

The Church of England
*and the Seventh *Iatreia**
Council *proskunhsiv*

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CHAPTER I
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE COUNCILS

‘GENERAL Councils may not (non possunt) be gathered together without the commandment and will of Princes. And when they be gathered together, (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men; whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and the Word of God,) they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture.’

So runs the twenty-first Article of the Church of England. Though the clergy are only required to give general assent to the Articles as agreeable to the word of God; and the laity are not asked to assent to them at all, this Article contains the official statement of the Church of England on General Councils.

But not the only official statement. For the *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*, drawn up at the same time and largely by the same men, contains the following commentary ‘Though we gladly give great honour to the Councils, especially those that are General, we judge that they ought to be placed far below the dignity of the canonical Scriptures: and we make a great distinction between the Councils themselves. For some of them, especially those four, the Council of Nicæa, the first Council of Constantinople, and the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, we embrace and receive with great reverence. And we bear the same judgment about many others held afterwards, in which we see and confess that the most holy Fathers gave many weighty and holy decisions according to the Divine Scriptures, about the blessed and supreme Trinity, about Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, and the redemption of man obtained through Him. But we think that our faith ought not to be bound by them, except so far as they can be confirmed by Holy Scripture. For it is manifest that some Councils have sometimes erred, and defined contrary to one another, partly on actions of law, partly even of faith.’¹

Bishop Gibson says that ‘this Article must, beyond question, be interpreted by this longer statement. It does not, therefore, intend to cast any slur upon those Councils which are received “with great reverence.”’

The Articles were imposed on the clergy by Convocation in 1571. The Act of Supremacy, 1559, which was the cornerstone of the Elizabethan Settlement, declared that the decrees of the first four General Councils were the doctrinal standard of the Church of England and the standard by which persons accused of heresy (then a legal offence) were to be judged. A canon asserting the same standard was passed in 1571 by the same Convocation which subscribed and imposed the Articles. That the Church of England accepts the first four General Councils has never been disputed. They are also accepted by the Confession of Augsburg, and therefore by all Lutherans bound by the authority of that Confession. Even Calvin accepted the four Councils and others like them (*Institutes* i. 4, 9, 8, see W. Palmer, *On the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 129).

¹ Bishop E. C. S. Gibson, *Thirty-Nine Articles*, p. 531.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE SEVENTH COUNCIL

The Homily on Peril of Idolatry (on which I lay no emphasis, for reasons that will appear later) speaks of six General Councils. Some of the foreign reformers, such as the Magdeburg Centuriators, accepted six. Dean Field, *Of the Church*, v. Si, reckons six: ‘as defining doctrine, and the seventh as concerned with manners.’ Hammond (*Of Heresy*, iii, 8 7-8) and other Anglican divines down to William Palmer (he cit.) recognize six. It is generally agreed, that the Church of England and the other Anglican churches accept six General Councils.²

There are seven General Councils accepted both by the Greeks and by the Latins. These are:

1. Nicæa I 325
2. Constantinople I 381
3. Ephesus 431
4. Chalcedon 451
5. Constantinople II 553
6. Constantinople III 681
7. Nicæa II 787

The first six of these are accepted by the Church of England. The seventh is the subject of this book.

The reason that Article 21 appears to be critical of General Councils is evident when its origin is borne in mind. The Articles were first published in 1553. At that time the Council of Trent, which had been opened in 1545, was actually sitting. It was necessary to define the attitude of the English Church towards it. For 150 years a General Council had been the means proposed by reformers to remove the admitted abuses in the Church. The Councils of Pisa, Constance, Basle, Florence, and the Lateran had not completed the reform of the Church; because the reformers were trying to lessen the power of the Papacy, and the Papacy had stopped their attempts. But now the Papacy itself had summoned a Council entirely subject to its control; so much so that a French bishop profanely remarked that it was notorious that the Holy Ghost was carried in the letter-bags from Trent to Rome and back.

This Council, in its fourth session, had declared that unwritten tradition is a second source of the Christian faith, equal to Scripture. The Church of England maintains that nothing can be regarded as necessary to salvation unless it can be proved from Scripture: and appeals to the teaching of all the Fathers, both Greek and Latin, in support of this doctrine. (See Bishop Jeremy Taylor, *Dissuasive against Popery*, ii. i. 2; W. Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 8—12.) The English bishops, therefore, would not accept the Council of Trent as a true council. They had to say why. ‘General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of princes.’ All the ancient Councils had been summoned by the Emperor. The Council of Trent had been summoned by the Pope: the King of England, who had been excommunicated,, had not been consulted. ‘General Councils may err and sometimes have

² See also More and Crosse, *Anglicanism*, pp. 142—66.

erred.' Several Councils, summoned as General, have erred grievously: the most notorious case was the Robber Council of Ephesus (449). Their definitions of dogma necessary to salvation have no authority, unless they have been taken out of Holy Scripture. All the definitions of the genuine Councils can be proved from Scripture. Many of those of Trent cannot: nobody even pretends that they can. Therefore the Church of England accepts the six first Councils, but not Trent.

Franciscus Sancta Clara, chaplain to Queen Henrietta Maria, commented on this Article from the Roman standpoint, as follows (p. 33), 'The first sentence seems to be confirmed by the authority of S. Jerome, *Apol. 2, contra Rufinum*. The following words are no less easy to be explained. For that General Councils may err in matters which do not concern the faith, or morals necessary to salvation, is the common opinion of all the Doctors' (S. Thomas, Duns Scotus, Bellarmine, etc.). 'The final words express the opinion of the ancient and almost all modern authors.' He then quotes S. Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium 17*, and other Latin writers, from S. Cyprian to Cardinal Turrecremata.

But why should we accept the definitions of Councils at all? Some people argue that Holy Scripture is sufficient. But most of the controversies in the Church have turned on the interpretation of Scripture. The purpose of the Councils was to warn members of the Church that a particular interpretation of Scripture was mistaken because it was one-sided. They were sign-posts, telling us that this or that road led nowhere. Thus the first and third Councils proclaimed our Lord's true Godhead: the second and fourth, His true and complete Manhood. The fifth was a supplement to the third, and the sixth to the fourth; they were the result of attempts to reconcile to the orthodox Church those who rejected the Fourth Council.

But who is to decide whether the definition of a particular Council is a necessary conclusion from Scripture rightly interpreted? The English Church has no doubt at all about this. 'The Church hath authority in controversies of faith' (Article 20). The Church has no right to enforce what cannot be proved by Scripture, but it has the right to give judgment on the interpretation of Scripture, and to require its members to accept its judgment. 'No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation' (2 Peter 1²⁰). For the Church is not an academic society for theological research; it is an army marching to win the human race for Christ. There are some questions which, once they have been asked, must be answered, and answered finally. Is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, a created being, as Arius taught? If He is, we ought not to worship Him as God. Was His Manhood swallowed up in His Godhead 'like a drop of vinegar in the ocean,' as Eutyches taught? Then it is not true that a man like us is on the throne of God, and knows what our sufferings are because He has felt them. Such questions must be settled, and only the Church can settle them. If local councils cannot, a General Council must be held. But its decisions require to be accepted by the Universal Church, which is the final judge. Councils can be misled: no assembly of men is immune from the possibility of error, as history abundantly shows. When the decrees of a Council have been accepted by the whole Church, or practically the whole Church, the question is settled. It ought not to be opened again unless new knowledge turns up, which in the nature of the case, if the subject is the revealed truth of the Incarnation, is unlikely.

