

## ICONS: VISIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD?

In recent years, icons have captured the imagination of many Christians and non-Christians alike. The Eastern Orthodox Church is well known for its use of icons. This paper examines the history, purpose, and use of icons and asks the question: are they contrary to the Scripture?

A pictorial<sup>1</sup> icon<sup>2</sup> is an image (generally two dimensional) intended to depict the Lord Jesus Christ, angels, Orthodox saints, biblical history, and events in the history of the Orthodox Church.<sup>3</sup> Icons are an important part of an Orthodox family's personal and church life. An Orthodox home will usually have at least one icon on a wall,<sup>4</sup> and Orthodox churches contain a profusion of icons, as Bishop Timothy Ware<sup>5</sup> informs us:

“Orthodox churches are full of icons on the screen, on the walls, in special shrines, or on a kind of desk where they can be venerated by the faithful. When Orthodox people enter a church, their first action will be to buy a candle, go up to an icon, cross themselves, kiss the icon, and light the candle in front of it.”<sup>6</sup>

For the visitor to an Eastern Orthodox church, the initial sight of the icons, and the veneration afforded to them, can seem strange and slightly confusing; it is like stepping into another world. The Orthodox Church believes icons are a point of meeting between heaven and earth, and that taken together they form an image of the Kingdom of God.<sup>7</sup> Surrounded by these icons, the Orthodox congregation believes that they have a sense of “heaven on earth.”<sup>8</sup> How did these icons come to be in the Orthodox Church?

### Orthodox Iconic History

The presence of icons in the Orthodox Church has a long history; Orthodox tradition holds that the practice of painting icons began with Luke the gospel writer:

“According to tradition, Luke the Evangelist painted the image of the Mother of God; and, also according to tradition, there still exist today many Icons which were painted by him.”<sup>9</sup>

The Catacombs of Italy also contain sarcophagi and wall art, which are considered by the Orthodox Church to be an iconographic link that stretches back to the early church era. As Leonid Ouspensky, who was a leading Orthodox iconographic expert, says:

---

<sup>1</sup> In Orthodox theology, the scope of the concept of an icon is more extensive than just pictorial icons; for example: “Orthodoxy regards the Bible as a verbal icon of Christ, the seventh Ecumenical Council laying down that the Holy Icons and the Book of the Gospels should be venerated in the same way. ...Because she or he is an icon of God, each member of the human race, even the most sinful, is infinitely precious in God's sight.” (Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church: New Edition* (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 201, 221.)

<sup>2</sup> “εἰχών-image, portrait” (Leonid Ouspensky, Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons* (Crestwood: SVS Press, 1994) p. 25.)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/general/icon\\_faq.aspx](http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/general/icon_faq.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> In Orthodox homes, the eastern corner of a centrally located room is always dedicated to the display of icons. ([http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/general/orth\\_icon.aspx](http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/general/orth_icon.aspx))

<sup>5</sup> Bishop Timothy Ware is also known as Bishop Kallistos Ware.

<sup>6</sup> Ware, p. 271. Timothy Ware is also known as Bishop Kallistos Ware.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 272.

<sup>9</sup> Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco, *A Discourse in Iconography* ([http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/general/icon\\_discourse.aspx](http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/general/icon_discourse.aspx))

“The themes of the catacomb paintings, beginning with the 1st and 2nd centuries... These paintings correspond to the sacred texts, biblical, liturgic and patristic.”<sup>10</sup>

A further ancient witness to the practice of icon painting, referred to by Orthodox writers and councils, is the fourth century “Church Father” Basil,<sup>11</sup> who sought to encourage the artists who painted the martyrs.<sup>12</sup> As the centuries progressed, icons were increasingly incorporated into the worship of the Orthodox Church leading to their recognition in the last two of the historic Seven Ecumenical Councils. Icons are first mentioned at the penultimate Council of Trullo<sup>13</sup> in A.D. 692,<sup>14</sup> and their veneration (*proskuneō*)<sup>15</sup> received official approval at the Seventh and last Ecumenical Council, the Second Council of Nicea (A.D. 787).<sup>16</sup> During the eighth and ninth centuries, a dispute over the issue of icons raged in the Orthodox Church over the issue of icons.<sup>17</sup> Those who opposed the use of icons were termed Iconoclasts, and those who promoted the use of icons were sometimes called Iconodules. The Orthodox writer most associated with the defense of the use of icons, during the early period of the Iconoclastic controversy, was John of Damascus (A.D. 675-749).<sup>18</sup> During the later and final phase of the Iconoclastic controversy, Theodore of Stoudios (A.D. 759-826) defended the Iconodules in the dispute.<sup>19</sup> The controversy came to an end in A.D. 843 when the Empress Theodora reinstated icons. This event is commemorated every year in the Orthodox Church, by the special service called “the Triumph of Orthodoxy”.<sup>20</sup> Since the time of the Second Council of Nicea, the Eastern Orthodox Church’s doctrinal stance on icons had largely been finalized and remains essentially unchanged until the present day.

### The Fractured History of Icons

In his study of icons, Ouspensky makes the following comments:

“Icons used for prayer (*εἰχών*-image, portrait) that date from the first centuries of Christianity have not reached us, but we know of them both from Church Tradition and from historical evidence.”<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Ouspensky et al., p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> “Basil was born in A.D. 329 and died in A.D. 379.” See: Blomfield Jackson, Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series* Vol. 8, (Albany: AGES Software, 1997), (Prolegomena, Sketch Of The Life And Works Of Saint Basil) pp. 6-8.

