

Gregory III in Rome denounced and excommunicated him but Leo had very little influence in the west in a military sense and it was mostly a word battle with the pope

A council meeting in Constantinople in 754 banned the veneration of images, bowing before pictures, etc. In so doing it went contrary to the expressions of most of the theologians of both the Grecian and Western church where the views of John of Damascus were more commonly followed. (The idea being that one does not worship the icon...it is merely an aid in giving us a concrete representation...and, since the Lord in particular had a real body, the concrete representation of it cannot be wrong if the body were not wrong.) The vast majority of the church certainly held that recognition of merit given by God in the life of a saint did not constitute worship of the saint. (Although this picture was very quickly changing in the way it was gripped by the average man.)

2. The Council Action

At Nicaea in 787 a very ecumenical council was joined in that all but monophysites were there. They spoke against the ideas of Leo and the decision of 754 and gave the following creed...well, this extract of it at least.

*Those, therefore who dare to think or teach otherwise, or as wicked heretics to spurn the traditions of the church and to invent some novelty, or else to reject some of those things which the church hath received (e.g. the Book of the Gospels, or the Image of the Cross, or the pictorial icons, or the holy reliques of our martyr,) or evilly and sharply devise anything subversive of the lawful traditions of the Catholic Church or to turn to common uses the sacred vessels or the venerable monasteries, if they be bishops or clerics, we command that they be disposed; if religious or laics, that they be cut off from communion.*

The discussion in the Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. XIV, Series Two, page 526, ff, will help the interested student see what the church thought it was doing in the "worship of pictures.

3. Result

Actually much of the church had never given up the icon usage and so was enabled to continue. The eastern church remained less vociferous in "standing statues" but maintained the iconology of bas-reliefs and pictures. There was a western synod at Frankfurt (810) that contradicted the

*John of Damascus -  
greatest defense of icons.*