

POSITIVE (20min)

1. 4 vs. 2
 - a. Last time v. Kazules I argued for liberty from the legalism of the Jewish Sabbath
 - b. When DVD heard that I was interested in arguing for permissibility of Images of Christ, “What, is he taking down the commandments one at a time?”
 - c. Last one, I promise!
2. You’re my idol?
 - a. I hope that the outcome tonight is that idols are OK, because you’re my idol!
 - b. Seriously, I’m part of an online community that is a big fan of Van Drunen’s work with the doctrine of Two Kingdoms, and within that community, I have gotten in the habit of referring to you as “DVD”
3. What I have to offer tonight is a collection of distinctions; of “versuses”
 - a. (Many interrelated)
 - b. (Hard to linearly order because they circle back on themselves)
4. Regulative vs. Normative
 - a. Three kinds of things: Commanded, forbidden, and in between/indifferent/*adiaphora*
 - b. Two principles:
 - i. Regulative Principle: *adiaphora* are forbidden
 - ii. Normative Principle: *adiaphora* are permissible
5. Worship vs. Life
 - a. The distinctive Reformed understanding of the 2nd commandment is that the RP is for W (you’ve probably heard of the “RPW”)
 - b. The unspoken implication of applying the RP to W is that the NP is for life (but nobody ever says “NPL”)
 - c. There are those who would contend: “All of life is worship”
 - i. Good intention: elevate the importance of glorifying God in life
 - ii. Unintended consequence: demean set-apartness (holiness) of worship
 - iii. Better: “All of life is God-glorifying” (or at least ought to be)
 - d. Scope discussion lies in life, not worship
 - i. (I completely affirm that we are forbidden to worship with or through images)
 - ii. Be on the lookout for attempts to lever Worship-based arguments outside the sphere of Worship
 - iii. For instance, some would quote HC98 “God will not have his people taught by dumb images”.
 - iv. But reading the full Q&A, we can see that it is the church that is asked and answered about: But may not images be tolerated **in the churches**, as books to the laity? A. No: for we must not pretend to be wiser than God, who will have his people taught, not by dumb images, but by the **lively preaching of his word**.
 - v. HC98 does not answer tonight’s question of images of Christ outside of worship, it answers the question that it itself asked, which is about “in the churches”.
6. Argument vs. Guidelines
 - a. My argument is small -- of logical necessity
 - b. If I were to advocate images in worship, then because of the RPW, the burden would fall on me to demonstrate the requirement.
 - c. But since we are discussing only images outside of worship, then by the NPL, the burden falls on the other side to demonstrate the prohibition.
 - i. The flipside is that, because it is a question of liberty, not requirement, it is not my burden to produce chapter and verse saying “You may make images of Christ, as long

as you keep them away from worship”