<sup>12</sup> “Up, I charge you, ye famous painters of the martyrs’ struggles! Adorn by your art the mutilated figure of this officer of our army! I have made but a sorry picture of the crowned hero. Use all your skill and all your colors in his honor.” (Ibid. p. 102.)

<sup>13</sup> See: Canon 82, p. 762. The Canons Of The Council In Trullo (Henry R. Percival, Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series* Vol. 14, (Albany: AGES Software, 1997), (The Seven Ecumenical Councils, The Quinisext Council))

<sup>14</sup> The Council in Trullo in 692 took place in Constantinople. Eastern bishops took part in it, and they passed disciplinary canons to complete the work of the Fifth and the Sixth Ecumenical Councils and, thus, it is known as the Fifth-Sixth (*Quinisext* or *Penthekti*). (<http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article7116.asp>)

<sup>15</sup> Προσκυνέω *proskuneō*: in the NT by *kneeling* or *prostration to do homage* (to one) or *make obeisance*, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication (Thayers, p 548); *proskuneō* (Προσκυνέω, 4352) “to make obeisance, do reverence to” (from *pros*, “towards” and *Kuneō*, “to kiss”), is the most frequent word rendered “to worship.” (Vine, Unger, White, *Vines Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), p. 686.

<sup>16</sup> (Percival et al, The Decree of the Holy, Great, Ecumenical Synod, The Second of Nice, p. 1032.)

<sup>17</sup> Ware, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. For example the “Apologia Against Those Who Decry Holy Images.”

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ouspensky et al., p. 25.

The tradition, of Luke painting the first icons, is difficult for the Orthodox Church to prove and remains unsubstantiated, as Ouspensky tacitly admits. Ouspensky's book was published in 1952; more recent investigations on the origin of "Christian" art and icons has revealed the following:

"The theoretical *terminus a quo* (starting point) for Christian art - the beginning of the third century - is now generally accepted by scholars, although earlier art historians tended to date the inception of Christian art as early as the end of the first or beginning of the second century."

"In fact, the first significant examples of Christian image-making, the very basis for setting the beginning date, are frescoes on the walls of the Christian catacombs along the Via Appia Antica in Rome itself. The oldest of these tunnel-like burial grounds, the Catacomb of Callistus, was named for an early bishop of Rome (c.217-22) who, while still a deacon of the church, was put in charge of this first subterranean Christian cemetery."<sup>22</sup>

Since there is no provable, existing Christian art before the third century<sup>23</sup> then it is highly questionable to assert that icons were used and venerated by the early church. Amongst the early "Church Fathers," there were those who opposed attempts to picture God by artwork. An example of this is found in the treatise called the first apology, by Justin Martyr who was martyred in A.D. 165:<sup>24</sup>

"For why must we tell you who already know, what the craftsmen fashion their material into, by planning and cutting, casting and hammering? And often out of vessels used for dishonorable purposes, by merely changing the form, and making an image of the appropriate shape, they make what they call gods. We consider this not only irrational, but to be even insulting to God, who, though of ineffable glory and form, yet has His name set upon things which are corruptible and need to be cared for."<sup>25</sup>

Similar objections are found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria<sup>26</sup> and Eusebius, the early church historian and Bishop of Caesarea. Eusebius lived in the third and fourth centuries,<sup>27</sup> and by his time icons of the Lord Jesus Christ had begun to appear<sup>28</sup>. Eusebius'

---

<sup>22</sup> Robin Margaret Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 13, 20.

<sup>23</sup> "Early Christian art and architecture is the art produced by Christians or under Christian patronage from about the year 200 to about the year 500. Prior to 200, there is no surviving art that can be called Christian with certainty." ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early\\_Christian\\_art\\_and\\_architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Christian_art_and_architecture))

<sup>24</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1988), p.127.

<sup>25</sup> Leslie William Barnard, St. Justin Martyr, *The First and Second Apologies*, 9 (Ancient Christian Writers), (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1997), pp. 27-28

<sup>26</sup> Clement of Alexandria lived in the second and third centuries A.D. A quote from his work, the *Stromata*, is as follows: "It were indeed ridiculous, as the philosophers themselves say, for man, the plaything [3545] of God, to make God, and for God to be the plaything [3546] of art; since what is made is similar and the same to that of which it is made, as that which is made of ivory is ivory, and that which is made of gold golden. Now the images and temples constructed by mechanics are made of inert matter; so that they too are inert, and material, and profane; and if you perfect the art, they partake of mechanical coarseness. Works of art cannot then be sacred and divine." (Translated by Rev. William Wilson, *The Stromata, or Miscellanies*, Clement of Alexandria, Book VII, Chapter V. (<http://mb-soft.com/believe/txv/clemenaj.htm>))

<sup>27</sup> "Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (265-340)..." (Ouspensky et al., p. 25.)

