

## A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF THE VENERATION OF ICONS IN THE FIRST ICONOCLASM

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### ABSTRACT

*Icons became an increasingly familiar presence to Christians, especially with the spread of the faith outside the Jewish space, more restrained from iconographic representations, although assiduously honoring the revealed scriptural text, as well as the temple adorned with figurative images and religious representations. However, in the 8th and 9th centuries they would be exposed to a fierce reevaluation, through the Byzantine iconoclasm, 726-780, 815-842. The Church would confirm, in the end, both the importance of iconography and the veneration of the icons, arguing it on the bases of Christ incarnation and on the antiquity of the tradition. There were still less emphasised the fact that God is sharing His all-blessing-grace and reveals Himself through the icons.*

**Keywords:** *adoration; Christology; iconoclasm; theophany; veneration.*

### INTRODUCTION

Iconoclasm, that is the breaking of icons, significantly reduced the Christian iconographic treasure inherited from the first seven centuries of Church's existence. Only a few testimonies of the popularity of iconographic representations, their presence in private but also public life, as well as their worship since ancient times, escaped the fury of the imperial iconoclastic policy. Proof of Christian figurative art also survived in the Christian areas of the West European territories as well as in the Eastern part of the old Roman Empire which was under Muslim occupation. Whether we are referring to the iconography in the Roman catacombs<sup>1</sup>, to that of the old Christian sites, like Dura Europos<sup>2</sup>, or to the icons in the monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai, each of these confirms both a tradition of the Christian iconographic art as well as of the ritual of their veneration.

If, at the beginning, the religious images were symbolic, refraining from representing Christ anthropomorphically, having a biblical content with a pedagogical role, gradually, once the danger of idolatry had been excluded<sup>3</sup>, they became less and less symbolic and were widely used, being promoted by the painting on the walls of the imposing places of worship built by the Byzantine emperors. They had several roles, as simple decoration, as didactical anamnesis of the events in the history of salvation, as protection against the enemies of the faith and of the empire. It is interesting to see, after a look at the history of iconoclasm, why we should not discard the icons from the walls of our schools and other public places.

<sup>1</sup> André Grabar. *L'arte paleocristiana (200-395)*. Milano: Rizolli, 1979, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> Lea Cline and Nathan T Elkins. *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Imagery and Iconography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022, p. 477.

<sup>3</sup> After emperor Justinian's closure of the School of Athens in 529AD.

## 1. THE CONTEXT OF FIRST BYZANTINE ICONOCLASM

The icons, confirmed alongside the Holy Cross in the canons of the Quinisext Council, Trullan II, 691/692, as a constitutive part of the Christian universe and honored privately as protectors of homes or publicly like a safeguard (*palladium*) in military confrontations, they were considered legitimate by the great mass of the Christian population and honored as visual means of God's manifestation. Canon 74 forbade representation of the holy symbol of the Cross on the floors to prevent involuntary profanation and canon 82 forbade symbolic iconography in favor of anthropomorphic one. These canons initiated the discussion of iconography from the perspective of more authoritative doctrinal grounds. What accelerated the formation of a theology of the icon was the iconoclastic policy led by the Byzantine emperors of the 8th and 9th centuries, the first among them being Leo III the Isaurian (717-741).

Eager to restore the successful politics of the emperor Constantine the Great, under the victorious sign of the Cross, the emperor Leo III considered it his duty to ban, following the model of the Jewish prophet-kings, any deviation of society from the Christian faith, but was also against any form of idolatry which, between 726 and 741 would include the icons, too. In the context of a prolonged period of instability in the Byzantine Empire (695-717), characterized by the rapid succession to the throne of several emperors and their military failures, Leo III announced himself as the leader capable of ending the Umayyad (Arab) rise. On the eve of the decisive confrontation in 718, patriarch Germanous of Constantinople (715-730) and the clergy held a procession with the icons<sup>4</sup>, matched by another in which Emperor Leo III hit the sea with a cross, like Moses, with the staff.<sup>5</sup>

The defeat of the Arabs on the date of the Assumption, August 15 718, with divine help, gave Germanous the opportunity to institute an annual religious holiday.<sup>6</sup> In the sermon delivered on the commemoration of this occasion a year later, the patriarch omitted to mention the contribution that the emperor, as a political leader and militant Christian, had made to the miraculous success. "This naturally led to a growing enmity between emperor and patriarch, between cross and icon, and it was an intimation of things to come."<sup>7</sup> The new emperor, Leo III, forced upon enthronement to promise to keep intact the teaching of the Church, would see in this dominant position of patriarch Germanous, an insult to the status he assumed, according to the ancient model, of emperor and high priest.