But General Councils are only summoned to settle disputes which cannot be otherwise settled: we do not know, before a Council is held, or for some time, perhaps a long time, afterwards, whether it is a true General Council or not. We do not accept the dogmas because they were decreed by the Councils: we accept the Councils, because, in the permanent judgment of the Universal Church, their definitions were necessary to the traditional faith as recorded in Holy Scripture. So we recognize two tests of a General Council; its dogmatic definitions must be necessary conclusions from Holy Scripture, and this must be recognized over a long period, by the Universal Church. The first four Councils, and probably the fifth and sixth, are General by these tests. (It is perhaps arguable that the two latter Councils were not necessary, but I do not intend to discuss this point.)

There is a formal exception: the Egyptian, Ethiopian, Syrian, and Armenian Churches have steadily refused to recognize the Council of Chalcedon. The Lambeth Conference of 1920 expressed the opinion that investigation had gone far towards showing that any errors which had been attributed to them had now passed away. It seems likely that their refusal to accept Chalcedon was more due to nationalism, party spirit, fear of imperialism, and misunderstanding caused by difference of language, than to real doctrinal error.

But in what sense does the Church of England accept these Councils? It accepts their decisions on matters of faith, matters necessary to salvation, that is to spiritual health and right understanding of the Gospel: not necessarily their anathemas (though it accepts the principle of anathema, Articles 18 and 33), nor their Canons, which may not be suitable for the very different conditions in which we live now. The Church of England and presumably all the other Anglican Churches accept these dogmas, freely and not under compulsion, because they believe that they are proved by Holy Scripture, and are necessary to the right understanding of it.

It is the purpose of this book to show that they ought to accept the Seventh Council in the same way.

Note I use the word General, not Oecumenical, Council. An Œcumenical Council was a Council of the bishops in the οἰκουμένη, the inhabited world, that is, the Roman Empire. It was called together by the Emperor, in order that the bishops might decide what was the real teaching of the Church, and put an end to public controversy. The Roman Empire has long ceased to exist, and the word Œcumenical is now used in a different and historically misleading sense. Therefore I prefer to use the word General, to mean a Council of the whole Church, which is recognized by all local Churches, or almost all, as binding them by its dogmatic decisions.

CHAPTER II THE BREAKERS OF PICTURES

THE Orthodox Eastern Churches,³ in which the Patriarch of Constantinople is the chief bishop, believe that they alone are the true Church of Christ. This is a claim which we Anglican Churchmen naturally cannot accept without repudiating our own orthodoxy. Therefore we must refer to them as the Orthodox Eastern Communion, or group of churches, rather than Church. Nevertheless this Communion is the original stock from which all other Christians have sprung. The preaching of the Gospel began at Jerusalem: the Apostles preached in Greek: the New Testament was written in Greek. The Nicene Creed, which alone is accepted by the whole Church, is a Greek creed. And all the General Councils accepted universally, or nearly so, were Greek Councils. They were all (except Ephesus) held at Constantinople, or in its neighbourhood.

The faith of the Orthodox Eastern Communion is formulated in the Seven General Councils, which mean more to the Greeks than they can ever mean to us, because they were all Greek Councils. The Church of England was not represented at any of them, and did not even exist till after the first five had been held. Consequently, among us they are only known to those who have studied theology and Church history. But among the Orthodox they are well known to everybody. The feast of Orthodoxy every year reminds the faithful of the final defeat of the Iconoclastic heresy after the Seventh Council. The Seven Councils are sometimes represented in a row of icons on the screen in church. The whole complex of dogma, custom, rite and ceremonial, the same with only minor differences throughout the Orthodox world, has been crystallized through centuries of persecution. And of this complex the Seven Councils are the heart. Whereas we have had no experience of persecution by a hostile Government (except in Scotland, and in England for a few years during the Great Rebellion), every Orthodox Church has lived under a hostile Government, Moslem or Communist: many of them for centuries and most of them even to-day. They have maintained through all adversity and temptation the faith of the Seven Councils. It is quite impossible, quite inconceivable, that the Orthodox should ever compromise on the Seven Councils. In any proposal for reunion, modification of the Seven Councils cannot even be discussed. If we are ever to be restored to full communion with the Orthodox churches, we shall have to accept the Seven General Councils. Of that there is no possible doubt. The question which I wish to examine is, whether we can. And the first subject for enquiry must be what the Seventh Council was.

The Second Council of Nicæa, regarded by both the Greeks and the Latins as the Seventh General Council, condemned the Iconoclasts, or Breakers of Pictures, as the First Council of Nicæa condemned Arius and his followers. At the beginning of the eighth century (in English history the age of S. Boniface, and of the Venerable Bede), the Roman, that is the Byzantine,

³ There is only one Church, as the Creed declares. Churches in this book, as in the New Testament, are local or national organizations of the One Church. They are not rival sects.

Empire was on the verge of ruin. It had long lost all its western provinces, except a few districts of Italy, with Sicily and Sardinia. The Moslem Arabs had stripped it of Egypt and Syria, and were overrunning Asia Minor, near the heart of the Empire. The Bulgarians and other tribes were invading it from beyond the Danube. The Empire had been in a state of confusion and anarchy for many years; the people had become more savage and more superstitious. The position was desperate. It was saved by the founder of a new dynasty, Leo III, commonly called the Isaurian. He came from Commagene, on the eastern frontier, rose to be commander of the army in the East, and in 717 rebelled against the incapable Emperor, and ascended the throne in his place. In the first year of his reign the Arabs besieged Constantinople: he drove them back and recovered Asia Minor. He reorganized the army, restored order in the capital and the provinces; set up a new code of laws, the Eclogè, and a new system of government by 'themes.' In consequence the Empire survived for 450 years as a great power, and for 700 years as a state. But Leo III proceeded, among his other reforms, to alter the religious habits of his subjects. He was an Asiatic from the Syrian border where Moslem influence was strong; where the Christians were often Monophysites, that is, they tended to minimize our Lord's Manhood: and where there were many Paulicians who did not believe in the Incarnation. Leo was shocked by the superstition with which many of his subjects venerated the sacred pictures.

