

THE SEVENTH OECUMENICAL  
COUNCIL OF NICAEA  
ON THE VENERATION OF ICONS  
AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH\*

By  
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The completion this year of twelve hundred years since the convocation of the Seventh Oecumenical Council of Nicaea in 787 has been a special occasion for the Churches that recognize that Council as Oecumenical and accept the decisions and the decree of that Council concerning the veneration of icons as the faith and the teaching of the undivided Church of the first millenium. It is an occasion to celebrate this anniversary and to organize theological conferences and symposiums for the study and the discussion of that great ecclesiastical event.

All the conferences and festivities aimed at laying stress upon the great historical and theological significance of that ecclesiastical event for the undivided Church, and to make widely known the belief of the Seventh Oecumenical Council — the last of the Oecumenical Councils of the One Church — in the unity of the Church.

The study of the topic of the Seventh Oecumenical Council of Nicaea has in some respect been significant too for the ecumenical dialogues of our days, both within the W.C.C. and for the bilateral dialogues between the different Churches. Indeed, I think that the examination of this particular subject (the Council of Nicaea) in your annual conference is opportune, interesting and useful. It will be as follows:

- A) The reasons for the convocation of the Council.
- B) The summoning of the Council and its Decree on the veneration of icons.
- C) Evaluation of the work of the Council.

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*A) The reasons for the convocation of the Council.*

The Seventh Oecumenical Council of Nicaea, usually known as the Second Council of Nicaea, was summoned in Nicaea of Bithynia, which today is called Iznik, in 787. Nicaea was a Metropolitan see outside and quite beyond the Patriarchal see of Constantinople in the Asiatic part of the capital of the Byzantine Empire.

The Council is very often named as the Second Council of Nicaea, since it was the second time that such a Council was convened in that place. The first Oecumenical Council was summoned there in 325.

The main reason for the convocation of the Council was to solve the question of the accusations and the struggle of the Byzantine Emperors against the Church tradition and teaching concerning the worship of the icons of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of his Mother St. Mary and of the Saints of the Church. It was a question that shook the Eastern Church terribly, mainly in its Patriarchal see of Constantinople, and in the whole Byzantine Empire since 726, when the imperial edicts against the veneration of icons were issued. Its duration was long, for it lasted more than a century.

The struggle against icons is divided into two periods. The first begins in 726 and continues up to 787, i.e. up to the time of the convocation of the Council of Nicaea which, by its decisions, put an end to it and restored peace and unity in the Church.

The second period began in 815, when new disturbances were raised against the veneration of icons, and goes up to the year 843, that is the time when a Great Council was summoned in Constantinople and has reaffirmed the faith of the Church in the decisions taken at the Council of Nicaea.

In this paper I intend to examine the events of the first period of the struggle against the veneration of icons, since they were the reasons the Council of Nicaea was convened. I shall refer to the imperial edicts against icons, which led the Church in the East into schism with the rest of the Churches, that is the Patriarchates in the East and the Church of Rome in the West,<sup>1</sup> and to a crisis in the relations between the Church and the State in the Byzantine Empire.

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1. Tarasius on the eve of his ascent to the Patriarchal Throne of Constantinople describes the situation in the Church as follows: «ὄρω καὶ βλέπω τὴν ἐπὶ τὴν πέτραν Χριστὸν τὸν Θεὸν ἡμῶν τεθεμελιωμένην ἐκκλησίαν αὐτοῦ διεσχισμένην νῦν καὶ διηρημένην, καὶ ἡμᾶς ἄλλοτε ἄλλως λαλοῦντας, καὶ τοὺς ἀνατολῆς ὁμοπίστους ἡμῶν Χριστιαν-

The struggle against the veneration of icons and the fierce fight which was undertaken by the imperial forces to destroy them, both within and outside of the churches, in the capital of the Byzantine Empire, was stirred up by Emperor Leo III, who is known as Leo the Isaurian.<sup>2</sup> That struggle against icons is called in the history of the Eastern Church «Εἰκονομαχία» i.e. the fight against icons, while in the Western Church it is called «the Iconoclastic Controversy».

The motives which led Emperor Leo III to adopt such an attack and to move against the veneration of icons vary, according to commentaries,<sup>3</sup> and I think it is difficult to ascribe them to one sole reason with certainty. However, without doubt the Emperor used religious motives to cover his basic political motives, for he had ambitious plans for reforming the Empire.

Emperor Leo, with the two edicts which he issued, in 726 and

νοὺς ἐτέρως, καὶ συμφωνοῦντας μὲν αὐτοῖς τοὺς τῆς δύσεως, ἡλλοτριωμένους δὲ ἡμᾶς ἐκείνων ἀπάντων, καὶ καθ' ἑκάστην ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἀναθεματιζομένους». *Mansi XII*, 987.

«I see the Church itself, built upon the rock Jesus Christ our Lord, divided and being in tears. Our faith is in disagreement with the faith of the Patriarchates in the East and in the West. We are alienated from them all and they anathematize us daily».

2. He was born in Germanicia in Commagene, on the borders of Syria and Cilicia, though the title Isaurian suggests that Germanicia may be a chronicler's error for Germanicopolis, a town to the north-west of the Isaurian mountain. Edward J. Martin, *A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy* S.P.C.K., London, p. 17. «...ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ Λέων ὁ Γ', ἐσφαλμένως ὀνομαζόμενος Ἴσαυρος, διότι κατῆγετο ὄχι ἐκ τῆς Γερμανικοπόλεως τῆς Ἰσαυρίας, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῆς Γερμανικείας, τῆς κειμένης παρὰ τὸν Εὐφράτην, εἰς τὰ νοτιοδυτικὰ τῶν Σαμοσάτων». Ἀρχιμ. Βασιλείου Στεφανίδου, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία*, Ἀθήναι 1978, σελ. 255.

3. Edward J. Martin, *op. cit.* p. 27, 28, insists that the motives were religious and political as well. «That Leo's motives were partly religious seems indisputable. The Asiatic environment in which he lived so long was... permeated with iconoclastic ideas... A political and social aim is to be sought in Leo also».

Archimandrite Philaretos Vaphides, the Greek historian, accepts as motives only the political reasons. «...ὁ Λέων εἰς τὸν κατὰ τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων πόλεμον ἐκινήθη ἐκ λόγων πολιτικῶν, διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς δὲ ταύτης μεταρρυθμίσεως ἐσκόπει τὴν ἐνίσχυσιν τοῦ καταρρέοντος κράτους». Φιλαρέτου Βαφείδου, Ἀρχιμ., *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία*, τόμος Β', Κωνσταντινούπολις 1886, σελ. 31.

Archimandrite Vassilios Stefanides in his *Church History* supports that the iconoclastic controversy was not against the veneration of icons only, but was a wider religious and ecclesiastical reformation. «Ἡ εἰκονομαχία δὲν ἀνεφέρετο μόνον εἰς τὴν προσκύνησιν τῶν εἰκόνων, ἀλλ' ἦτο εὐρυτέρα θρησκευτικὴ καὶ ἐκκλησιαστικὴ μεταρρύθμισις». Ἀρχιμ. Βασιλείου Στεφανίδου, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία*, Ἀθήναι 1978, σελ. 256.

730 declared all icons idols and ordered their destruction. So at the beginning of the struggle against the veneration of icons the main indictment was the charge of idolatry. Both edicts were executed by the army, and by those of the hierarchs of the Church and people who were supporting the Emperor in his movement to fight the veneration of icons.

The official reaction of the Church to Emperor Leo's hostile intentions came from the Oecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Germanos, whose devotion to Church tradition and the teaching concerning the veneration of icons was very strong and widely known.<sup>4</sup> Patriarch Germanos was obliged to leave the Patriarchal Throne of Constantinople on account of his unyielding resistance to the Emperor's aggressive behaviour. Leo replaced him with Anastasios, who was the ex-Patriarch's syncellus or chaplain, and a vigorous supporter of the Emperor's policy against the Church in general.

Besides Germanos, the Oecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, the Church of Rome in the West raised a voice of protest against the Emperor's intervention in Church's affairs and his fierce struggle against the veneration of icons. A Roman council under Pope Gregory III (731-741) in 732 condemned the Emperor's action and decreed that anyone who should stand forth as a destroyer of the veneration of holy icons should be excommunicated.<sup>5</sup>

4. Germanus' views on the veneration of icons and his devotion to the tradition of the Church were expounded in his letters sent to bishops John of Synada and Thomas of Claudioupolis, which were read at the Council of Nicaea. «Ἐπιστολή Γερμανοῦ τοῦ μακαριωτάτου πατριάρχου γενομένου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως πρὸς Ἰωάννην ἐπίσκοπον Συναδῶν». *Mansi* XIII, 100-105.

Ἐπιστολή Γερμανοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως πρὸς Θωμᾶν ἐπίσκοπον Κλαυδιουπόλεως. *Mansi* III, 108-128.

5. Pope Hadrian (722-795), writing to the Emperors Constantine and Irene before the Seventh Oecumenical Council of Nicaea, mentions the names of all his predecessors who supported the tradition of the Church on the veneration of the holy icons, and maintains that they asked the Emperors to restore them in the Churches.

«ἔθεν ἐν μεγάλῃ θλίψει γεγόνασιν Γρηγόριος καὶ Γρηγόριος οἱ μακαριώτατοι ἀρχιερεῖς τοῦ κατ' ἡμᾶς Ρωμαϊκοῦ θρόνου, οἳ τινες ἐν τοῖς καιροῖς ἐκεῖνοις ἦσαν, καὶ πολλὰκις τὸν πρόπαππον τῆς ὑμετέρας εὐσεβοῦς γαλήνης ἐδυσώπησαν, ἵνα αἱ αὐταὶ σεβάσμιαι εἰκόνες ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ στάσει ἀποκατασταθῶσιν· ἀλλ' οὐδαμῶς εἰς τὰς αὐτῶν σωτηριώδεις δεήσεις ἐκλίθη. καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ὁ κύριος Ζαχαρίας, καὶ Στέφανος, καὶ Παῦλος, καὶ ἕτερος Στέφανος, οἱ προηγησάμενοι ἡμῶν ἀγιώτατοι ἀρχιερεῖς τὸν πάππον καὶ τὸν πατέρα τῆς ὑμετέρας εὐσεβοῦς βασιλείας περὶ τῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως τῶν αὐτῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων ἐδυσώπησαν». *Mansi*, XII. 1059. *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne Vol. I, Paris 1886, i. 403. E. J. Martin *op. cit.*, p. 77.

The Emperor's edicts and his violent action against the Church were from the beginning also condemned theologically. St. John of Damascus, the famous Orthodox writer of the Church in the eighth century, who was living in Damascus under the Arab yoke, undertook the task of theologically defending the worship of icons. Between the years 727-732 he wrote three Orations, called «Apologetical», against those who slandered holy icons.<sup>6</sup> The Orations were based upon the traditional teaching of the Church. John of Damascus tried to let the people of the Byzantine Empire know what, in fact, the teaching of the Church was and to reinforce their faith. He attempted to put before the faithful the reasons why they ought to fight against the Emperor's will, and how to face his groundless arguments against the veneration of icons.<sup>7</sup>

The Iconoclastic controversy of the first period (726-787) found its greatest figure in Leo's successor, his son Constantine V, who reigned between 741-775. In Leo's III reign those who venerated icons were accused of idolatry, while in Constantine's time they were persecuted and condemned as heretics.

