



The chief champion of the icons in the first period was Saint John of Damascus (?675-749), in the second Saint Theodore of Studium (759-826). John was able to work the more freely because he dwelt in Moslem territory, out of reach of the Byzantine government."

*Kallistos Ware. The Orthodox Church. Chapter 2*

"We do not pay homage to the wood itself, but we revere the One who died on the Cross... When the two beams of the Cross come together, I pay homage to that figure because of Christ crucified, but if the beams separate, I throw them away or throw them into the fire"

*Leontius of Neapolis*

"In ancient times, the incorporeal and uncircumscribed God was not represented. But now that God has manifested Himself in the flesh and lived among men, I produce an image of the God who is visible. I do not venerate matter, but the Creator of matter, who through me became material and deigned to inhabit matter, who through matter effected my salvation. I will not cease to venerate the matter that has been the means of my salvation"

*Saint John Damascene*



"The icon is a triumphant song, and a revelation, and an enduring monument to the victory of the saints and the shame of demons"

*Saint John Damascene*



## THE OECUMENICAL COUNCILS III

### *The Seventh Oecumenical Council*

Held in **Nicaea**, Asia Minor in **787**. Under Empress Irene. 367 Bishops were present.

### *The Iconoclastic Controversy*

*It centred around the use of icons in the Church and the controversy between the iconoclasts and iconophiles.*



*The iconoclasts were suspicious of religious art; they demanded that the Church rid itself of such art and that it be destroyed or broken (as the term "iconoclast" implies).*

The iconophiles believed that icons served to preserve the doctrinal teachings of the Church; they considered icons to be man's dynamic way of expressing the divine through art and beauty. **The**

**Iconoclast controversy was a form of Monophysitism: distrust and downgrading of the human side.**

### *The Council's Proclamation*

*"We define that the holy icons, whether in colour, mosaic, or some*

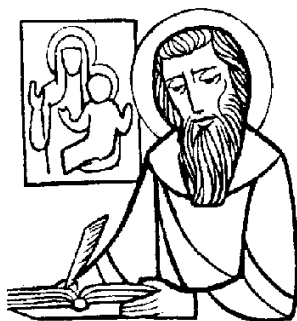
*other material, should be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on the sacred vessels and liturgical vestments, on the walls, furnishings, and in houses and along the roads, namely the icons of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, that of our Lady the Theotokos, those of the venerable angels and those of all saintly people. Whenever these representations are contemplated, they will cause those who look at them to commemorate and love their prototype. We define also that they should be kissed and that they are an object of veneration and honour (timitiki proskynisis), but not of real worship (latreia), which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith and is proper for the divine nature, ... which is in effect transmitted to the prototype; he who venerates the icon, venerated in it the reality for which it stands."*





## *Defenders of Orthodoxy*

**St. John of Damascus** (675-745) John Mansur was educated at the Caliphate Court in Damascus. He held a position comparable to that of a Prime Minister. He was a devout Orthodox Christian. He entered the Monastery of St. Sabbas in Palestine, where he wrote many poems, hymns and treaties, one of which is called "*An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*." This work is a systematic theological summary of all the basic doctrines of the first seven centuries, a monumental work which became a classic in Orthodox Theology.



## *The Triumph of Orthodoxy*

An Endemousa (Regional) Synod was called in **Constantinople** in **843**. Under Empress Theodora. The veneration of icons was solemnly proclaimed at the St. Sophia's Cathedral. Monks and clergy came in procession and restored the icons in their rightful place. The day was called "Triumph of Orthodoxy." Since that time, this event is commemorated yearly with a special service on the first Sunday of Lent, the "Sunday of Orthodoxy."

## *The Holy Icons*

"Disputes concerning the Person of Christ did not cease with the Council of 681, but were extended in a different form into the eighth and ninth centuries. The struggle centred on the Holy Icons, the pictures of Christ, the Mother of God, and the Saints, which were kept and venerated both in churches and in private homes. The Iconoclasts or icon-smashers, suspicious of any religious art which represented human beings or God, demanded the destruction of icons; the opposite party, the Iconodules or venerators of icons, vigorously defended the place of icons in the life of the Church. The struggle was not merely a conflict between two conceptions of Christian art. Deeper issues were involved: the character of Christ's human nature, the Christian attitude towards matter, the true meaning of Christian redemption.



The Iconoclasts may have been influenced from the outside by Jewish and Moslem ideas, and it is significant that three years before the first outbreak of Iconoclasm in the Byzantine Empire, the Mohammedan Caliph Yezid ordered the removal of all icons within his dominions.

But Iconoclasm was not simply imported from outside; within Christianity itself there had always existed a 'puritan' outlook, which condemned icons because it saw in all images a latent idolatry. When the Isaurian Emperors attacked icons, they found plenty of support inside the Church.

Typical of this puritan outlook is the action of Saint Epiphanius of Salamis (?315-403), who, on finding in a Palestinian village church a curtain woven with the figure of Christ, tore it down with indignation.

This attitude was always strong in Asia Minor, and to some extent the Iconoclast movement was an Asiatic protest against Greek tradition.

Two leading Iconoclast Emperors, Leo III and Leo V, were of Asiatic origin. The Iconoclast controversy, which lasted some 120 years, falls into two phases. The first period opened in 726 when Leo III began his attack on icons, and ended in 780 when the Empress Irene suspended the persecution.



The Iconodule position was upheld by the seventh and last Ecumenical Council (787), which met (as the first had done) at Nicaea. Icons, the Council proclaimed, are to be kept in churches and honoured with the same relative veneration as is shown to other material symbols, such as 'the precious and life-giving Cross' and the Book of the Gospels.

A new attack on icons, started by Leo V the Armenian in 815, continued until 843 when the icons were again reinstated, this time permanently, by another Empress, Theodora.

The final victory of the Holy Images in 843 is known as 'the Triumph of Orthodoxy', and is commemorated in a special service celebrated on 'Orthodoxy Sunday', the first Sunday in Lent.

