

FROM: CYRIL MANGO. "ICONOCLASM" IN THE ART
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The Iconoclastic Position

Definition (Horos) of the Iconoclastic Council of 754.⁶² *This document begins with a brief account of the Creation; the corruption of man by Lucifer, the inventor of idolatry; the Incarnation, which liberated man from idol-worship; the renewed introduction of idolatry under cover of Christianity; and the first six ecumenical councils which established the doctrine of Christ's two natures and single hypostasis.*

After examining these matters with much care and deliberation ... we have found that the illicit craft of the painter was injurious to the crucial doctrine of our salvation, i.e., the incarnation of Christ, and that it subverted the six ecumenical councils that had been convened by God,⁶³ while upholding Nestorius who divided into two sons the one Son and Logos of God who became man for our sake;⁶⁴ yea, and Arius, too, and Dioscorus and Eutyches and Severus who taught the confusion and mixture of the one Christ's two natures.⁶⁵

⁶¹ A pagan Roman festival in honor of Bacchus which, in spite of ecclesiastical opposition, continued to be celebrated at the court of Constantinople between late November and mid-December.

⁶² Text in Mansi, XIII, 208 ff. This document was read out piecemeal at the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787), each passage being followed by its refutation. See M. V. Anastos, "The Argument for Iconoclasm as Presented by the Iconoclastic Council of 754," *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of A. M. Friend, Jr.* (Princeton, N.J., 1955), pp. 177 ff.

⁶³ Mansi, XIII, 240 C.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 241 E. Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople (428-31), was condemned, rightly or wrongly, for dividing Christ into two persons.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 244 D. These, except for Arius, were Monophysites condemned by the Council of Chalcedon (451) for teaching that Christ had only one nature. Arius is included in this heretical group as having been in some way its precursor.

Wherefore we have considered it proper to demonstrate in detail by the present Definition the error of those who make and reverence [images]. . . .⁶⁶ How senseless is the notion of the painter⁶⁷ who from sordid love of gain pursues the unattainable, namely to fashion with his impure hands things that are believed by the heart and confessed by the mouth!⁶⁸ This man makes an image and calls it Christ: now the name "Christ" means both God and man. Hence he has either included according to his vain fancy the uncircumscritable Godhead in the circumscritption of created flesh,⁶⁹ or he has confused that unconfusable union . . . and in so doing has applied two blasphemies to the Godhead, namely through the circumscritption and the confusion. So also, he who reveres [images] is guilty of the same blasphemies. Both deserve the same condemnation in that they have erred together with Arius, Dioscorus, Eutyches and the heresy of the Acephali.⁷⁰

When they are condemned by the right-minded for having attempted to delineate the incomprehensible and uncircumscritable divine nature of Christ, they resort forsooth to another base excuse, namely that "We paint the image of the flesh alone, which we have seen and touched and with which we have lived;" which is an impiety and an invention of the evil genius of Nestorius.⁷¹ *The bishops go on to state that the flesh of Christ is the flesh of the divine Logos, and the two cannot be separated; the same applies to Christ's soul.*

Granted, therefore, that at the Passion the Godhead remained inseparable from these [i.e., Christ's body and soul], how is it that these senseless men . . . divide the flesh that had been fused with the Godhead and [itself] deified, and attempt to paint a picture as if it were that of a mere man? In so doing they fall into another abyss of lawlessness, namely by severing the flesh from the divinity, and by attributing to the flesh a separate hypostasis and a different person which they claim to represent, for thereby they add a fourth person to the Trinity. . . .⁷² *The only true image of Christ is the bread and wine of the Eucharist as He Himself indicated.*⁷³ On the other hand, the images of false and evil name have

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 245 D.

⁶⁷ There is an untranslatable pun here: *skaiographos* (painter of stupid things) instead of *skiagraphos*.

⁶⁸ Mansi XIII, 248 E.

⁶⁹ The terms "circumscritable" (*perigraptos*) and "uncircumscritable" (*aperigraptos*) have a technical meaning in the Iconoclastic controversy. The former is applied to anything that is finite, bounded and visible, hence admitting of representation; the latter to the infinite and invisible.