Emperor Constantine V, who had been educated in the Constantinopolitan tradition and who had acquired some theological knowledge, decided to bring the question of the iconoclastic controversy to a great Council of the Church, so that his views against the veneration of icons could be definitely sanctioned.

When Patriarch Anastasios died and the Patriarchal see of Constantinople became vacant, the Emperor, without having the necessary contacts with the Church of Rome and the Eastern Patriarchates to get their assent, summoned in 754 a council which he himself and the

6. *Migne* P.G. 94, 1232-1420.

7. John of Damascus in his first Oration describes the reasons urging him to write it as follows: «Ἐπειδὴ... ὄρω γὰρ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, ἣν ὁ Θεὸς ᾠκοδόμησεν ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν, ὄντος ἀπρογωγιαίου Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, βαλλομένην ὡσπερ θαλαττίῳ κλύδωνι... καὶ ταραττομένην, καὶ τὸν χιτῶνα Χριστοῦ τὸν ἄνωθεν ὕφαντόν, διαιρούμενον, ὃν ἀσεβῶς διελεῖν ἠθέλησαντο παῖδες, καὶ τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ εἰς διαφόρους κατατομὰς τεμνόμενον, ὃ ἐστὶν ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγος, καὶ ἡ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἄνωθεν κεκρατηκυῖα παράδοσις, οὐκ εὐλογον ἡγγεσάμην σιγᾶν, καὶ δεσμὸν ἐπιθεῖναι τῇ γλώσσῃ».

«Because I see the Church, which God founded with the apostles and prophets, its cornerstone being Christ His Son, tossed on an angry sea, beaten by rushing waves, shaken and troubled by the assaults of evil spirits, and the garment of Christ woven in heaven being divided, and his body, that is the word of God, and the Church tradition possessed from high, cut in different profiles, I have deemed it unreasonable to keep silence.» Ch. 1.

iconoclast bishops called Oecumenical.<sup>8</sup> The council was convened at the palace of Hierian Chalcedon, on the Asiatic shore of Constantinople. In the presence of 338 bishops,<sup>9</sup> it condemned the worship of the icon of Christ and those of the Virgin Mary and the saints, and decreed their destruction. Finally the council anathematized Germanos, the Patriarch of Constantinople at the time the Iconoclastic Controversy began, as a wood-worshipper, George of Cyprus, as the falsifier of the teaching of the fathers, and Mansour, i.e. John of Damascus, as a betrayer of Christ and an enemy of the Empire.<sup>10</sup>

That council was never recognized as Oecumenical and was officially condemned as a false synod (ψευδοσύλλογον) by the Council of Nicaea,<sup>11</sup> by the Church of Rome at the Lateran Council of 769, which

8. «Ἡ ἅγια καὶ οἰκουμενικὴ σύνοδος, ἡ κατὰ Θεοῦ χάριν καὶ πανευσεβὲς θέσπισμα τῶν θεοστέπτων καὶ ὀρθοδόξων ἡμῶν βασιλέων Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Λέοντος συναχθεῖσα ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ θεοφυλάκτῳ καὶ βασιλίδι πόλει...». *Mansi*, XIII, 209. «Εἴ τις οὐ παραδέχεται τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς ἁγίαν ταύτην καὶ οἰκουμενικὴν ἐβδόμην σύνοδον... ἀνάθεμα ἔστω ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος καὶ τῶν ἁγίων ἑπτὰ οἰκουμενικῶν συνόδων». *Mansi*, XIII, 349.

9. «Καὶ δὴ τὰ νῦν συναθροισθεῖσα ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἱερὰ σύνοδος, ἧς τὸν ἀριθμὸν πληροῦμεν τριακῶσι τριάκοντα δικτῶ, ταῖς συνοδικαῖς ἐπόμενοι θεσμοθεσίαις, ἀσπασίως δεχόμεθα καὶ ἀνακηρύττομεν τὰ δόγματα καὶ τὰς παραδόσεις, ὡς αὐταὶ βεβαιώσασαι, ἀσφιλῶς κρατεῖν ἡμᾶς τεθεσπίκασιν». *Mansi*, XIII, 232.

10. «Γερμανῶ τῷ διγνώμῳ καὶ ξυλολάτρῃ ἀνάθεμα.

Γεωργίῳ τῷ ὁμόφρονι αὐτοῦ, καὶ φαλσευτῇ τῶν πατρικῶν διδασκαλιῶν, ἀνάθεμα. ... Τῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑβριστῇ καὶ ἐπιβούλῳ τῆς βασιλείας Μανσοῦρ, ἀνάθεμα». *Mansi*, III, 356.

The Acts of that Council of 754 were in a great part preserved in the Acts of the Seventh Oecumenical Council of Nicaea, which refuted the arguments against the veneration of icons brought by the iconoclasts, expounding at the same time the tradition and the teaching of the Church. *Mansi*, XIII, 205-364.

«ΑΝΑΣΚΕΥΗ ΤΟΥ ΚΑΤΤΥΘΕΝΤΟΣ

καὶ ψευδῶς ὀνομασθέντος ὄρου παρὰ τῆς  
ὀχλαγωγῆσεως πληθῆος τῶν

χριστιανοκατηγόρων». *Mansi*, XIII, 205.

11. «...καὶ ἀσπαζόμεθα, καὶ τιμητικῶς προσκυνοῦμεν τὰς ἱεράς καὶ σεβασμίους εἰκόνας· καὶ τὸν κατ' αὐτῶν γενόμενον ψευδοσύλλογον ἐπὶ καθαιρέσει τούτων ἀνασκάπτουτες, τῷ ἀναθέματι παραπέμπομεν». *Mansi*, XIII, 1154.

The Council of 754 could not have the authority of an Oecumenical Council which the Emperor and the bishops participating in that assembly attributed to it, because of the absence of all the Patriarchs. The see of Constantinople was vacant. Neither the Church of Rome nor the Eastern Patriarchates, i.e. those of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, were represented, either in person or by deputy.

«πῶς δ' ἂν μεγάλη καὶ οἰκουμενικὴ, ἣν οὔτε ἐδέξαντο, οὔτε συνεφώνησαν οἱ τῶν λοιπῶν ἐκκλησιῶν πρόεδροι, ἀλλ' ἀναθέματι ταύτην παρέπεμψαν; οὐκ ἔσχε συνεργὸν τὸν

supported the veneration of icons and anathematized the council,<sup>12</sup> and by the three Eastern Patriarchates,<sup>13</sup> which also sent a memorandum to the Pope of Rome confirming their support for the veneration of icons.<sup>14</sup>

Notwithstanding the condemnation of the council and its decisions, the Emperor continued the struggle against icons and the persecution against the iconophiles, i.e. «the friends of icons» who venerated them.<sup>15</sup> He raged more fiercely than ever against them, using all his power for their humiliation and elimination until his death, which occurred in 775. With the death of his son Leo IV in 780, who succeeded him, the first and greatest period of the iconoclastic controversy ended.

*B) The summoning of the Council and its Decree on the veneration of icons.*

At the end of the «Eikonomachia» i.e. the Iconoclastic controversy of the first period, the Church of Constantinople was almost in schism with the rest of the Churches in the East and the West. So the unity of the Church was broken. There was already a breach between the Church of Constantinople and the Church of Rome, since Leo III detached Calabria, Sicily and the east of Illyria i.e. the Balkan peninsula, from the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Pope of Rome and put

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τηνικαῦτα τῆς Ρωμαιοῦν πάπαν, ἢ τοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν ἱερεῖς, οὔτε διὰ τοποτηρητῶν αὐτοῦ, οὔτε δι' ἐγκυκλίου ἐπιστολῆς, καθὼς νόμος ἐστὶ ταῖς συνόδοις. ἀλλ' οὔτε συμφρονοῦντας αὐτῇ τοὺς πατριάρχας τῆς Ἑω, Ἀλεξανδρείας, Ἀντιοχείας, καὶ τῆς ἁγίας πόλεως, ἢ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς μύστας καὶ ἀρχιερεῖς... ἐβδόμη δὲ πάλιν πῶς, ἢ μὴ συμφωνήσασα ταῖς πρὸ αὐτῆς ἔξ ἁγίαις καὶ οἰκουμενικαῖς συνόδοις;» *Mansi*, XIII, 208, 209.

12. *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne. Vol I Paris, 1886, i., 477. *Mansi*, XIII, 701 sqq.

13. «ἀλλ' ὦ ἁγιάτατοι καὶ μακαριώτατοι, ... ἀσμένως τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ἡμῶν ὑποδέξασθε, ... ἔξετε γὰρ αὐτοὺς ἐπισταμένους ἀκριβῶς τῶν τριῶν ἀποστολικῶν θρόνων τὴν ὁμονοητικὴν τε καὶ σύμφωνον ὀρθοδοξίαν· οἳ τινες τὰς ἁγίας καὶ οἰκουμενικὰς ἔξ συνόδους ὁμοφώνως κηρύττουσιν, ἐτέραν πρὸς ταῦταις, ἣν καὶ ἐβδόμη τινὲς θρυλλοῦσιν, οὐ προσιέμενοι, ἀλλὰ πᾶμπαν ἀποβαλλόμενοι, ὡς ἐπὶ καθαιρέσει τῶν ἀποστολικῶν τε καὶ διδασκαλικῶν παραδόσεων συναθροισθεῖσαν, καὶ τῶν θεῶν καὶ σεπτῶν εἰκόνων ἀναιρέσει καὶ ἐξαλείψει». *Mansi*, XII, 1134.

14. *Mansi*, XIII, 764.

15. A full description of the persecution of veneration of icons, i.e. bishops, priests, monks, and faithful, of the destruction of the Churches, monasteries, icons, holy relics, and vestments, and of the tortures and the crimes which the iconoclasts carried out, was made by the Council of Nicaea which accused them of atrocities and non-Christian, heretical behaviour. *Mansi*, III, 329.

it under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Oecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. That action was considered as a prelude to the great and final schism between East and West, since the Popes of Rome were seeking to be politically independent and to have their own state.<sup>16</sup>

The lifting of that schism and the restoration of the broken unity of the Church could only be achieved by the convocation of an Oecumenical Council. The reasons for such a Council were apparently similar to the reasons which led Church in the past to the convocation of the previous six Oecumenical Councils since 325. The Iconoclastic controversy that agitated the Church for so long and divided it, was as dangerous as the heresies of the past, since Church unity was once more broken. The Iconoclastic controversy was not simply a struggle against the superstitious misuse of icons and their veneration. It was mainly a struggle against the Church and its faith in general, and against her teaching on the veneration of icons in particular.

There is not the least doubt that there had been misuse by the faithful in the veneration of icons, amounting to worship, but even in those cases, whether many or few in number, only an Oecumenical Council — regarded as the supreme administrative body of the undivided Church, canonically summoned — could have the right to decide about the true teaching concerning the veneration of icons.

