

Biblical production may be, it nevertheless is *not* God's Word but a series of *interpretations*: how a film director personally "sees" what is declared in Bible, how an actor *thinks* a Biblical character would act (including the God-man Jesus!), how the art director and set decorator *imagine* the scenes of thousands of years ago to have appeared - the details of which (for God's own reasons) the Bible does not supply".

Irenaeus, (130-200 A.D.) Bishop of the church at Lyons (in modern-day France) said, "They call themselves Gnostics. They also possess images, some of them painted, and others formed from different kinds of material. They maintain that a **likeness of Christ** was made by Pilate at the time when Jesus lived among them. They crown these images, and set them up along with the images of the philosophers of the world. That is to say, they place them with the images of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and the rest. They have also other modes of honoring these images, after the same manner of the Gentiles," (Taken from the dictionary of early Christian beliefs by David W. Bercot, page 351).

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

II Corinthians

6:16

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

I John 5:21



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*"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."*
Acts 16:31

The **RICHES** OF GRACE

Robert W. Reed
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"hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

Pictures of Christ

"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

A c t s

+ Images of Christ Constitute Idolatry +

The second commandment forbids the use of images to represent God (**Exodus 20:4-6, Deuteronomy 4:15-16**). To use such images constitutes idolatry and is thereby unlawful. The Bible accepts no likeness or similitude of God. If God cannot be depicted in a visual way, then the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be pictured. He is a member of the Godhead (**Colossians 2:9**), the second person of the Holy Trinity. Jesus Christ is beyond description according to **Hebrews 1:1-3**, and is seated in Heaven at this present time in all the fullness of His divinity. If Jesus is God and there are to be no visual images of the Godhead, then it is blasphemy to present Him in images, statues, sculptures, pictures, paintings, movies, books, flannel boards, manger scenes, plays, pageants, crucifixes, and stained glass windows.

"Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female."

Deuteronomy 4:15-16

This article will focus on three reasons why pictures of Christ are a violation of Scripture. Many think that pictures of Christ are not idolatry because they are not three dimensional. Many denominations use Warner Sallman's "Head of Christ" painting or similar pictures or paintings without even considering what God has said. Movies like the "Jesus" film or the "Passion of Christ" by Mel Gibson are also a violation of the second commandment. It seems as if Christians want to carry their gods with them as the heathen do. Please keep in mind, that throughout history, image worshippers have had little knowledge of God and the truth of the gospel message.

PICTURES OF CHRIST DEFILE THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

The second commandment speaks clearly on the subject before us, **Exodus 20:4-6**, "*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*" This commandment shows us how to worship, whereas, the first commandment shows us who to worship, **Exodus 20:3**, "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*" The second commandment forbids worshipping false gods or worshipping the true God in a false way. The Rev. Durhen put it this way, "We are no more at liberty to worship the true God in a false way than we are to worship false gods." Idolatry is the worship of deity in a visible form, whether the images represent the true God or false divinities.

No wonder the Catholic church has omitted the second commandment which addresses the issue of making images and bowing to them, and yet, it still has ten commandments. They divide the tenth commandment into two commandments. For example, the ninth basically says, "*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife*" and the tenth, "*Thou shalt not covet thy*

tells us that in His Word He has given us "*all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him.*" The Word is the very foundation on which we stand. It is the Word of God and Holy Spirit that changes us into the image of Christ from glory to glory and not some picture. Remember, "*there is a way that seemeth right unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of death*" (**Proverb. 14:12, 16:25**). Those who use images and pictures of our Lord may be sincere but they are sincerely wrong.

In conclusion, we are told to flee idolatry in **I Corinthians 10:14**. Pictures of Christ constitute idolatry. No one knows what Jesus looks like. Those who paint pictures of Him can only guess at what He looks like. Is it fair to the Lord to do this? Would you want someone to paint you who has never seen you? No one likes a poor photo of themselves, and this would be especially true of our Savior. If we say that Jesus is God and put pictures of Him before our children, is this not confusion? They will have false images of Christ as they worship Him or pray in His name to the Father. Ask any child that has been exposed to these types of pictures what Jesus looks like and you may be shocked at their answer. This is putting a stumbling block before our children which is a sin against our Creator (**Matthew 18**). According to **Acts 17:29**, we are not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. Any attempt by man to fashion any likeness of God is idolatry. The Athenians ignorantly worshipped the true God with their idols (**verse 23**). According to **verses 31-32**, this ignorance must be repented of, "*Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.*" Repentance is the only solution for forgiveness if we have attempted to visualize the Father, Christ, or the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Please consider the following statement by T. A. McMahon in his article titled, "Let the Biblical Buyer Beware": (The Berean Call, October 2004), "Interpreting the Scriptures in a visual medium is the most subjective and least accurate of any method of presenting God's Word. No matter how dramatic and emotionally moving a

a direct result of turning from the true and living God to idolatry (**verses 26-32**). As they did not want to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind. If we turn from God, He will turn from us, and the final result is the judgment of God (**vs. 32**).