⁷⁰ Mansi XIII, 252 A. The Acephali were rigid partisans of Eutyches who resisted the efforts at conciliation between the Monophysites and the Orthodox at the end of the 5th century.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 256 A.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 257 E-260 A.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 261-64.

no foundation in the tradition of Christ, the apostles and the Fathers, nor is there a holy prayer that might sanctify an image, and so transform it from the common to a state of holiness; nay, it remains common and devoid of honor, just as the painter has made it.⁷⁴

*If the above is acceptable insofar as it applies to Christ, in whom two natures were united, a man might still object that the same reasoning was not applicable to the Virgin Mary, the prophets, apostles, and martyrs who were "mere men." To this it may be retorted that once the image of Christ has been abolished, there is no need for the others. In general, Christianity steers a middle course between Judaism and paganism and does not borrow the ritual of either; it abhors the bloody sacrifices and burnt offerings of the Jews as well as the idol-making and idol-worship of the pagans. Men who have no hope of resurrection vainly attempt to represent what is not present as if it were present, but the Church of Christ, which contains no alien elements, rejects such satanic inventions. The saints live with God after their death on earth; to represent them by means of a dead art is to insult them.*⁷⁵

How indeed do they dare depict through the gross art of the pagans the all-praised Mother of God who was overshadowed by the plenitude of divinity, through whom an unapproachable light did shine for us, who is higher than the heavens and holier than the cherubim? Or [the saints] who will reign with Christ, and sit beside Him to judge the world, and share in His glory (of whom Scripture says that the world was not worthy of them)⁷⁶—are they not ashamed to depict them through pagan art? For it is not lawful to Christians who believe in the resurrection to adopt the customs of demon-worshipping gentiles, and to insult by means of inglorious and dead matter the saints who will be adorned with so much glory. Indeed, we do not accept from aliens the proofs of our faith: yea, when the demons addressed Jesus as God, He rebuked them, because He deemed it unworthy that demons should bear testimony concerning Him.⁷⁷

The Horos proceeds to adduce a number of passages from the Bible and from the Fathers (Epiphanius, Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, Basil, Athanasius, Amphilocheus of Iconium, Theodotus of Ancyra, Eusebius) in support of iconoclastic doctrine. This is followed by a number of resolutions:

Let no man dare to pursue henceforth this impious and unholy practice. Anyone who presumes from now on to manufacture an icon, or

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 268 B-C.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 272-76.

⁷⁶ Hebr. 11:38.

⁷⁷ Mansi XIII, 277 C-E. (Cf. Mark 1:25; Luke 4:41.)

to worship it, or to set it up in a church or in a private house, or to hide it, if he be a bishop or a presbyter or a deacon, he shall be deposed; if he be a monk or a layman, he shall be anathematized and deemed guilty under imperial law as a foe of God's commands and an enemy of the doctrines of the Fathers.⁷⁸

This we also decree that no man who has charge of a church of God or a pious establishment shall, on the pretext of diminishing this error of icon [-worship], lay his hands on holy vessels consecrated to God for the purpose of altering them if they happen to have pictures on them,⁷⁹ or on altar-cloths (*endutai*) or other veils or any other object consecrated to the holy ministry lest these be put to waste.⁸⁰ If, however, a man receives from God such ability, and wishes to alter the aforesaid vessels or altar-cloths, he shall not presume to do so without the consent and knowledge of the most-holy and blessed Ecumenical Patriarch and permission of our most-pious and Christ-loving Emperors, lest under this pretext the devil dishonor God's churches; nor shall any dignitary or any of his subordinates, i.e., a member of the laity, under the same pretext lay his hands on the holy churches and sack them, as has been done in the past by certain individuals acting in a disorderly manner.⁸¹

The Horos concludes with a string of anathemas in which the argument against icons is recapitulated.

Definition (Horos) of the Iconoclastic Council of 815⁸²: [5] This Council,⁸³ having confirmed and fortified the divine doctrines of the holy Fathers and followed [the lead of] the six holy Ecumenical Councils, formulated [a set of] most pious canons; [6] wherefore the Church of God remained untroubled for many years and guarded the people in peace; [7] until it chanced that the imperial office passed from [the hands of] men into [those of] a woman, and God's Church was undone by female frivolity; for, guided by most ignorant bishops, she convened a thoughtless assembly,⁸⁴ [8] and put forward the doctrine that the incomprehensible Son and Logos of God should be painted [as He was] during the Incarnation by means of dishonored matter. [9] She also heedlessly stated that lifeless portraits of the most-holy Mother of God and the saints who share in His [i.e., Christ's] form should be set up and worshipped, thereby

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 328 C.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 329 D.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 332 B.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 332 D.