The year 780 saw the accession to the Byzantine Imperial throne of the Empress Irene, a devout icon-venerator, as Regent, since she was the guardian of the infant Constantine VI. In her, the defenders of the veneration of icons, both clergy and laity, and especially monks, found a great supporter. Having prepared the way for the restoration of icons, the Empress proceeded in 784 to seek a suitable person for the Patriarchal see of Constantinople.<sup>17</sup> The see was vacant after the abdi-

16. Ἀρχιμ. Βασιλείου Στεφανίδου, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία*, Ἀθῆναι 1978, σελ. 258, 259.

17. In their *Sacra* read at the Council of Nicaea, the Emperors state why they asked Tarasius, their chief imperial secretary, to occupy the Patriarchal throne of Constantinople. It was a choice that had the consent of all those interested in ecclesiastical matters.

«προκαλεσάμενος οὖν ἄνδρας τοὺς τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν πραγμάτων πεπειραμένους, Χριστὸν δὲ τὸν Θεὸν ἡμῶν ἐπικαλεσάμενοι, καὶ βουλὴν μετ' αὐτῶν ποιησάμενοι, τίς ἔρα ἄξιός ἐστί τοῦ προχειρισθῆναι εἰς τὴν τῆς ἱερωσύνης καθέδραν ταύτης τῆς θεοφυλάκτου καὶ βασιλίδος πόλεως ἡμῶν, ὁμογνώμωνων δὲ καὶ ὁμοψύχων πάντων γεγονότων εἰς Ταράσιον τὸν νυνὶ προκαθεζόμενον ἐπὶ τῷ ἀρχιερατικῷ ἀξιώματι ἀπεδίδοδοτο ἡ ψήφος». *Mansi*, XII, 1006.



cation of Patriarch Paul during that year. Her choice fell on the chief imperial secretary, Tarasius, who at first refused to accept the personal request of the Empress, but later gave his consent and ascended the throne of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.<sup>18</sup>

The first task of the new Patriarch Tarasius was to write letters to the Pope of Rome — the Empress Irene had done so earlier — and to the Eastern Patriarchs, i.e. those of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem,<sup>19</sup> announcing to them his enthronement as Patriarch of Constantinople and stating his intention of holding an Oecumenical Council. He invited them to send representatives, who should bring with them if possible letters stating the faith of the Patriarchates.

In his reply to the Patriarch's letter, Pope Hadrian expressed his sorrow for the Patriarch's illegitimate and irregular — as he characterised it — accession to the highest order of the priesthood.<sup>20</sup> But on the

18. In an apologetical speech to the people, Patriarch Tarasius explains why he hesitated to accept the Patriarchal throne when offered it by the Emperors, and how later he gave his consent if certain conditions were fulfilled.

«φόβω συνέχομαι καταθέσθαι ἐπὶ τῇ ψήφῳ ταύτῃ, καὶ εὐλαβοῦμαι ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ Θεοῦ προσδραμεῖν οὕτως εὐκόλως, καὶ ὡς ἔτυχεν ἀπερισκέπτως... πῶς ἐγὼ ὁ τῷ κόσμῳ συναναστρεφόμενος, καὶ μετὰ λαϊκῶν ἠριθμημένος, καὶ στρατευόμενος ἐν ταῖς βασιλικαῖς ὑπηρεσίαις, οὕτω χωρὶς ἀνακρίσεως καὶ προσκέψεως δύναμαι εἰσπηδῆσαι εἰς τὸ τῆς ἱερωσύνης μέγεθος;... καὶ αἰτοῦμαι ἀδελφοί· οἶμαι δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς,... παρὰ τῶν εὐσεβεστάτων καὶ ὀρθοδόξων βασιλέων ἡμῶν, σύνδοτον οἰκουμενικὴν συναθροισθῆναι, ἵνα γενώμεθα οἱ τοῦ ἐνός Θεοῦ ἕν... καὶ εἰ μὲν οὖν κελεύουσιν οἱ τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας πρόμαχοι βασιλεῖς ἡμῶν, ἐπὶ τῇ ἐμῇ εὐλόγῳ αἰτήσῃ ἐπινεύσαι, συγκατατίθῃμι κἀγὼ καὶ τὴν κέλευσιν αὐτῶν ἐκπληρῶ, καὶ ὑμῶν τὴν ψῆφον ἀσπάζομαι. εἰ δὲ μὴ γε, ἀδυνάτως ἔχω τοῦτο ποιῆσαι». *Mansi*, II, 987.

«I fear to accept such an office to which I am called so easily and without a deep consideration... How could I, a layman who has spent his whole life in the world in the experience of the imperial service alone, leap to the great office of the priesthood?... God wanted nothing so much as for us to be united and to be one. I request from you to appeal with me to our pious and orthodox emperors for the convocation of an oecumenical council, which would restore Christian unity... If the emperors assent to my blessed request, I would on my part accept the office to which I am called by them and your vote. Otherwise I could not do so». *Ibid.*

19. «προχειρισθεῖς δὲ ἔγραψε συνοδικὰ τοῖς πατριάρχαις, Ρώμης, Ἀλεξανδρείας, Ἀντιοχείας, καὶ τῆς ἁγίας πόλεως». *Mansi*, XII, 990.

«Ἰσον γράμμασιν ἀποσταλεῖσι πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ ἱερεῖς Ἀντιοχείας, καὶ Ἀλεξανδρείας, καὶ τῆς ἁγίας πόλεως, παρὰ Ταρασίου τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου καὶ μακαριωτάτου οἰκουμενικοῦ πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως». *Mansi*, XII, 1119-1127.

20. Ἐπιστολὴ Ἀδριανοῦ τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου πάπα τῆς πρεσβυτέρας Ρώμης, ἐρμηνευθεῖσα ἐκ τῆς τῶν Ρωμαίων διαλέκτου εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα φωνήν.

Τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ ἀδελφῷ Ταρασίῳ πατριάρχη,

Ἀδριανὸς δούλος τῶν δούλων τοῦ Θεοῦ. *Mansi*, XII, 1078-1083.

other hand he expressed his satisfactions and pleasure at the Patriarch's sincere confession of the orthodox faith according to the creed of the Church and the teaching of the six Oecumenical Councils.<sup>21</sup> However, he warned the Patriarch that he would not recognize him if the Empress did not restore the use of icons.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, at the same time he praised the Patriarch for his request to the Emperors to summon an Oecumenical Council, and named the two delegates he had appointed to represent the Church of Rome at the Council.<sup>23</sup> The Pope concluded by asking the Patriarch to demand of the Emperors and the Council that they anathematize, in the presence of his delegates, the «ψευδοσύλλογος» i.e. false gathering of 754, because it had been convened in the absence of Rome's apostolic delegates and against the holiest tradition of the Fathers of the Church concerning the veneration of icons.<sup>24</sup>

On the 17th of August 786 the Seventh Oecumenical Council of Nicaea was summoned at the Church of the holy Apostles, in Constan-

21. «ἐν τοῖς συνοδικοῖς τῆς ὁμολογίας τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν, τοῖς τῷ ἀποστολικῷ ἡμῶν ὀρόνῳ σταλεῖσι διὰ Λέοντος τοῦ εὐλαβεστάτου πρεσβυτέρου ὑμῶν, εὖρομεν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ τοῦ πρώτου σελιδίου, τὴν ὑμετέραν εὐλάβειαν ἐκ λαϊκῆς τάξεως καὶ βασιλικῆς ὑπηρεσίας εἰς τὸν ἱερατικὸν βαθμὸν ἀνυψωθεῖσαν... εἰ μὴ τὴν ὑμετέραν εἰλικρινῆ καὶ ὀρθόδοξον πίστιν εἰς τὰ προειρημένα συνοδικὰ τοῦ ἱεροῦ συμβόλου κατὰ τὸν θεσμὸν τῶν ἁγίων ἐξ οἰκουμενικῶν συνόδων, καὶ περὶ τῶν σεπτῶν εἰκόνων εὖρομεν καλῶς ἔχουσαν, οὐδαμῶς ἐτολήσαμεν τῶν τοιούτων ὑπακοῦσαι συνοδικῶν. ἀλλ' ὅσον ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν ἐλυπεῖτο περὶ τῆς ἀθεμίτου ὑμῶν χειροτονίας, καὶ τῆς ἀναρμόστου παλαιᾶς ἐξ ἡμῶν διαστάσεως, τοσοῦτον εὐροῦσα τὴν ὑμετέραν ὁμολογίαν καὶ τὴν ὀρθὴν πίστιν ἠυφράνθη ἡ ὑμετέρα ψυχὴ». *Mansi*, II, 1078, 1079.

22. «εἰ δὲ τὰς ἱερὰς καὶ σεπτὰς εἰκόνας ἐν τοῖς μέρεσι τῶν αὐτόθι οὐ καταστήσωσι, τὴν ὑμετέραν χειροτονίαν κατὰ πάντα τρόπον οὐ τολμῶμεν δέξασθαι καὶ μάλιστα ἐὰν ἐπακολουθήσῃ τοῖς ἀπειθοῦσι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ. *Mansi*, II, 1083.

23. «μετὰ γὰρ τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν ἐγνώσθη ἡμῖν, ὅτι ἡ ὑμετέρα σεπτὴ ὁσιότης ἤξιωσε τοὺς εὐσεβεστάτους καὶ ὀρθοδοξοτάτους καὶ ζηλωτάς, τοὺς γενομένους εἰς δόξαν Θεοῦ πιστοὺς βασιλεῖς ἡμῶν... περὶ τοῦ γενέσθαι σύνοδον οἰκουμενικὴν. καὶ συνέθεντο... τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ ἰκεσίᾳ εὐσεβῶς ἐπινεύσαντες, καὶ τὴν σύνοδον ὥρισαν ἐν τῇ βασιλίδι αὐτῶν πόλει γενέσθαι... ἡμεῖς δὲ σὺν μεγάλῳ πόθῳ, καθὼς ἀνεφέρετο, ἐν τῇ αὐτῶν θείᾳ κελύσει, γνησίους καὶ δοκίμους καὶ φρονίμους ἱερεῖς περὶ τῆς συστάσεως τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων, ἵνα ἐν τῇ ἀρχαίᾳ τάξει ἐν τοῖς μέρεσιν ἐκεῖνοις κατασταθῶσι, μετὰ μεγίστης χαρᾶς ἐπέμψαμεν... τοὺς δὲ ἀποσταλέντας παρ' ἡμῶν Πέτρον τὸν ἡγαπημένον ἡμῶν πρωτοπρεσβύτερον τῆς ἁγίας Ρωμαϊκῆς ἐκκλησίας, καὶ Πέτρον τὸν ἀββᾶν, πρεσβύτερον καὶ ἡγούμενον, πρὸς τὰ ἔχνη τῶν γαληνοτάτων καὶ εὐσεβῶν βασιλέων, δυσωποῦμεν..., ἐν πάσῃ ἀντιλήψει καὶ εὐμενεῖᾳ ἀνθρωπίνῃ διάγειν καταξιώσωσι...». *Mansi*, XII, 1082, 1083.

