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Contemporary Wesleyans may be uniquely placed to be used for a new and dynamic articulation of the gospel message in our day. We have in our tradition the best of the catholic, evangelical, and charismatic emphasis.

Jeremy Rifkin, in his new book *The Emerging Order*, argues:

> If the Charismatic and evangelical strains of the new Christian renewal movement [today] come together and unite a liberating energy with a new covenant vision for society, it is possible that a great religious awakening will take place, one potentially powerful enough to incite a second Protestant reformation.
>
> It is also possible that as the domestic and global situation continues to worsen in the 1980s, the evangelical/Charismatic phenomena, and the waves of religious renewal that follow, could, instead, provide a growing sanctuary for millions of frightened Americans and even a recruiting ground for a repressive movement manifesting all of the earmarks of an emerging fascism.[62]

Wesleyanism already, to some degree, bridges the Evangelical and Charismatic camps today. It has a clear message of present deliverance from inbred sin by the power of the sanctifying Spirit. If it needs anything it is a new infusion of an openness to the power of the Holy Spirit and a new appreciation for the breadth and balance of its own heritage as seen in John Wesley himself.

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Dr. Howard A. Snyder was a missionary in Brazil with the Free Methodist Church. He is now a pastor in Chicago, USA. p. 202

Icons as Christian Art

Robert M. Yule

Reprinted from Poyema: The Christian Task in the Arts

Icons (Greek eikōn*—image) have traditionally been used in private and public worship by members of the Orthodox family of Churches as channels of divine blessing and healing. Icons usually take the form of flat images of Christ, the Virgin Mary or Saints painted on wood and are often ornately decorated. Icons featured prominently in the iconoclastic controversy 717–843 between church and state on the use of paintings, mosaics and statues in the Church, ending with the state withdrawing its support for the iconoclasts or image-breakers. The author of this article offers an evangelical reflection on the theology or icons in the context of today's humanistic art.*
(Editor)

In 1967, I heard the Rev. Doug Storkey, then minister of Knox Church, Dunedin, speak about an overseas tour he had just completed. I remember his description of seeing Michelangelo's sculpture of David, in the Accademia in Florence. He was overwhelmed by

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[62] Jeremy Rifkin, *The Emerging Order: God in the Age of Scarcity* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1979), p.xi.

the vastness of this statue, with its heroic proportions, proud face and taut strongly-muscled body. 'I became acutely aware,' he said to us, 'of the great gulf between Michelangelo's David and Mrs. Storkey's Douglas!'

THE PROBLEM OF THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

This amusing anecdote draws attention to a significant problem in the classical artistic tradition. The artists and sculptors of ancient Greece, followed by those (like Michelangelo) who revived their ideals at the time of the Renaissance, sought to embody in their art ideals of human perfection, beauty and form. Yet in the pursuit of this humanistic objective, they created an idealization of humanity that is not corroborated by our experience of ourselves or of other human beings. The classical ideals of perfection are oppressive and daunting. When embodied in art they overwhelm us, for they are too good to be true. When we look at classical sculpture, consequently, we are more likely to be made aware of our weakness and imperfection, than to receive a sense of dignity and nobility which the humanist tradition claims to find in man.

This tendency towards idealization in classical and Renaissance art has given rise to an anti-classical reaction which characterizes the mainstream of modern Western art. This reaction is well documented in H. R. Rookmaker's book *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*. Beginning with Rembrandt, there is a conscious attempt to portray p. 203 man in a realistic manner, in terms of the weakness, pathos and suffering of real human experience. In Rembrandt's case, this realism is combined with a Christian outlook, which gives to his paintings and sketches a deeply compassionate quality that evokes a sympathy for the subject depicted and prevents the viewer from gloating over human weakness. But when this Christian perspective was lost, about the time of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, realistic art became crude and inhuman. We can see this transition in the etchings of Goya, for instance, which constitute a horrific catalogue of human pettiness and vice. Later still, in the art of Picasso and Francis Bacon in our own century, all that remains of the nobility of man are an assortment of weird geometric shapes and a few grossly contorted hunks of flesh. The question thus arises whether either classicism or realism is capable of setting before us a true and lasting vision of human worth and dignity.