⁸² Preserved in fragments in a treatise of the Patriarch Nicephorus known by the title *Refutatio adversus*. Ed. P. J. Alexander, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VII (1953), 58 ff.

⁸³ The Iconoclastic Council of 754.

⁸⁴ The Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787.

coming into conflict with the central doctrine of the Church.⁸⁵ Further, she confounded our worship (*latreutiké proskunésis*)⁸⁶ by arbitrarily affirming that what is fit for God should be offered to the inanimate matter of icons, [10] and she senselessly dared state that these were filled with divine grace, and by offering them candlelight and sweet-smelling incense as well as forced veneration, she led the simple-minded into error. . . . [14] Wherefore, taking to heart the correct doctrine, we banish from the Catholic Church the unwarranted manufacture of the spurious icons that has been so audaciously proclaimed, [15] impelled as we are by a judicious judgment; nay, by passing a righteous judgment upon the veneration of icons that has been injudiciously proclaimed by Tarasius,⁸⁷ and so refusing it, we declare his assembly invalid in that it bestowed exaggerated honor to painting,⁸⁸ namely, as has already been said, the lighting of candles and lamps and the offering of incense, these marks of veneration being those of worship. [16] We gladly accept, on the other hand, the pious council that was held at Blachernae, in the church of the all-pure Virgin, under the former pious Emperors Constantine and Leo,⁸⁹ a council that was fortified by the doctrine of the Fathers, and in preserving without alteration what was expressed by it, we decree that the manufacture of icons is unfit for veneration and useless. We refrain, however, from calling them idols since there is a distinction between different kinds of evil.

The Orthodox Position

St. John Damascene, *De fide Orthodoxa* IV, 16:⁹⁰ Inasmuch as some people blame us for reverencing and honoring the images of the Saviour, of our Lady and furthermore of the other saints and servants of Christ, they should hearken to [the statement] that in the beginning God made man in His own image.⁹¹ Why is it indeed that we revere each other, if we had not been made in God's image? As the God-inspired Basil, who was learned in things divine, says, "The honor [shown] to the image is conveyed to its prototype."⁹² The prototype is the subject represented

⁸⁵ This repeats the formulation of 754: see p. 165.

⁸⁶ This is the technical term for the veneration that is due only to God. The defenders of icons claimed for the latter a "relative veneration" (*scheitike proskunésis*) as distinct from the "veneration of worship."

⁸⁷ Patriarch of Constantinople (784-806) under whom the Council of 787 was held.

⁸⁸ Literally "to colors."

⁸⁹ The Council of 754.

⁹⁰ PG 94, 1158 ff.

⁹¹ Gen. 1:26.

⁹² See p. 47.

from which the derivative (*paragōgon*) is made.⁹³ Why is it that the Mosaic people worshipped the Tabernacle all round, which contained the image and pattern (*typos*) of heavenly things, or rather of the whole creation? For God said to Moses, "Look that thou make everything after the pattern which was shewed thee in the mount."⁹⁴ And the cherubim that overshadowed the mercy-seat,⁹⁵ were they not made by human hands? And what of the famous temple of Jerusalem? Was it not constructed by human hands and skill?

Divine Scripture condemns those who worshipped works of carving, but also those who sacrificed to the demons. The pagans offered sacrifice, and so did the Jews; but while the pagans sacrificed to demons, the Jews sacrificed to God. And whereas the sacrifice of the pagans was rejected and condemned, that of the righteous was acceptable to God. For Noah offered sacrifice and God smelled a sweet savor,⁹⁶ i.e., He accepted the fragrance of Noah's good will and love towards Him. Thus, the carvings of the pagans are rejected and prohibited because they represented demons.