PICTURES OF CHRIST DISTORT THE GOSPEL OF GOD

The Bible clearly states in **Romans 10:17**, that faith cometh by hearing (**not seeing**) and hearing by the Word of God. The written word of God is God's ordained means by which men and women would be saved and taught. As one author so clearly put it, "**God gave us a word book, not a picture book.**" The gospel is the power of God unto salvation according to **Romans 1:16**, words and faith cannot be separated. Throughout the Bible emphasis is placed on the words. Over 4,000 times in Scripture we find the phrase or similar phrase, "Thus saith the Lord." It is the written Word of God that is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (**Hebrews 4:12**). We are born again by the Word of God (**I Peter 1:23-24**). God said that He would put the Word in the hearts of the believers (**Hebrews 8:10-13**). It is the Word of God that converts the soul (**Psalms 19:7**). It is by the Word that we are sanctified (**John 17:17**). It is those who heareth and believeth the Word of Christ that are saved and hath everlasting life (**John 5:24**). No wonder we are told of a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord in **Amos 8:11-12**. Many are being weaned off the written Word of God in our day.

To present Jesus Christ in picture form is to present another Jesus and another gospel (**Galatians 1:6-9, II Corinthians 11:4**). This is not the Jesus of the Bible. This is no different than many of the cults who just out right deny the deity of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is our mediator (**I Timothy 2:5**) but any picture of Christ makes the picture itself into a mediator.

Again, God's Word is sufficient and pictures undermine the authority of Scriptures (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). We are told in **Matthew 4:4**, "*man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" In **II Peter 1:3**, the Lord

neighbor's goods." The purpose for this is because the Catholic church is filled with idolatry and the second commandment condemns their practices. The 1994 catechism of the Roman Catholic Church states, "The honor rendered to an image passes to its prototype, and whoever venerates an image venerates the person portrayed in it." The Bible states in **Deuteronomy 5:9** that God is a jealous God. The nation of Israel was guilty of provoking God to jealousy on a number of occasions in the Old Testament (**Jeremiah 31:3, Deuteronomy 32:21, Psalms 78:58**). The second commandment is further clarified in **Deuteronomy 4:13-19**, "*And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.*" In **verses 15-16**, the Lord placed great emphasis on the fact that they saw no similitude or likeness of God lest they corrupt themselves with graven images. To make any similitude or likeness of the Lord representing Him in some materialistic form, is the same sin as making the golden calf.

According to **Deuteronomy 12:4**, Christians are not to worship God by images as the heathen worship their gods, "**Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God.**" In **verse 8**, they are told to follow the Lord and not to do what seemeth right in their own eyes, and in **verses 30:31**, they were not to inquire at all as to how the nations worshipped their gods by images and then do the same unto the Lord. God's people were not even to worship in the same places

(groves and high places) where the heathen worshipped their idols according to **verses 2-3**, “*Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.*” The children of Israel were to destroy every thing that had any association to idolatry so that they themselves would not be tempted to imitate the heathen.

In **Exodus 32**, the children of Israel erected the golden calf. They desired a visible representation of God, that is, like the idolaters, they wanted to carry their God about in images. It was to be a help or aid in worshipping God. The image itself was not considered to be God, but as something to represent Him. We know this to be true, because in **verse 4**, the image is considered to represent God, the one who brought them out of Egypt. Also, in **verse 5**, Aaron made a proclamation and said, “**Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.**” This image to which they sacrificed, they considered to be the Lord. This idol was to be used in the worship of the one and true God, yet it is condemned in Scripture.

In **Isaiah 40:18**, we are told, “*To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?*” To depict God in any visual way is idolatry and forbidden by the second commandment. The making of images for religious service, whether it represents the true God or some heathen god, constitutes idolatry and will bring God’s judgment.

PICTURES OF CHRIST DENY THE DEITY OF CHRIST

The use of pictures is an attack on the deity of Jesus Christ, for they do not and cannot present Him as God. Pictures reduce Christ to a mere man, taking from His glory and majesty. Pictures can only focus on one nature and are powerless to do otherwise. The Lord Jesus Christ is the God-man, who is Creator of all things (**John 1:1-3, 14, Colossians 1:14-18**). He was not part God and part man, but all God and all man. He is just as much a part of the Trinity as the Father and Holy Spirit. The Godhead is fully made known in Christ according to **Colossians 2:9**, “*For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*” According to **I Timothy 3:16**, Jesus Christ is

God manifest in the flesh, “*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*”

Not only are pictures of Christ a form of idolatry, but no picture could truly represent Him today as He is in Heaven in the fullness of His divinity (**Hebrews 1:1-3**). According to **II Corinthians 5:16**, we are to no longer know Him in the flesh, but in spirit and truth, “*Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*” After His resurrection and ascension, Jesus rests in His glorified state and not in His earthly servant form (**Ephesians 1:20-23, Colossians 1:15-18, I Timothy 6:14-16**). The Apostle Paul saw the Lord in His glory and was blinded for three days, for His brightness was brighter than the noon day sun (**Acts 26:13**). We must fix our eyes on His divinity and no picture can clearly represent Him to mankind.

Please consider the fact that pictures lead to a pantheistic concept of God and obscure the distinction between the Creator and His creation according to **Romans 1:21-23**, “*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*” Pictures create in the viewer’s mind a single image, bringing the Lord to a low estate. Any picture is a part of creation and thereby changes the glory of the invisible God into a visible and corruptible creature or form. Pictures address the physical senses of the viewer and leads to carnal thoughts of God. Pictures or images also conform the Lord into man’s own likeness according to his imagination, thus creating his own god. In **verse 21**, it says that “*when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God.*” They knew God but refused to follow Him and declined in their worship by idols. In **verses 22-23**, the decline continues as they corrupted themselves and this is the reason God gave them up in **verse 24**, because of their idolatry. Again, in **verses 25**, we see that they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. The wicked and horrible sins such as