<sup>28</sup> Reference is made by Orthodox authors [Ouspensky et al. p. 25.] to Eusebius describing a statue of Christ and the woman with the issue of blood; this statue is now considered to have no connection with the Lord Jesus as the following quote shows: "EUSEBIUS, writing before 323, claimed to have seen a statue of Christ healing the woman with an issue of blood... The Statue probably existed, as it is mentioned by other writers, but it is inherently unlikely that it represented the miracle and it is generally believed that what he saw was a Roman

antagonism towards icons is well known to Orthodox writers.<sup>29</sup> Arthur Cushman McGiffert,<sup>30</sup> in his introduction to the Church History of Eusebius, comments on Eusebius' letter to Constantia Augusta.<sup>31</sup>

“Constantia had written to Eusebius requesting him to send her a certain likeness of Christ of which she had heard. Eusebius, in this epistle, rebukes her, and speaks strongly against the use of such representations on the ground that it tends toward idolatry.”<sup>32</sup>

It is also interesting that the Roman Emperor Constantine made an oration in which he opposed images of God:

“...not knowing that that which is truly blessed and incorruptible needs no distinction which perishable men can give: for that Being, who is seen by the mental eye, and conceived by the intellect alone, requires to be distinguished by no external form, and admits no figure to represent its character and likeness”<sup>33</sup>

During the fourth and fifth century, popular devotion to saints, relics, and icons grew. It is interesting to note that this popular devotion was not universally accepted; John Cassian, a contemporary “Church Father,” had no regard for such things:

“But in Cassian’s lifetime the devotion of the common people grew very attached to cult objects. In the congregation they thought about saints, and relics, and images, and icons, and dust from saints’ tombs, and methods to secure the power of the dead saints, and outward rituals effective with saints. And when we consider Cassian’s Conferences in this light, we find – nothing. An entire range of a common people’s superstition is missing from his outlook, more absent than in his contemporary Saint Augustine.”<sup>34</sup>

Bishops were amongst those who were concerned with the spread of images. The Episcopal opposition to icons was expressed individually, as in the case of Eusebius, and also collectively in councils. Canon 36 of the council of Elvira (A.D. 306) forbade pictures being placed in church buildings,<sup>35</sup> and the Council of Hieria (A.D. 754)<sup>36</sup> condemned the making and venerating of pictorial icons.<sup>37</sup>

---

conqueror receiving the surrender of a city or province, personified as a woman.” (Peter Murray, Linda Murray, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 104.)

<sup>29</sup> “Eusebius’ testimony is all the more valuable since he was personally very antagonistic to icons.” Ouspensky et al., p. 25.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur Cushman McGiffert does not belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church.

<sup>31</sup> “*To Constantia Augusta*, the sister of Constantine and wife of Licinius.” (Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Philip Schaff, D.D, Henry Wace, *The Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series, Volume 1, The Church History Of Eusebius, Prolegomena, Epistles*, (Albany: Ages Software, 1997) Chapter 2, p. 84.)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Cushman et al., *The Oration Of The Emperor Constantine, Which He Addressed “To The Assembly Of The Saints,”* Chapter 4, p. 822

<sup>34</sup> Colm Luibheid, Owen Chadwick, John Cassian, *Conferences*, Introduction (The Classics of Western Spirituality), (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 22.

<sup>35</sup> The decree against icons is found in Canon 36: “Pictures are not to be placed in churches, so that they do not become objects of worship and adoration”

(<http://faculty.cua.edu/pennington/Canon%20Law/ElviraCanons.htm>)

<sup>36</sup> “Constantine V. ... called an iconoclastic council in Constantinople in 754, which was to be the seventh oecumenical council, but was afterwards disowned as a pseudo-synod of heretics.” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* Volume 4, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006, p. 457.)

<sup>37</sup> (Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 155.)

It seems that icons and other images were gradually introduced into the Eastern Orthodox Church and were opposed for at least five hundred years. A pertinent question, which could be asked at this point, is: does this dispute over icons really matter? As the paper progresses we hope to show that it does matter, by examining the attitude of the Orthodox Church to its icons and seeing what God's word, the Bible, has to say on this matter.

### Icons as a Bridge to Paganism

“An icon is not simply a religious picture designed to arouse appropriate emotions in the beholder; it is one of the ways whereby God is revealed to us. Through icons the Orthodox Christian receives a vision of the spiritual world.”<sup>38</sup>

Bishop Ware's quote postulates that icons provide a “vision of the spiritual world.” But what are we really seeing when we look at an icon? Leonid Ouspensky provides an insight into the origins of icons in art of the catacombs:

“Separate symbols were used not only from Old and New Testaments (lamb, good shepherd, fish...) but also from pagan mythology, as for instance, Cupid and Psyche, Orpheus, etc. In using these myths, Christianity re-establishes their true and profound meaning, filling them with new content. In other words, Christianity selects and adopts from the pagan world all there was of its own, that is, all that was ‘Christian before Christ’ ...”<sup>39</sup>

Artwork portraying pagan idols was adapted in an attempt to portray biblical truth. What do the Scriptures say on this matter? Paul, the Apostle, reminds the church at Corinth:

*“And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”*<sup>40</sup>

As the centuries progressed, the ongoing selective incorporation of elements of paganism into the Orthodox Church developed into universal Christianized Neoplatonism. Historian, and later Eastern Orthodox convert, Jaroslav Pelikan, remarked on the culmination of this tendency in the eighth century Iconodule Orthodox Church:

“But what carried the day—in addition to the dramatic changes of political fortune represented by the accession of the empress Irene as regent in 780, and again by that of the empress Theodora in 842—was a method that moved from the writings of the great Cappadocian fathers of the fourth century (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianzus) to the universal principles of their Christianized Neoplatonism. One of the most important of these principles was, of course, the relation between the particulars of sense-experience and universal Forms. That Principle, applied to the images by means of the analogy of the incarnation, justified the images in a situation where the explicit evidence of the tradition, and whatever that evidence seemed to assume or imply, seemed to oppose them.”<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Ware, p. 206.