The art of the Eastern Church stands outside these antinomies in the history of Western art. The early Greek and Byzantine theologians came to grips with the problems of idealization and realism when from the first they sought to subordinate their classical inheritance to the Christian gospel. Classical Greek sculpture is of such exquisite beauty and perfection that an act of virtual idolatry takes place in viewing it. This is so even in the case of works which no longer survive in the originals, like the Apollo Belvedere or the Venus of Milo, which are known to us only by way of later Greek or Roman copies. Such sculptures are extraordinarily beautiful, but the beauty is opaque rather than symbolic; it inheres in the work of art itself, rather than transcending it. The sculpture draws the attention of the viewer to itself, it absorbs the viewer in the contemplation of its own intrinsic beauty, rather than evoking an awareness of a beauty and a mystery which extends beyond itself. To overcome the idolatry which is latent in classical aesthetics, the Byzantine theologians and artists repudiated three-dimensional sculpture—with the exception of the bas relief—as a means of expressing Christian truth, and created instead a new and distinctively Christian form of two-dimensional art: the icon.

The distinctive feature of icons is their symbolic character. They are specifically intended to be transparencies of an unseen world, a part of earth that opens on to heaven,

overcoming from our side the tendency to self-absorption and idolatry which is inherent in naturalistic art, and evoking in us an awareness of the glory of God and the beauty of his holiness. Icons are of three main types: mosaics, wall frescoes and panel icons. The techniques and means of construction p. 204 were taken over from those currently in use in the later Roman Empire, particularly after the Emperor Constantine's acceptance of Christianity in 313 and the inauguration of his massive programme of church building. But the actual content of icons—the treatment of biblical themes, and the reduction of incidents to an outline of the barest essentials—owes more to the wall paintings in the catacombs of Rome, where Christian art was born in the age of the persecutions. Already in the rudimentary art of the catacombs we can see that a sense of humble trust in God has displaced the heroic pride of earlier humanism, and that a concern for clarity and simplicity of expression is beginning to outweigh the classical concern to imitate or idealize nature. I would argue, therefore, that the birth of iconography was not the product of a general Hellenization of Christianity, as Adolf Harnack and some other Western critics of the Eastern Church have maintained. Rather, it was one expression among many of a profound attempt to Christianize Hellenism and subordinate the culture of the Greco-Roman world to Christ.

SEEING THINGS FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

I have already suggested that a significant theme in the history of Western art is the interaction between classicism and anti-classicism. The former, with its tendency to idealization, places too high a value on man; the latter, with the opposite tendency towards realism, gives too low a value to man. Both tendencies, however, are basically humanistic in character, for they start from the premise that man is the measure of all things, and differ only in their estimate of the value of that measure. Either way, man whether he be noble or abject, is still the standard by which all else is judged. In classical or realistic art, the assumption of human autonomy goes unquestioned.

Christian art, acknowledging the primacy of God, has not left this assumption unchallenged. But the challenge has taken a very different form in the art of the Eastern Church from that of the Church in the West, a difference which reflects a significant divergence of theological approach. In the West, the most obvious cultural expression of a Christian alternative to humanism was the Gothic art and architecture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the age that saw the building of Chartres Cathedral. But like the theological disjunction of nature and grace which underlies it, Gothic architecture, with its soaring columns and towering spires, points heavenwards and away from earth. It suggests that one must leave the realm of nature altogether if one is to honour God. God is acknowledged, and humanism p. 205 is overcome, but at the price of setting man and nature aside.

Byzantine art, on the other hand, does not try to overcome humanism by pointing away from man to God. Rather, it endeavours to see things from God's perspective, and so points to God as the One in whom man and the world are truly fulfilled. Byzantine architecture, with its rounded Romanesque arches returning again to the earth instead of soaring upwards and its characteristic dome representing the vault of heaven, presents us with a vision of heaven on earth, a cosmos visited and inhabited by its Creator, who has become incarnate in Christ and dwells among us by His Spirit. Justinian's great sixth century Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople is an enduring monument to this vision of heavenly beauty. Similarly, Orthodox iconography presents an alternative to humanism by showing man, not in the disfigurement of his own egoism and autonomy, but fulfilled and transfigured by the radiance of God's glory. Just as Gothic architecture

expresses the Western dichotomy of nature and grace, so the art of the Eastern Church bears witness to the mystery of the Transfiguration. Orthodox aesthetics are not concerned with a world from which God is absent, remote, or just irrelevant, but seek rather to represent the world and man as an object of God's love and suffused with His glory.