During the first four centuries, while it was still subject to the heathen Empire, the Church had been very cautious in its use of pictures. Those which have survived are mostly symbolic, such as that of our Lord as the Good Shepherd; and some of the Fathers, and the Council of Elvira in Spain, forbade them to be used in churches. But when the persecutions ceased in the fourth century, the use of pictures in churches became widespread, though there were still some who disapproved of them. The Emperor Theodosius (378-95) made the orthodox Christian religion compulsory for his subjects. Large numbers of people were baptized, even before this, who were really pagan at heart. It is not surprising that some people did not see clearly the difference between the idols of the gods and the pictures of our Lord and the saints.

By the eighth century the tradition of pictures in churches, the books of the unlearned as they were called, was nearly 400 years old: as long a period as separates us from the Reformation. Few people, if any, knew that they had not always been there. When S. Augustine of Canterbury landed in England in 597 he had a sacred picture carried before him in procession. The ancient Irish crosses are covered with carved figures of our Lord and the saints. In the West there seems to have been no dispute about the use of pictures and sculpture in the Church: but there was no such excessive devotion to sacred pictures as that which Leo III found at Constantinople.

It is not my purpose to tell more of what followed than is necessary for understanding the Second Council of Nicæa. The story is admirably told in detail by Dr. E. J. Martin in his *History of the Iconoclastic Movement* (S.P.C.K. 1933). Byzantine Emperors, from Constantine onwards, regarded it as their duty to protect the faith and morals of their subjects: it was their duty both to God who had placed them on the throne, and to the empire whose obedience to God and peace among men they were there to preserve. But the Emperor was not a dictator whose only law was

his own will: nor was he a Pope, with the power to define dogmas.⁴ He was bound to observe the Roman law and the Orthodox faith. The guardians of the faith were the bishops and all the members of the Church; their duty to the faith of Christ came before their duty to the Emperor, and if he fell into heresy they were not bound to obey him.

Leo III was an Asiatic soldier, to whom, probably, neither Roman law nor Greek art meant anything. He saw himself as God's messenger to reform the Empire. His code of laws was based, not on Roman precedents, but on texts of Scripture. Already in 722 he was compelling Jews and Montanists⁵ to accept Orthodox baptism. In 725 he opened his attack on the sacred pictures; and there were many who agreed with him, especially in the army. He seems also to have been advised by a group of bishops who deplored the widespread popular superstition of the time.

The Emperor ordered the removal of images and pictures set up in public places, in particular the figure of our Lord over the Chalkè Gate of the palace. There were cases of resistance, and one unsuccessful revolt, but on the whole Leo's action was mild. He closed the schools and dismissed the teachers who were defenders of the pictures, but there was no great struggle in the Empire till after his death in 740. Meanwhile S. John of Damascus, who was a subject of the Arab Khalif, delivered three great orations which became the theological backbone of the resistance to Iconoclasm. Constantine V, the son and successor of Leo III, was an even abler soldier, and far better educated. For some years after his accession he took no steps beyond continuing his father's policy. But in 752 he decided to establish firmly the principle which he favoured by summoning a Council which should forbid pictures of our Lord and the saints. The next year the Council met at Hieria, near Chalcedon, on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus opposite Constantinople. 338 bishops were present: there had only been 318 at the First General Council and 150 at the Second. The Council proclaimed itself the Seventh Oecumenical Council, but it was only œcumenical in the sense that its members were all subjects of the Empire. Not one of the five Patriarchs was present, in person or by deputy. The see of Constantinople was vacant: Rome would have nothing to do with Iconoclasm, and the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, now much diminished, and subject to the Moslem Khalif, ignored it.

The Acts of the Council have not survived, and we know what it did chiefly from the answer that was given to it by the Second Council of Nicæa thirty-four years later. It asserted that to make a picture of Christ was either to portray Him as God and to mingle His Godhead with His Manhood, or else to portray Him as Man, which was to separate His two Natures. The former was Monophysitism, which had been condemned at Chalcedon; the latter Nestorianism, which had been condemned at Ephesus. It declared that as the picture of Christ was forbidden, still more so were the pictures of His Mother and the other saints.

The Council decreed that 'supported by the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers we declare unanimously in the Name of the Holy Trinity, that every likeness which is made by any material or colour by the art of painters is to be rejected and removed out of the Christian Church.' No one was even to make a picture, to set one up, or to possess one in private.

⁴ Hence the word 'Caesaropapism' should be avoided.

⁵ A puritan sect dating from the second century.

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At the end of the Council the Emperor brought forward an obscure bishop from Pamphylia and announced him as the new Patriarch. There was no pretence of canonical election.

Armed with the decrees of the Council, the Emperor went on with his policy. He settled Paulicians and other heretics from Asia in districts depopulated by the war with the Slavonic tribes. Twenty years of Iconoclastic government had shown where the strongest opposition was to be found. The army, the greater part of the official classes, and the married clergy in the parishes supported Iconoclasm: so did the bishops, for they had been appointed by the Emperor or his father. The opposition was found among the women and the monks, the most religious (perhaps also the most superstitious) classes of the people.

The Eastern monk was not necessarily a cleric: there were of course monks who were priests or deacons, but the majority have always been laymen. The monasteries were the only centres of spiritual and intellectual culture: Leo III had closed the schools. Constantine V proceeded to attack the monasteries. I need not describe the atrocities which followed: it was the Balkan Peninsula, and the eighth century. Not many were put to death, but there was much flogging and mutilation of various kinds. No decorations were allowed in the churches but pictures of birds, flowers and hunting scenes. Others were destroyed or whitewashed over. Monasteries and convents were secularized and turned into arsenals and storehouses. Monks and nuns were forced to marry one another.

Constantine V died in 775. He was succeeded by his son Leo IV, called the Khazar, because his mother was the daughter of the chief of that Tartar tribe. He did not persecute the monks, but otherwise continued his father's policy. He died in 780, and was succeeded by his son Constantine VI, who was a child. Leo IV's widow, Irene, became Regent. She had always been secretly opposed to her husband's policy, and she lost no time in restoring the sacred pictures and the monasteries. In 784 S. Tarasius, a moderate supporter of the pictures, was made Patriarch. He was a layman and was consecrated *per saltum*. He called for a General Council, and wrote to the Pope and to the three other Patriarchs: but because of Moslem persecution it was impossible to reach the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and he had to be content with two monks from Alexandria and Antioch, who came without authority from their Patriarchs, but claimed that they knew the Patriarchs' minds. The Pope, Hadrian I, after some hesitation, sent two representatives, and with them a letter stating the usual Petrine claims. In these conditions the Second Council of Nicæa opened.

CHAPTER III THE SECOND COUNCIL OF NICÆA

THE subject of the dispute was the εἰκὼν (icon), which is usually translated by the misleading word 'image.' The icon is a sacred picture, not realistic but formalized: which has much the same likeness to modern 'sacred pictures' that a medieval church melody has to a modern hymn-tune. I suppose there is no difference in principle between painting and sculpture for religious purposes, but sculpture has not usually been allowed by the later Greek church tradition. We must admit that there was much superstition connected with the icons. The people of Constantinople, like many other Southern, and indeed Northern, Europeans, had been imperfectly converted since Christianity was made the official religion of the Empire; and seventy years of anarchy had lowered their standards, both spiritual and intellectual. But experience shows that it is impossible to destroy superstition by destroying its objects. Superstition is an error of the mind and the spirit: it can only be cured by true religion and sound learning. If someone is superstitious about a picture, and the picture is destroyed, he will direct his superstition to something else, and there are worse objects of superstition than the pictures of the saints. Leo III and Constantine V were right to deplore superstition, but they did not go the right way to get rid of it.