Furthermore, who is capable of making a likeness of God who is invisible, incorporeal, uncircumscribable and without form? It is an act of extreme folly and impiety to figure God. Hence, the use of images was not practised in [the times of] the Old Testament. But since God, out of His innermost mercy, became truly man on account of our salvation, not as He had been seen in human form by Abraham and the Prophets, but verily a man in substance who lived on earth, conversed with men, worked miracles, suffered, was crucified, arose [from the dead] and was carried up [to heaven]; since all of these things happened truly and were seen by men, they were written down for the remembrance and instruction of us who were not present at the time, so that, though we had not seen, but have heard and believed, we may be deemed worthy of the Lord's blessing.⁹⁷ Since, however, not everyone knows how to read or has leisure for reading, the Fathers saw fit that these things should be represented in images, like deeds of prowess, to serve as brief reminders; for often, when we are not thinking of the Lord's passion, we see the image of the Crucifixion and, being reminded of that salutary passion, we fall to our knees and revere, not the matter, but the One represented; just as we do not adore the matter of the Gospel book or the matter of the cross, but that which is expressed (*ektupōma*) by them. For what is the difference between the cross that does not bear the Lord's representation (*ektupōma*)

⁹³ I.e., the image. In grammatical terminology *prōtotypon* (root word) was the opposite of *paragōgon* (derivative). See, e.g., Dionysius Thrax, *Ars grammatica*, ed. G. Uhlig (Leipzig, 1885), p. 25.

⁹⁴ Exod. 25:40.

⁹⁵ Exod. 25:18.

⁹⁶ Gen. 8:21.

⁹⁷ Cf. John 20:29.

from the one that does? And the same applies to the Mother of God, since the honor done to her is transmitted to Him who took on flesh from her. And likewise the valiant deeds of saints⁹⁸ incite us to courage and zeal and the imitation of their virtue for the glory of God. . . . The tradition is unattested (*agraphos*),⁹⁹ just as that of praying towards the east, adoring the cross and many other similar things.

A story is told that Abgar, the King of Edessa, sent a painter to make a likeness of the Lord and this painter was unable to do so because of the splendor that shone from His face, whereupon the Lord placed a cloth upon His divine and life-giving countenance and impressed upon it His image which he sent to Abgar [to satisfy the latter's] desire.¹⁰⁰

St. John Damascene, *De imag. orat.* III, 16 ff.¹⁰¹ 16. First, what is an image? An image is a likeness, an exemplar or a figure (*ektupōma*) of something, such as to show in itself the subject represented. Surely, the image is not in all respects similar to its prototype, i.e., its subject; for the image is one thing and the subject another, and there is necessarily a difference between them. . . . For example, the image of a man represents the characteristics of his body, but is not endowed with his spiritual faculties: it does not live or think or speak or feel or move a limb. And a son, who is the natural image of his father, is in some ways different from the latter, for he is the son and not the father.

17. Secondly, what is the purpose of an image? Every image is declarative and indicative of something hidden. I mean the following: inasmuch as a man has no direct knowledge of the invisible (his soul being covered by a body), or of the future, or of things that are severed and distant from him in space, being as he is circumscribed by place and time, the image has been invented for the sake of guiding knowledge and manifesting publicly that which is concealed. . . .

18. Thirdly, how many different kinds of images are there? The different kinds of images are these: The first kind is the natural. . . . Thus the first, natural and identical image of the invisible God is the Son of the Father, who exhibits the Father within Himself. . . .

19. The second kind of image is God's knowledge of what will be done by Him, i.e., His will that precedes time. . . . For his notion concerning each particular thing that will occur at His bidding is an image or exemplar of that thing. . . .

20. The third kind of image is the one made by God in the way of imitation, i.e., man. . . .

⁹⁸ I.e., pictures of the deeds of martyrs.

⁹⁹ I.e., the tradition of Christian painting has no scriptural authority.

¹⁰⁰ On the famous Abgar legend, which took shape in the second half of the 6th century, see esp. E. von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder* (Leipzig, 1899), pp. 102 ff.

¹⁰¹ PG 94, 1337 ff.

21. The fourth kind of image is when Scripture invents figures, forms and symbols for invisible and incorporeal things, and the latter are represented in bodily form for the sake of a faint understanding of God and the angels, inasmuch as we are unable to contemplate incorporeal beings without figures that correspond to our comprehension, as stated by Dionysius the Areopagite, a man learned in divine things.¹⁰² It is indeed with good reason that forms of the formless and figures of the figureless have been set before us, namely that our condition is unable to rise directly to the contemplation of intelligible things and is in need of aids appropriate to our nature so as to guide us upwards....