24. «ἀλλ' ἡ ὑμετέρα ὁσιότης τοῖς αὐτοῖς εὐσεβεστάτοις καὶ τροπαιούχοις βασιλεῦσι προῦλοι ἀναγάγοι, ἵνα ἐν πρώτοις ὁ ψευδοσύλλογος ἐκείνος, ὁ γενόμενος χωρὶς τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ θρόνου ἀτάκτως καὶ ἀσυλλογίστως ἐξ ἐναντίας τῆς τῶν σεπτοτάτων πατέρων παραδόσεως κατὰ τῶν θείων εἰκόνων, ἀναθεματισθῆ παρόντων τῶν ἀποκρισιαρῶν ἡμῶν». *Mansi*, XII, 1082.

tinople.<sup>25</sup> That first session of the Council had to close, because soldiers of the imperial guard who belonged to the iconoclastic party, which was still alive, gathered round the Church of the holy Apostles and violence broke out. The soldiers and the people who were against the use of icons were supported in their action by the iconoclastic bishops who were present at the Council.<sup>26</sup> Under these circumstances the Emperors decided to postpone the convocation of the Council, promising the Patriarch to convene it at a later date.<sup>27</sup>

The Council was summoned almost a year later, on the 24th of September 787, in the Church of the Holy Wisdom, at Nicaea, in the presence of the two delegates of Rome, i.e. Peter the archpriest of the holy church of the Apostle Peter in Rome, and Peter the priest and abbot of St. Sabbas, in the presence, too, of the Patriarch of Constantinople Tarasius, of John the presbyter and Thomas the monk, delegates of the Eastern Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, and of more than three hundred bishops or diocesan representatives and a good number of monks. The Empress and the Emperor were represented by two superior officers from the imperial staff, the Archon Petronas and the patrician John. Instead of an actual chairman the book of the Gospels was — as usual in church assemblies — laid in the chief place to signify the presidency of Christ as the Head of the Church.<sup>28</sup> Patriarch Tarasius of Constantinople presided in the absence of the head of the Church of Rome.<sup>29</sup>

The first place in rank was assigned to the two papal delegates at all the Acta of the Council.

25. «ὀρίζεται γενέσθαι ἡ σύνοδος ἐν τῷ σεπτῷ ναῶ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ πανευφήμων ἀποστόλων». *Mansi*, XII, 990.

26. «οἱ δὲ πλείους τῶν ἐπισκόπων τῇ αἰρέσει τῶν χριστιανοκατηγόρων ἐγκαλινδοῦμενοι ἐτύρευον μετὰ λαϊκῶν τινων πολλῶν τὸν ἀριθμὸν, μὴ καταδέχεσθαι γενέσθαι σύνοδον... ἀλλὰ τῇ ἐπαύριον γίνεται ἡ συναγωγὴ τῶν ἐπισκόπων... καὶ γενομένων τινῶν διαλαλιῶν... ὄχλος ἐκινήθη πολλὸς τῶν στρατευομένων καὶ... στάσις καὶ κραυγὴν ἐποιούντο, ἐξ ὑποβολῆς τινων τῶν ἐν τῇ συνόδῳ κακοφρόνων ἐπισκόπων εἰς τοῦτο κινήθεντες». *Mansi*, XII, 991.

«προκαθεζομένων ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ σεπτῷ ναῶ... τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων, ἐκινήθη πολὺν ὄχλος θυμοῦ καὶ πικρίας γέμων, χειρὰς ἡμῶν ἐπιβαλεῖν. ἐξ οὗ χειρὶ Θεοῦ ἐρρύσθημεν, ἔχοντες εἰς συμμαχίαν καὶ τινὰς εὐαριθμήτους ἐπισκόπους, ...». *Mansi*, XII, 999.

27. «ἡ βασιλεῖα ἐκέλευσε διὰ κουβικουλαρίου πάσῃ τῇ συνόδῳ προσειπεῖν· τῶς ὑποχωρήσατε ἵνα τὴν τοῦ λαοῦ ἄτακτον φορὰν ἐκφύγωμεν. καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου γενήσεται». *Mansi*, XII, 991.

28. *Mansi*, XII, 991, 994, 999.

29. *op. cit.* 999.

Patriarch Tarasius opened the first session of the Council in Nicaea by asking the assembly for admission of the iconoclastic bishops.<sup>30</sup> The Council agreed and they were admitted.<sup>31</sup> Then the imperial Sacra constituting the Council and defining its object was read.<sup>32</sup> In the Sacra the Emperors stated that they had convened the Council upon the request of Patriarch Tarasius with the consent of the Pope of Rome and the Eastern Patriarchs, who were sending delegates to the Council and letters signifying and confirming their appointment.<sup>33</sup> The Sacra contained a full description of the abdication of the Patriarch Paul and of the accession of Tarasius to the Patriarchal see of Constantinople. Finally it referred to the work of the Council as the restoration of the unity of the Church, and the condemnation of the teaching of the iconoclasts.<sup>34</sup> The iconoclastic bishops, who had participated in the so-called false-synod of 754, after being admitted to participate at the Oecumenical Council at Nicaea absolutely repudiated that council, as «a synod gathered together out of stubbornness and madness, which styled itself the seventh council, but which by those who think correctly was lawfully and canonically designated a pseudo-synod.»<sup>35</sup>

The actual work of the Council on the teaching concerning icons began with the reading of the letters of the Pope of Rome addressed to the Emperors<sup>36</sup> and to Tarasius,<sup>37</sup> the Patriarch of Constantinople. The

30. «εἰ πληροφορούμεθα ἀρεστὸν εἶναι ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ, παραγενέσθωσαν οἱ κατὰ τὸν πέρυσι χρόνον ἀντιταχθέντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ». *Mansi*, XII, 10012.

31. «Ἡ ἀγία σύνοδος εἶπεν· εἰσελθέτωσαν· καὶ εἰσῆλθον οἱ προειρημένοι ἐπίσκοποι». *Ibid.*

32. «τοιγαροῦν... συνηγάγομεν ὑμᾶς τοὺς ὀσιωτάτους... ἱερεῖς... ἵνα τοῖς ὅροις τῶν ὀρθῶς δογματισασῶν συνόδων ἢ κρίσις ὑμῶν ἐφάμιλλος γένηται...». *Ibid.* 1003.

33. «ἐξαιρέτως δὲ τῆς τῶν ἁγίων τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκκλησιῶν εὐταξίας φροντίζειν βουλόμεθα καὶ τὴν τῶν ἱερέων ἔνωσιν... ἀνατολῆς, ἄρκτου, δύσεώς τε καὶ μεσημβρίας, καὶ πάρεισι Θεοῦ εὐδοκήσαντος διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν τοποτηρητῶν μετὰ καὶ ἀντιγράφων τῶν ἀποσταλέντων συνοδικῶν γραμμάτων παρὰ τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου πατριάρχου». *Ibid.*

34. «πρῶτον ἔργον ἔχοντες τὴν εἰρηνικὴν δίαίταν τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας... τὴν πανίερρον ἡμῶν συναθροῖσαι οὐκ ἀπεκάμομεν σύνοδον». *Ibid.*

«ἐπειδὴ περ ἀπὸ πάσης τῆς οἰκουμένης ὁ Θεὸς συνήγαγεν ἡμᾶς, βουλὴν τὴν οἰκίαν στήσαι θέλων... πᾶσαν καινοφωνίαν καὶ νεοφανῆ εἰσῆγησιν ἐκτεμεῖν προθυμήθητε». *Mansi*, XII, 1006.

35. «ἐξ ἀπροσεξίας καὶ ἀπονοίας συναθροισθεῖσαν καὶ ὀνομασθεῖσαν ἐβδόμην σύνοδον, παρὰ δὲ τῶν ὀρθῶς φρονούντων ψευδοσύνοδον ἐνθέσμως καὶ κανονικῶς καλουμένην». *Mansi*, XII, 1010.

36. «Ἐρμηνεῖα γραμμάτων Ῥωμαϊκῶν Ἀδριανοῦ τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου πάπα τῆς πρεσβυτέρας Ῥώμης.

Δεσπότης εὐσεβεστάτος καὶ γαληνοτάτος, νικηταῖς, τροπαιούχοις, τέκνοις ἡγα-

letter to the Emperors is the sole source in the Acta of the Council of Nicaea in which the view of the Church of Rome on the veneration of icons is expressed in detail. In his letter the Pope praises the goodwill and eagerness of the Emperors in supporting and honouring the venerable icons in accordance with the tradition of the holy apostles and the teachers of the Church.<sup>38</sup> It is, the Pope says, a great task and comparable to that of the great predecessors of the Emperors, i.e. Constantine the Great and his mother Helena.<sup>39</sup> The Pope, after referring to the faith of all his predecessors, whom he names, in the veneration of icons, since the beginning of the Iconoclastic controversy, declared that the use of icons by the faithful was an old tradition<sup>40</sup> and could be found in all the parts of the world where Christianity existed.<sup>41</sup> It was, he wrote, a practice aiming at guiding the believer through the visible character of the incarnate son of God to His invisible Deity.<sup>42</sup> It is not a worship or deification of icons.<sup>43</sup> The Pope's letter contained a series of quotations from the Old Testament and the Fathers of the Church, both Latin and Greek, i.e. Augustine and St. Ambrose, Basil the Great, St. Athanasius, St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Epiphanius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, aiming at defending the veneration of icons

πημένους τῷ Θεῷ καὶ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, Κωνσταντίνῳ καὶ Εἰρήνῃ Αὐγούστοις, Ἄδριανὸς δοῦλος τῶν δούλων τοῦ Θεοῦ». *Mansi*, XII, 1055-1071.

37. «Ἐπιστολὴ Ἄδριανοῦ τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου πάπα τῆς πρεσβυτέρας Ρώμης, ἐρμηνευθεῖσα ἐκ τῆς τῶν Ρωμαίων διαλέκτου εἰς τὴν ἑλλάδα φωνήν.

Τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ ἀδελφῷ Ταρσίῳ πατριάρχῃ,

Ἄδριανὸς δοῦλος τῶν δούλων τοῦ Θεοῦ». *Mansi*, XII, 1078-1083.

38. «τὰ παραδοθέντα παρὰ τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων καὶ πάντων διδασκάλων κρατεῖν, καὶ τιμᾶν τὰς σεβασμίας εἰκόνας». *Mansi*, XII, 1055.

39. «ὅτι τὸ μέγα ἔργον τοῦτο, ὃ ἐπεχειρήσατε, εἰ τελειωθῆ..., καὶ ἀποκατασταθῆ ἢ ἀρχαία ὀρθόδοξια ἐν τοῖς μέρεσιν αὐτοῖς, καὶ σταθῶσιν αἱ σεβάσμιαι εἰκόνες ἐν τῇ ἀρχαίᾳ αὐτῶν ἀποκαταστάσει, μέτοχοι γενήσεσθε τοῦ ἐν θεῷ τῇ λήξει πάσαι βασιλείως κυροῦ Κωνσταντίνου, καὶ τῆς μακαρίας Ἑλένης, τῶν τὴν ὀρθόδοξον πίστιν τρανωσάντων καὶ βεβαιωσάντων, καὶ τὴν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν, πνευματικὴν ἡμῶν μητέρα, Ρωμαϊκὴν ἐκκλησίαν ὑψωσάντων». *Ibid.*

40. «πάντες οἱ ὀρθόδοξοι καὶ χριστιανικώτατοι βασιλεῖς σὺν πᾶσι τοῖς ἱερεῦσι καὶ ἐντιμοῖς ἀνδράσι τοῖς θεραπεύουσι τὸν Θεόν, ἅμα παντὶ τῷ χριστιανικωτάτῳ λαῷ, κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν παράδοσιν τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων καὶ ἐδέξαντο, καὶ ἐκράτησαν...». *Mansi*, XII, 1059.