The argument of the Iconoclasts, in the first stage under Leo III, was that the cult of the icons was idolatry, which is constantly forbidden in Scripture. The idolatry forbidden in Scripture is usually the worship of images of false gods, which is forbidden by the First Commandment. But there is a second form of idolatry, which is the worship of images of the true God: such as the golden calves of Jeroboam, which were intended to represent the God of Israel (1 Kings 12²⁸). This is forbidden by the Second Commandment. (The Greeks do not combine the Second Commandment with the First, but reckon it a separate Commandment, as we do.) S. John of Damascus answered that we are forbidden, as the Hebrews were, to make or to worship a figure or picture of God, because He is invisible. But since Old Testament times the Word of God has become Man. Jesus Christ is God, and as God He is invisible, but He is also Man, and we may make a picture of Him as Man. The two parts of the Second Commandment, Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image; and Thou shalt not bow down to it or worship it, must be taken together. If the Commandment had been written in Greek they would have been united in one sentence, but Hebrew prefers a co-ordinate to a subordinate clause. The Commandment does not forbid us to make an image, but only to make one and then worship it. The Greeks of the eighth century were not illiterate barbarians like many of their contemporaries in the West. They read and knew their Bibles (the New Testament in the original language), and the arguments of both the Iconoclasts and their opponents were drawn from Scripture and the Fathers. It was pointed out that the Cherubim on the Ark were images, so were the lions on the steps of Solomon's throne. Not making images, but worshipping them, was forbidden. S. John of Damascus showed that a picture (εἰκὼν) such as was placed in churches was not an idol

(ειδολων), because it did not represent either false gods or the true God, but a created being: either our Lord as Man, or an angel, or a saint. He further distinguished sharply between the respect, or even veneration, which we give to created beings, such as men or angels; and the adoration which we give to God alone. For the former he used the word προσκυνησις, which may be offered to man or to God: for the latter λατρεία (latria). The word προσκυνησις has no exact equivalent in English or Latin because the thing denoted does not exist in the West. It is the custom, common throughout the East from Constantinople to Japan, of prostration on the ground before a superior. This is what Abraham did before Ephron the Hittite (Gen. 23¹²), and the young Amalekite before David (2 Sam. 1²). Προσκυνησις is the word used in both cases in the Greek translation used by the Church.

On the other hand, S. Peter refuses it from Cornelius, Acts 10²⁵, because he feared that Cornelius was treating him as a god: besides, Cornelius was a Roman centurion, not an Oriental, and this gesture was not offered to men by the Romans of that period. Likewise it was refused by the angel to S. John, Rev. 19¹⁰; 22⁹. At Constantinople, however, it was the usual gesture of respect to the Emperor and his officers; and S. John of Damascus says that it may be offered either to man or to God, and gives seven different degrees of what may be called ‘respect,’ or in some cases ‘veneration.’⁶ But latria is what we may not offer to any created being. It is offered to God alone, and is best translated ‘adoration.’ Either as noun or verb it is used twenty-nine times in the New Testament: always of the worship of God, except twice, where it is used of heathen worship. In S. Matthew 4¹⁰ our Lord says to the devil ‘It is written, Thou shalt worship (προσκυνησις) the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve’ (λατρευσεις). This is exactly what S. John of Damascus says: προσκυνησις may be offered to God or man, λατρεία to God alone. In no case may λατρεία be offered to an icon, even an icon of our Lord: for it represents Him as Man, not as God. Idolatry is latria offered to an idol: but an icon is not an idol, for it represents a created being, human or angelic, and we do not offer it latria, but

S. John of Damascus seems to have proved his case; for in the second stage of the Iconoclastic movement, under Constantine V, its adherents changed their ground. The argument put forward by Constantine was this: God is uncircumscribed (απεριγραπτος, immensus, the word which appears in the so-called Athanasian Creed as ‘incomprehensible’). Christ is God: therefore Christ is uncircumscribed—therefore He cannot be represented in a picture. The answer to this was easy. Christ is indeed uncircumscribed, as God (as the Athanasian Creed says), but not as Man. As He went about in Galilee He was seen, and we can make a picture of Him as He appeared to His disciples.

The Iconoclasts were really Monophysite though they could not say so. They did not think of our Lord as Man at all, but only as God. If they had succeeded in abolishing the icons men would soon have come to believe in our Lord as a phantasy, a theological concept, not as a living human Person. Dr. J. M. Neale (1818-66) tells us that when he was a boy, pictures of the Crucifixion were rare in England, and many simple people did not know how our Saviour died.

⁶ The word used by later Latin theologians in *dulia* (δουλεια, servitude). It was not used by the Greeks, and to English ears has a very unpleasant sound.

They knew that He was crucified, but they did not know what 'crucified' meant.

The bishops assembled at Constantinople in 786; but a band of soldiers of the Imperial Guard, who were ardent Iconoclasts, attacked them, and the meeting had to be closed. The Empress sent the most Iconoclastic regiments to the front, and transferred the bishops across the Bosphorus to Nicæa, where they opened the Council in the Church of the Holy Wisdom on September 24th, 787.

About 300 bishops were present or were represented. The first place was given to the Pope's deputies, both of whom were named Peter. Then came Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople, John and Thomas, the priest-monks who were all that Alexandria and Antioch, under Moslem rule, could send, Constantine, Archbishop of Cyprus, and the Archbishops of the famous sees of Ephesus and Caesarea in Cappadocia. Most of the bishops came from Asia Minor, then still a part of Europe in culture and theology, and from the Greek islands. Twenty-one came from Thrace and Illyria, including a monk from the Crimea. Eight came from Sicily, six from Calabria, and the Archbishop of Sardinia (still part of the Empire) was represented. There were many abbots and other monks present to advise the bishops, for the monks had the best brains in the Church. The Council had assembled for two purposes; to condemn the Iconoclasts, and to restore communion with Rome. They had made up their minds already about Iconoclasm. It had been under discussion for over sixty years, the case on both sides was well known to them all, and they were all agreed. At the first session of the Council the Patriarch Tarasius and Constantine, Archbishop of Cyprus, the two highest ranking bishops who were present in person, asked that the Iconoclastic bishops who had supported the disturbance at Constantinople, might be admitted. This was allowed, and these bishops made a complete recantation of Iconoclasm and the decrees of the Council of Hieria. After some discussion they were forgiven. The Pope's letters to the Emperor and the Patriarch were read; the passage in which he protested against the title of 'Oecumenical' given to the Patriarch of Constantinople, and asserted the Petrine claims, was omitted. Tarasius and 260 bishops or representatives of bishops declared that they agreed with the Pope about the pictures. The two monks from the East explained why they were there, and declared that their Patriarchs agreed with what had been said.