22. The fifth kind of image is said to be the one which represents and delineates the future in advance, as the [burning] bush,¹⁰³ and the dew upon the fleece,¹⁰⁴ and the rod,¹⁰⁵ and the pot [of manna]¹⁰⁶ represented] the Virgin who is also the Mother of God; and as the [brazen] serpent¹⁰⁷ [represented] Him who by means of the cross was to heal the bite of the [other] serpent, the originator of evil; and as the sea, the water and the cloud¹⁰⁸ [represented] the Spirit of baptism.

23. The sixth kind of image serves to record events, be it a miracle or a virtuous deed, for the glorification... of men who have excelled and distinguished themselves in virtue.... This is of two kinds: in the form of speech that is written in books... and in the form of visual contemplation.... So, even now, we eagerly delineate images of the virtuous men of the past for the sake of love and remembrance.

Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787):¹⁰⁹ The making of icons is not the invention of painters, but [expresses] the approved legislation of the Catholic Church. Whatever is ancient is worthy of respect, saith St. Basil, and we have as testimony [first] the antiquity of the institution and [second] the teaching of our inspired Fathers, namely that when they saw icons in holy churches they were gratified, and when they themselves built holy churches they set up icons in them.... The conception and the tradition are therefore theirs and not of the painter; for the painter's domain is limited to his art, whereas the disposition manifestly pertains to the Holy Fathers who built [the churches]. The name "Christ" is indicative of both divinity and humanity—the two perfect natures of the Saviour. Christians have been taught to portray this image in accordance with His visible nature, not according to the one in which He was

¹⁰² E.g., *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, I, 2, PG 3, 373; *De divinis nominibus*, I, 1, *ibid.*, 588, etc.

¹⁰³ Exod. 3:2.

¹⁰⁴ Judges 6:40.

¹⁰⁵ Aaron's rod which budded: Num. 17:8.

¹⁰⁶ Exod. 16:33.

¹⁰⁷ Num. 21:9.

¹⁰⁸ Exod. 14:20 ff.

¹⁰⁹ Mansi XIII, 252.

invisible; for the latter is uncircumscribable and we know from the Gospel that no man hath seen God at any time.¹¹⁰ When, therefore, Christ is portrayed according to His human nature it is obvious that the Christians, as Truth has shown, acknowledge the visible image to communicate with the archetype in name only, and not in nature; whereas these senseless people [the Iconoclasts] say there is no distinction between image and prototype and ascribe an identity of nature to entities that are of different natures. Who will not make fun of their ignorance?

St. Theodore the Studite, *Epist. ad Platonem*:¹¹¹ Every artificial image is a likeness of that whereof it is the image, and it exhibits in itself, by way of imitation, the form (*charaktér*) of its model (*archetypón*), as expressed by Dionysius, learned in divine things: the truth in the likeness, the model in the image, the one in the other, except for the difference of substance. Hence, he who reveres an image surely reveres the person whom the image shows; not the substance of the image, but him who is delineated in it. Nor does the singleness of his veneration separate the model from the image, since, by virtue of imitation, the image and the model are one....

A natural image is one thing, an imitative image is another. The former has no natural difference with respect to its cause, but a difference of person, as the Son with respect to the Father: for the person (*hypostasis*) of the Son is not the same as that of the Father, while their nature is one and the same. The latter, on the other hand, has a difference of nature, but not of person, e.g., the image of Christ with respect to Christ. For the nature of painting (*hulographia*) is different from that of Christ, whereas the person is one and the same, i.e., that of Christ, even when it is delineated in an image.... Now, observe the distinction. In the case of the natural image and its cause, i.e., the Son and the Father, granted that their nature is one and the same, the reverence [due to them] is also one because of the identity of their nature, but not of their person.... Whereas in the case of the imitative picture and its model, i.e., of Christ and Christ's image, granted that the person of Christ is one and the same, the reverence is here, too, the same, because of the identity of person, without regard to the difference of nature between Christ and the image. If, however, we acknowledged that the reverence towards image and model was one, not only because of the identity of person, but also that of nature, we would be disregarding the difference between the image and the person represented... and falling into pagan polytheism by deifying every kind of material which is fashioned into the image of Christ. Thereby we would be giving the iconoclasts an opportunity to accuse us... of revering and honoring many gods, and this with good reason. If,

¹¹⁰ John 1:18.