There are three ways in which Orthodox icon painters contradict a humanistic way of looking at man. They do so, firstly, by their use of *perspective*. Andrei Rublev's famous icon of the Holy Trinity, now in the Tretiakov Gallery in Moscow, is a splendid illustration of this. We are all familiar with the famous picture of the avenue of poplars diminishing in size and converging towards the horizon. That is natural perspective, how things seem when viewed by us. The mathematical laws of natural perspective were only mastered in the 1420s during the Italian Renaissance, by the architect Brunelleschi. One of the earliest paintings to make use of this new discovery of diminishing perspective was Masaccio's painting of the Holy Trinity, made about 1427. Yet Rublev—as far as I know without any knowledge of the Italian Renaissance—had already anticipated this discovery and contradicted it in his icon of the Trinity, painted about 1410, simply by being faithful to the non-naturalistic methods of representation which the icon painters had already used for centuries.

In this icon Rublev uses reverse perspective. The throne on which the three figures are seated broadens rather than diminishes towards the background of the painting. By this technique, Rublev embodies a critique of naturalism within the work of art itself. The effect is twofold: to contradict our natural way of seeing things, and to make us p. 206 aware of how things look when seen from God's perspective. In this way the icon does not absorb our attention, but directs us away from the surface of the painting to what it signifies. An icon is a sign of a presence, and the use of reverse perspective draws our attention to the fact that the presence in question is that of the eternal God, uncircumscribed by space and time.

'The Holy Trinity' by Andrei Rublev (1410).

A second contrast with naturalistic art is that whereas naturalism tends to distance the viewer from what he contemplates, the icon p. 207 creates a sense of *intimacy and*

communion. This is a by-product of the use of reverse perspective. Where natural perspective places objects further and further into the distance, reverse perspective pushes the figures, as it were, out into the space between the viewer and the painting. We can see this very clearly in Rublev's icon, where the inversion of perspective has the effect both of bringing the central figure towards the viewer and of including the viewer in the community of love which so exquisitely characterizes the relationship of the three figures to one another. The icon thus expresses one of the central affirmations of Orthodox theology: that man is made for *theosis*, for 'deification', for fellowship in the very life of the triune God Himself (2 Peter 1:4). The impact of the icon is therefore the very opposite of what Doug Storkey felt before Michelangelo's David. It abolishes distance and creates intimacy, it overcomes isolation and establishes communion between the viewer and what is represented in the icon, it lifts us from a state of servility and awakens in us a foretaste of the glory of God in which our true worth is to be found. Far from distancing us a good icon has the effect of putting us in the picture.

A third contrast with naturalistic art is that icons show humanity *transfigured* by God, not disfigured by evil and suffering. This too grows out of the attempt to view reality from God's perspective. Orthodoxy, in common with the outlook of the early Church (and in contrast with the rather morbid quality that has characterized much Catholic religious art), sees man in the joy of the Gospel, already surrounded by the light of the resurrection and the glory of God's kingdom. Its vision is one of glad tidings to men. It presents a God-orientated rather than a sin-orientated view of human life. In this respect the icons of the Eastern Church follow the precedent of early Christian art, in not showing the sufferings or hardships of the martyrs but rather the attitude or bearing which a Christian should show towards them. The wall paintings in the catacombs, for example, frequently show Christians standing in an attitude of prayer, or portray the exemplary faith in God of Old Testament believers like Daniel in the lions' den or the three men in the fiery furnace. Sin and suffering are certainly not ignored in such art, but the emphasis is not on the sin or sufferings themselves, or even on their effects; it is on how these evils may be overcome.

