

TriBakery Group: Christians & Kitsch #7

Discussion compiled by Kirk Irwin

Scripture:

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our likeness, let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.’”

Genesis 1:26-27

“The Lord watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow....”

Psalms 146:9

“Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, ‘How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?’”

John 4:9a

“Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb...she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, ‘Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him, ‘Rabboni!’ (which is to say, Teacher).”

John 20:1 & 14b-16

Quotes:

“The value of the Bible as an object is affected also by the shifting values of image and text and devotion to the text as the word of God.”

Betty Spackman, p30, [A Profound Weakness: Christians and Kitsch](#)

Questions: Is our culture more “text” oriented or “image” oriented? Defend your response. How about the church? Is it more “text” oriented or “image” oriented? What are the implications of being “text” or “image” oriented? What should be our responses as artists who are Christians?

Quote:

“In his book *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict between Word and Image*, Leonard Shlain sets out ‘hypothetical explanations of historical events’ (p3) in which he presents his thesis that alphabets ‘profoundly affect gender relations’ and the image is essentially female. In this extensive document (which is extremely controversial, to say the least), he argues that the Reformation ‘was clearly not a return to the content of the New Testament[,] but...a wrenching sociological shift wrought by a new information technology dependent on users being alphabet-literate [p340]...I may not agree with everything Schlain has to say about goddesses, but I do agree with the simple premise of this book that we have been living in a text-based world dominated by male power-structures through patriarchy in religion and education in particular. Especially in Western Protestantism, the image, regarded as more feminine in the sense that it is less linear and less analytic and more fuzzy-logic-based, has been subordinated to the word.”

Betty Spackman, p31, [A Profound Weakness: Christians and Kitsch](#)

Questions: Initial responses? What does Schlain mean by alphabets “profoundly affecting gender relations”? Do you think this is true? Defend your position.

Quote:

“However, to make such distinctions between text and image and set them in opposition to each other is problematic. It is dangerous, and much too limited, to choose one or the other and from a Christian perspective neglects a very basic understanding of the incarnation. If we divorce images completely from words there is the risk that they will end up floating in a sea of insignificance, just as text disconnected from body and spirit is without substance.”

Betty Spackman, p31, [A Profound Weakness: Christians and Kitsch](#)

Questions: How do we as artists and the arts community, who are Christians, bring the value of the ‘image’ back into the church without violating the integrity of its ‘text-based’ culture? How do we do this without allowing our value of the ‘image’ to become an idol? How do we bring the ‘text-based’ values into our seemingly ‘image’-infatuated general culture?