- d. Another way to look at it:
 - i. In communist countries, the way the judicial system works is that the accused are guilty until proven innocent. This is the system that God has given us for worship; any innovative worship practice is assumed forbidden unless it can be proven commanded.
 - ii. But under the normative principle, Life is like America, and images of Christ are innocent until proven guilty.
 - e. Note: After my small argument is made that images are *permissible*, that does not mean that it is not *possible* to sin with images.
 - i. the use of images is still a matter of *wisdom* (not law)
 - ii. so if I have time, I will discuss some guidelines for what I see as better vs. worse (and even sinful) uses of imagery
 - iii. [but if I don't have time, the guidelines for wise use of images are beside the point; maybe some of that will come up in Q&A]
7. Need vs. Liberty: The non-regulative nature of my side of the argument makes me immune to “need”-based arguments.
- a. “For 100s/1000s of years, Reformed/Christian children didn't *need* pictures of Jesus.”
 - i. I agree; Children do not *need* storybooks with pictures of Jesus. Nor do they *need* storybooks *without* pictures of Jesus. Nor do they need any storybooks at all. For that matter, nor do they *need* bibles in their vernacular language, but only God's word faithfully preached.
 - ii. I'm not arguing that we *need* pictures of Jesus. I'm arguing that we have *liberty* to use pictures of Jesus outside of worship.
 - b. What's going on here is that “need” is a regulative category, “what is commanded?”; that's why no images in worship, “because it's not commanded”, which is the same as to say “because there's no need”
 - i. In a normative context, however, questions about “need” are irrelevant.
 - ii. If you're out driving your car, the police can't stop you just to ask, “Why are you driving?” You don't have to demonstrate a *need*, because you have *liberty*. When you have liberty, legitimate answers to the question “why” include “no reason” or “because I feel like it”.
8. Confessional vs. Biblical
- a. Sabbath debate: I believe I have strong grounds to argue that the Westminster is radically different than 3F on the Sabbath, thus demonstrating liberty and latitude within the Reformed tradition.
 - b. Not so with Images: I (unhappily) concede that the Reformed confessions and tradition are on DVD's side
 - i. [Small point worth noting: I'm not convinced that the three forms address this particular question]
 - c. Which leaves me to argue that the Bible is on my side
 - i. A daunting task; of the two of us, which is professional exegete with knowledge of Greek and Hebrew?
 - ii. But at least I only have to mount a small argument
9. BEGIN ARGUMENT: One Commandment vs. Two:
- a. Questions of images fall under the second commandment. Looking closely at the quite long text of that commandment...
 - b. Is it two commandments: one to not make images, and a second to not worship images?

- c. If two commandments, then they are contradictory
 - i. “You shall not bow down to *them* or serve *them*”, -- for the referent of “them” to be meaningful, the first commandment must already have been violated!
- d. Or the second is tautological (and redundant)
 - i. 1: No children in the pool. 2. All children in the pool must be supervised by an adult
 - ii. [No point in reinforcing “don’t worship” given that “no images” has already removed the potential of images to be worshipped]
- e. If two commandments, then one of them is No. Images. Period.
 - i. [This is the Muslim solution: representational art “challenges” Allah’s creative work, so let’s stick to non-representational art like mosaics
 - 1. "Those who make pictures will be punished on the day of judgment. It will be said to them, "Bring to life what you have created!"]
 - ii. This view has no representation in the Reformed tradition
 - iii. [Bezalel already skilled -- is that sinful?]
- f. God’s word only makes sense if the two parts are interpreted as a **single** command not to **worship** [with] images.
 - i. Waltke: “and” has “an explanatory sense: ‘and’ links two ideas, but the latter is intended to clarify the meaning of the former.”
 - ii. Vos explains that the 2nd commandment distinguishes between man-made shapes, and natural shapes: do not worship [man-made forms] and do not worship [forms found in nature].
 - iii. DVD (p222): “The relationship between making an image and worshipping an image in the second commandment is an interesting issue. On the one hand, in Exodus 20:4 making images is prohibited distinctly from bowing down and worshipping them. The same is true in Deuteronomy 4:15-18, which makes perfect sense without any specific reference to worship. Yet **the whole thrust of the second commandment as well as Deuteronomy 4:15-24 points to acts of worship ineluctably. These texts do not give the impression that two separate and potentially unrelated laws are set before the people.** The making and the worshipping, though distinct acts, are evidently aspects of a unified sin.

10. Worship vs. Use

- a. The bible teaches us that images can be used properly without being worshipped.
- b. God commands many images to be incorporated into the Tabernacle and Temple, “angels, bulls, lions, leaves, flowers, pomegranates, palm trees”
 - i. As more evidence for the unity of the 2nd commandment, a two-part interpretation of comm.2 declares all these images to be sinful.
- c. Consider the bronze serpent
 - i. As used properly: GOOD
 - ii. As used for worship: BAD
- d. So it is obvious that the Bible affirms a distinction between worshipping images and having/using images
 - i. Even in a context of worship!
 - ii. How much more valid is this distinction outside the Regulated context of Worship (in the context of Life)

11. That’s it for the argument. In case you missed it, here it is again:

- a. Since the 2nd commandment only forbids the **worship** of images, and the bible affirms the possibility of use without worship, therefore outside of worship, we have liberty to **use** images of anything in heaven, on earth, or in the waters under the earth.