41. «ἐπειδὴ ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ, ὅπου ἐστὶν ὁ χριστιανισμὸς, αἱ αὐταὶ σεβάσμιαι εἰκόνες παρὰ πάντων τῶν πιστοτάτων τιμῶνται». *Ibid.* 1062.

42. «ὅπως διὰ τοῦ ὄρατου χαρακτῆρος εἰς τὴν ἀόρατον θεότητα τῆς μεγαλειότητος αὐτοῦ ἢ διάνοια ἡμῶν ἀρπαγῇ πνευματικῇ τάξει κατὰ τὴν σάρκα, ἣν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν δέξασθαι κατηξίωσεν». *Ibid.*

43. «ἐπεὶ μὴ γένοιτο ἡμῖν, ἵνα τὰς αὐτὰς εἰκόνας, καθὼς φλυαροῦσί τινες, θεοποιήσωμεν». *Ibid.*

and proving its Patristic tradition. The Pope told the Emperors that he was referring in detail to the witness of the Fathers, because they had instituted the use of icons and the Church must keep it.<sup>44</sup> In concluding his letter, he insists that the Emperors support the holy icons and restore them, thereby remaining faithful to the tradition of the very venerable and the most holy Church of Rome.<sup>45</sup>

A similar recommendation had been made by Pope Hadrian to Patriarch Tarasius in his letter to the Patriarch before the convocation of the Council of Nicaea, as a reply to the latter's letter.<sup>46</sup> In that letter the Pope urged the Patriarch to restore to their traditional rank the holy and venerable icons of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, of the Virgin Mary His Mother, of the holy Apostles, of the holy prophets and martyrs, and those of the confessors.<sup>47</sup>

The Council unanimously declared its complete assent with the contents of the Pope's letter to the Emperors.<sup>48</sup>

Two sessions of the Council were spent in reading extracts from the writings of the Church Fathers, in which passages relative to the veneration of icons could be found.<sup>49</sup> They were extracts from the works of almost all the Greek Fathers, mainly from the fourth century on-

44. «ὅθεν καὶ τὰς ἐκ διαφόρων καὶ εὐδοκιμημάτων πατέρων λεπτομερῶς μαρτυρίας, τῶν τὰς αὐτὰς ἱερὰς εἰκόνας συστησάντων, τηρητέον ἐστὶ, καθὼς ἐν ταῖς βίβλοις αὐτῶν εὐρίσκομεν, καὶ τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ ἐπιεικεστάτῃ βασιλείᾳ ἐπετηδεύσαμεν ἀναγαγεῖν». *Mansi*, XII, 1071.

45. «δυσωπῶ δὲ μετὰ μεγάλου πόθου καρδίας τὴν ὑμετέραν πράξητα, ... ἱκετεύω, καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ παρακαλῶ καὶ ὀρκίζω, τὰς αὐτὰς ἱερὰς εἰκόνας ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ θεοφυλάκτῳ καὶ βασιλίδι πόλει, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀμφοτέροις μέρεσι τῆς Γραικίας, εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν βᾶσιν συστήσαι καὶ στηρίξαι κελεύσατε, φυλάττοντες τὴν παράδοσιν ταύτης τῆς ἡμετέρας ἱερωτάτης καὶ ἀγιωτάτης ἐκκλησίας...». *Ibid.*

46. «...ἐὰν προσκολληθῇ ἡ ὑμετέρα ὀσιότης τῷ ἡμετέρῳ ἀποστολικῷ θρόνῳ, ὅστις ἐστὶ κεφαλὴ πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ τὸν αὐτῆς ἱερόν καὶ ὀρθόδοξον τύπον... φυλάξαι ἐπιτηδεύση... πρώτην θυσίαν τῷ παντοδυνάμῳ προσοίσει καὶ ὡς ἐκ προσώπου ἡμῶν, τῶν εὐσεβεστάτων καὶ θεοσεπτῶν μεγάλων βασιλέων ἡμῶν... δυσωπήσει, ... ἵνα τὰς ἱερὰς εἰκόνας ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ θεοφυλάκτῳ καὶ βασιλίδι πόλει, καὶ ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ, εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν στάσιν καταστήσαι καὶ κηρῦξαι κελεύσωσι, φυλάττοντες τὴν παράδοσιν ταύτης τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀγιωτάτης ἡμῶν Ρωμαϊκῆς ἐκκλησίας». *Mansi*, XII, 1083.

47. «...ἀδιστακτικῶς τὴν ὑμετέραν σεπτοτάτην ἀγιωσύνην ἀρμόζει τὰς ἱερὰς καὶ σεπτὰς εἰκόνας τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ τῆς ἀγίας αὐτοῦ γεννητρίας καὶ ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας, καὶ τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων, καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων προφητῶν τε καὶ μαρτύρων, ἅμα ὁμολογητῶν, ἐν τοῖς μέρεσι τῶν αὐτόθι ἐν τῇ ἀρχαίᾳ τάξει ἀναστήσαι». *Ibid.*

48. *Mansi*, XII, 1085-1111.

49. The fourth and fifth sessions.

wards.<sup>50</sup> Extracts of the lives of saints were also read. Such a lengthy quotation by the Council from the Fathers proves that almost all the arguments used to defend the veneration of icons and to denounce the accusations of the iconoclasts as groundless and contrary to Church tradition were taken from the Fathers' teachings. They were, indeed, regarded as the criterion of ecclesiastical teaching.

The Correspondence of Germanos, who was Patriarch of Constantinople at the outbreak of the Iconoclastic controversy and one of the most vigorous opponents of the iconoclasts, was used by the Council to refute their accusations that the veneration of icons was idolatry.<sup>51</sup>

The Council quoted the 82nd canon of the Council in Trullo or «Quinisext» Council (Πενθέκκτη) of 692 to defend the making and veneration of the icon of Our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>52</sup> That canon required that Christ should always be depicted in human form and not symbolically as a lamb, as had been the more orthodox custom, «so that all may understand by means of it the depths of the humiliation of the Word of God, and that we may recall to mind his conversation in the flesh, his passion and salutary death and his redemption which was wrought for the whole world».<sup>53</sup>

50. *Mansi*, XIII, 8-73. 160-196.

51. *Mansi*, XII, 100-105. 108-128.

52. That Council was convened to pass canons to complete the work of the Fifth (553) and Sixth (680) Oecumenical Councils (hence its other name, Πενθέκκτη, Quinisext). It sat in the domed room (*trullus*) of the Emp. Justinian II's palace at Constantinople, where the Sixth Oecumenical Council had also met. (See, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, Oxford, 1978, p. 1397.

Sixth Oecumenical Council. «Κανὼν τῆς ἁγίας καὶ οἰκουμενικῆς ζ' συνόδου». *Mansi*, XII, 40.

53. The full text of the canon reads as follows: «Ἐν τισὶ τῶν σεπτῶν εἰκόνων γραφαῖς ἀμνὸς δακτύλῳ τοῦ προδρόμου δεικνύμενος ἐγχαράττεται, ὃς εἰς τύπον παρελήφθη τῆς χάριτος, τὸν ἀληθινὸν ἡμῖν διὰ νόμου προῦποφαίνων ἀμνὸν Χριστὸν τὸν Θεὸν ἡμῶν. τοὺς οὖν παλαιούς τύπους καὶ τὰς σικιάς, ὡς τῆς ἀληθείας σύμβολά τε καὶ προχαράγματα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ παραδεδομένους κατασπαζόμενοι, τὴν χάριν προτιμῶμεν καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὡς πλήρωμα νόμου ταύτην ὑποδεχόμενοι. ὡς ἂν οὖν τὸ τέλειον καὶ ἐν ταῖς χρωματουργίαις, ἐν ταῖς ἀπάντων ὄψεσιν ὑπογράφηται, τὸν τοῦ αἵροντος τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου ἀμνοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον χαρακτῆρα καὶ ἐν ταῖς εἰκόσιν ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἀντὶ τοῦ παλαιοῦ ἀμνοῦ ἀναστηλοῦσθαι ὀρίζομεν· δι' αὐτοῦ τὸ τῆς ταπεινώσεως ὕψος τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγου κατανοοῦντες, καὶ πρὸς μνήμην τῆς ἐν σαρκὶ πολιτείας, τοῦ τε πάθους αὐτοῦ, καὶ τοῦ σωτηρίου θανάτου χειραγωγούμενοι, καὶ τῆς ἐντεῦθεν γενομένης τῷ κόσμῳ ἀπολυτρώσεως».

A full reference to the 82nd canon can be found in the Acts of the Council,

The presentation and the refutation of the «Ο Ρ Ο Σ», that is the decree of the pseudo-synod of 754, took almost a whole session of the Council of Nicaea.<sup>54</sup>

The principle that was followed in all the sessions of the Council in defending the veneration of icons and refuting the charges of the iconoclasts against the iconophiles with the accusation of idolatry and heresy, was to appeal to the authority of tradition, both written and unwritten,<sup>55</sup> and to the writings of those Church Fathers in which the teaching on icons was to be found.<sup>56</sup>

in the letter of Pope Hadrian to Patriarch Tarasius, at the letter of Patriarch Tarasius to the bishops and the priests of the Churches of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, and in the comments made by deacon Epiphanius on the texts produced by the iconoclasts against the veneration of icons, at the Council of 754. *Mansi*, XII, 1079, 1123, 1126, XIII, 220.

Patriarch Tarasius remarks that the 82nd canon, although it was decided upon by the Quinisext Council four years after the Sixth Oecumenical Council, has to be regarded as an ecclesiastical canon of that Council, since the same Fathers took part in both Councils, as is indicated by their signatures in the Acts, to define the ecclesiastical canons in accordance with the tradition of the Oecumenical Councils.

«μετὰ γοῦν τέσσαρα ἢ πέντε ἔτη οἱ αὐτοὶ πατέρες συναθροισθέντες ἐπὶ Ἰουστινιανοῦ υἱοῦ Κωνσταντίνου, τοὺς προδηλωμένους κανόνας ἐκτεθείκασι. μηδεὶς ἀμφιβαλλέτω περὶ αὐτῶν· οἱ γὰρ ὑπογράψαντες ἐπὶ Κωνσταντίνου, οἱ αὐτοὶ καὶ ἐπὶ Ἰουστινιανοῦ... ὡς δῆλον καθίσταται ἐκ τῆς αὐτῶν ἰδιοχειροῦ ἀπαραλλάκτου ὁμοιότητος. ἔδει γὰρ αὐτοὺς σύνοδον οἰκουμενικὴν ἀποφάναντες, καὶ κανόνας ἐκκλησιαστικούς ἐκθέσθαι». *Mansi*, XIII, 41.