<sup>39</sup> Ouspensky et al., p. 27.

<sup>40</sup> II Corinthians 6:15-16

<sup>41</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (Bingham, Vail-Ballou Press, 1984), pp. 77-78.

Eastern Orthodoxy's gradual acceptance of Greek philosophical thought, and its sanctioning of the popular attachment to cultic objects, led to the universal adoption of icons by the ninth century.

Christianized Neoplatonic thinking in the Eastern Orthodox Church has enabled it to work with the "world" and accept its pagan methods, as Ouspensky says:

"Therefore what the Church accepts from the world is determined not by the needs of the Church but by those of the world, for in this participation of the world in building the Kingdom of God (depending, of course, on its free will) lies the principal meaning of its existence."<sup>42</sup>

This raises a question; does the world have any place in the Kingdom of God? The Lord Jesus Christ answers this question: "*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"<sup>43</sup> Thus, for a man to enter into the kingdom of God, he must be reborn by the Spirit of God, as the Scriptures show: "*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*"<sup>44</sup> The world is an enemy of God; the Lord warns his people that they are unfaithful to him if they are friends of the World: "*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*"<sup>45</sup>

It is a sad fact that icons have all too often given the Eastern Orthodox Church a vision, not of heavenly things, but of paganism.

### **Icons of Christ**

The seventh century Council of Trullo paved the way for the embedding of icons of Christ into the Orthodox Church,<sup>46</sup> by issuing Canon 82, which says:

"In order therefore that "that which is perfect" may be delineated to the eyes of all, at least in colored expression, we decree that the figure in human form of the Lamb who taketh away the sin of the world, Christ our God, be henceforth exhibited in images, instead of the ancient lamb, 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 our memory his conversation in the flesh, his passion and salutary death, and his redemption which was wrought for the whole world."<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Ouspensky et al., p. 28.

<sup>43</sup> John 3:3

<sup>44</sup> John 3:5

<sup>45</sup> James 4:4

<sup>46</sup> "The relationship between art and Orthodoxy as expressed by the Council of Trullo was, then, two-fold. For the first time, representation was sufficiently important to the church that legislation about it was drafted. This legislation provides the earliest indication of the development of a Byzantine theory of images, a theology of icons." (Leslie Brubaker, Edited by Andrew Louth & Augustine Casiday, *Byzantine Orthodoxies*, Papers from the Thirty-sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Durham, 23-25 March 2002 (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 98.)

<sup>47</sup> Percival et al (The Seven Ecumenical Councils, The Canons Of The Council In Trullo) Canon 82, p. 762

This legislation mandated the replacement of symbolic icons of Christ with more literal attempts at picturing the Lord Jesus.<sup>48</sup> There is a problem with these images; archaeological evidence indicates that the earliest “virtual” images of Christ are separated by two centuries from their subject. Also, the appearance of some of these images differed substantially from the later “Byzantine” format, as the following article from the “Oxford Companion to Christian Art” shows:

“Not until much later did representations of Christ’s person begin to appear, in the CATACOMBS, on SARCOPHAGI, and at DURA-EUROPOS, c.232/56. At this time there emerged the two versions of Christ’s person which may be called Greek (or Hellenistic) and Oriental. The Greek version is a young man, beardless and with short curly hair, so that Christ as the Good SHEPHERD is easily confused with HERMES Kriophoros or even Orpheus. The mosaic recently discovered under St Peter’s shows Christ as the Sun-God Helios... At about the same time, however, there emerged the figure of Christ as Teacher, based on pagan sarcophagi showing bearded philosophers, seated and teaching from a scroll. This type, bearded and older-looking, developed into the Oriental Christ-type, with an austere face, staring eyes, a full, pointed beard, and long dark hair. This is the type which was standard in Byzantium after the ICONOCLASTIC period...”<sup>49</sup>

Images purporting to be of Christ Jesus have varied with time; this raises the question: which one is the true likeness? Evidently, the images are based on models taken from the surrounding culture. Because the Orthodox Church endorses the use of “images and forms drawn from the material world to transmit the revelation of the Divine world,”<sup>50</sup> then it is faced with a problem: cultural fashions change. God does not change, as the Bible says: “*For I am the LORD, I change not...*”<sup>51</sup> The Scriptures do not give a detailed physical description of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why should an artist attempt to do so?

According to Orthodox theology, icons are integrally connected with the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Bishop John at the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the Iconoclasts, in denying images of Christ Jesus, were denying the truth of the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus:

“John, the most reverend bishop and legate of the Eastern high priests said: This heresy is the worst of all heresies. Woe to the iconoclasts! It is the worst of heresies, as it subverts the incarnation (oikonomian) of our Savior.”<sup>52</sup>

The Iconodule<sup>53</sup> party fought to protect the truth of the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus.<sup>54</sup> But, the Iconodule stance of the Orthodox Church has a number of problems connected with it; firstly, the Iconoclast Council did not deny the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the

---

<sup>48</sup> “First of all, this rule is an answer to the situation which existed at that time, namely, that in Church practice, side by side with historical representations, symbols replacing the human image of God were still used.” (Ouspensky et al., p. 29.)

<sup>49</sup> Peter Murray, Linda Murray, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 103-104.