The Council had now done its work; but it went on to produce testimony from Scripture and the Fathers. It was not all such testimony as would convince us to-day. They could not distinguish (any more than S. Thomas Aquinas could, 450 years later) genuine passages of the Fathers from spurious ones. But we are not concerned with their arguments. Both they and those whom they had to convince were medieval Greeks, and they had to argue in the manner of their time. We do not, probably, find S. Paul's rabbinical argument in Galatians 3¹⁶ convincing: but he did, or he would not have written it.

The Council then drew up a summary of its conclusions, which all its members signed. The definition of the Iconoclastic Council of Hieria was presented, read by Gregory of Neocaesarea, a convert from Iconoclasm, and refuted point by point.

On October 13th, at the seventh session of the Council, the definition with which it answered the Iconoclasts was read in the presence of 347 bishops. The reader is asked to give

special attention to this definition; for it is this to which we must assent if we are to accept the Second Council of Nicæa as a true General Council.

After a rather verbose preface, at the end of which they declared their acceptance of the Six General Councils, recited the Nicene Creed, and anathematized Arius and other heretics, they proceeded as follows.⁷

To make our confession short we keep unchanged all the ecclesiastical traditions handed down to us, whether in writing or verbally, one of which is the making of pictorial representations, agreeable to the history of the preaching of the Gospel: a tradition useful in many respects, but especially in this, that so the Incarnation of the Word of God is shown forth as real and not merely imaginary, for those have mutual indications and without doubt also have mutual significations.

We therefore, following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired (Θεηγορω) 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 pictures (εικοναζ), as well in painting and mosaic as in other fit materials, should be set forth in the holy churches of God, and on the sacred vessels and on the vestments and on the hangings and in pictures (σανισιν) both in houses and by the wayside, to wit, the picture (εικονος) of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, of our spotless Lady (δεσποινης) the holy Mother of God (θεοτοκος), of the honourable angels, of all holy (αγιων) and pious (οσιων) men. For the more frequently they are seen in artistic representation the more readily are men lifted up to the memory of, and longing after, their prototypes; and to these should be given salutation and honourable reverence (ασπασμον και τιμητικην προσκυνησιζ), not indeed the true worship (λατρειαν, latria) which is fitting (πρεπει) for the Divine nature alone; but to these, as to the figure (τυπω) of the holy and life-giving Cross, and to the holy Gospels, and to the other sacred objects, incense and lights may be offered according to ancient pious custom. For the honour which is paid to the picture (εικων) passes on to that which the picture represents, and he who reveres (προσκυνων)⁸ the picture reveres in it the subject represented. For thus the teaching of our holy Fathers, that is, the Tradition of the Catholic Church, which from one end of the earth to the other has received the Gospel, is strengthened. Thus we follow Paul, who spoke in Christ, and the whole Divine Apostolic company and the holy Fathers, holding fast the traditions which we have received. So we sing prophetically the triumphal hymns of the Church: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: rejoice and be glad with all thy heart. The Lord hath taken away from thee the oppression of thine adversaries; thou art redeemed from the hand of thine enemies. The Lord is a King in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more, and peace shall be unto thee for ever (Zephaniah 3¹⁴⁻¹⁵ Greek translation, which does not quite correspond to the Hebrew).

We may perhaps summarize this definition as follows:

⁷ Translated by H. R. Percival.

⁸ This word is translated 'adorat' in Latin which is misleading.

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1. Idolatry, the offering of adoration (latria) to any created person or thing, is strictly forbidden.
2. The sacred pictures are to be given veneration (προσκυνησις), according to ancient tradition.
3. The sacred pictures are useful for instruction.
4. They are needed, in order to preserve the truth that Jesus Christ is a Person and not a phantasy, theory or idea.
5. The veneration given to the picture passes on to the person, human or angelic, whom the picture represents.
6. Our Lord Jesus Christ is truly and completely human, and therefore though in His Godhead He is uncircumscribed, in His Manhood He is limited, and may be portrayed in painting, mosaic, or other suitable materials.

CHAPTER IV THE LATER HISTORY OF ICONOCLASM

WE may pass briefly over the events that followed the Second Council of Nicæa.

The Empress Irene deposed her son and reigned as sole empress. There had never before been a woman alone on the throne of the Roman Empire. Pope Leo III, regarding the throne as vacant, on Christmas Day 800 crowned Charles the Great, King of the Franks, as Emperor. This was the beginning of the 'Holy Roman Empire' of the Germans, which was for a thousand years, in theory but after the thirteenth century seldom in practice, the chief state in Western Europe. It was not recognized as legitimate by the Emperors at Constantinople.

In 802 Irene was deposed. She and her successors were unsuccessful rulers, and in 813 the army, which clung to Iconoclasm and sighed for the days of Leo III and Constantine V, good rulers and good generals, put Leo V (the Armenian) on the throne. Like Leo III, he came from the Eastern frontier, but his Iconoclastic convictions were political rather than religious. A second Iconoclastic period followed, accompanied by persecution of the monks, and lasted till 842.

The opponents of the Iconoclasts were now much more strongly organized under S. Theodore, Abbot of the great monastery of the Studium at Constantinople. Archbishop Trench calls him 'quite the most attractive figure in the long struggle, and the most notable theologian whom it produced' (*Lectures on Medieval Church History*, p. 93).

Theodore is said to have opposed slavery on principle, refused to have slaves belonging to his monastery, and forbidden the persecution of heretics, even the universally detested Manicheans. In this he was a thousand years ahead of his time. But he was an extremist in his opposition to the Iconoclasts, offering speculations on the relation between a picture and its subject which cannot be discussed here, and taking up a position new to Constantinople on the relations of Church and State.

The Byzantine tradition had always allowed the Emperor great authority in religious affairs (like the royal supremacy of our Tudor and Stuart sovereigns who were consciously following Byzantine precedents). But Theodore claimed complete independence for the ecclesiastical authorities, and tended more and more to appeal for support to the Papacy, which has always supported ecclesiastical against civil authority. He was not successful: the Byzantine tradition was too strong, and too much to the interest of the Empire.

In 842 Michael III, aged three, succeeded, and his mother Theodora, as Regent, restored the icons. In 843 a local council was held which confirmed the Second Council of Nicæa: and the feast of Orthodoxy, the first Sunday in Lent, was established. Iconoclasm had long been losing ground. The withdrawal of imperial favour gave it the final blow, as in the case of Arianism 400 years before.

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Dean Milman⁹ says: 'There was this irremediable weakness in the cause of Iconoclasm: it was a negative doctrine, a proscription of those sentiments which had full possession of the popular mind, without any strong countervailing excitement. The senses were robbed of their habitual and cherished objects of devotion, but there was no awakening of an inner life of intense and passionate piety. The cold naked walls from which the Scriptural histories had been effaced, the despoiled shrines, the mutilated images, could not compel the mind to a more pure and immaterial conception of God and the Saviour. Hatred of images might become, as it did, a fanaticism, it will never become a religion.'

