biblicism, the conviction that guidance for the Christian life was first and foremost to be found in the biblical word itself. Zwingli discovered Exod.20:3 again as a real and universal command:

No creature should ever have undertaken to change, belittle, or touch this holy first commandment which is so heavy with all its words. It should be forever held up in its full integrity, word for word, to those who want to listen to God’s command. But since we have allowed the worship of idols, we could not countenance the words any longer which are against it and have skipped what was most important in it, using the excuse that it is an “external” thing; images and ceremonies concern the Jews only, but not us Christians.
(Zwingli *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 4 = *Corpus Reformatorum* 91 (1927), p. 86)

This is wrong. The commandment is not Jewish but divine. In fact, only Christians can fully and seriously implement it, because they know what the “true worship in Spirit and in Truth” is. The prohibition of images is the most important test of *right* worship. The reason is that “idolatry,” the wrong worship of the creature instead of the creator, is a natural human tendency. It follows, that all those who seek in a creature, whatever it may be, that which ought to be sought from the One and Only God, are not true believers, nor Christians.

On this basis, image and idol are always very close to each other; human nature is always ready to underestimate or deny the fatal dynamic of the one becoming the other:

You say: To forbid the images is only an external thing. Here is my answer: Your mistake is that you want to understand it of idols but you say “images.” We all speak of “images,” but we have to understand “idols” as often as we talk of putting up images.
(Zwingli *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 4 = *Corpus Reformatorum* 91 (1927), p. 93f.)

This fatal dynamic, this natural self-delusion also means that pictures cannot have any teaching function in the church either. Zwingli rejected Pope Gregory’s justification of images as educational tools. Nothing can be added to the majesty of the Word of God. It would be a merely human, a carnal addition. Therefore, Zwingli unwaveringly defended the stripping of the Zürich

churches. When a visitor from Schaffhausen expressed regret about the bare buildings, he remarked that Zürich now finally had bright, light church halls, and that white walls were quite lovely.

Zwingli was not against art as such. If there was no danger of idolatry, there would be no problem with images. Zwingli gives two examples:

In Zürich, we have cleared all churches of the idols. There are still many images in the windows. There were some people in the countryside who smashed the windows too, though I myself have heard this of no more than one place. But the magistrates intervened and told them to stop. Reason: The windows did not lead into idolatry and were not the object of any adoration, veneration, or service. Another [example]: We had two large Charlemagnes, one of them in the Grossmünster; he received veneration like other idols and therefore was removed. The other was in one of the towers; no one venerates him. This one has been left and it is no bother whatsoever. But note: As soon as this one would also become the object of idolatry, he would also be removed.

(Zwingli *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 4 = *Corpus Reformatorum* 91 (1927), p. 95)

God wants the commandment kept, not for some arbitrary reason but because we in our human weakness and natural inclination need it! It is helping, not hindering true worship.

Calvin shared the same theological basis, the centrality of the right relationship between God and us, the Creator and the creature, and therefore the centrality of worship, *right* worship of God. A thorough discussion of the second commandment occurs very early in the *Institutes*. Knowledge of God the Creator is hindered by human sin. Ignorance, superstition, and idolatry are a self-made problem for us. Thus, the importance of the commandment becomes clear. It speaks not to an ideal world but to the human condition as it evolved over the centuries down to Calvin's own day. For Calvin, the scope of the commandment extends to all religious art which tries to express the divine in earthly media:

God's glory is corrupted by an impious falsehood whenever any form is attached to him. Therefore in the law, after having claimed for himself alone the glory of deity, when he would teach what worship he approves or repudiates, God soon adds: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, nor any likeness." By these words he restrains our waywardness from trying to represent him by any visible image and enumerates all those forms by which superstition long ago began to turn his truth into a falsehood ... God does not compare these images with one another, as if one were suitable, another less so; but without exception he repudiates all likenesses, pictures and other signs by which the superstitious have thought he will be near them.