¹¹¹ PG 99, 500 ff.

on the other hand, we affirmed that the reverence towards image and model rested neither on identity of nature nor of person, we would clearly be severing from the image the might and glory of the model, and so in revering the image of Christ, we would be guilty of manifest idolatry by offering not one reverence, but two. This is what the iconoclasts seek to demonstrate, and by denying that Christ can be circumscribed in the flesh, they are proved to be as impious as those who believed that God came down to earth only by way of appearance and illusion. . . .¹¹² Now a man might also say this: Granted that reverence is adoration (*latreia*), it follows that the image of Christ is adored together with the holy Trinity. This man would appear not to know the different nature of reverence (*proskunésis*), inasmuch as we revere the saints, but do not adore them, neither do we adore those who rule by God's dispensation. Furthermore, he should learn that the reverence is not [directed] to the substance of the image . . . but towards Christ who is revered in His image, while the material of the image remains altogether unrelated to Christ who is revered in it by virtue of similitude. . . . I think that the example of the mirror is appropriate, for in it, too, the spectator's face is, as it were, represented, but the similitude remains outside the material . . . and when he moves away from the mirror, the reflection is simultaneously removed since it has nothing in common with the material of the mirror. The same applies to the material of the image: once the likeness that is visible upon it and towards which the veneration is directed has been obliterated, the material remains without veneration inasmuch as it has no connection whatever with the likeness. Or take the example of a signet ring engraved with the imperial image, and let it be impressed upon wax, pitch and clay. The impression is one and the same in the several materials which, however, are different with respect to each other; yet it would not have remained identical unless it were entirely unconnected with the materials. . . . The same applies to the likeness of Christ irrespective of the material upon which it is represented. . . .

Such, as far as I know, basing myself on the doctrine of the holy Fathers, is the reverence towards the image of Christ. If it is subverted, Christ's incarnation is also subverted; and if the image is not revered, our reverence towards Christ is likewise destroyed.

St. Theodore the Studite, *Epist. I, 17*.¹¹³ *Addressed to the spatharius*¹¹⁴ John. We have heard that your Lordship had done a divine deed and we have marvelled at your truly great faith, O man of God. For my informer tells me that in performing the baptism of your God-guarded child, you had recourse to a holy image of the great martyr Demetrius instead of a

¹¹² Referring to the Docestis heresy.

¹¹³ PG 99, 961.

¹¹⁴ A court dignity.

godfather. How great is your confidence! "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel!"¹¹⁵—this I believe Christ to have said not only at that time to the centurion, but even now to you who are of equal faith. The centurion found what he sought; you, too, have won what you trusted in. In the Gospel the divine command took the place of bodily presence, while here the bodily image took the place of its model; there the great Logos was present in His word and invisibly wrought the incredible miracle through His divinity, while here the great martyr was spiritually present in his own image and so received the infant. These things, being incredible, are unacceptable to profane ears and unbelieving souls, and especially to the iconoclasts; but to your piety clear signs and tokens have been revealed.

St. Theodore the Studite, *Epist. I, 19*.¹¹⁶ *Addressed to Theodoulos the stylite*. Forgive me, Father, for what I am about to say in all simplicity and sincere love. . . . Some persons have charged . . . that your Holiness had been acting in an improper manner. . . . And they have accused you both of certain words and deeds. To give one example, they alleged that you had represented in the windows angels crucified in the form of Christ, and that both Christ and the angels were shown aged.¹¹⁷ Much as I questioned them, I could not contradict them. They said that you had done something foreign and alien to the tradition of the Church, and that this deed was inspired not by God, but surely by the Adversary [i.e., the Devil], seeing that in all the years that have passed no examples of this peculiar subject (*idióma*) have ever been given by any one of the many holy Fathers who were inspired by God.