There was some truth in Iconoclasm, as there is in every heresy. But superstition is a disease of the mind and soul, and can only be cured by sound religion and education.

Leo III closed the schools and put nothing in their place. Constantine V turned the monasteries into barracks and arsenals; he did not pension the monks and nuns off, as even Henry VIII did, but compelled them to marry one another. The Iconoclastic movement depended wholly on the Emperor and the army. Unlike the Puritan movement, which in some ways it resembled, it produced no spirituality to rival that of the Church. There was no Iconoclastic Baxter or Bunyan.¹⁰ So when it fell, 'it fell like Lucifer, never to rise again.'

⁹ B. C. Trench, *Lectures on Medieval History*, p. 99.

¹⁰ Bunyan was no Iconoclast: see his account of the House of the Interpreter in *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

CHAPTER V
THE FRANKS AND THE COUNCIL

THE Iconoclastic controversy did not interest the Latin churches. Apart from the Pope's legates, the bishops and deputies of bishops who went to Nicæa from Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia were all subjects of the Byzantine Empire. The Latin churches had never had either a cult of sacred pictures, or a reaction against them: nor had they ever known Monophysitism, which was the foundation of Iconoclasm.

When the Iconoclastic movement began the Lombards were conquering Italy, and their progress was made easier by the refusal of the Pope and the Italians to accept the policy of Leo III. The Lombards took Ravenna and most of the Byzantine territory in Italy, and the Pope, Gregory III, began to coin his own money. Unable to get any help from Constantinople, he made an alliance with the Franks against the Lombards. In 769 a local council held at the Lateran rejected Iconoclasm and condemned the Council of Hieria.

The Second Council of Nicæa in 787 restored communion between Rome and Constantinople. But Pope Hadrian I was not satisfied. The Empress Irene had not restored to him Southern Italy and Sicily, which the Iconoclastic Emperors had transferred to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Constantinople, and therefore the Pope sided with the Franks against the Greeks.

For the political situation in the West had changed during the fifty years of Iconoclastic rule at Constantinople. Charles the Great was now King of the Franks, though not yet Emperor. He had overthrown and annexed the Lombard kingdom, and he was now the only Christian ruler in Western Europe, except in the British Isles, and in the small principalities in Northern Spain which had not been conquered by the Moslems. His kingdom was the largest dominion held by anyone in Europe between the invasion of the barbarians and the conquests of Napoleon. Charles the Great did not like the Greeks, and since he controlled the religion as well as the government of his kingdom, he determined to show that the Council of Nicæa was wrong. But he had only a poor and misleading translation of its definition. He sent to the Pope a criticism of the Council to which the Pope replied. The work known as the Caroline Books, which some think was written by the English scholar Alcuin, appears to be an expansion of King Charles's letter to the Pope issued by his authority.

In 794 a large council of the bishops of Charles the Great's possessions in France, Germany and Italy, was held at Frankfort-on-the-Main. Its principal business was to condemn the Adoptionist heresy which had arisen in Spain; but one of its canons was directed against the Second Council of Nicæa, which was condemned on the ground that it directed the same worship to be given to the sacred pictures as to the Holy Trinity (just what the Second Council of Nicæa had expressly forbidden).

Under Charles' successor, Lewis the Pious, another Council was held at Paris in 825. This Council also rejected the Second Council of Nicæa, and went so far as to condemn Pope

Hadrian I for accepting it. The Emperor Lewis tried to persuade the Pope to accept the Frankish position in place of that of the Greeks, but he did not succeed.

The Franks were remote from the struggle at Constantinople, and did not really understand what it was about. They had not got the acts of the Second Council of Nicæa in Greek, and they could not have read them if they had. They stood for the traditional Latin attitude towards pictures and images. Gregory the Great had rebuked Serenus, who had torn down 'a picture in a church, and had told him that pictures were to be retained, not for worship, but for the instruction of the unlearned. The Franks were not, like the Greeks, the heirs of an ancient civilization which had always made pictures and statues; they were at the opening of a new civilization, and were only beginning to learn the use of the fine arts. They were not Mediterranean people, but Northern Europeans; the Teutonic King did not receive from his followers the servile respect to the Emperor which had become traditional in Orientalized Constantinople. Nor were their habits of worship those to which the Greeks were accustomed. Neither the Monophysite denial of Christ's Manhood, which was at the root of Iconoclasm, nor the passionate reaction against it, meant anything to them.

Besides, there was the misleading translation. In the Latin translation of the definition of the Second Council of Nicæa, προσκυνησις was represented by *adoratio*. It is not surprising that the Latins rejected the Council; they thought it had directed that Divine worship should be offered to the pictures, and accused it of the very idolatry which it had carefully excluded. S. John of Damascus had distinguished seven kinds of veneration, but Charles the Great would not, perhaps could not, recognize any such differences. And since Charles was on bad terms with the Greeks, he was determined to show that their theology was false, and thus to break the agreement between them and the Papacy. The Pope, on the other hand, was angry with the Empress Irene because she had not restored to his patriarchate the dioceses in Southern Italy and Sicily which her iconoclastic predecessors had transferred to Constantinople. He was much more interested in this than he was in the controversy about pictures, and it would have been in any case impossible for him to resist Charles the Great, who was the master of most of Latin Christendom.

As for Lewis the Pious, he appears to have tried, at the request of the iconoclastic Emperor Michael II, to get the two parties at Constantinople to agree on the basis of the decree of Frankfort, but he had no success.

It seems to me that the difference between the Franks and the Greeks, Frankfort and Nicæa, was not fundamental: it was partly due to a political quarrel, partly to Frankish ignorance of Greek, and partly to diversity of tradition and racial temperament. Both parties agreed in condemning the Iconoclasts, and in forbidding the worship which is due to God alone (*latria*) to be offered to pictures or images: they agreed that the pictures must be treated with respect, but they differed in the expression of that respect: as northern and southern peoples, the free subjects of a barbarian war-lord and the courtiers of a Byzantine Emperor, were likely to do.

I have spent more time on this attempt at a middle way, which was founded on a misunderstanding and which led to no result, than I should have done but for the following reasons.

William Palmer, in his *Treatise of the Church* maintains that the Second Council of

Nicæa, which he calls the Pseudo-Synod of Nice, was never accepted in France or Germany before the sixteenth century: and gives a number of writers, down to Matthew of Westminster in 1375, who held that it had been rejected by the Council of Frankfort and therefore was not a General Council. But on his own showing these writers supposed that the Second Council of Nicæa had ordered images to be 'adored.' The Decretum of Gratian (1150), which was the text-book for canonists, reckoned it as General: so did the Council of Constance. But it does not seem to have been well known in Latin Christendom, in spite of Gratian. Bellarmine says that it is very credible that S. Thomas Aquinas and Alexander of Hales did not know it, and we shall see later that Bellarmine was right.