Calvin, *Institutes* I. xi. 1.

History itself is an important help here. Calvin rehearses at length the story of false gods from the earliest times through the recent history of the church. Everything points to the inevitable dynamic that fatally links image to idol:

Man tries to express in his work the sort of God he has inwardly conceived. Therefore the mind begets an idol; the hand gives it birth. ... Daily experience teaches that flesh is always uneasy until it has obtained some figment like itself in which it may fondly find solace as in an image of God ... Adoration promptly follows upon this sort of fancy; for when people thought they were gazing upon God in images, they also worshiped him in them.
 Calvin, *Institutes* I. xi. 8

Calvin is not impressed by the efforts of the Eastern churches to avoid the pitfall. Their anthropology is much too optimistic. It does not help to distinguish verbally between God and idol, prototype and image, adoration and veneration. The problem is not art and artefacts, but the fallenness of the human race. Calvin makes it quite clear that he is not against art as such:

I am not gripped by the superstition of thinking absolutely no images permissible. Because sculpture and painting are gifts of God, I seek a pure and legitimate use of each.. We believe it wrong that God should be represented by a visible appearance, because He himself has forbidden it. Therefore it remains that only those things are to be sculptured or painted which the eyes are capable of seeing.
 Calvin, *Institutes* I. xi. 12

Calvin was wary of any art that simply wants to please. On the other hand, he thought, paintings and sculptures which depict historical subjects might have some usefulness in the teaching or admonition of the people. As one of the early Reformed Confessions in Hungary would state it:

We do approve of public pictures made for civic use of the secular community by professional artists.

Erlauthal Confession (1562), *Bekenntnisschriften*, ed. E.F.K.Müller, p. 320

Even with this exception, the Reformed tradition under Calvin's influence remained extremely hesitant about art in the churches and even religious art in the home. I remember that one of our daughter's godparents, a young Reformed pastor in the Rhineland, noticing on the wall above the baby's crib a carved Oberammergau crucifix, a family treasure, asked us about the wisdom of letting the child grow up looking at this "image." We took it down. For Lutherans, the crucifix belongs to the *adiaphora*. There can be no doubt that the close identification of image and idol via the inevitable dynamic of human sinfulness made the fight against the "idolatry" of visual art a hallmark of Reformed identity.

In a recent book entitled, *War Against Idols* (1986), Carlos Eire has argued that idol-smashing in the time of the Reformation had little to do with art. It was rather the statement of a new consciousness of the common people, an expression of solidarity under the Bible among simple folk who were united in this symbolic act against the symbols of wealth, corruption, greed and immorality. In fact, Eire argues, the widespread participation in idol-smashing was

instrumental in creating a new democratic solidarity as a political reality. The action was simple, visible, and revolutionary. In it and through it, a new reality was born: A citizenry which was able to take things into its own hands.

Perhaps the point is well taken. In its stern warning against idolatry in all its forms the second commandment certainly retains its full validity. But it really does not say much about art. Even in Calvin we noted the problem: “Making”, “having,” “adoring,” and “smashing” images were not to be treated all on the same level. For us today, neither “adoring” nor “smashing” seem to be real options. Or are they? Reformed Christians are trying hard these days to incorporate the arts into a healthy life of worship and the celebration of all the gifts of God in their churches and in the Christian home. But the task is harder than ever. Frowning on the use of the visual arts in the Church, the ethos of Reformed Christianity abandoned art and artists and left them to create their own world, presumably a world of un-Christian secularity. But the story turned out differently. Art did go its own way—without the Church and with a vengeance. Since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, art has become its own religion. Artists are its gods, museums its temples, art critics its priesthood, and an engaged crowd of art-enthusiasts its body of believers. In this situation, will it be possible for our churches to develop a proper use for the gift of art within their own ranks and walls, and at the same time to reclaim their iconoclastic heritage in its proper theological function? I think, it is a task worth to be tackled.