54. The sixth session, *Mansi*. XIII, 205-364.

55. «...ἀποστολικῶς διδαχθέντες, κρατοῦμεν τὰς παραδόσεις ὡς παρελάβομεν, πάντα ἀποδεχόμενοι καὶ ἀσπαζόμενοι, ὅσα περὶ ἡ ἀγία καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία ἀρχῆθεν τῶν χρόνων ἀγράφως καὶ ἐγγράφως παρέλαβεν· ἐξ ὧν εἰσι καὶ αἱ ὑποτυπώσεις τῶν εἰκονικῶν ἀναζωγραφήσεων»· «ἀπάσας τὰς ἐκκλησιαστικὰς ἐγγράφως ἢ ἀγράφως τεθεσπισμένους ἡμῶν παραδόσεις ἀκαινοτομητῶς φυλάττομεν· ὧν μία ἐστὶ καὶ ἡ τῆς εἰκονικῆς ἀναζωγραφῆσεως ἐκτύπωσης». *Mansi*, XIII, 409.

«μετὰ δὲ πολλῶν τῶν ἀγράφως ἡμῶν παραδοθέντων, καὶ ἡ τῶν εἰκόνων ποίησις ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πεπλάτνται ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν ἀποστόλων κηρύξεως». *Mansi*, XIII, 268.

56. «καὶ ἐγγράφως δὲ ταύτας ἐμπολιτεύεσθαι εἰς τοὺς Χριστιανούς, πλεῖστοι τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων ἡμῶν παραδεδώκασι. Βασίλειος ὁ μέγας, οὗ ἡ διδασκαλία περιηγεῖ πάντα τὰ πέρατα, ἐν διαφόροις λόγοις αὐτοῦ μνήμην αὐτῶν πεποιήται. Γρηγόριος ὁ αὐτοῦ καὶ σαρκὶ καὶ πνεύματι ἀδελφός, ὁ Νυσσαέων πρόεδρος, ἐν τῷ εἰς τὸν Ἀβραάμ λόγῳ αὐτοῦ· Γρηγόριος ὁ τῆς θεολογίας ἐπώνυμος ἐν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἔπεσιν αὐτοῦ, ἐν οἷς λόγος ἐμφέρεται ἐπιγεγραμμένος περὶ ἀρετῆς· Ἰωάννης ὁ χρυσοῦ τιμαλφέστερον στόμα κεκτημένος ἐν τῷ ἐπιταφίῳ λόγῳ αὐτοῦ εἰς Μελέτιον ἐπίσκοπον Ἀντιοχείας, καὶ εἰς τὸν ἐπιγεγραμμένον λόγον αὐτοῦ, ὅτι παλαιᾶς καὶ καινῆς διαθήκης εἰς νομοθέτης· Κύριλλος ὁ καθαίρετης Νεστορίου ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ αὐτοῦ τῇ πρώτῃ πρὸς Ἀκάκιον ἐπίσκοπον Σκυθοπόλεως, καὶ



During the seventh and the last session of the Council in Nicaea<sup>57</sup> in the presence of about 350 bishops or their representatives, of a number of monks and of Petronas the imperial officer who was representing the Emperors, Bishop Theodore of Tauriana in Sicily read the «Ο Ρ Ο Σ» i.e. the Decree of the Seventh Oecumenical Council of Nicaea.<sup>58</sup>

The «Ο Ρ Ο Σ» of the Council consists of a short introduction, a confession of faith in the decisions of the previous six Oecumenical Councils, to which the Creed confirmed by those Councils is added, and of the exposition and the definition of faith concerning the veneration of icons.

In the introduction of the «Ο Ρ Ο Σ» are explained the reasons for the convocation of the Council and the responsibility of the Church for defending and confirming her catholic faith concerning the veneration of icons; «... because certain priests, priests in name only, had dared to speak against the God-pleasing decency of the holy churches... and following profane men, led astray by their carnal sense, they have calumniated the tying together of Christ our God and holy church... and have failed to distinguish between holy and profane, calling the icon of the Lord and of his saints by the same name as the statues of diabolical idols. For sovereign God, not tolerating such a corruption in the church, has summoned us the leaders of the hierarchy of the church all around the world, with the divine zeal and consent of Constantine and Irene our faithful emperors, to confirm the authority of the divine tradition of the catholic church by a common vote.<sup>59</sup>

The «Ο Ρ Ο Σ» of the Council on the veneration of icons reads as follows:

«We declare that we accept without any innovation all

<sup>57</sup> Αναστάσιος Θεουπόλεως, Σωφρόνιος και Μάξιμος... πάντες οί ἅγιοι πατέρες ἡμῶν τὴν τῶν εἰκόνων ποίησιν ἀπεδέξαντο». *Mansi*, XIII, 268-269.

57. *Mansi*, XIII, 364-400.

58. ΟΡΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΙΑΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΗΣ ΕΝ ΝΙΚΑΙΑ ΣΥΝΟΔΟΥ τὸ δεύτερον. *Mansi*, XIII, 373.

59. «ὅτι τῶν ἱερῶν ἀναθημάτων τὴν θεοπρεπῆ εὐκοσμίαν διαβάλλειν τετολμήμασιν, ἱερεῖς μὲν λεγόμενοι, μὴ ὄντες δὲ ... ἀνιέροις γὰρ ἐπακολουθήσαντες ἀνδράσι, ταῖς ἰδίαις φρεσὶ πειθομένοις, κατηγορήσαν τῆς ἀρμοσθείσης Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ ἁγίας αὐτοῦ ἐκκλησίας, καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον ἁγίου καὶ βεβήλου οὐ διέστειλαν, τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ κυρίου καὶ τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ ὁμοίως τοῖς ξοάνοις τῶν σατανικῶν εἰδώλων ὀνομάσαντες. διὸ μὴ φέρων ὄραν ὑπὸ τοιαύτης λύμης διαφθειρόμενον τὸ ὑπῆκοον ὁ δεσπότης Θεός, ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀπανταχοῦ τῆς ἱερουσῶνης ἀρχηγούς τῇ αὐτοῦ εὐδοκίᾳ συνεκάλεσε, θεῶν ζήλω καὶ ἐπινεύσει Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Εἰρήνης τῶν πιστοτάτων ἡμῶν βασιλέων· ὅπως ἡ ἔνθεος παράδοσις τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας κοινῇ ψήφῳ ἀπολάβῃ τὸ κύρος». *Mansi*, XIII, 376.

the written and unwritten ecclesiastical traditions which have been enacted. One of these traditions is that referring to the figurative «εἰκονικῆς» printing or repainting, being in accordance with the history of the preaching of the Gospels so as to testify to the true and not to the imaginary incarnation of the Word of God... Following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired teaching of our holy fathers and the tradition of the catholic church, where, as we acknowledge, the Holy Spirit is indwelling, we declare with all certitude and accuracy that —following the example of the precious and life-giving cross— the venerable and holy icons, as both in painting and in mosaic, as well as in other fit materials are to be set forth in the holy churches of God: on the sacred vessels, on vestments and on hangings, and in pictures both in houses and by the wayside. That is: the icon of the Lord Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, of our most holy lady Theotokos, of the esteemed angels, of all holy and saintly men. For by their being frequently seen in figurative «εἰκονικῆς» representation, so much more readily are men lifted up to the recalling of their prototypes and to a longing after them; to these icons there should be given a kiss «ἀσπασμὸν» and honorary veneration «τιμητικὴν προσκύνησιν» not indeed the true worship «λατρείαν» of faith which pertains only to the divine nature. But to these as to the type of the precious and life-giving cross and to the book of the holy gospels, and to the other holy objects, incense and lights may be offered according to ancient pious custom. For the honour which is paid to the icon is passing to its prototype, and he who venerates «προσκυνοῦν» the icon venerates «προσκυνεῖ» in it the hypostasis of the subject represented «τοῦ ἐγγράφομένου τῆν ὑπόστασιν». In this way the teaching of our holy fathers is strengthened, i.e. the tradition of the catholic church that accepted the gospel from one end to the other of the world».<sup>60</sup>

60. «καὶ συνελθόντες φημέν, ἀπάσας τὰς ἐκκλησιαστικὰς ἐγγράφως ἢ ἀγράφως τεθεσπισμένους ἡμῖν παραδόσεις ἀκαινοτομήτως φυλάττομεν· ὧν μία ἐστὶ καὶ ἡ τῆς εἰκονικῆς ἀναζωγραφῆσεως ἐκτύπωσις, ὡς τῇ ἱστορίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελικοῦ κηρύγματος συνάδουσα, πρὸς πίστωσιν τῆς ἀληθινῆς καὶ οὐ κατὰ φαντασίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγου ἐνανθρωπήσεως, καὶ εἰς ὅμοιαν λυσιτέλειαν ἡμῖν χρησιμεύουσα. τὰ γὰρ ἀλλήλων δηλωτικὰ, ἀναμφιβόλως καὶ τὰς ἀλλήλων ἔχουσιν ἐμφάσεις. τούτων οὕτως ἐχόντων, τὴν βασιλικὴν ὡσπερ ἐρχόμενοι τρίβον, ἐπακολουθοῦντες τῇ θεηγόρῳ διδασκαλίᾳ τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων ἡμῶν, καὶ τῇ παραδό-

The «Ο Ρ Ο Σ» ends with a threat of excommunication by the Church of all those who should dare to violate the traditions of the Church. «If they be bishops or clergymen, we command that they be deprived of their rank, if religious or laymen of society, that they be excommunicated».<sup>61</sup>

The «Ο Ρ Ο Σ» was signed by all those present in the Council, beginning with Peter, the protopresbyter of the see of the holy Apostle Peter, and Peter, the presbyter of the same see who were representing Hadrian, the Pope of the ancient Rome. They were followed by Tarasius, Patriarch of the see of Constantinople, the new Rome, and by John and Thomas the presbyters who were representing the Churches of the East, that is the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. Then follow signatures of all the bishops present in the assembly according to the rank of their diocese.