- b. DVD & Reformed tradition agree with this in general terms, but take specific exception when it comes to the incarnate true body of God the Son, which I will deal with...
12. In my remaining time, I want to start to address some foundational anti-image arguments, to lay a framework for more DVD-specific rebuttal in my negative time.
- a. Images of Christ are wrong because inaccurate
 - i. Sometimes “inaccurate” is replaced with “inauthentic”, which as far as I can tell is just a subtle way of adding a moral component to “inaccurate”
 - ii. Fisher’s Catechism (expansion of SC) doesn’t pull any punches: “downright lies”
 - b. General response: Yes, and so what!
 - c. Pictures of Christ’s **divinity** are inaccurate
 - i. “Christ is not *circumscribable*” because of his infinite, divine nature
 - ii. Anti-image arguments that deity cannot be portrayed in an image, rely on a hidden premise that an accurate picture of Christ *must* portray his deity
 - iii. [Premise 1: deity cannot be portrayed: Sure; maybe it can be *symbolized* (and it is arguable whether/when such symbols are useful), but because God is invisible, deity is invisible.
 - iv. Premise 2:] But why *must* Christ’s divinity be portrayed?
 - 1. Was Christ’s divinity apparent with his human form?
 - a. (wouldn’t everybody have immediately bowed down?)
 - b. Is 53:2 “he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.”
 - c. HGG: “He’s just this guy, you know?”
 - 2. It would be most accurate *not* to attempt to portray Christ’s divinity
 - v. Deut 4:15-19 “I showed you no form”
 - 1. DVD: “[Appeal is often made to Deuteronomy 4:15–19, where Moses grounds his exhortation to refrain from image-making and image-worship in the fact that the people did not see any ‘form’ on the day that God spoke to them at Horeb out of the fire. The formlessness of God supposes divine unrepresentability.] **Despite the popularity of this argument, it is certainly not without its difficulties. Even a second look at the Deuteronomy 4:15–19 proof-text reveals that it has been forced to say something other than it actually does.** ... [Thus, Deuteronomy 4:15 provides a strict prohibition of images of the Deity – not absolutely, however, but only until God stoops to become visible in revelation. If and when this happens, Deuteronomy 4:15 is no longer a sufficient rationale for such a prohibition. Of course, one of the great confessions of the Christian faith is that God has stooped to become visible through revelation, in the incarnation of the Son.] ... **This great event [The Incarnation] must prompt Christians to read Deuteronomy 4:15 in a new light. God revealed no form at Horeb indeed, but has now revealed it in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.** How does this affirmation affect the Christian’s view of the second commandment and its prohibition of images?
 - 2. [LC 109 forbids “making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever.” Surely goes too far:
 - 3. Dove? Pillar of cloud/fire? Lion? Lamb? Hen? Baby Jesus?]
 - d. Pictures of Christ’s **humanity** are inaccurate
 - i. DVD agrees that a proper understanding of the Incarnation defeats the *circumscribability* argument: “That an authentic image of Christ is ontologically

- possible, [as the iconophiles argued], is granted; but such an image is authentic only if it attempts to represent Christ's actual appearance."
- ii. In general, images of Christ are wrong because they don't look like what Jesus actually looked like.
 1. Again, Yes, but so what!
 2. The colors in a B&W image are inauthentic, but does that make it wrong?
 3. The Moses Test: Pictures of Moses aren't accurate, and nobody would say that a picture of Moses parting the Red Sea is sinful
 4. So inaccuracy is not sinful in and of itself
 5. [DVD goes beyond this, I'll get to it later...]
 - iii. It is a straw man to argue that pictures of Christ claim to provide an accurate representation of what Jesus looked like
 1. [Iconoclast: "Image, you are a lie!" Image: "Of course that's not what Jesus looked like; you know it, and I know it. You missed the point. I'm trying to show what Jesus *did!*"]
 2. Of course this defense is unavailable for all these "portraits" of Jesus in circulation, which are nothing more than an (inaccurate!) depiction of Jesus' face!
 3. Iconoclast: "Image, you are a lie!" Image: "Of course that's not what Jesus looked like." Iconoclast: "So what's your point, then? After you take away purported representation, what's left?" Image: "um..."]

