

Objection 1. It would seem that Christ’s image should not be adored with the adoration of “latria.” For it is written (Ex. 20:4): “Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything.” But no adoration should be given against the commandment of God. Therefore Christ’s image should not be adored with the adoration of “latria.”

Objection 2. Further, we should have nothing in common with the works of the Gentiles, as the Apostle says (Eph. 5:11). But the Gentiles are reproached principally for that “they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man,” as is written (Rom. 1:23). Therefore Christ’s image is not to be adored with the adoration of “latria.”

Objection 3. Further, to Christ the adoration of “latria” is due by reason of His Godhead, not of His humanity. But the adoration of “latria” is not due to the image of His Godhead, which is imprinted on the rational soul. Much less, therefore, is it due to the material image which represents the humanity of Christ Himself.

Objection 4. Further, it seems that nothing should be done in the Divine worship that is not instituted by God; wherefore the Apostle (1 Cor. 11:23) when about to lay down the doctrine of the sacrifice of the Church, says: “I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.” But Scripture does not lay down anything concerning the adoration of images. Therefore Christ’s image is not to be adored with the adoration of “latria.”

On the contrary, Damascene (De Fide Orth. iv, 16) quotes Basil as saying: “The honor given to an image reaches to the prototype,” i.e. the exemplar. But the exemplar itself—namely, Christ—is to be adored with the adoration of “latria”; therefore also His image.

I answer that, As the Philosopher says (De Memor. et Remin. i), there is a twofold movement of the mind towards an image: one indeed towards the image itself as a certain thing; another, towards the image in so far as it is the image of something else. And between these movements there is this difference; that the former, by which one is moved towards an image as a certain thing, is different from the movement towards the thing: whereas the latter movement, which is towards the image as an image, is one and the same as that which is towards the thing. Thus therefore we must say that no reverence is shown to Christ’s image, as a thing—for instance, carved or painted wood: because reverence is not due save to a rational creature. It follow therefore that reverence should be shown to it, in so far only as it is an image. Consequently the same reverence should be shown to Christ’s image as to Christ Himself. Since, therefore, Christ is adored with the adoration of “latria,” it follows that His image should be adored with the adoration of “latria.”

Reply to Objection 1. This commandment does not forbid the making of any graven thing or likeness, but the making thereof for the purpose of adoration, wherefore it is added: “Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them.” And because, as stated above, the movement towards the image is the same as the movement towards the thing, adoration thereof is forbidden in the same way as adoration of the thing whose image it is. Wherefore in the passage quoted we are to understand the prohibition to adore those images which the Gentiles made for the purpose of venerating their own gods, i.e. the demons, and so it is premised: “Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me.” But no corporeal image could be raised to the true God Himself, since He is incorporeal; because, as Damascene observes (De Fide Orth. iv, 16): “It is the highest absurdity and impiety to fashion a figure of what is Divine.” But because in the New Testament God was made man, He can be adored in His corporeal image.

Reply to Objection 2. The Apostle forbids us to have anything in common with the “unfruitful works” of the Gentiles, but not with their useful works. Now the adoration of images must be numbered among the unfruitful works in two respects. First, because some of the Gentiles used to adore the images themselves, as things, believing that there was something Divine therein, on account of the answers which the demons used to give in them, and on account of other such like wonderful effects. Secondly on account of the things of which they were images; for they set up images to certain creatures, to whom in these images they gave the veneration of “latria.” Whereas we give the adoration of “latria” to the image of Christ, Who is true God, not for the sake of the image, but for the sake of the thing whose image it is, as stated above.

Reply to Objection 3. Reverence is due to the rational creature for its own sake. Consequently, if the adoration of “latria” were shown to the rational creature in which this image is, there might be an occasion of error—namely, lest the movement of adoration might stop short at the man, as a thing, and not be carried on to God, Whose image he is. This cannot happen in the case of a graven or painted image in insensible material.

Reply to Objection 4. The Apostles, led by the inward instinct of the Holy Ghost, handed down to the churches certain instructions which they did not put in writing, but which have been ordained, in accordance with the observance of the Church as practiced by the faithful as time went on. Wherefore the Apostle says (2 Thess. 2:14): “Stand fast; and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word”—that is by word of mouth—“or by our epistle”—that is by word put into writing. Among these traditions is the worship of Christ’s image. Wherefore it is said that Blessed Luke painted the image

of Christ, which is in Rome.