<sup>50</sup> Ouspensky et al., p. 30.

<sup>51</sup> Malachi 3:6

<sup>52</sup> Percival et al., (The Seven Ecumenical Councils: Extracts From The Acts Session 1), p. 1007.

<sup>53</sup> By 787 the Iconodule (pro-image) party became dominant... (Geanakoplos, p. 156.)

<sup>54</sup> “Defending the icon in the period of iconoclasm, the Church was not defending merely its educational role, and, still less, its aesthetic value; it was fighting for the very foundations of the Christian faith, the visible testimony of God become man, as the basis of our salvation.” Ouspensky et al, p. 34.

following extract from its definition shows: “If anyone does not confess that one of the Trinity was made flesh, let him be anathema.”<sup>55</sup> Clearly the Iconoclastic Council did not deny the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. Secondly, a phrase from John of Damascus is used by Orthodox writers to justify the Orthodox Councils defense of icons: “I have seen the human image of God, and my soul is saved”<sup>56</sup> This is a most unfortunate quotation, especially since it seems to associate a person’s salvation with seeing an image of the Lord Jesus. The Scriptures say otherwise:

*“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”*<sup>57</sup>

Here the Lord describes the blessedness of the Christian who has not seen Him in the flesh and yet has believed.<sup>58</sup> The Scriptures speak of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God...*”<sup>59</sup> Of what use, then, is an imaginary image of the Lord Jesus Christ for Christians today who are likewise blessed?

Concerning the issue of connecting icons with the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, Bishop Ware states the following Eastern Orthodox stance:

“God took a material body, thereby proving that matter can be redeemed: ‘The Word made flesh has deified the flesh,’ said John of Damascus. God has ‘deified’ matter, making it ‘spirit bearing’: and if flesh has become a vehicle of the Spirit, then so – though in a different way – can wood and paint.”<sup>60</sup>

“What does the Bible say on this subject? The Lord Jesus Christ is fully man and fully God,<sup>61</sup> he is perfect and sinless; as the Scriptures say: “...*because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth...*”<sup>62</sup> According to Eastern Orthodox logic, if our flesh is redeemed by deification, then it should be able to enter into the kingdom of God, but it cannot, as Scripture shows: “*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*”<sup>63</sup> The Lord Jesus’ human flesh is fully perfect, all other flesh since Adam’s rebellion was and is fully fallen. We should both love and worship Him as our divine Savior who gave his perfect humanity as our sacrificial substitute to satisfy God’s righteous judgment of our sin. He is God with us. We are able to love and adore Him because He first loved us. We will take on his perfection as we believe on Him alone. His righteousness becomes our righteousness when we are lives are hid in Him. We will, however, never take on deity. As God, He will not share His deity with another. Furthermore, even the flesh of a Christian is corrupt, as Paul the Apostle says: “*For I know*

---

<sup>55</sup> Percival et al, (The Seven Ecumenical Councils: Epitome Of The Definition Of The Iconoclastic Conciliabulum, Held In Constantinople, A.D. 754.), p. 1023.

<sup>56</sup> Ouspensky et al., p. 34.

<sup>57</sup> John 20:29

<sup>58</sup> “*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*” (I Peter 1:7-9)

<sup>59</sup> Ephesians 2:8

<sup>60</sup> Ware, p. 33.

<sup>61</sup> “*Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men...*” (Philippians 2:6-7)

<sup>62</sup> 1 Peter 2:21-22

<sup>63</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:50

*that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing...*<sup>64</sup> The hope of the Christian is the redemption<sup>65</sup> of our body in the resurrection:

*“And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”*<sup>66</sup>

There is no record in the Scriptures of paintings (icons) of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>67</sup> There is no scriptural support for icons being used as a medium (Greek: mesitēs<sup>68</sup>) to commune with the Son of God - the Lord Jesus Christ - and God the Father. There is only one mediator between man and God as the Scripture says:

*“For there is one God, and one mediator [mesitēs] between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...”*<sup>69</sup>

## Reverence for the Saints

Eastern Orthodox saints are very important to the Orthodox Church and the daily lives of its people. Bishop Ware portrays this very well:

*“Reverence for the saints is closely bound up with the veneration of icons. ... These ever-present icons act as a point of meeting between the living members of the Church and those who have gone before. Icons help Orthodox to look on the saints not as remote and legendary figures from the past, but as contemporaries and personal friends. At baptism an Orthodox is given the name of a saint... Orthodox have a special devotion to the saint whose name they bear; usually they keep an icon of their patron saint in their room and daily ask for his or her intercessions.”*<sup>70</sup>

For the Orthodox Church, veneration of icons and worship of the saints are closely connected, as Ouspensky notes:

*“The outcome of this organic link, which exists in the Orthodox Church, between the veneration of icons and the worship of saints. It also explains the care with which every external feature of a saint is preserved. Thanks to this the iconography of saints is distinguished by extraordinary stability.”*<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Romans 7:18

<sup>65</sup> *“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”* (Romans 8:23)

<sup>66</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:49-54

<sup>67</sup> Icons of Christ Jesus are becoming increasingly popular with Christians; many reason that the Lord can be pictured, because it is only Christ's humanity that is being portrayed, not his divinity. This thinking separates the Lord Jesus Christ's humanity from His divinity. This is a false Christ.