NEGATIVE (10min)

2. Where's the history?
 - a. Heidelberg 98 "God will have his people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of his word" -- preaching vs. images is in the domain of worship, and doesn't address our question
 - b. LC 109; no making images even inwardly or in our mind... is not an argument, but merely a statement.
 - c. When I researched Hyde's *In Living Color*, Calvin's *Institutes*, Ursinus' commentary on Heidelberg, ... every discussion of images of Christ eventually turned back to images in churches, and therefore in worship.
 - i. Conclusion; the Reformers were not too terribly concerned with images in Life, but very explicitly concerned with images in Worship
 - ii. The most significant (probably the only) painter to come out of the Reformation was Rembrandt. He painted pictures of Christ, and was never disciplined for it (and it's not like the churches didn't discipline; Rembrandt had a mistress at one point, and she was disciplined for adultery)
 - d. You might think I'm just a bad researcher, but I found the reason in DVD's article "Iconoclasm, Incarnation, and Eschatology: Toward a Catholic Understanding of the Reformed Doctrine of the 'Second' Commandment":
 - i. "Even in grasping the Chalcedonian legacy, however, Reformed theologians have seemed to do relatively little thinking about its consequences for the second commandment issue. ...If Reformed Christianity is to continue to abstain from the making and use of images of Christ, it owes it both to itself and to other Christian traditions to explain its position in the light of Chalcedonian Christology. [In the remainder of this article I offer a proposal for how this might be done.]"
 - e. So (if I can take the liberty to overstate DVD), in DVD's assessment there are no arguments

prior to his article worth addressing. So I should really only need to refute his argument, but I'll throw in a couple bonus refutations as well...

3. DVD insists that representational accuracy is critical:
 - a. ...In assuming human nature, the Son of God took on a physical body with a certain set of defined attributes. Jesus Christ was not an abstract human being, but a man with particular features and characteristics. He was a certain height and weight, his hair and eyes certain colors, his skin a particular pigmentation. His nose and mouth had a form unique to him. This human body, in all its particularities, was the result of the incarnation. ... **Jesus Christ was not generic humanity with general human features, but a particular human being with specific features.**”
 - b. ...**that don't matter!** [were accidental/contingent, not necessary]
 - c. DVD's assertion implies that the specifics of Jesus' physical appearance must have some kind of moral or theological significance
 - d. Is 53 “he had no form or majesty that we should look at him”
 - e. If there is some significance, the Bible has failed in providing these important details of Jesus' appearance;
 - f. BUT the Bible is **sufficient**; therefore we know these details must be unimportant.
4. “How would you feel...”
 - a. (Boettner/Hyde p63) “How would you like it if someone who had never seen you and knew nothing at all about your physical features, resorted to his imagination and, drawing on the features of his own nationality, painted a picture and told everyone that it was a picture of you?”
 - b. My answer: Depends. Is the picture a portrait, or a narrative?
 - c. Anyways it's very subjective. What if my answer is “It doesn't bother me at all”? Then what? What does that tell us about how Jesus feels?
5. Relationship (a variation on “How would you feel...” -- call it “How would your wife feel...”)
 - a. DVD attempts to bypass the Moses Test: **“another point of difference between portraying Jesus and portraying Moses or Alexander or other historical figure: it is only with Jesus that Christians claim to have some real relationship.** The fact of covenantal – to use favored Reformed terminology – relationship with Christ makes portrayal of him a much different matter from portrayal of any other historical figure. The significance of such a relationship might be illustrated by analogizing the portraying of Christ to a person's portraying of his or her spouse. **Imagine a husband who carries in his wallet a picture of a woman. The picture is not of his wife, but he pretends that it is and acts like it is. He takes it out of his wallet periodically and gazes at it. He shows it to others and tells them that it is his wife. The oddness of this practice may lie most notably in the fact that this man has married a particular woman, not a general female human being with a negotiable set of features. He has a sacred, intimate, covenant-like relationship with her, and most wives, presumably, would be rather unhappy to learn that their husbands were attempting to enjoy that relationship through a means that treats her as if her body does not really constitute her. In fact, her husband has relationship with her, body and soul,** and a picture of another woman substitutes something that is not her. Likewise, it is with Christ, true God and true man, incarnate in a uniquely particular body and soul, that the Christian has a sacred, intimate, covenantal relationship, and a picture of another, anonymous man substitutes something that is not him.”
 - b. First off, if the man is conducting acts of devotion with the false image, then he's an idiot. It is a straw man argument to imply that I am advocating images of Christ as aids for religious devotion.