The contact with the iconophobic Jewish and Muslim space of the regions of Asia Minor (Phrygia, Isauria, Armenia) made some Christian communities considered circumspectly the iconographic representations and some bishops even ordered the removal of icons from churches on the charge of idolatry. As early as 720, patriarch Germanous had to advice three bishops by epistles<sup>8</sup>, leaving this way to posterity a first defense of the iconographic representation in itself, as well as the justification of honoring the icons of the

<sup>4</sup> It is memorable the support brought by the icons to repel the Persians during the siege of Edessa in 544 AD and to repel the invasion of the Avar-Persian coalition that besieged Constantinople in 626 AD while the Byzantine emperor was missing from the city.

<sup>5</sup> Erin Michael Doom, *Patriarch, monk and empress: a Byzantine debate over icons*, Wichita State University, 2005, p. 83.

<sup>6</sup> Pope Gregory II congratulated the patriarch of Constantinople for this success and praised the protective role of the Mother of God manifested as a result of the the procession with her icon.

<sup>7</sup> Erin Michael Doom, *Patriarch, monk and empress...*, p. 83.

<sup>8</sup> In the 4th session of the Council of Nicaea II, were read three epistles of patriarch Germanous of Constantinople addressed to the Metropolitan John of Synada and to the bishops Constantine of Nakoleia and Thomas of Claudiopolis.

Savior, the Mother of God, the angels and the saints. First of all, Germanous called upon the attention of the iconoclasts to the disservice they were doing to the Church by exposing it to the mockery of iconophobic Jewish and Muslim communities.<sup>9</sup> If the Church had fallen into idolatry by the veneration of icons, then it would have meant that this fact had remained unnoticed at the six ecumenical councils held until then<sup>10</sup> and its purity and guidance by the Holy Spirit promised by Christ, the Head of the Church, could have been regarded as false or impotent. In addition to the venerable iconographic tradition, the patriarch of Constantinople added the fact that there was an irreconcilable antagonism between the icon and the idol: the idol being the occasion for the manifestation of the passions and subhuman attitudes of those who honor them, and the icons, instead, memories of the work of redemption accomplished by the Son of God incarnate, and examples of holy living. Even more, the Church was freed by Christ from idolatry through His incarnation, which allowed His representation according to His human depiction. Idolatry would be the situation in which Christians would visually represent the uncreated and limitless God as creation and manufactured idol, as well as visible and invisible creature. The icons were not only allowed by God, but they also had a didactic and commemorative role, helping the uneducated learn about the lives of the saints and be inspired to follow their example.

There was also a major distinction regarding worship between cultic adoration (*latreia*) offered by Christians only to the Holy Trinity and veneration as a sign of reverence (*proskynesis*).<sup>11</sup> Honoring the saints based on the words of Saint Basil the Great, implied honoring the Almighty God.<sup>12</sup> The final argument brought by Germanous was that of the famous icon of Christ placed by the righteous emperors above the Bronze Gate (Chalke) of the imperial palace.<sup>13</sup> The patriarch remembered to mention that both the Jews and the Muslims, the possible origin of this contention, were as iconophobic as they were idolaters. The former, according to the Old Testament, fell many times into idolatry, and the latter, worshiped an inanimate stone, the so-called Chobar (Kaaba in Mecca)<sup>14</sup>.

There are two types of iconoclasm, one was due to a heretic misconception within the Byzantine Empire, the other took place in the context of the Muslim persecution of the Melkite Christians. The second type of iconoclasm commenced under the caliph of Damascus, Yazid II (720-724), as a consequence to the defeat suffered by the Arabs in 718. However, the Muslim ban on Christian depictions lasted initially only for one year. Rakuten between 730-750, this time was proven archaeologically by replacement of the icons with floral designs on the walls of the churches.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et amplissima Collectio*, XIII, Florence, 1759–1798, 123D.