<sup>68</sup> μεσίτης (mesitēs): one who intervenes between two, either in order to make or restore peace and friendship, or to form a compact, or for ratifying a covenant a medium of communication, arbitrator (Joseph Henry Thayer, D.D., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), p. 401.

<sup>69</sup> 1 Timothy 2:5

<sup>70</sup> Ware, pp. 256-257.

<sup>71</sup> Ouspensky et al., p. 36.

The Orthodox tradition of icon painting seeks to preserve every external feature of the person represented; but how can this be achieved in the case of saints such as John the Baptist?<sup>72</sup> The only verifiable description we have of John is the general physical description found in the Bible. Any icon an artist paints of John must add details, which are not described in the Scripture. Therefore, it would seem, Orthodox tradition approves of imaginary constructions. The Orthodox Church recognizes this problem as the following quote demonstrates:

“...the Orthodox Church has never accepted the painting of their icons from the imagination of the artist... for this would involve a complete and conscious rupture with the prototype... In order to avoid invention, and a rupture between the image and the prototype, iconographers paint from ancient icons and make use of aids.”<sup>73</sup>

As has been shown earlier in this paper there is no provable link between the oldest icons (which are third century) and the original biblical persons. The problem becomes even more acute when one considers the icons of Old Testament saints, such as the fifteenth century icon of “The Holy Prophet Elijah in the Desert.”<sup>74</sup> Where is the original image for the artist to model his icon? There is no record of the Jewish people painting or carving images of Elijah. It seems apparent that the Eastern Orthodox Church has accepted imaginary icons.

The Bible gives no examples of the Lord approving prayer to dead “saints” or seeking the intercession of departed “saints” or angels. There is only one intercessor between God the Father and His children, that is: God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Scriptures say: “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...*”<sup>75</sup> The Lord Jesus Christ has promised the Christian: “...*that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*”<sup>76</sup>

## **Guardian Angels**

In Eastern Orthodox thinking, angels are important, as Bishop Ware explains:

“An Orthodox Christian invokes in prayer not only saints but the angels, and in particular her or his guardian angel. The angels ‘fence us around with their intercessions and shelter us under their protecting wings of immaterial glory’.”<sup>77</sup>

Certain icons that are used in the Orthodox Church are supposed to represent a particular angel; for example The Icon of Archangel Michael Balkan.<sup>78</sup> Wherever reference is made to Michael in the Bible, there is no physical description of him.<sup>79</sup> So, from where does the painter of the icon get his image? To realize how seriously the Lord God regards the picturing of Heavenly things we must look to the Scriptures. Moses oversaw the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness; this included the making of “*two cherubim of gold*”<sup>80</sup> for the mercy seat. The writer of the book of Hebrews says:

---

<sup>72</sup> Certain Orthodox icons of John the Baptist represent him with wings, like an angel, which are supposed to indicate his function as a messenger. See: (Ouspensky et al., p. 106.)

<sup>73</sup> Ouspensky et al., p. 37.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p. 142.

<sup>75</sup> 1 Timothy 2:5

<sup>76</sup> John 15:16

<sup>77</sup> Ware, p. 257.

<sup>78</sup> Ouspensky et al., p. 108.

<sup>79</sup> Daniel 10:13; Daniel 10:21; Daniel 12:1; Jude 1:9; Revelation 12:7

<sup>80</sup> Exodus 25:18

*“Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.”<sup>81</sup>*

God admonished Moses to follow the pattern He gave him of all the things of the tabernacle he was to make. The word admonished is the English translation of the Greek word *chrēmatizō*,<sup>82</sup> which means to be divinely commanded. Would the painter of an icon of an angel claim that God had showed him the pattern of the image he made and divinely commanded him to paint the icon? Concerning the building of the second temple, Solomon likewise received the pattern (including the cherubim<sup>83</sup>) from David his father, who received it from God by the Holy Spirit, as the Scripture says:

*“Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things...”<sup>84</sup>*

There is no record in the Scripture of people, who saw angels and visions of angels, making icons of these creatures. Any person painting or venerating icons of angels runs the risk of contravening the Scriptures and being led astray, as Paul the Apostle says:

*“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind...”<sup>85</sup>*

## **Bowing Down Before the Icon**

John of Shanghai portrays the response that an icon produces in an Eastern Orthodox person:

*“An Icon is an image which leads us to a holy, God-pleasing person, or raises us up to Heaven, or evokes a feeling of repentance, of compunction, of prayer, a feeling that one must bow down before this image. The value of an Icon lies in the fact that, when we approach it, we want to pray before it with reverence. If the image elicits this feeling, it is an Icon.”<sup>86</sup>*

The Eastern Orthodox Church encourages this practice, how did this come to be? As has been referred to earlier, the worship of images entered into the Orthodox Church gradually and incrementally over a period of centuries. The veneration (*proskuneō*) of an object<sup>87</sup>, received its first official approval by the issuing of canon 73 at the Council of Trullo in A.D. 692.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Hebrews 8:5

<sup>82</sup> *χρηματίζω* (*chrēmatizō*): to be divinely commanded, admonished, instructed (Thayer, p. 671.)

<sup>83</sup> “Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed for the building of the house of God. ... And in the most holy house he made two cherubims of image work, and overlaid them with gold.” (II Chronicles 3:3,10)

<sup>84</sup> I Chronicles 28:11-12

<sup>85</sup> Colossians 2:18

<sup>86</sup> Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco, *A Discourse in Iconography* ([http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/general/icon\\_discourse.aspx](http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/general/icon_discourse.aspx))

<sup>87</sup> In this case the representation of a cross.

