



SESSION 19: ICONOCLASM & THE 7TH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL – READINGS

“I sketch and paint Christ and the sufferings of Christ in churches, in homes, in public squares, and on icons, on linen cloth, in closets, on clothes, and in every place I paint so that men may see them plainly, may remember them and not forget them... And as thou, when thy makest thy reverence to the Book of the Law, bowest down not to the substance of skins and ink, but to the sayings of God that are found therein, so I do reverence to the image of Christ. Not to the substance of wood and paint – that shall never happen!... But, by doing reverence to an inanimate image of Christ... I think to embrace Christ Himself and to do Him reverence... We Christians, by bodily kissing an icon of Christ, or of an apostle or martyr, are in spirit kissing Christ Himself or His martyr.”

- Leontius of Neapolis

“In venerating the ancient icons and the saints who are devoted to the Church, as symbols and prototypes of the Truth, we especially venerate grace and truth as the fulfillment of the Law. Therefore, that what has been accomplished may be represented to all men’s eyes through the art of painting. We decree that henceforth there are to be imprinted upon the icons of Christ our God – Who took on the guise of humanity that in this semblance men might discover the depth of God’s humility – His Words, to bring to mind His life in the flesh, His passion, His saving Death, and the redemption of the whole world which has proceeded therefrom.”

- canon 82, Trullan Synod of 692

“When He Who is without a body and without form, Who has neither quantity nor magnitude, Who is incomparable with respect to the superiority of His nature, Who exists in Divine form – accepts a bond-servant’s appearance and arrays Himself in bodily form, then do thou trace Him upon wood, and rest thy hopes in contemplating Him, Who has permitted Himself to be seen.”

- Saint John of Damascus

“To ask where it has been revealed to us that we should renounce the world and become monks – an echo of iconoclastic doubts of the value of monasticism – is simply to ask where it has been revealed to us that we should become Christians.”

- Saint Theodore

“We declare that, next to the sign of the precious and life-giving cross, venerable and holy icons – made of colours, pebbles, or any other material that is fit – may be set in the holy churches of God, on holy utensils and vestments, on walls and boards, in houses and in streets. These may be icons of our Lord and God the Saviour Jesus Christ, or of our pure Lady the holy Mother of God, or of honoured angels, or of any saint or holy man. For the more these are kept in view through their iconographic representation, the more those who look at them are lifted up to remember and have an earnest desire for the archetypes. Also so that one may render to them the veneration of honour; not the true worship of our faith, which is due only to the divine nature, but the same kind of veneration as is offered to the form of the precious and life-giving cross, to the holy gospels, and to the other holy dedicated items. Also that one may honour these by bringing to them incense and light, as was the pious customs of early Christians for ‘the honour to the icon is conveyed to the archetype’. Thus, one who venerates the icon venerates the reality of the one depicted on it...”

- Summary of the 7th Ecumenical Council