

When you have come to this point you have come to the pinnacle of orthodox understanding on this particular point. What will happen from now on in the course of historical theology will be the offering of suggestions and helps in making the doctrine more visible or in removing some of the intrigue that tends to make it mysterious. This program is of interest to us as it helps sharpen the statements but it is also one fraught with the possibility of error and for every meaningful contribution I suppose there are four or five wild teachings that we could better live without.

D. Later Developments in Theology Proper

1. The icon question

An icon is an image or a resemblance. Icons in the church are chiefly pictures..in the eastern church and often statues ..in the western church. (Sorry about that syntax..it is easier to go on than to correct it.) Often the picture is illuminated or highlighted. The great difficulty came with pictures of the Deity and representative deity scenes involving people from the life of Jesus.

a. The Problem

Following 640 AD the Islamic forces constituted the greatest single threat to the churches and governments of the east. Leo the Isaurian (717-741) had some success in defeating the Arab forces but felt that he could avoid much of the problem if he eliminated "idolatry" from the Christian practices of religion in the east. He had in mind to remove as much as possible picture, statues, etc., from all churches since the Muslim tended to think of these things as images and were inflamed by them in their anti-idolatry kick. The objects (icons) were popular throughout the religious world but had reached art form perfection in the east and the general idea of iconism is that of having sacred pictures, etc., as aids in worship.

In 726 Leo banned all idols, images, statues, pictures, etc., in the eastern churches and had his army remove them. Many were taken by their patrons and concealed in places such as St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai...perhaps a clue as to how the scroll treasure troves, etc., came to be there. Gregory III of Rome denounced Leo and placed him under excommunication but Leo had little influence in the west and vice-versa so it was mostly a word-war with the Pope.

A council meeting in Constantinople in 754 banned the veneration of images, bowing before pictures, and such things. In so doing it went contrary to the expressions of most of the theologians of both the Grecian and Roman communities. The views of John of Damascus were more commonly