<sup>10</sup> Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et amplissima Collectio*, XIII, Florence, 1759–1798, 115D.

<sup>11</sup> Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et amplissima Collectio*, XIII, Florence, 1759–1798, 99C.

<sup>12</sup> Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et amplissima Collectio*, XIII, Florence, 1759–1798, 123C; Basil the Great, *Homily 19 Concerning the Forty Martyrs*; PG 31, 509A.

<sup>13</sup> A detail from the letter addressed by German to bishop Thomas of Claudiopolis [Isauria] suggests that the place of origin of the emperor Leo III was not alien to an iconoclastic tendency inspired by the influences of the Mosaic Law interpreted literally. From here to the incrimination of icons as idols and, therefore, factors of attracting the wrath of God (as in Old Testament times), it was only a small step.

<sup>14</sup> Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et amplissima Collectio*, XIII, Florence, 1759–1798, 109E.

<sup>15</sup> Ioan I. Ică jr. *Canonul Ortodoxiei: Sinodul VII Ecumenic*. [Vol.] 1 *Definind Dogmatic Icoanele (691-810)*. Sibiu: Deisis, 2020, p. 39.

## 2. BANNING ICONS AND THEIR DEFENCE IN THE FIRST BYZANTINE ICONOCLASM (726-780)

In 726 the Byzantine emperor emitted his own decree to ban the icons. This acted as a *coup de grâce* given to Christians everywhere, both to the ones under Arab occupation, as well as to the ones in Christian territories. Some reasons for this part of iconoclasm were the dissensions between Germanous and the emperor himself. Another reason was the volcanic eruption in the summer of 726 which led to the appearance of the island of Thera in the Aegean Sea. That event influenced the mindset of the time to take drastic religious measures.

### 2.1. THE ICONOCLASTIC POLICY OF LEO III ISAURUS

The removal of the famous icon of Christ from the entrance to the imperial palace and its replacement with an imposing cross will mark the beginning of his imperial iconoclasm policy. The attached inscription gave a glimpse of the reasons that led the emperor to this unexpected gesture. “The Lord not suffering Christ to be portrayed in voiceless form devoid of breath, by means of earthly matter which the scriptures reject.”<sup>16</sup> To the emperor there was an incompatibility between the Holy Scriptures, which portrayed a living God and the icon, which was an inanimate representation. Basically, the emperor could not see beyond the material, tangible nature of the icon. The ostentatious gesture, followed by three successive imperial edicts, the first in 726, the others in 729 and 730, culminated with a pseudo-council/theological conference (*silentium*) in 730, after the dismissal of Germanus, who had remained faithful to the icons. These events would open the first Byzantine iconoclasm. The religiously abusive measures of Leo III, who arrogated to himself the double quality of emperor and priest, manifesting an attitude contrary to the tradition of the Church, will not go unpunished by the other patriarchs of the Pentarchy. They will follow like an avalanche: Rome’s rejection of the letter of presentation (*synodika*) of the new patriarch of Constantinople, Anastasios (730-754), a letter of protest from patriarch John of Jerusalem (supported by John Damascene), two letters of rebuke addressed to emperor Leo III by pope Gregory II of Rome, and in November 731 the official condemnation of iconoclasm by a Roman council and, no later than the year 732, the anathematization of Leo III by the Eastern bishops in a similar council against-iconoclasm.

Summarizing all these positions, we can say that initially both pope Gregory II<sup>17</sup>, as well as patriarch John of Jerusalem, through John Damascene, tried to find a return to the initial state through dialogue with the emperor. They reminded him of the illegality of the interference of political power in the pronouncement on the Church’s teaching of faith and in the election of the hierarchs. They also argued in favor of iconographic representations and their veneration by calling on patristic and biblical texts. Only after using all the exhaustion of this peaceful way, the hierarchs pronounced themselves by anathemas, realizing that the emperor had maintained his own iconoclastic and heretical opinion, despite the very pertinent clarifications brought by them.