THE THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION OF ICONS

The place of icons has not gone unchallenged in the Eastern Church. The Iconoclastic Controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries raised P. 208 the issue of their validity in an acute form. The controversy was precipitated by an edict of the Emperor Leo III in 726, banning icons on the ground that their making and veneration is idolatry, contrary to the second commandment. The opposition to icons was suspended in 786, but renewed again, by Leo V, in 815. Their validity was not finally recognized until 843, in what has come to be known as 'The Triumph of Orthodoxy'. Modern historical research indicates that two main factors influenced the outlook of the iconoclasts: a desire to purify Christianity of visual images to enable it better to withstand the challenge of nascent Islam; and a suspicion of matter and material representations, reflecting the continued impact of Platonic intellectualism on Christian thought. The antipathy of the Puritans to the visual arts in more recent times has a good deal in common with the attitude of the Byzantine iconoclasts. Since these Puritan attitudes still hinder the development of Christian artistic endeavour today, it is worth considering the main arguments in defence of Christian art put forward by the Orthodox in their debate with the iconoclasts of long ago.

The leading defender of icons was the theologian John of Damascus, who wrote three treatises on the subject between 726 and 730. His argument hinges on the significance of the Incarnation. He agreed with the iconoclasts that God in His eternal nature, prior to the Incarnation, cannot be represented in any way. But, he argues, the Incarnation has made

it possible for art to represent what God has revealed of Himself. As he puts it at the beginning of his first treatise, 'I represent God, the Invisible One, not as invisible, but insofar as He has become visible for us by participation in flesh and blood.' John's emphasis is on the change which occurred in the relationship between God and the visible world when the Son of God became man:

> In former times, God, without body or form, could in no way be represented. But today, since God has appeared in the flesh and lived among men, I can represent what is visible in God. I do not venerate matter, but I venerate the Creator of matter, who became matter for my sake, who assumed life in the flesh, and who, through matter, accomplished my salvation.

The meaning of the Incarnation lies precisely in the fact that the Son of God assumed all the characteristics of man, including material existence and describability. Therefore, iconographic art is not only legitimate; it is also a way of drawing attention to the full meaning of the Incarnation and the reality of God's coming among men. p. 209

Three important secondary principles for regulating the making and use of icons follow from this normative principle of the Incarnation. The first is what I would call the principle of *clarity*. Canon 82 of the Trullan Council (692) sets forth a surprising rule which declares that Christian art, in the light of the Incarnation, should eschew obscure symbolism and pursue instead the unambiguous clarity of representing the person or incident itself. Alluding to the traditional practice of representing Christ allegorically as a lamb—a practice which has continued in the Western Church to the present day—the Council decreed that 'henceforth Christ our God must be represented in His human form, and not in the form of the ancient lamb.' This rule has important implications, for it shows that Orthodox iconography, by presenting the spiritual significance of persons or events directly and not allegorically, aims to be clear, meaningful and unambiguous. Nothing could be further from the spirit of icons than the current fad in some art circles to treat them as bearers of esoteric wisdom. The principle of clarity, in my view, also governs the use of colour in icons. A number of icon painters—like the brilliant artists who painted the murals on the walls of the monastery and the church at Mistra (the ancient Sparta) in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—used colour with a boldness and an immediacy that was unrivalled until the coming of the Impressionists in the nineteenth century. But, unlike the Impressionists, they always used colour in subordination to form and meaning, never in the abstract as an appeal to the emotions alone.

A second corollary of the Incarnation is the principle of *historicity*, by which I mean the rule that an icon—even a doctrinal icon—should describe an episode or persons in the history of salvation. Icons are not speculative or conceptual art. The Trinity, for example, can be represented legitimately only in one of two ways. One type, known as the 'New Testament Trinity', is based upon the Gospel narrative of Christ's baptism, in which the Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove and the Father's voice from heaven attested, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.' This type of icon serves a double function, signifying both the Baptism and the Trinity. The other type is known as the 'Old Testament Trinity', based upon the incident recorded in Genesis 18, when the patriarch Abraham gave hospitality to three strangers under the tree at Mature and received the message that he and Sarah would have a son. The narrative of this incident is unique and numinous, for it uses both singular and plural in speaking of the strangers. They are described as three men, yet Abraham addressed them as 'My Lord'. This peculiarity of p. 210 language led the early Christian commentators to see this episode as the first revelation of the trinitarian nature of God. Similarly, from as early as the fourth century, Christian iconography began to make use of the three messengers to represent

the three persons of the Godhead. Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity is the finest icon of this type. Its basic plan is a circle, representing unity, encompassing a triangle, representing threeness. Building on this outline, Rublev developed the biblical imagery in a way that surpassed the work of all his predecessors. Through his supreme artistry the meal which Abraham prepared comes to signify the Christian Eucharist, the tree of Mamre symbolizes the tree of life and the patriarch's tent the Christian Church, and the shimmering heat of midday even becomes evocative of the luminescence of God's glory.