Relying on Palmer, I wrote in my book *The Christian Faith* that the Church of England had never accepted the Seventh Council either before or after the Reformation. I have every wish to believe Palmer (one of whose daughters was my godmother). His *Treatise on the Church* (1838), now undeservedly neglected, is the only large Anglican work on the subject since Richard Field's, written in 1606, and in my opinion it is far superior to Field's book, which is marred by its controversial tone. Palmer (who was an Irishman) had strong prejudices against even the devotional use of the crucifix,¹¹ and when I had examined the matter more closely, I saw that the position I had stated was untenable. The Council of Frankfort did not condemn the teaching of the Second Council of Nicæa, but what was wrongly supposed to be its teaching, and therefore the English provinces rejected that Council, if at all, under a misapprehension. The Second Council of Nicæa had been accepted as General by the Council of Constance, at which the English provinces were represented. We cannot therefore say that it was not accepted by the Church of England before the Reformation. The attitude of the Church of England after the Reformation will be the subject of a later chapter.

¹¹ Narrative of events connected with the Tracts for the Times, p. 150.

CHAPTER VI
THE TEACHING OF S. THOMAS AQUINAS

S. THOMAS AQUINAS (*Summa Theologica* Part 3, Question 25, Article 3), wrote thus:

As Aristotle says, a movement of soul towards an image is double. It implies, for one thing, a movement towards the image, in so far as the image is a particular object (*res*) itself; it implies also a movement towards the image in so far as it is representative of a reality other than itself. Between these two movements there is this difference: the first kind of movement directed to the image as a particular thing is distinct from the movement towards the reality represented, whereas the second movement, directed to the image as the representative of a reality not itself, is identical with the movement directed to the reality. Thus one must say that to an image of Christ, so far as it is itself a particular thing (let us say a carved bit of wood or a painted board), no veneration at all is offered, because veneration is owed only to a rational being. It remains that veneration is exhibited towards it only in so far as it is an image; and thus it follows that the veneration exhibited to an image of Christ and the veneration exhibited to Christ Himself is one and the same. Since therefore Christ is adored with the worship of *latria*, it follows that the adoration directed to His image is an act of *latria*.

In the following Article, S. Thomas says that the Cross also is to be adored with *latria*: giving as an illustration that the robes of a King are honoured with the same honour as the King himself. But the Second Council of Nicæa had laid down that neither the Cross nor the sacred pictures are to receive *Latria* but only *τιμητικην προσκυνησις*, the veneration that is given to created beings, not the adoration that is given to God. S. Thomas disobeyed the Second Council of Nicæa, though it had been recognized as a General Council by the Pope 450 years earlier. Clearly he did not know the decree of the Council, and as he did not understand Greek, probably would not have interpreted it rightly if he had known it, as it had not been accurately translated. But we may go farther. S. Thomas directs *latria* to be directed to a visible form, which the Greeks call *ειδωλον*. an idol: to do this is idolatry, so often forbidden in Scripture. This is an objection which he does not even mention. It is rash, I admit, to accuse S. Thomas Aquinas of teaching idolatry; but I do not see how the conclusion can be avoided. We may agree with him that what is offered to the image is offered to the person whom it represents. A crucifix is no more than a piece of carved wood or stone, but when we salute the crucifix we salute Him whom it represents. But I cannot agree that the honour which is given to the image is the same honour as that given to the person whom it represents, or that, to use S. Thomas' illustration, the honour given to the King's robes is the same as that which is given to the King.

I raise my hat when I pass a wayside crucifix; that is not *latria*. But if our Lord appeared to me in person, as He did to S. John in Patmos, I should do very much more than raise my hat. S. John fell at His feet, as one dead (Rev. 1¹⁷). That was *latria*; and S. John was not rebuked, as he was when he fell prostrate before the angel. S. Thomas, then, taught that Divine worship, *latria*, should be offered to the Cross, and to pictures and images of Christ. He would not have

done this if he had known the Second Council of Nicæa. But he expressly forbids the offering of latria to our Lord's mother or any other saint; and therefore to their pictures or statues.

S. Thomas, as the greatest theologian of medieval Latin Christendom, cannot altogether escape responsibility for the growth of superstitious observances towards pictures and images in the 250 years that elapsed between him and the Reformation. The ignorant did not always distinguish between the *latria* that was to be offered to a crucifix or picture of our Saviour, and the veneration that was to be offered to other images and pictures. This was the result of ignoring the Second Council of Nicæa.

CHAPTER VII THE ANGLICAN DIVINES AND THE SEVENTH COUNCIL

AT the Reformation, the provinces of Canterbury and York claimed to be a self-governing national church, rejected the authority of the Pope which had been accepted till then, because there was no foundation for it in Scripture or history, and repudiated all the Latin Councils, on the ground that they had been summoned by Papal authority, and that the doctrines which they had defined could not be proved from Scripture. But it formally declared that it accepted the first four General Councils, because their decrees could be proved from Scripture and had been accepted by the whole Church. It did not claim to be a new institution, or anything else than the Catholic Church planted in England 900 years earlier by S. Augustine and S. Aidan: which had always accepted the first six General Councils, though the fifth and sixth were not concerned with anything relevant to English conditions. We have now to enquire what attitude was taken by the Church of England towards the Second Council of Nicæa. The twenty-second Article has nothing to do with the case because the 'Romish doctrine' (*doctrina Romanensium*) which it condemns may fairly be identified with the teaching of S. Thomas Aquinas, which, as we have seen, was directly contrary to the definition of the Council, and with the abuses and superstitions which went beyond even that teaching.

The first witness to be called is an extremely hostile one: the Homily against Peril of Idolatry. Every bishop, priest and deacon in the Church of England (though not in all other Anglican churches) is required to give general assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles.

The thirty-fifth Article says: 'The Second Book of Homilies, the several titles whereof we have joined unto this Article, doth contain a godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for these times . . . and therefore we judge them to be read in churches by the ministers diligently and distinctly, that they may be understood of the people.'

The second of these Homilies is called: Against Peril of Idolatry. They were issued in 1563, and authorized by Queen Elizabeth I, but they were much disliked by the clergy of more than one school of thought. Bishop Gibson says that some of the historical statements in them are highly questionable and even demonstrably false; and that the individual cannot fairly be called upon to maintain any particular view simply because it is taught in the Homilies: they are only authoritative so far as they agree with the Articles, and the Book of Common Prayer. The Court of Arches, which is the court of the Archbishop of Canterbury, on November 19th, 1938, declared that it must not be inferred that the Church of England adopted every part of the doctrines contained in the Homilies.