- c. Second, this argument can be used to demonstrate deficiencies in other arguments against images. DVD stresses “her husband has a relationship with her, **body and soul**” So what if, instead of mooning over a picture of another woman, he has a picture of his actual wife on his desk at work. Would she complain, “That picture only depicts my physical nature, not my soul – you only love me for my body!”?
 - i. The point is that it is silly to criticize a picture for not portraying Christ’s “nature” or “person”
- d. Most importantly, this analogy is fatally flawed. Analogies are only valid to the extent that the similarities to the issue in question are relevant, and the dissimilarities are irrelevant. But in this case, the dissimilarities are quite relevant.
 - i. A husband has access to accurate information about his wife’s appearance.
 - ii. The relationship of a husband and wife has quite a lot to do with the particularities of the wife’s body.
 - iii. Our relationship with Christ is not bodily, but spiritual
 - 1. (Else we are Lutherans wrt communion)
- e. [A better analogy: A rich and powerful man wants to adopt a poor baby orphan girl, so he brings his son to the orphanage, to sign paperwork to make official the engagement of the baby girl to his son. The son writes a bunch of letters to the girl, but does not provide a picture. The lady that runs the orphanage (who saw the son) dies, but passes on to her successor the paperwork and the letters. The girl grows up reading the letters and even though the son has promised to write no more letters until the wedding, she writes him many letters, he reads them all, and sometimes even intervenes on her behalf. At some point, she draws a picture of the son visiting the orphanage and signing engagement papers. She knows the picture doesn’t really look like him (so there’s no point mooning over it like a teen magazine about Justin Bieber), but she likes to show the picture to her friends in the orphanage, saying “look what he did for me!” How would the son feel about that?]

6. DVD’s unique arguments

- a. Eschatological: “ought Christians desire to see Christ? Though the answer is definitively ‘Yes’, considered in general, the New Testament witness, I argue, suggests that Christians must view this desire as one that will only be enjoyed in the eschatological future. To seek to see Christ now is to move the eschatological clock ahead of schedule.” “We live in the age after the ascension, and we must reckon with the *absence* of Christ.”
 - i. Amen, and we already understand that art is not a means or attempt to “see Christ”
 - ii. Anyone who turns to an image to see Christ, or for whom an image satisfies their desire to see Christ, is stupid enough that they probably *should* abstain from images!
- b. “Practical-Ethical”: “any encounter with the human nature of Jesus demands a reckoning with his identity as the Son of God and thus evokes worship...a person confronted by a picture of Christ is faced with an impossible dilemma. If he worships it he overtly violates the second commandment, but if he refuses to worship it and thus treats it like any common picture, then making the picture is ‘in vain’ or even ‘wrongs Christ.”
 - i. Where’s the promised impossible dilemma? I choose option B.
 - ii. What category does the iconoclastic response of “destroy the sinful image” fall under?
 - iii. “any encounter with the human nature...” an encounter with a picture is not an encounter with a person, or a nature, or a humanity. HC98 it’s just a “dumb image”!
 - iv. This attempted dilemma relies on a false dichotomy, which begs the question of whether an image of Christ necessarily involves worship.
 - v. This argument is interesting in that the language “in vain” shifts the issue from the second to the third commandment;