The principle of historicity was not always observed in the Eastern Church, and there is a third—and in my view illegitimate—representation of the Trinity, known as 'the Paternity', which appeared in later Russian iconography as a result of Western influence. It shows the Father as a bearded old man, with the Son as a child seated on His lap, holding a dove which signifies the Spirit. It has striking affinities with the common representation of the Trinity in post-Renaissance ecclesiastical art in the West, in which the Father is represented holding a cross on which Christ is crucified. (The Holy Trinity by Masaccio, which I have already referred to in connection with perspective, is a typical example.) John of Damascus and the early fathers of the Eastern Church would have shunned this manner of representation, for they took seriously the fact that the Father—unlike the Son—had not become incarnate and therefore could not be described in human terms. Indeed, basing itself on the views of these theologians, the Russian Church finally forbade the depiction of the Father on icons, at the Council of Moscow in 1667.

The third principle concerns the *degree of respect* to be given to icons. One of the reasons why the iconoclasts rejected icons as idolatrous was because of the excessive devotion which had come to be accorded to them in Christian worship. In this respect, I consider that the protest of the iconoclasts was justified. However, it seems to me that the excesses of popular iconophile devotion and the accusation of idolatry by the iconoclasts both arose from the same misunderstanding: by confusing the image with its prototype, both parties wrongly identified the icon with God. John of Damascus rejected this identification, pointing out that only the Son and the Spirit are 'natural images', consubstantial with the Father. Icons on the other hand, are by nature created and essentially different from God; p. 211 they are, therefore, not idols, but symbolic images, which point away from themselves to their prototype. This distinction formed the basis of the decree of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which met at Nicaea in 787, prescribing how icons are to be used. An icon, since it is distinct from the divine prototype, is not to be worshipped (for worship is due to God alone), but to be treated only with relative veneration or honour, in the same way as the Book of the Gospels or the Cross. As John Meyendorff says in his book *Byzantine Theology*, 'This authoritative statement by an ecumenical council clearly excludes the worship of images often attributed to Byzantine Christianity.'

TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY OVER ICONOCLASM

In my view the triumph of Orthodoxy over iconoclasm has important implications for a Christian attitude towards the material world, and for Christian aesthetic activity in particular. The iconoclasts of the Eastern Church, like the Puritans in the West, lapsed into a sort of dualism. While not necessarily going to the extreme of viewing matter as evil, they certainly did tend to regard the realm of matter as an inappropriate subject for Christian concern, as something alien to God and remote from spiritual activity. Eusebius of Caesarea, the well-known fourth century Church historian, is a reminder that these attitudes are not uncommon even among the Church's leadership. When asked by Constantia, the sister of the Emperor Constantine, to provide her with an image of Christ,

Eusebius refused, commenting that her desire to have a material image of Jesus was unworthy of the faith; now that Christ had been glorified, he said, He can be contemplated only 'in the mind'.

Such an attitude has two consequences, both of which can be seen in the legacy of Puritan iconoclasm in our own culture. Firstly, there is a tendency to identify the realm of God and the spiritual life with the realm of the intellect, and thus make Christianity the preserve of educated people. The intellectualism and loquacity of so much modern Protestantism—even, I would hazard, its middle class character as well—amply testify to this. By contrast, icons have always been valued as a medium of visual instruction among the Orthodox, 'books for the illiterate' as John of Damascus once called them. And secondly, the world of material and cultural endeavour is abandoned to the prey of secular forces, instead of being transformed by Christian influences. I cannot help feeling that the prevalence of pornographic images in Western societies today is an expression of this abandonment of the material world to secularism. For, if Christian p. 212 iconoclasts refuse to allow what is truly good, honourable and beautiful to be set before people in the visual media of culture (Philippians 4:8), it is hardly cause for surprise that debased images arise to fill the vacuum. The human heart cannot live without contemplating something and the images of the flesh are always to hand if the image of God is withheld.