<sup>16</sup> Cited by John Moorhead, “Byzantine iconoclasm as a problem in art history,” *Parergon* 4(1986), p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Pope Gregory II clarifies the absence of previous conciliar legislation regarding icons (older than the 6th Ecumenical Synod), based on the naturalness of this generally accepted and practiced tradition: “Nothing was said about bread and water, whether that should be eaten or not; yet these things have been accepted from the beginning for the presence of human life. So also have images been accepted; the popes themselves brought them to councils, and no Christian would set out on a journey without images, because they were possessed of virtue and approved of God.” (*Letters of Pope St. Gregory II (+731) to Emperor Leo Against Heresy of Iconoclasm*, available in English translation at: <https://nftu.net/letters-of-pope-st-gregory-ii-731-to-emperor-leo-against-heresy-of-iconoclasm/>, accessed on 26.02.2023)

In a second epistle to Leo III (729 AD), pope Gregory II advised the emperor that, in his constant iconoclastic attitude, he allowed himself to be deceived by his own thinking and was distracted from the truth under the pressure of the difficult political issues he had to manage.<sup>18</sup> He was even suggesting the existence of evil counselors who could influence him in this regard.<sup>19</sup> The pope also accused the emperor of violating the traditional relationship between the state and the Church, in which the emperor, although called a bishop (“of external affairs”), did not have the competence to act in matters of faith outside a general council of bishops. Gregory II limited the emperor’s reach to the administrative problems of the state because the latter failed to follow the example of his predecessors, who embellished churches instead of stripping them of their beauty and religious symbols.<sup>20</sup> After this clarification, the pope expounded on the importance of the icons that the emperor had disparaged as man-made idols. Gregory II showed that, according to the emperor’s reasoning all edifices dedicated to God, including churches, should be demolished, which was totally absurd. Regarding the icons, the pope explained that they were, first, a decorative art, a preoccupation pleasing to God to be made at the expense of the rich. The role of icons was pedagogical, anamnestic, and missionary.<sup>21</sup> By rejecting the icons, Leo was doubly wrong, as he replaced them with instrumental music and useless words.<sup>22</sup> An important mention regarding the value of icons was that “by means of these pictures the hearts and minds of men are directed to God”<sup>23</sup>, a fact that absolved those who worshiped them from the charge of idolatry.

Patriarch Germanous I and Pope Gregory II, in epistolary writings, argue for the creation and veneration of icons because of the antiquity of this tradition, their educational and missionary character, as well as because of the distinction between icon and idol. We see the first philosophical and doctrinal exposition of the theology of the icon in the three successive treatises written by John Damascene, the spokesman of patriarch John V of Jerusalem. He justified the necessity of painting icons because they were testimonies of the Incarnation of Christ and of the salvation of man. The foundation of iconography was, in the opinion of John Damascene, the Son of God incarnate, Who opened a new era in which God made Himself available through tangible representations.

John Damascene gave the first definition of the icon by saying it reminds us of the original without claiming to be a perfect reproduction. The icons bring the distant object of veneration close to the believer and give the spiritual being a physical representation. The purpose of the icon is to transcend distances, but also realities. They challenge the observing

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*: “But you have followed the guidance of your own wayward spirit and have allowed the exigencies of the political situation at your own court to lead you astray.”

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*: “you have followed the teaching of perverse and wicked men who wander from the truth.”

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*: “[Previous emperors] proved themselves to be both emperors and bishops by following the true faith, by founding and fostering churches, and by displaying the same zeal for the faith as the popes. These emperors ruled righteously; they held synods in harmony with the popes, they tried to establish true doctrines, they founded and adorned churches. Those who claim to be both emperors and priests should demonstrate it by their works;”

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*: “[Churches are] also adorned with pictures and representations of the miracles of the saints, of the sufferings of Christ, of the holy mother herself, and of the saints and apostles; and men spend their wealth on such images. Moreover, men and women make use of these pictures to instruct in the faith their little children and young men and maidens in the bloom of youth and those from heathen nations; by means of these pictures the hearts and minds of men are directed to God.”

<sup>22</sup> Possible reference to the poems that were associated with heretics in the propaganda of their own ideology.

<sup>23</sup> <https://nftu.net/letters-of-pope-st-gregory-ii-731-to-emperor-leo-against-heresy-of-iconoclasm/>, accessed on 26.02.2023.

