

fought for Christ and who have received grace from him for the healing of diseases and the curing of sicknesses and the casting out of devils, as the Christian Church has received from the holy Apostles and Fathers even down to us today.

Moreover, we are well pleased that there should be images in the churches of the faithful, especially the image of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the holy Mother of God, of every kind of material, both gold and silver and of every color, so that his incarnation may be set forth to all men. Likewise there may be painted the lives of the Saints and Prophets and Martyrs, so that their struggles and agonies may be set forth in brief, for the stirring up and teaching of the people, especially of the unlearned.

For if the people go forth with lights and incense to meet the "laurata" and images of the Emperors when they are sent to cities or rural districts, they honor surely not the tablet covered over with wax, but the Emperor himself. How much more is it necessary that in the churches of Christ our God, the image of God our Savior and of his spotless Mother and of all the holy and blessed fathers and ascetics should be painted? Even as also St. Basil says: "Writers and painters set forth the great deeds of war; the one by word, the other by their pencils; and each stirs many to, courage." And again the same author "How much pains have you ever taken that you might find one of the Saints who was willing to be your importunate intercessor to the Lord?" And Chrysostom says, "The charity of the Saints is not diminished by their death, nor does it come to an end with

their exit from life, but after their death they are still more powerful than when they were alive," and many other things without measure. Therefore we ask you, O ye Saints! We call out to you. Let them who do not venerate the holy and venerable images be anathema! Anathema to those who blaspheme against the honorable and venerable images! To those who dare to attack and blaspheme the venerable images and call them idols, anathema! To the calumniators of Christianity, that is to say the Iconoclasts, anathema! To those who do not diligently teach all the Christ-loving people to venerate and salute the venerable and sacred and honorable images of all the Saints who pleased God in their several generations, anathema! To those who have a doubtful mind and do not confess with their whole hearts that they venerate the sacred images, anathema!

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Pamphlet 559

The Use of Sacred Images

Q. What is Idolatry?

In popular language, idolatry means the worship of images and statues and other handmade objects as God. Strictly speaking, however, idolatry involves the worship of any creature or thing.

Q. Does every religion that employs images and statues practice idolatry?

Not necessarily. Because a religion employs statues, it does not thereby follow that its adherents worship the statues as God.

Q. How can one determine, then, whether or not a religion which employs statues and images is idolatrous?

This can be determined only by investigating the reason why a particular religion employs statues.

Q. Why does Catholicism favor the use of religious pictures and statues?

Catholicism makes use of them for the same reason that a nation employs patriotic pictures and statues—namely, for their inspirational value. Just as citizens are stimulated to cherish their country and its ideals when they look at likenesses of their national heroes, so Catholics are prompted to love and serve God when they gaze at religious images and pictures.

Q. Does not the Bible forbid the fashioning of graven images?

The Bible forbids the making of graven—that is, engraved or sculptured

images, but the prohibition must be interpreted correctly. Otherwise one would be compelled to maintain that the making of all statues, bas-reliefs, coins, medals, dolls, puppets, figurines, statuettes, toy soldiers, et cetera, was denounced in the Bible—which is obviously nonsense. What the Bible absolutely forbids is the shaping of images to be worshiped and adored; it forbids, in other words, the making of idols. This is clearly indicated by the context (See Exodus 20:4-5) and it is confirmed by the fact that in the very same book where the making of images is forbidden Moses is instructed by God to fashion two images representing angels (Exodus 25:18).

Q. Do not Catholics pray to statues?

No, they do not, since Catholics recognize as does anyone sane that statues are lifeless blocks of stone or plaster. Catholics occasionally pray *before* statues, *in front* of statues—just as national groups often hold patriotic exercises in front of statues and monuments—because such a position is natural and appropriate, since the visible statue reminds Catholics of the invisible God to whom they are praying, and helps them to keep their minds and hearts fixed on Him.

Note: In some translations of the NT, St. Paul (Gal. 1:8) used the term “Anathema” in the sense of excluding a person from the kingdom of God (a curse). In this it is understood as an excommunication, a cutting off, or destruction. Later in the Church the term was applied to one

solemnly pronounced excommunicated or expelled from communion with the Church by the pope. Today anathema is used in Church declarations that state what the Church does not believe.

Episcopal Statements on Image Breakers (Council of Nice 787)

Anathema to the calumniators of the Christians, that is to the image breakers.

Anathema to those who apply the words of Holy Scripture which were spoken against idols, to the venerable images.

Anathema to those who do not salute the holy and venerable images.

Anathema to those who say that Christians have recourse to the images as to gods.

Anathema to those who call the sacred images idols.

Anathema to those who knowingly communicate with those who revile and dishonor the venerable images.

Anathema to those who say that another than Christ our Lord hath delivered us from idols.

Anathema to those who spurn the teachings of the holy Fathers and the tradition of the Catholic Church, taking as a pretext and making their own the arguments of Arius, Nestorius, Eutyches, and Dioscorus, that unless we were evidently taught by the Old and New Testaments, we should not follow the teachings of the holy Fathers and of the holy Ecumenical Synods, and the tradition of the Catholic Church.

Anathema to those who dare to say that the Catholic Church hath at any time sanctioned idols.

Anathema to those who say that the making of images is a diabolical invention and not a tradition of our holy Fathers.

This is our confession of faith and to these propositions we give our assent. And we pronounce this with our whole heart, and soul, and mind.

And if at any time by the fraud of the devil (which may God forbid!) we voluntarily or involuntarily shall be opposed to what we have now professed, may we be anathema from the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and from the Catholic Church and every hierarchical order a stranger.

We receive and we salute and we venerate in the first place the spotless image of our Lord Jesus Christ, our true God, and the holy image of her who bore him without seed, the holy Mother of God, and her help and protection and intercessions each day and night as a sinner to our aid we call for, since she has confidence with Christ our God, as he was born of her. Likewise also we receive and venerate the images of the holy and most laudable Apostles, prophets, and martyrs and the fathers and cultivators of the desert. Not indeed as gods (God forbid!) do we ask all these with our whole heart to pray for us to God, that he may grant us through their intercessions to find mercy at his hands at the day of judgment, for in this we are but showing forth more clearly the affection and love of our soul which we have borne them from the first. Likewise also we venerate and honor and salute the relics of the Saints as of those who