Where iconoclasm drives a wedge between the spiritual and the material, Orthodoxy affirms that matter can be transfigured by the glory and holiness of God. In the Incarnation the Son of God took a material body like ours; and in the Transfiguration this body revealed His divine glory to the three disciples on the mountain. 'The Word was made flesh … and we saw his glory', says the apostle John (John 1:14), and his words are echoed by John of Damascus at the time of The Iconoclastic Controversy: 'The Word made flesh has deified the flesh.' The Transfiguration is the central mystery of the Orthodox faith. Matter is not outside the scope of redemption, nor is it intrinsically hostile to the spiritual life. On the contrary, God has redeemed and glorified matter, making it 'Spirit-bearing', a vehicle of His divine life to us. And if our human flesh can become a vehicle of the Spirit, then so too—though at a subordinate level and in a different way—can wood and paint, the material constituents of an icon. Thus, as Timothy Ware puts it in his book *The Orthodox Church*, 'The Orthodox doctrine of icons is bound up with the Orthodox belief that the whole of God's creation, material as well as spiritual, is to be redeemed and glorified.'

Matter, of course, is not intrinsically spiritual and 'God-bearing'. It must be transformed and made holy by being offered to God for His use and blessing. The Orthodox icon painters take this very seriously, and we would do well to allow their approach to instruct our own artistic and cultural endeavour. An icon is painted as an act of worship. The wood is chosen and blessed, the paint (which is usually egg tempera) is blessed, and the painter prepares himself by prayer, by fasting and by receiving communion. An important aspect of this prayer is confession, the artist's renunciation of his own egoism and sinfulness, so that the icon may not merely set forth his distorted vision and inflict this on those who view the finished work, but may come to embody the healing radiance and beauty of God. In this way the icon painters sought to overcome their sin and the limitations of their own temperament, and offer themselves as instruments of the Holy Spirit. Few icon painters, accordingly, ever signed their work, and those who did wrote 'Through the hand of the sinful servant of God …' in front of their name. Prayer, of course, does not remedy p. 213 deficiencies in the artist's technical ability, any more than technical virtuosity can make up for a lack of spiritual discernment. It is the interplay of both the divine and the human factors that distinguishes a good icon from a defective one.

In addition to his own spiritual preparation, the icon painter followed traditional rules of technique and representation, which were handed down by word of mouth from master to pupil over the centuries, and are now preserved in iconographic manuals. The best known of these manuals is probably that of Dionysius of Fourna, written about 1730. The most reliable and authoritative, however, is the *Explanation of Orthodox Iconography* (Athens, 1960), written by Fotis Kontoglous, the leading contemporary Greek icon painter, which is based on older sources than those used by Dionysius. Unfortunately, it has not yet been translated into English. The iconographic rules prescribed in detail how icons and frescoes are to be made and, in particular, how each person or theme is to be depicted. This has assured astonishing continuity of representation over the centuries, so that one acquainted with icons can tell at a glance what is the scene and who are the saints illustrated. I have a reproduction of a sixth century wall painting of the apostle Peter, from St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai, which is recognizably the same person as that shown on Russian icons of Peter made ten centuries later—without (so far as I am aware) any possibility of direct copying.

The primary object of these iconographic rules, however, is to ensure that icons express God's truth, beauty and holiness, and thereby instruct, uplift and sanctify the worshipper. By following them, the icon painter sets himself to avoid everything that is arbitrary or novel, everything that is vague or superfluous, everything that is individualistic, subjective or sensual; in short, to avoid what belongs to the old order in which our perception of God's truth is blurred and the image of God in us is disfigured. The iconographic tradition is therefore diametrically opposed to those modern ideas with which we are all familiar, that art should faithfully copy nature, reveal the spirit of the times, or express the imagination and personality of the artist. Iconographic art seeks to transcend the limitations of our fallen, secular world: it is an art of the new creation, an art of redemption, of God, and humanity transfigured. As Western Christians who seek to respond to the challenge of secular attitudes in the arts, we would be foolish to overlook the lessons of the iconographic tradition of the Eastern Church, which is perhaps the most rigorous and sustained attempt yet made to create a specifically Christian art. Today, when visual images exercise an ever increasing influence over people p. 214 through the new media of cinema and television, it can hardly be denied that the recovery of a Christian vocation in the visual arts is a matter of great urgency and importance.

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The Claims of Jesus in the African Context

David Gitari

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The *Letter to the Hebrews* opens with these words: