

Selected Statements from the Early Christian Fathers Concerning Images:

“And neither do we honor with many sacrifices and garlands of flowers such deities as men have formed and set in shrines and called gods; since we see that these are soulless and dead, and have not the form of God.”

— Justin Martyr (died c. 165), *First Apology*, ch. IX.

“Moses enacted expressly that neither a graven, nor molten, nor molded, nor painted likeness should be made; so that we may not cleave to things of sense, but pass to intellectual objects: for familiarity with the sight disparages the reverence of what is divine; and to worship that which is immaterial by matter, is to dishonor it by sense.”

— Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI, v (c. 200)
(treatise on the Ten Commandments).

“And after this [the Seventh Commandment] is the [Eighth] command respecting theft. As, then, he that steals what is another's, doing great wrong, rightly incurs ills suitable to his deserts; so also does he, who arrogates to himself divine works by the art of the statuary or the painter, and pronounces himself to be the maker of animals and plants.”

— Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI, xvi.

“If it is necessary for us, while engaged in public business, or discharging other avocations in the country, and often away from our wives, to seal anything for the sake of safety, He [God] allows us a signet for this purpose only... And let our seals be either a dove, or a fish, or a ship scudding before the wind, or a musical lyre, which Polycrates used, or a ship's anchor, which Seleucis got engraved as a device; and if there be one fishing, he will remember the apostle, and the children drawn out of the water. For we are not to delineate the faces of idols, we who are prohibited to cleave to them; nor a sword, nor a bow, following as we do, peace; nor drinking-cups, being temperate.”

— Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, III, xi (c. 200).

“If one will examine their [the Jews'] polity from its first beginning, and the arrangement of their laws, he will find that they were men who represented upon earth the shadow of a heavenly life, and that amongst them God is recognized as nothing else, save He who is over all things, and that amongst them no makers of images was permitted to enjoy the rights of citizenship. For neither painter nor image-maker existed in their state, the law expelling all such from it; that there might be no pretext for the construction of images, an art which attracts the attention of foolish men, and which drags down the eyes of the soul from God to earth... The law, indeed, wished them to have regard to the truth of each individual thing, and not to form representations of things contrary to reality, feigning the appearance merely of what was really male or really female, or the nature of animals, or of birds, or of creeping things, or of fishes.”

— Origen, *Against Celsus*, IV, xxxi (before 248).

“All those indeed sit in darkness, and are rooted in it, who fix their gaze upon the evil handiwork of painters, and molders and sculptors, and who will not look upwards, and ascend in thought from all visible and sensible things, to the Creator of all things, who is light.”

— Origen, *Against Celsus*, VI, lxvi.