Christian to follow the example of the depicted object. The icon also has a cathartic role: it purifies the mind and also the eyes which are the gate through which the depicted reality enters the soul. Its didactic function was already universally recognized: “For what writing presents to the unlearned who behold, since in it even the ignorant see what they ought to follow; in it the illiterate read.”<sup>24</sup> The icons depict scenes from the Holy Scripture and from the Holy Tradition. Their motives are often those of the triumph of good over evil, in order for the viewer to be inspired.

John Damascene clearly stated the distinction between the cultic service (*latreia*)<sup>25</sup>, due only to Holy Trinity (the Creator, never to creatures), and that due to superiors or equals as a sign of reverence (*proskynesis*).<sup>26</sup> Regarding the accusations related to the materiality of the icon, he warned about the Manichean character of such an opinion. The identification of matter with something evil was contrary to the biblical Revelation at the end of creation that all that had been made was “very good” (Genesis 1, 31). Moreover, God included matter in the economy of salvation by filling it with His divine energy for transfiguration. In the icon, we honor the saints, the objects of worship, not the material or the substance that was used to create their representation, not the paint, the wood, not the glass itself. The emperor was still honoring the Holy Cross, the Holy Bible, the Holy Tomb of the Lord and John Damascene reminded him that these objects were as material as icons, without bearing the image of the Son of God incarnate and of other saints.<sup>27</sup> John Damascene considered these images of valued addition to these sacred objects. The proof that we do not worship the material substance was that the damaged icons and crosses were burned.<sup>28</sup> Regarding the icons dedicated to the Mother of God and the saints, John Damascene specified that the glorification and the final target of worship was God Himself, Who rests in saints and is honored through their life. The saints are living temples of God. They form His victorious army. Saint Basil the Great said that, just like in the case of the imperial statues, from the visual representation of the icon, “the honor given the image passes to the prototype”.<sup>29</sup>

John Damascene’s writings, had they been known at the time, would have destroyed emperor Leo’s views, which subordinated the icons to the crosses in value, disparaging the formal in favour of the latter.

## 2.2. THE ICONOCLASTIC POLICY OF CONSTANTINE V

Constantine V worsened the iconoclastic heresy by the attempt to impose an iconoclastic theology sanctioned by an ecumenical council.

Based on 19 questions expressed regarding the icons, some of them being aporias<sup>30</sup>, the emperor came to accuse the iconodules of crypto-Monophysitism and crypto-Nestorianism. In his view, the icon and the prototype should have an identity of nature, such

<sup>24</sup> Gregory the Great. *Epistle XIII to Serenus, Bishop of Massilia*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd Series, Vol. XIII. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997, p. 133

<sup>25</sup> St. John of Damascus. *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, III.26, translation and introduction by Andrew Louth. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Press, 2003, p. 102.

<sup>26</sup> St. John of Damascus. *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, III.27, p. 104.

<sup>27</sup> St. John of Damascus. *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, III.34, p. 107-108.

<sup>28</sup> St. John of Damascus. *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, II.19, p. 75.

<sup>29</sup> St. Basil the Great. *On The Holy Spirit*, 16, 45, translation by David Anderson. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Press, 1980, p. 72.

<sup>30</sup> Ioan I. Ică jr. *Canonul Ortodoxiei: Sinodul VII Ecumenic*. [Vol.] 1 *Definind Dogmatic Icoanele (691-810)*, pp. 191-195. These questions will find their due answer only through the works of St. Nicephorus the Confessor and Theodore the Studite, in the time of the second iconoclasm. The latter will clarify the fact that in the icon it is the person/hypostasis who is venerated and not the nature/natures of the one depicted.

as the Son, the natural uncreated icon of God the Father, had with Him. In the opinion of Constantine V, the only icon that fulfilled this requirement was the Eucharist, able to encompass unseparately the two natures of Christ.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the icons painted and venerated were inappropriate to these criteria, so they should be considered idols made by human hands, unsanctified because they were not consecrated by a special prayer. Constantin V considered icons being both material, therefore not consubstantial with the risen and spiritualized Christ, as well as devoid of life and in effected.