Nicephorus, *Antirr. III, 3*.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, we affirm that the delineation or representation of Christ was not instituted by us, that it was not begun in our generation, nor is it a recent invention. Painting is dignified by age, it is distinguished by antiquity, and is coeval with the preaching of the Gospel. To put it briefly and emphatically, these sacred representations, inasmuch as they were tokens (*sumbola*) of our immaculate faith, came into existence and flourished as did the faith from the very beginning: undertaken by the apostles, this practice received the approval of the Fathers. For just as these men instructed us in the words of divine religion, so in this respect also, acting in the same manner as those who represent in painting the glorious deeds of the past, they represented the

¹¹⁵ Matt. 8:10.

¹¹⁶ PG 99, 957.

¹¹⁷ For the identification of Christ with an angel in the Patristic period see J. Barbel, *Christos Angelos* (Bonn, 1941). Reflections in Byzantine art: J. Meyendorff, "L'Iconographie de la Sagesse Divine," *Cahiers archéologiques*, X (1959), 266 ff.; S. Der Nersessian, "Note sur quelques images . . . du Christ-ange," *ibid.*, XIII (1962), 209 ff.

¹¹⁸ PG 100, 380.

Saviour's life on earth, as it is made manifest in evangelical Scripture, and this they consigned not only to books,¹¹⁹ but also delineated on panels. . . . Therefore, he who accepts the written account will necessarily accept the pictures (*historia*) as well. . . .

Nicephorus, *Antirr.* III, 36:¹²⁰ And what are we to say concerning the sign of the cross? The very prototype of the cross, if one may so call it, i.e., the venerable and life-giving wood, which is revered by us faithful, they shamefully insult and dishonor. And what do these impious men think of the so-called phylacteries, i.e., the gold and silver objects which have been made by Christians from the very beginning, and which we Christians wear suspended from the neck and hanging down-over the breast for the protection and security of our lives . . . for which reason they have received their name . . . and upon which the passion and miracles of Christ and His life-giving resurrection are often represented, which objects are found in countless number among Christians? Instead of preserving them, they abominate them; instead of seeking them, they avoid them.

***Epist. synod. patr. Orient.* 6:**¹²¹ The holy apostles, who "from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word,"¹²² even as they had heard and seen and their hands had handled the Word of life,¹²³ so they adorned the holy Church with painted pictures and mosaics representing the likeness of Christ, the God-man, and this before they had written the God-inspired Gospels. *The Gospel of Matthew was written eight years after the Ascension; that of Mark ten years after, that of Luke fifteen years after, that of John sixty-two years after.* Hence the custom of making pictures in churches is earlier [than the Gospels] and, using the painter's colors as a book,¹²⁴ they delineated the heavenly salutation of the archangel Gabriel to the holy Virgin Mary at Nazareth; the Saviour's holy Nativity at Bethlehem; the angelic vision accorded to the shepherds who beheld with their eyes the incarnate God; the Infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes, reclining in the manger, with animals standing by; the star guiding the Magi versed in astronomy; the royal gifts¹²⁵ brought by them to the new-born babe; Symeon receiving Him in his holy arms and the testimony of the righteous Anna; the Saviour's holy Baptism by the angelic John; the descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove

¹¹⁹ Referring presumably to illuminated manuscripts of the Gospels.
¹²⁰ PG 100, 483.

¹²¹ Ed. Duchesne, pp. 273 ff. Cf. the Life of St. Pancratius of Taormina (p. 137) which also claims an apostolic origin for the New Testament picture cycle.

¹²² Luke 1:2.

¹²³ I John 1:1.

¹²⁴ The Greek text, as printed, is ungrammatical and possibly corrupt.
¹²⁵ Emending *doruphorian*, as printed in the edition, to *dorophorian*.

upon the one baptized; the manifestation of the wondrous and divine miracles of the Saviour; His willing and salutary sufferings; the supernatural and life-giving Resurrection after three days, the slaying of Death, the destruction of Hades and the fall of the devil; the holy women who brought unguents seeing the Saviour with their eyes and touching His immaculate feet; His apparition to the disciples who witnessed God; Thomas touching the divine chest from which life flowed forth, the immaculate hands and feet, and offering homage [to the Lord]; the Saviour's Ascension on the holy Mount of Olives; and likewise the subsequent incredible miracles of the apostles performed thanks to the visitation upon them of the Holy Ghost in the form of fiery tongues.