

Bowing before holy images and kissing them is idolatry

If we can show that the Christian scriptures and reason show that using images to help worship God is sinful or silly, then we prove that the many miraculous images venerated in the Catholic Church are gravely idolatrous. If it is bad to venerate an image, it is worse to say an image weeps blood or miraculously cures people.

The Church teaches that idolatry is a state of mind. It says it is okay to treat an image well as long as it is treated as a means of honouring God. To honour a reminder of God for the sake of God is to honour God. So the intention is to use the image to honour God - it is not really the image itself that is intended for honour. Idolatry is supposed to be essentially trying to belittle the great creator and source of all comfort and goodness by making him out to be a mere object or thing. It is insulting God to say that your statue is God as if God is not better than that!

The Bible forbids the veneration of graven images whether they are of God or not. The Jews did not use images in worship showing that the Protestants are right to interpret the Bible as forbidding Catholics to use statues in worship.

The teaching about idolatry ignores the fact that human nature may love persons but soon it begins to love things ABOUT the person and stop noticing that it has ceased to love the person. The image that represents God or a saint, soon becomes a substitute. The worship given soon becomes a mockery and a corruption of worship. The feelings that should be lavished on God become lavished on his substitute.

That is probably why one of the Ten Commandments goes further than just banning images of God. It bans images of anything on heaven or earth or below the earth or in the water that are used in religious worship. It says you shall not make graven images. The command is about honouring God so the context tells us that it is not the images that is the problem but their use in worship. That means Israel must not make things it understands to be graven images with which to honour God. There is no room in the commandment for supposing, "Oh it only refers to those who think graven images are gods or alive." It condemns the use of images in worship that represent holy things and holy people.

The first commandment forbids idolatry - you shall not have any other gods before me.

The pagans believed in gods who were superior to other gods and the other gods had to do whatever their superiors let them do. The commandment contradicts the Catholic doctrine that as the saints have no power of their own but only God's power, they are not gods. If they really believe that argument they can say, "It's okay to be a slave for that statue of Abraham Lincoln or whoever because to honour it is to honour God by honouring what he has made." It's a licence to rampant idolatry.

This commandment forbids gods in any sense. Only God is to be adored and without images or saints being deployed.

The second commandment condemns bowing before images - this is not condemning idolatry for that has already been done in the first commandment. It is condemning the use of images and other devices instead of keeping the attention purely on God. Using images to help your worship of God, really means you are pretending they help. You may feel they help but do they? The commandment does not suggest that the images are thought to be gods - it merely says that you must not bow before them. In other words, do not use images as representations of God. Do not argue that it is not the image that is being honoured but who it represents.

Liberal Catholics claim that the pagans had a vague sense of God that they dealt with by adoring idols. If so, the pagans didn't know any better. Yet God severely condemned their idolatry. Catholics are worse than pagans for they know better.