Taken by this own understanding of the theology of the icon, Constantine V will take all the steps to formalize it in a council with ecumenical claims met in Hieria in 754 AD, but which did not enjoy the presence of representatives of the Pentarchy. Although, formally, they aligned themselves with the decisions of the other six Ecumenical Councils, the assembly of bishops ended up supporting a “new” Christology.<sup>32</sup> Their doctrine was based on the theological vision of the semi-Arian Eusebius of Caesarea according to which the resurrected Christ was incommensurable.

### ***2.3. THE END OF THE FIRST ICONOCLASM UNDER LEO IV AND THE FIRST TRIUMPH OF THE ICONS AT THE SECOND COUNCIL OF NICAIA***

Without going into details, it must be stated that the iconomach Caesaro-papism established by Leo III and consolidated through a much more subtle and dangerous argumentation by his son Constantine V (741-775), managed to impose itself due to military successes that were interpreted as proof of divine confirmation and support. Despite opposition from the exterior and a few personalities in the monastic world steadfast to the veneration of icons, the Church was dispossessed of the iconographic representations that were mostly banned and destroyed for almost five and a half decades. The few supporters of the icons suffered humiliation, beatings, imprisonment and even martyrdom.

With Leo IV the Khazar, the harsh repressive measures imposed by his father were relaxed, the iconophiles being allowed to return from exile, and some of the monks were accepted for promotion to the episcopate. His death in 780 AD meant that his young son Constantine VI, aged only 9, already associated as co-emperor, succeeded him on the throne under the regency of his mother Irina.

Through Irina, a recognized iconophile, the Church would know for a while the much-desired peace and the restoration of icons through the meeting of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea II in 787 AD. With impeccable diplomacy, having the new patriarch on her side, in the person of Tarasios, former imperial secretary, she would succeed in organizing a council attended by representatives of the five patriarchs. Held between September 24 and October 13, 787 AD, there were seven sessions of communication – the sixth being dedicated to the rejection of the Council of Hieria<sup>33</sup> and the seventh to the formulation of the doctrinal

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<sup>31</sup>Promoting through these ideas a Monophysite spiritualistic ideology, Constantine avoids the Chalcedonian attributes regarding the unmixability and immutability of the divine and human natures in Christ.

<sup>32</sup> The consequences of the new Christology from Hieria were multiple: Christ's Resurrection annulled or suspended the Incarnation in the Hellenistic sense, contrary to what was expressed by Scripture and the Holy Fathers; Christ was implicitly considered, in the Monophysite sense, as being substantially different from us humans, through the deification of His resurrected humanity, uncircumscribable according to his human nature, therefore unrepresentable iconographically; the artificial, material icon was forbidden precisely on the basis of its materiality, in a dualistic, Manichean sense, the only accepted icon being the Eucharist, wrongly understood as different from the Resurrected Christ, although, also, considered to be consubstantial with Him.

<sup>33</sup> The text which rejected of the decision from the Council of Hieria, had been probably composed by Tarasios or a commission under his leadership. Although focused on emphasizing the antiquity of iconography, it nevertheless signaled the slippages of the iconomachs and the lack of relevance of their doctrine. The false opinion that the true, "living" icon is only that which is substantially identical to its original, i.e. the Eucharist

decision. the council represented a first triumph of Orthodoxy over iconoclasm. The main merit was the bold specification of the fact that the icons did not paint the nature/natures of the person represented, but the person, identified by the likeness and the name inscribed on it.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, it was concluded that icons were profoundly Christian, being a confession of the Incarnation of God. It was also argued, and that the transfigured human nature preserves human qualities and, therefore, Christ and the Saints could be depicted in the icons.

## CONCLUSION

From what has been presented so far, regarding the first iconoclasm, we understand that in their writings the iconophiles authors had more of a defensive attitude, without insisting on the mystery of the icon through which God speaks to those who pray with faith. The iconophiles did not argue that the icon was a pretext of seeing God's glory because this idea was not part of the discussion.

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consecrated within the Holy Liturgy, was dismantled, affirming that the Eucharist is not just an icon, but is the very reality of the Body and Blood of Christ.

<sup>34</sup> The Council of Nicaea II ratified the definition of the icon, noting that the icon only bears a resemblance to its prototype. It also specified that the icon does not participate neither in the nature of the prototype nor in its properties, but only shares with it the "name" (homonymy), understood as a distinctive element of the person depicted.