1. (SC 55) “3C forbiddeth all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God maketh himself known”
 2. I admit that images of Christ *can be* sinfully irreverent or blasphemous.
 3. But that does not outlaw all images of Christ any more than it outlaws all uses of God’s name.
 4. Consider replacing “Image” with “God” in the attempted dilemma: does every mention of “God” imply either worship or blasphemy?
7. Slippery slope: if images of Christ are allowed, people will eventually worship them
- a. This is the same principle as Judaistic, legalistic notion of creating extra laws to protect people from breaking the real laws
 - i. Don’t boil a kid in its mother’s milk? I can’t have a cheeseburger or pepperoni pizza, because meat and dairy can never come in contact
8. No psychological studies
- a. Permissible camp: images are inevitable when reading/hearing the Bible
 - b. DVD “no scripture for proof, nor ... social scientific studies”, “no biblical arguments or psychological studies”
 - c. Where are the biblical proofs, social, scientific, or psychological studies that demonstrate that exposure to images of Christ make one direct worship to or through that image, or that viewers are convinced that an image of Christ shows what Christ actually looked like, or that people don’t like it when they are represented by inaccurate pictures?
9. Part-time law?
- a. Hyde *In Living Color*: “Those who say that images are forbidden, but only for worship, imply that we can fulfill the command of God by not having images in worship, while we have them in books or at home on our walls. The logical conclusion is that we can have idols, but just not in worship”
 - b. But we can! 1 Cor 10; we know that idols are nothing (I’m wearing an idol right now)
 - i. Kokopelli, god of fertility, trickery, and music for many SW american indian tribes (Hopi, Zuni, Pueblo...)
10. [Cultural variation
- a. On the one hand, it is bad that images of Christ all look like a blue-eyed, long-nosed, bearded, long-blond-haired Jesus
 - b. On the other hand, it is bad that images of Christ have so much ethnic variation
 - c. I would argue that variation is better; it teaches us that
 - i. We don’t know what Jesus looked like
 - ii. It doesn’t matter what Jesus looked like
 - iii. He became one of *us*!

CONCLUSION (5min)

1. Reiterate The Argument:
 - a. The Bible validates the dichotomy between worship of images, and use of images.
 - b. 2nd commandment is only about worship.
 - c. Therefore the Bible does not prohibit images of Christ
2. What’s at stake:
 - a. Not just “let’s just be safe and not make images” -- see slippery slope/Judaism
 - b. If DVD is right, then images of Christ are a sin
 - c. If I am right, then forbidding images of Christ is legalism -- also a sin.
3. END ARGUMENT. BEGIN GUIDELINES

- a. Why do we need guidelines? 1 Cor 10:23: All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful -
- All things are lawful, but not all things build up.
- b. [This statement in a very near context to idolatry]
- c. Even though images of Christ are permissible,
 - i. it is still possible for some images of Christ to be sinful;
 - ii. and it is certain that some uses of images of Christ are sinful
- 4. Image vs. Word: (Jacques Ellul, *Humiliation of the Word*.)
 - d. Images convey “reality”, but words convey “truth”
 - e. “Reality” of images is uninterpreted, and often unhelpful, misleading
 - f. (T. David Gordon) <Ellul criticizes imagery because its ambiguity allows man a false sense of control → idolatry
 - g. [Even pagans understand this; *Brothers Bloom* (Adrian Brody) “A picture is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you the less you know.”]
 - h. So it is helpful, useful, wise, to trade in Images that tend toward the more beneficial characteristics of Words
- 5. Message vs No Message?
 - i. Does the image deliver a message?
 - j. The answer is YES.
 - k. NOT having a message is not an option; an image that pretends not to have a message, delivers a message that is unintended, unclear, ambiguous, etc.
 - l. So the right question is, does the image deliver a good, correct, useful message?
- 6. Gazing vs. Meditating: What is your response to an image? Does it make you want to talk?
- 7. Devotional vs. Educational (vs. Aesthetic)
 - m. Devotional tends to worship (*dulia* vs. *latria* is **not** a valid distinction!)
 - n. Educational tends to learning
 - o. Aesthetic tends to enjoyment, appreciation of beauty
- 8. (Depiction? vs. Symbol)
 - p. Details have only simplest, outwards level of meaning
 - q. Symbols: Chinese pictographs, Cartoons (why is Charlie Brown always in that shirt? Why is Jesus always in a sky-blue robe?)
- 9. Portrait vs. Narrative
 - r. Does the image [claim to show...] show what Jesus looked like?
 - i. (If that’s all an image of Christ has to “offer”, then it’s got nothing to offer! It has no usefulness)
 - s. Or does the image show what Jesus did?
- 4. Better analogy from above?
- 5. The Grave is empty, but the manger was not empty