The session of the Council ended with the declaration of the bishops that their belief concerning the veneration of icons is that decided by the Council, with the pronouncement of anathemas against the iconoclasts and their ecclesiastical leaders, the bishops referred to by name, and with a prayer for the everlasting memory of the three

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σει τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας· τοῦ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ οἰκήσαντος ἁγίου πνεύματος εἶναι ταύτην γινώσκομεν· ὀρίζομεν σὺν ἀκριβεῖα πάση καὶ ἐμμελεῖα παραπλησίως τῷ τύπῳ τοῦ τιμίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ σταυροῦ ἀνατίθεσθαι τὰς σεπτὰς καὶ ἁγίας εἰκόνας, τὰς ἐκ χρωμάτων καὶ ψηφίδος καὶ ἐτέρας ὕλης ἐπιτηδειῶς ἐχούσης ἐν ταῖς ἁγίαις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκκλησίαις, ἐν ἱεροῖς σκεῦεσι καὶ ἐσθῆσι, τοίχοις τε καὶ σανίσι, οἴκοις τε καὶ ὁδοῖς· τῆς τε τοῦ κυρίου καὶ Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰκόνας, καὶ τῆς ἀχράντου δεσποίνης ἡμῶν τῆς ἁγίας Θεοτόκου, τιμιῶν τε ἀγγέλων, καὶ πάντων ἁγίων καὶ ὁσίων ἀνδρῶν. ὅσῳ γὰρ συνεχῶς δι' εἰκονικῆς ἀνατυπώσεως ὄρῶνται τοσοῦτον καὶ οἱ ταύτας θεώμενοι διανίστανται πρὸς τὴν τῶν πρωτοτύπων μνήμην τε καὶ ἐπιπόθησιν, καὶ ταύταις ἀσπασμῶν καὶ τιμητικῆν προσκύνησιν ἀπονέμειν, οὐ μὴν τὴν κατὰ πίστιν ἡμῶν ἀληθινὴν λατρείαν, ἣ πρέπει μόνῃ τῇ θεῷ φύσει, ἀλλ' ὄν τρόπον τῷ τύπῳ τοῦ τιμίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ σταυροῦ καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις εὐαγγελίοις καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς ἱεροῖς ἀναθήμασι, καὶ θυμιαμάτων καὶ φώτων προσαγωγῇ πρὸς τὴν τούτων τιμὴν ποιεῖσθαι, καθὼς καὶ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις εὐσεβῶς εἴθιστα. ἣ γὰρ τῆς εἰκόνας τιμῆ ἐπὶ τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει· καὶ ὁ προσκυῶν τὴν εἰκόνα, προσκυνεῖ ἐν αὐτῇ τοῦ ἐγγραφομένου τὴν ὑπόστασιν. οὕτω γὰρ κρατύνεται ἡ τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων ἡμῶν διδασκαλία, εἴτουν παράδοσις τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας, τῆς ἀπὸ περάτων εἰς πέρατα δεξαμένης τὸ εὐαγγέλιον».

See the English text in E. J. Martin, *op. cit.* p. 103-104. *Mansi*, III, 377.

61. «Τοὺς οὖν τολμῶντας ἐτέρως φρονεῖν ἢ διδάσκειν, ἢ... τὰς ἐκκλησιαστικὰς παραδόσεις ἀθετεῖν... ἐπισκόπους μὲν ὄντας ἢ κληρικοὺς καθαιρεῖσθαι προστάσομεν, μονάζοντας δὲ ἢ λαϊκοὺς τῆς κοινωνίας ἀφορίζεσθαι». *Mansi*, XIII, 378.

champions of the orthodox faith, Germanos the Patriarch, John the presbyter, and George the bishop.<sup>62</sup>

The eighth and final session of the Seventh Oecumenical Council of Nicaea took place in Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire and the centre of the Oecumenical Patriarchate. It was summoned by the Emperors on the 23rd of October 787 in the palace of Magnaura.<sup>63</sup> Although the Emperors presided in the Assembly, the Gospel was laid at the chief place as in the previous sessions.<sup>64</sup> After the reading of the «Ο Ρ Ο Σ» of the Council, on the Emperors' request, the bishops were asked whether the Decree was unanimously agreed and accepted by them. A hearty assent was given by them. The Patriarch of Constantinople asked the Empress to sign the «Ο Ρ Ο Σ». She did so and then made her son sign, too. On the Emperors' order five texts of Patristic authorities, which had been read at the fourth and fifth sessions of the Council, and the 82nd canon of the Quinisext Council of 692, were once more read for the large audience from the people who attended the assembly.<sup>65</sup>

62. «Γερμανοῦ τοῦ ὀρθοδόξου αἰωνία ἡ μνήμη.

Ἰωάννου καὶ Γεωργίου αἰωνία ἡ μνήμη.

Τῶν κηρύκων τῆς ἀληθείας αἰωνία ἡ μνήμη». *Mansi*, XIII, 400.

63. «...οἱ τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας συνήγοροι βασιλεῖς... διὰ κελύσεως αὐτῶν ἐπιστέλλουσι τῷ πατριάρχῃ, ἀγαγεῖν ἅπαντας τοὺς θεοφιλεῖς ἐπισκόπους ἐν τῇ θεοφυλάκτῳ καὶ βασιλίδι πόλει αὐτῶν νέα Ρώμη... καὶ παραγενομένων αὐτῶν,... ἡ... θεοφροῦρητος βασιλισσα... ταυτὴν ἡμέραν ὄρισσα, συνοδικῶς μετὰ τῶν ἐπισκόπων προκαθεσθῆναι ἐκέλευσεν· ὃ δὲ καὶ γέγονεν ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ τῷ λεγομένῳ Μαγναύρα». *Mansi*, XIII, 413.

64. «καὶ δὴ προτεθέντων τῶν ἁγίων τοῦ Θεοῦ εὐαγγελίων, αὐτῆς προκαθίσασης μετὰ τοῦ συμβασιλεύοντος αὐτῇ υἱοῦ...». *Ibid.*

65. «Καὶ μετὰ τὴν εὐφήμησιν ἐκέλευσαν οἱ βασιλεῖς τὰς πατρικὰς χρήσεις ἀναγνωσθῆναι ἐκ τῶν προαναγνωσθέντων ἐν τῇ Νικαέων Μητροπόλει καὶ προγραφέντων ἐν τῇ τετάρτῃ πράξει. τοὔτεστιν Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου εἰς Μελέτιον ἐπίσκοπον Ἀντιοχείας, Ἀστερίου ἐπισκόπου Ἀμασειας εἰς Εὐφημίαν τὴν μάρτυρα, Ἰωάννου ἐπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης ἐκ τῶν γραφέντων αὐτῷ λόγων κατὰ Ἑλλήνων· τοῦ ὀσίου Συμεῶν τοῦ Στυλίτου ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὸν Ἰουστίνον τὸν βασιλέα, τοῦ μακαρίου Νεῖλου ἀσκητοῦ ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς Ὀλυμπόδωρον ἑπαρχον, ἐκ τῶν κανόνων τῆς ἁγίας καὶ οἰκουμενικῆς ἕκτης συνόδου κεφάλαιον πβ'». *Mansi*, XIII, 417.

The texts of St. John Chrysostom sent to Meletius, Bishop of Antioch, of Asterios, Bishop of Amaseia, to St. Euphemia, and of Neilus to sub-prefect Olympiodorus can be found in the Fourth Act of the Council of Nicaea. *Mansi*, XIII, p. 8, 16-17, and 36.

The texts of John, Bishop of Thessaloniki, against the Greeks, and of St. Symeon the Stylite to King Justin are in the Fifth Act of the Council. *Mansi*, XIII, 160-161, 164-165.

The Second Council of Nicaea, the last of the Oecumenical Councils of the undivided Church, completed its work in eight sessions, of which seven were held in Nicaea between the 24th of September and the 13th of October 787, and one, the eighth, was held at the imperial palace of Constantinople on the 23rd of October.

Besides its decisions concerning the veneration of icons, the Council issued 22 canons referring to canonical and administrative matters of the Church.<sup>66</sup> It was an act established by the previous Oecumenical Councils that aimed at defining the teaching of the Church on several current issues in church life.

The first of these canons enacted the acceptance of all that had been taught and been decided upon by the holy Apostles, the six Oecumenical Councils and the local Councils as well, and by the holy Fathers of the Church.<sup>67</sup>

Four of the canons, the 7th, 9th, 13th, and 16th have a connection with the veneration of icons.<sup>68</sup>

### C) Evaluation of the work of the Seventh Oecumenical Council in Nicaea.

The Seventh Oecumenical Council of Nicaea, with its Decree on the veneration of icons, safeguarded the unity of the Church and preserved her teaching on icons from any future misinterpretation or violation. That is confirmed by the decisions taken by the Great

#### 66. ΚΑΝΟΝΕΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΟΙ

ἐκφωνηθέντες παρὰ τῆς ἐν Νικαίᾳ

συνόδου τὸ δεύτερον. *Mansi*, XIII, 417-439.

67. «Ὅτι δεῖ τοὺς θελοῦς κανόνας κατὰ πάντα  
φυλάττεσθαι». *Mansi*, XIII, 417.

ζ'

68. «Ὅτι τοὺς ἐγκαινισθέντας ναοὺς ἐκτὸς καταθέσεως  
λειψάνων ἁγίων δεόν ἀναπληρωθῆναι». *Ibid.* 427

θ'

Περὶ τοῦ μὴ κρύπτειν τινὰ χριστιανοκατηγορικῆς  
αἵρέσεως βίβλον. *Ibid.* 430

ιγ'

«Ὅτι μεγάλης κατακρίσεως ἄξιοι εἰσιν οἱ τὰ  
μοναστήρια κοινοῦντες». *Ibid.* 431

ις'

«Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἱερατικὸν ἄνδρα ἱματίοις πολυτελέσιν  
ἀμφιένυσθαι». *Ibid.* 434

Council of Constantinople «ἐνδημοῦσα σύνοδος ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει» which was convened in 843 against the iconoclasts who disturbed the Church once more for almost three decades (815-843). That Council reaffirmed the faith of the Church regarding the Decree of the Council of Nicaea.

The Decree of the Council of Nicaea is a comprehensive summary of what had been on a large scale discussed and stated in the sessions of the Council concerning the history, development and formulation of Church tradition on the use of icons. The Council had tried to give the right interpretation of that tradition in its twofold aspect or character, i. e. the written and the unwritten, which the Fathers of the Church confirmed in their writings. It was according to that tradition that the Council defined the kind or degrees of veneration that ought to be attributed to the icon of Our Lord Jesus Christ and to the icons of all the other saints of the Church, always giving the priority among them to the Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Son of God.

Besides the definition of the words: «λατρεία, ἀσπασμός, προσκύνησις» at the Decree of the Council, a further explicit explanation of these words is given in the letters of the Oecumenical Council to the Emperors,<sup>69</sup> and to the priests and other clergy of the churches of the Byzantine Empire, in which the purpose of the convocation of the Council and the conclusions reached at that Council were recorded.<sup>70</sup>

Λατρεία, meaning worship, adoration, is the decree of worship attributed exclusively to God, «καὶ γὰρ μόνῳ Θεῷ τὴν λατρείαν ἡμῶν ἡμεῖς ἀναφέρομεν».<sup>71</sup> Ἀσπασμός and προσκύνησις mean the same thing, kissing. It is the degree of worship attributed to all icons. «... κατὰ πάντα ἀποδέχσθαι τὰς σεπτὰς εἰκόνας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καθ' ὃ τέλειος ἄνθρωπος γέγονε καὶ ὅσα ἱστορικῶς κατὰ τὴν εὐαγγελικὴν διήγησιν διαγράφονται· τῆς τε ἀχράντου δεσποίνης ἡμῶν τῆς ἁγίας Θεοτόκου, ἁγίων τε ἀγγέλων· ὡς ἄνθρωποι ἐνεφανίσθησαν τοῖς ἀξίοις γενο-

69. ΤΟΙΣ ΕΥΣΕΒΕΣΤΑΤΟΙΣ καὶ γαληνοτάτοις ἡμῶν βασιλεῦσι Κωνσταντίνῳ καὶ Εἰρήνῃ τῇ αὐτοῦ μητρὶ Ταράσιος ἀνάξιος ἐπίσκοπος τῆς θεοφυλάκτου καὶ βασιλίδος ὑμῶν πόλεως νέας Ρώμης, καὶ πᾶσα ἡ ἁγία σύνοδος, ἡ κατ' εὐδοκίαν Θεοῦ προστάξει δὲ τῆς φιλοχρίστου ὑμῶν βασιλείας συνελθοῦσα ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ Νικαέων λαμπρᾷ μητροπόλει τὸ δεύτερον. *Mansi*, III, 400-408.