<sup>88</sup> SINCE the life-giving cross has shewn to us Salvation, we should be careful that we render due honor to that by which we were saved from the ancient fall. Wherefore, in mind, in word, in feeling giving veneration (*prosku'nhsiv*) [*proskuneō*] to it, we command that the figure of the cross, which some have placed on the floor,

Nearly a century later the veneration of icons (artistic images) was authorized at the Second Council of Nicea in A.D. 787.<sup>89</sup> The council met at Constantinople and restored the use of icons<sup>90</sup> in the Byzantine Orthodox Church after the Iconoclast<sup>91</sup> council at Constantinople (A.D. 754) decreed their removal.<sup>92</sup> The following quote is an official decree of the Second Council of Nicea:

“We, therefore, following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired authority of our Holy Fathers and the traditions of the Catholic Church (for, as we all know, the Holy Spirit indwells her), define with all certitude and accuracy that just as the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross, so also the venerable and holy images, as well in painting and mosaic as of other fit materials, should be set forth in the holy churches of God, ...the figure of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God, of the honorable Angels, of all Saints and of all pious people. For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation, by so much more readily are men lifted up to the memory of their prototypes, and to a longing after them; and to these should be given due salutation and honorable reverence (ασπασμόν καί τιμητικήν προσκύνησιν [proskuneō]) not indeed that true worship of faith λατρείαν [latreia] which pertains alone to the divine nature; ...For the honor which is paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents, and he who reveres the image reveres in it the subject represented.”<sup>93</sup>

It is interesting that the council decree differentiates between two forms of worship: latreia (λατρείαν), which pertains to God alone; and proskuneō (προσκύνησιν)<sup>94</sup>, which is considered to be suitable towards Mary, angels, saints and pious people. Let us shine the light of Scripture<sup>95</sup> upon this decree and see what it reveals:

*“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship [proskuneō] before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of*

---

be entirely removed therefrom, lest the trophy of the victory won for us be desecrated by the trampling under foot of those who walk over it. Therefore those who from this present represent on the pavement the sign of the cross, we decree are to be cut off. (Percival et al., Canon 73, p.755.)

89 The Second Council of Nicea (A.D. 787 - the seventh and last ecumenical council), carried the legislation of the Council in Trullo one step further: “The Council in Trullo legitimized the idea, but Nicea II – ably seconded by John of Damascus – essentially created the theology of images as it is known today.” (Brubaker et al., pp. 99.)

90 “By 787 the Iconodule (pro-image) party became dominant, and Empress Irene (who styled herself basileus and autokrator) called a council which became the Seventh Ecumenical Council. It met in Constantinople to pronounce on the restoration of the icons.” (Geanakoplos, p. 156.)

91 “Iconoclasts' were deeply suspicious of any pictorial representations of Christ, the Mother of God, and the saints, and they therefore unleashed a wave of persecution against the use of religious images, while 'iconophiles' fiercely defended the veneration of icons as an integral element of the life of the church.” (<http://www.theandros.com/iconoclast.html>)

92 “Constantine V. ...called an iconoclastic council in Constantinople in 754, which was to be the seventh oecumenical council, but was afterwards disowned as a pseudo-synod of heretics.” (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church Volume 4, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006, p. 457.)

93 Percival, Schaff & Wace, p. 1032.

94 Προσκυνέω proskuneō: in the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication (Thayers, p 548); proskuneō (Προσκυνέω, 4352) “to make obeisance, do reverence to” (from pros, “towards” and Kuneō, “to kiss”), is the most frequent word rendered “to worship.” (Vine, Unger, White, Vines Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament Words (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), p. 686.)

<sup>95</sup> “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105

*thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship [proskuneō] God.”<sup>96</sup>*

If worshiping (proskuneō) an angel is acceptable to God, then why does the angel forbid John the apostle from worshiping him? Furthermore, the angel commands John to worship (proskuneō) God. As can be seen by the angel’s assertion; we are not to worship our fellow servants. Is it therefore appropriate for the Second Council of Nicea and the Orthodox Church to encourage the worshiping of icons of angels? A second example from the Scripture is most helpful:

*“And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped [proskuneō] him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.”<sup>97</sup>*

Peter forbids Cornelius worshiping him, pointing out that he also is a man. As can be seen from the context of the passage, the plain intent of Peter’s statement is to show Cornelius that he is not to worship (proskuneō) a man. Thus, it is clearly contrary to the Scriptures for the Seventh Ecumenical Council to approve the proskuneō of images of the “Saints and of all pious people”.<sup>98</sup>

A third example of the Bible forbidding the worship (proskuneō) of a creature is:

*“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship [proskuneō] me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship [proskuneō] the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”<sup>99</sup>*

Our Lord Jesus Christ refused to worship (proskuneō) Satan, and by His example and declaration showed that proskuneō belongs to God.

The New Testament does show two examples of men bowing down in proskuneō worship before other men<sup>100</sup>: but in these examples the worshipers are under condemnation. Would the Orthodox Church be willing to use these two examples to justify its worship of images of men?