Waltke: “The second commandment is a proscription against making images (Heb. pesel). This technical term entails animism and voodoo. Animists do not distinguish between spirit and matter; thus the spirit is in the matter itself. In other words, the pesel has spiritual power inherent in it. Voodoo involves the understanding that similitude provides access for manipulation. Because the image of the deity is of a

frozen, static form, it can be manipulated to serve its worshiper.

"Thus, the common practice is to capture the living forces of nature, such as birds, animals, storms, sun, into a concrete, corporeal form. At this point it becomes the living force itself but in a form that can be controlled. That is what the second commandment means by an idol, a living representation of a life-force or a god....

"The Hebrew grammar allows two possible interpretations to the commandment: the ambiguity pertains to the conjunction "and." One may interpret it as a coordinating conjunction: "You shall not make for yourself an idol *and* a similitude of anything in heaven." In this rendering, "and" links two separate and distinct commands: "You shall not make an idol, and you shall not make a similitude of anything." This interpretation entails a proscription against any sort of art that produces an image or form: statues, drawings, and even photographs. Orthodox Jews interpret the commandment in this fashion. It explains why they do not allow picture taking. Similarly, branches of Islam follow this interpretation. Islamic art produces no representational art but is focused on calligraphy, architecture, literature, and geometric designs.

"Others interpret "and" as having an explanatory sense: "and" links two ideas, but the latter is intended to clarify the meaning of the former. Thus, "similitude" helps clarify the meaning "idol." The TNIV adopts this interpretation, translating the phrase, "an image in the form of anything." I opt for this interpretation because of other Torah data. It seems inconsistent that God would prohibit the making of a "similitude" of anything in creation and then proceed to command Moses to make shapes of heavenly beings. But he commands the shaping of cherubs as part of the ark of the covenant (Exod. 25:17-20), of cups on the lampstand like almond flowers with buds and blossoms (Exod. 25:31-34), and so on.

"The rest of the Bible is full of art. Solomon's temple contained numerous shapes: pomegranates (1 Kings 7:18), bulls (v.25), cherubim, lions, and palm trees (v.36), and so on. These texts demonstrate that Israel at the time of King Solomon did not understand the second commandment as a prohibition against art. No prophet ever condemned the Israelites for engaging in artistic pursuits, and other biblical writers made no mention of a proscription against forms and images." Bruce Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), pp.416-417.

Vos: "There is some uncertainty in regard to the syntax of the second word. In the Authorized and Revised Versions, the word "likeness" is made dependent on 'thou shalt not make', and thus co-ordinated with the preceding object 'graven image'. The likeness, then, is something that can be made; it must be a manufactured object. Attention has, however, been called to the fact that the Hebrew word thus translated may also properly be rendered by 'shape', i.e. natural, non-manufactured shape, any one of the forms or likenesses nature offers. If this be adopted, and it seems to be favoured somewhat by the distinction of the 'shapes' in three groups -- those in the heaven above, those in the earth beneath, and those in the water under the earth -- then plainly those shapes cannot be the object of the verb 'thou shalt not make', since they are not the product of human making.

Consequently the syntactical construction of the sentence must on this view be changed. It will have to read as follows: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, (and), as to the likeness of anything (prefixed accusative phrase of reference) that is in heaven above, etc... thou shalt not bow down thyself unto *those*, nor serve them, etc.' Two things are on this view forbidden: the **worship** of a graven image (graven means 'made out of metal'), and the **worship** of any of the forms of nature. *BT*, 135.

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