70. ΤΟΙΣ ΘΕΟΦΙΑΕΣΤΑΤΟΙΣ ΙΕΡΕΥΣΙ τε καὶ κληρικοῖς τῆς τε ἁγιοπάτης τοῦ Θεοῦ μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας, καὶ πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τῆς θεοφυλάκτου καὶ βασιλίδος πόλεως, ἡ ἁγία σύνοδος ἡ ἐν Νικαίᾳ συναθροισθεῖσα τὸ δεύτερον». *Mansi*, III, 408-413.

71. *Mansi*, III, 405.

μένους τῆς αὐτῶν ἐμφανείας· καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων... καθὼς ἐκ τῶν ἀνέκαθεν χρόνων ἡ ἁγία τοῦ Θεοῦ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία παρέλαβε,... καὶ ταύτας προσκυνεῖν ἦτοι ἀσπάξεσθαι· ταῦτόν γὰρ ἀμφότερα).<sup>72</sup> Both words are treated as identical not only in the above letter to the Emperor, but also in the letter to the priests and other clergy of the churches of the Byzantine Empire: «Ἡμεῖς τοιγαροῦν πατρώοις νόμοις ἐπόμμενοι,... ὅσα εἶασαν τιμᾶσθαι ἐν τῇ καθολικῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἀποδεχόμεθα δίχα πάσης ἀμφιβολίας. ἐξ ὧν ἐστὶν... καὶ ἡ τῶν εἰκόνων ποίησις· καὶ ταύτας τιμητικῶς προσκυνούμεν καὶ ἀσπαζόμεθα· ταῦτόν γὰρ ἀμφότερα).<sup>73</sup>

Although the conciliar Decree on the veneration of icons represents the prevailing tradition of the Church and is based on the teaching of the Fathers of the previous centuries, nevertheless it appears to be concentrated on the central ideas of the teaching of St. Basil on this particular subject. This is confirmed by the frequent use and reference in the Acts of the Council and in the Decree to an expression of his, namely «the honor given to the icon is passing on to its prototype», «ἡ τῆς εἰκόνης τιμὴ πρὸς τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει»,<sup>74</sup> in order to define the proper use of icons. That expression has been used since then by the Church Fathers up to the time of John of Damascus in the eighth century. It was regarded as the most accurate and successful expression in explaining the Orthodox point of view on the question of the veneration of icons.

The connection of John of Damascus' teaching with the decisions of the Decree of the Council of Nicaea could not, of course, be denied. However there is no answer to the question why the bishops and all the participants of the Council, especially the monks, did not even once refer by name to him and to his Orations against the iconoclasts in any of the sessions of the Council, in presenting his strong arguments and solid theological approach to the question of icons. He is mentioned only once, defensively by the Council of Nicaea because

72. *Ibid.* 404.

The word «πρ ο σ κ υ ν ε ῖ ν» is derived from «κ υ ν ε ῖ ν» which in an ancient Greek dialect signifies «to kiss». The preposition «πρ ὸς» gives the additional idea of strong desire.

«κυνεῖν γὰρ τῇ ἑλλαδικῇ ἀρχαίᾳ διαλέκτῳ τὸ ἀσπάξεσθαι καὶ τὸ φιλεῖν σημαίνει· καὶ τὸ τῆς πρὸς προθέσεως ἐπίτασιν τινα δηλοῖ τοῦ πόθου, ὡσπερ φέρω καὶ προσφέρω, κυρῶ καὶ προσκυρῶ, κυνῶ καὶ προσκυνῶ, ὃ ἐμφαίνει τὸν ἀσπασμὸν καὶ τὴν κατ' ἐπέκτασιν φιλίαν. ὃ γὰρ τις φιλεῖ καὶ προσκυνεῖ· καὶ ὃ προσκυνεῖ, πάντως καὶ φιλεῖ...». *Ibid.*

73. *Mansi*, III, 412.

74. *Mansi*, III, 69. Μ. Βασιλείου, Περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, κεφ. ιη'.

of the anathema issued against him by the iconoclastic council of 754. He is praised for his love, faith and self-sacrifice for Christ, and for his vigorous support of the veneration of icons. John of Damascus' famous Orations against those who slandered the holy icons and his teaching were used by all subsequent Church writers, who repeated his arguments and authorities more than the Decree of the Council of Nicaea. For he is regarded in the Orthodox Church as the champion of the struggle against the iconoclasts and the main representative of the Church Fathers for his teaching on the veneration of icons.

The Council of Nicaea, the last of the Oecumenical Councils of the one undivided Church, states under what circumstances an Oecumenical Council may be convened. The necessary presuppositions for the convocation of such a Council can be summarized as follows:

a) Any kind of heresy which endangers the faith of the Church and her unity.<sup>75</sup>

b) The opinion of the Emperor and the five Patriarchs of the East and West that an Oecumenical Council should be convened.<sup>76</sup>

c) The presence of the five Patriarchs or of their representatives at the Council, i.e. the Pope of Rome, the Patriarch of Constantinople, and the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem.<sup>77</sup>

d) The acceptance by the Council of the decisions of the previous Oecumenical Councils.<sup>78</sup>

75. Patriarch Tarasios asked the Emperors and the other Patriarchs for the convocation of the Oecumenical Council because the iconoclastic controversy was dividing the Church. *Mansi*, XII, 987. See reference 1.

76. «τῇ ἐπαύριον γίνεται συναγωγή τῶν ἐπισκόπων ἐν αὐτῷ (τῷ ναῷ τῶν ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων). καὶ γενομένων τινῶν διαλαλιῶν παρὰ τε τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου πατριάρχου, καὶ τῶν θεοφιλεστάτων ἐπισκόπων, καὶ ἀναγνωσθέντων τινῶν συνοδικῶν τῶν διαγορευόντων μὴ δεῖν γενέσθαι ποτὲ σύνοδον οἰκουμενικὴν παρεκτὸς συμφωνίας τῶν λοιπῶν ἁγιωτάτων πατριαρχῶν». *Mansi*, XII, 991, 1126 See reference 11.

77. «καὶ πάρερσι θεοῦ εὐδοκήσαντος διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν τοποτηρητῶν μετὰ καὶ ἀντιγράφων τῶν ἀποσταλέντων συνοδικῶν γραμμάτων παρὰ τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου πατριάρχου· οὗτος γάρ ἐστιν ἀρχῆθεν νόμος συνοδικὸς τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἀπὸ περάτων εἰς πέρατα δεξαμένης τὸ εὐαγγέλιον». *Mansi*, XII, 1003. See reference 11 too.

78. «μετὰ πάσης τοίνυν ἀκριβείας ἐρευνήσαντές τε καὶ διασκεψάμενοι, καὶ τῷ σκοπῷ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀκολουθήσαντες, οὐδὲν ἀφαιροῦμεν, οὐδὲν προστίθεμεν, ἀλλὰ πάντα τὰ τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας ἀμειωτα διαφυλάττομεν· καὶ ἐπόμενοι ταῖς ἁγίαις οἰκουμενικαῖς ἐξ συνόδοις, πρῶτα μὲν τῇ ἐν τῇ λαμπρῇ Νικαέων μητροπόλει συναθροισθείσῃ, ἔτιγε μὴν καὶ τῇ μετ' αὐτὴν ἐν τῇ θεοφυλάκτῳ βασιλίδι πόλει». *Mansi*, XIII, 376. See reference 11 too.



e) The unanimous acceptance of the decisions of the Council by all its participants. Unanimity in the Council was regarded as a work of the Holy Spirit, who is indwelling in the Church and guides her to take the right and orthodox, in the plain sense of the word, decisions.<sup>79</sup>

f) The unanimous ratification of the decisions of the Council by all the Churches throughout the world that constitute the One undivided Church.

The Council of Nicaea denounced as a pseudo-synod the iconoclastic council of 754 and refused to recognize it as authentic and possessing authority, because that council failed to meet some of the above-mentioned essential terms.

The Council of Nicaea gives us a general idea of the stage of the relations between the Church of the East and the West, i.e. the Church of Constantinople, as the New Rome, and the Church of the Elder Rome, towards the end of the eighth century.

As it appears in the Acts of the Council, although there were some differences on matters of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and administration, due to political issues between them, nevertheless they were pushed aside for the sake of the unity of faith and of the Church. There was a common respect for the tradition and the teaching of the undivided Church and an identity of views regarding the tradition and the teaching of the Church on the veneration of icons.

However, the Church of Rome persists in its claims concerning the primacy of the Pope of Rome, and maintains that the see of Rome is the head of all the Churches of God around the Oikoumene and consequently the Pope is the head of the Church. «οὗ ὁ θρόνος εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην πρωτεύων διαλάμπει, καὶ κεφαλὴ πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπάρχει. ἔθεν ὁ αὐτὸς μακάριος Πέτρος ὁ ἀπόστολος τῷ τοῦ κυρίου προστάγματι ποιμαίνων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, οὐδὲν παραλέλοιπεν, ἀλλ' ἐκράτησε πάντοτε καὶ κρατεῖ τὴν ἀρχήν. δι' οὗπερ ἐὰν προσκολληθῇ ἡ ὑμετέρα ὁσιότης τῷ ἡμε-

79. «καὶ δὴ συνελθόντων ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐπινοία καὶ ἐνεργεία, πάντες συμπεφωνήκαμεν· καὶ ἀνατολή, ἄρκτος, δύσις καὶ μεσημβρία εἰς μίαν ἐνότητα συνήλθομεν· καὶ ἐβραβεύθη τῶν ἁγίων ἐκκλησιῶν εἰρηναία κατάστασις διὰ τῆς πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὁμοδοξίας καὶ πίστεως...». Mansi, XIII, 408-409.

«καὶ εἴ τις μὴ οὕτως ἔχοι, ἀλλ' ἀμφισβητοῖ καὶ νοσοῖ περὶ τὴν τῶν σεπτῶν εἰκόνων προσκύνησιν, τοῦτον ἀναθεματίζει ἡ ἅγια καὶ οἰκουμενικὴ ἡμῶν σύνοδος, ὀχυρωθεῖσα τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεύματος ἐνεργείᾳ, καὶ ταῖς πατρικαῖς καὶ ἐκκλησιαστικαῖς παραδόσεσι». *Ibid.*

τέρῳ ἀποστολικῷ θρόνῳ, ὅστις ἐστὶ κεφαλὴ πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ...». <sup>80</sup>

The Church of Constantinople expresses its respect for the see of the Church of the older Rome, and addresses the Pope as president of the elder Rome. «...ὅθεν Ἀδριανὸς τῆς πρεσβυτέρας Ρώμης πρόεδρος... γεγράφηκε τρανῶς καὶ ἀληθῶς τοῖς εὐσεβέσιν ἡμῶν βασιλεῦσι, καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἡμετέραν μετριότητα, βεβαιούμενος εὖγε καὶ καλῶς ἔχειν τὴν ἀρχαίαν παράδοσιν τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας». <sup>81</sup>

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80. *Mansi*, XII, 1083.

81. *Mansi*, XII, 1086.