A pertinent response at this point may be: only proskuneō worship of a creature in conjunction with falling down before it seems to be forbidden. The following comment made by Gregory Koukl<sup>101</sup> addresses this matter:

*“By the way, it isn't just falling down and worshipping that's condemned. There are twelve references where demons, idols or the beast of Revelation are merely proskuneo, worshipped (no reference to "falling down") and it's condemned. But the addition of the notion of falling down in other places merely makes the meaning impossible to miss in the context.”<sup>102</sup>*

---

<sup>96</sup> Rev 22:8-9

<sup>97</sup> Acts 10:25-26

<sup>98</sup> Percival, Schaff & Wace, p. 1032.

<sup>99</sup> Matthew 4:8-10

<sup>100</sup> Matthew 18:26; Revelation 3:9

<sup>101</sup> “He is an adjunct professor in Christian apologetics at Biola University.”

(<http://www.str.org/site/PageServer?pagename=GregsInfoPage> )

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5379>

Orthodox writer Timothy Copple came to the conclusion that proskuneō worship is due unto God alone:

“...the Greek seems to use the word "proskuneo" to only refer to worship which can only be given to God.”<sup>103</sup>

Falling down (prostration) and proskuneō worship of icons is a feature of the present day Eastern Orthodox Church, as Bishop Ware shows:

“An Orthodox prostrates himself before these icons, he kisses them and burns candles in front of them...”<sup>104</sup>

This practice of bowing before icons is clearly contrary to the commandments of God. The second commandment of the Law that God gave to Moses says:

*“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me...”*<sup>105</sup>

The Scriptures also give a fearful warning to those that worship images:

*“And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship [proskuneō] devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk...”*<sup>106</sup>

## **Images of the Godhead**

Images of the Godhead are the logical conclusion of the Orthodox doctrine of pictorial icons. The best-known example is The Holy Trinity by Andrew Rublev.<sup>107</sup> This icon was painted in the fifteenth century and most closely accords with Orthodox teaching on this subject.<sup>108</sup> Leonid Ouspensky describes the icon as follows: (words rearranged)

“...the icon of the Holy Trinity representing the Biblical scene of three men appearing to our forefather Abraham by the oak of Mambré (Gen. xviii). To show that they belong to the heavenly world, they are depicted as three winged Angels. This image, based on a concrete historical event, shows the first appearance of God to man, signifying the beginning of the promise of redemption”<sup>109</sup>

One problem that this image faces is that this biblical passage is in some respects difficult to understand. The ‘Church Fathers’ did not agree on the interpretation of this Scripture; some understood it to be an indirect appearance of the Trinity, others considered that the second person of the Trinity accompanied by two angels had visited Abraham.<sup>110</sup> This raises the

---

<sup>103</sup> [http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/inquirers/icon\\_bowing.aspx](http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/inquirers/icon_bowing.aspx)

<sup>104</sup> Ware, p. 31.

<sup>105</sup> Exodus 20:4-5

<sup>106</sup> Rev 9:20

<sup>107</sup> Ouspensky et al., pp. 198.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 201.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p. 200.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. p. 201.

question: did the artist of this icon understand the truth that God has recorded in this Scripture?

Ouspensky states a second problem concerning The Holy Trinity icon: (words rearranged)

“...this icon in no way pretends to represent concretely each Person of the Holy Trinity. ...since in its essence the Godhead cannot be represented.”<sup>111</sup>

Yet this icon attempts to represent concretely the three members of the Godhead,<sup>112</sup> in this case, as three angels. The viewer of this icon sees the Trinity as three creatures. In the Bible, the Lord God warns of this practice of making images of the Godhead:

*“Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.”*<sup>113</sup>

Isaiah the prophet inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote: *“To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?”*<sup>114</sup> God is glorious and beyond compare, he will not give His glory to another:

*“I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”*<sup>115</sup>

Praise that rightfully belongs to God alone cannot be given to images.

We would encourage those people who have icons to imitate the church of the Thessalonians, whom Paul the Apostle commended for turning away from idols, instead they turned to the living God: *“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God...”*<sup>116</sup>

Berean Beacon Ministry Webpage: <http://www.bereanbeacon.org>

Permission is given by ministry to copy this article if it is done in its entirety without any changes.

Permission is also given post this article in its entirety on Internet WebPages.

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 202.

<sup>112</sup> It is interesting to note that the Orthodox Church itself has reservations concerning the mode of representing the Godhead: “To represent the God of the Sabaoth (that is, the Father) on icons with a grey beard, with His Only Son on His lap, and a dove between Them, is exceedingly absurd and unseemly, since no one has seen the Father. For the Father has no flesh, and it was not in the flesh that the Son was born from the Father before all ages; although the Prophet David says: ‘I have begotten thee from the womb before the morning’ (Ps. cix, 3) – yet this birth is not in the flesh, but is beyond all understanding or expression. And Christ Himself says in the Holy Gospel: ‘Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son...’ This birth, before all ages, of the only-begotten Son from the Father should be understood by the mind, but must not and cannot be represented on icons.” (*Acts of Moscow Councils 1666-1667*. Moscow, 1893. *On Icon painters and the Lord of the Sabaoth*, c. 44.) (Ouspensky et al. p. 204)

<sup>113</sup> Acts 17:29

<sup>114</sup> Isaiah 40:18

<sup>115</sup> Isaiah 42:8

<sup>116</sup> I Thessalonians 1:9

For a more in depth analysis on the issue of pictorial representation of the Godhead, see: J. Virgil Dunbar, *Christ Can’t Be Pictured* (Montgomery: Grace Bible Publishers, 1994) ISBN 1-886096-00-7