The Homily on Peril of Idolatry is, it must be confessed, entirely and thoroughly iconoclastic. The writer identifies the pictures and images, which he describes as worshipped in the churches in his own time, with the idols forbidden in Scripture. He rejects the distinction between images and idols, between one kind of 'worship' and another. He tells the story of the Iconoclastic controversy very inaccurately; for he treats the pictures, and not the destruction of

them, as a novelty, and ignores altogether the restoration of them after the second Iconoclastic period. For him Leo III and Constantine V, the Iconoclastic emperors, are 'holy' and 'wise'; he ignores their persecution of the monks, lays the blame for resistance to Iconoclasm on the Pope, and attributes to it the schism between the Greeks and the Latins, and the conquest of the Eastern Christians by the Arabs and the Turks. He believes that all 'worship' of images or pictures is idolatry. As human nature is so corrupt, that it is impossible to prevent people from committing idolatry if they have the chance, all pictures and statues with any religious significance are to be destroyed, especially if they are in churches. If the bishops will not do this, it is the civil magistrate's duty to do it, following the example of Hezekiah and Josiah.

Moreover, he believes that pictures or statues of Christ and His Apostles are falsehoods because we do not know what they looked like. And if we did know, they would still be falsehoods because they only represent our Lord's Manhood, and not His Godhead; they only represent the bodies of the Apostles, and not their souls.

This astonishing example of Puritan invective, which covers a hundred pages of small print, shows clearly the ideal of the Calvinist party which was dominant in the Church of England during the reign of Elizabeth I. Fortunately, its influence was shortlived. For it had nothing to put in the place of the worship which it abhorred, but preaching (which the Homilist admits is rare, for 'sincere preachers were, and ever shall be, but a few in respect of the multitude to be taught'). This writer would have made our churches as bare and dull as those of the Puritan sectaries; places not to worship God in, but to listen to a preacher. It is one of the curiosities of Church history that this homily should have remained for nearly 400 years among the formularies of the Church of England. It is, probably, unknown to the laity, and hardly one in a thousand of the clergy has read it; I had not, till I began this enquiry. Certainly no responsible or significant group in the English Church would now defend or promote such principles.

Anglican theologians have not shown much interest in the Second Council of Nicæa. It is not mentioned by Hooker, our first and perhaps greatest Anglican theologian, properly so called (for those of the previous generation were supporters of the Reformation in general rather than of the particular position of the Church of England).

Our next witness is Richard Field, Dean of Gloucester, a younger contemporary of Hooker. Field's book *Of the Church* published in 1606, is described by the *Dictionary of National Biography* as a masterpiece of polemical divinity.

The learned author has the controversy with Rome (which he does not scruple to call heretical) constantly in mind. It is the more surprising that he should have asserted explicitly that there are Seven General Councils, and that the Second Council of Nicæa is one of them. 'Concerning the General Councils of this sort that have hitherto been holden, we confess that in respect of the matter about which they were called, so nearly and essentially concerning the life of the Christian Faith, and in respect of the manner and form of their proceeding, and the evidence of proof brought in them, they are and ever were expressly to be believed by all such as perfectly understand the meaning of their determination. And therefore it is not to be marvelled

at if Gregory profess that he honoureth the first four Councils as the four Gospels¹² and that whosoever admitteth them not, though he seem to be a stone cut and precious, yet he lieth beside the foundation and out of the building. Of this sort there are only six.’ (He then describes the first six Councils.) ‘For the Seventh, which is the Second of Nice, was not called about any question of faith, but of manners; in which our adversaries’ (the Romanists) ‘confess there may be something inconveniently prescribed, and so as to be the occasion of great and grievous evils: and surely that is our conceit of the Seventh General Council, the Second of Nice; for howsoever it condemn the religious adoration and worshipping of pictures, and seem to allow no other use of them but that which is historical, yet in permitting men by outward signs of reverence and respect towards the pictures of saints to express their love towards them, and the desire they have of enjoying their happy society, and in condemning so bitterly such as upon dislike of abuses wished there might be no pictures in the Church at all, it may seem to have given some occasion and to have opened the way to that gross idolatry which afterwards entered into the Church. ... So that there are but Seven General Councils that the whole Church acknowledgeth called to determine faith and manners. For the rest that were holden afterwards, which our adversaries would have to be accounted general, they are not only rejected by us, but by the Grecians also, as not general, but patriarchal only. . . . And therefore, howsoever we dare not pronounce that lawful General Councils are free from danger of erring (as some of our adversaries do), yet do we more honour and esteem, and more fully admit all the General Councils that ever hitherto have been holden, than they do: who fear not to charge some of the chiefest of them with error, as both the Second and the Fourth, for equalling the Bishop of Constantinople to the Bishop of Rome; which I think they suppose to have been an error in faith.’

Field was mistaken in supposing that the error of the Iconoclasts was only one of ‘manners.’ They were condemned, as we have seen, for believing that our Lord’s Manhood is uncircumscribed; that is, that He is not perfectly human. But this is the kind of consideration which penetrates the English mind with great difficulty; as everyone knows who has heard a committee of English ecclesiastics sigh with relief when they turn from a doctrinal to a practical question! Nor did he understand that the Seventh Council was so little known to the Latins in the later Middle Ages that even S. Thomas Aquinas ignored it; and that therefore it cannot be held responsible for the abuses of the cult of images which grew up among the Latins, and which he, like most Englishmen of his age, abhorred. When Field says ‘we’ he usually claims to speak for the whole Reformation, Continental as well as English. Whether he does so here I cannot say.

William Beveridge, afterwards Bishop of S. Asaph, published in 1672 his *Synodicon*, or collection of canons of the ancient Councils. He included among them those of the Seventh General Council; but not those of any later Council that claimed to be General.

Thomas Ken, Bishop of Bath and Wells, who died in 1712, wrote in his will: ‘As for my religion, I die in the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Faith professed by the whole Church before the division of East and West; more particularly I die in the communion of the Church of England, as it stands distinguished from all Papal and Puritan innovations, and as it adheres to the doctrine

¹² He wrote this after the Fifth Council had been held.

of the Cross.’

‘The faith of the whole Church before the division of East and West’ implies the Second Council of Nicæa; and probably Bishop Ken realized this. The rejection of Puritan innovations implies the rejection of Iconoclasm.

I have found no further references before the nineteenth century. William Palmer (who must be carefully distinguished from his Oxford namesake and contemporary, who was a brother of the first Lord Selborne, visited Russia with a letter of commendation from Dr. Routh, the President of Magdalen, and ended his life in the Roman Communion) published his *Treatise on the Church* in 1838, during the Tractarian Movement, with which he was partly, but not entirely, in sympathy. For him the Seventh Council is ‘the pseudo-synod of Nice.’¹³ He rejects the Iconoclastic Council of Hieria, whose proceedings he calls ‘uncharitable and censurable’; but, as I have already shown, he held that the Latin churches, all but the Roman see, rejected the Second Council of Nicæa also. He claimed that Pope Nicholas I, in 850, and a synod held by him at Rome in 863 (sometimes called the eighth General Council, but Professor Dvornik has shown that even from a Latin point of view it has no right to that title) recognized only six General Councils. He mentions a number of French, English and German authorities who rejected the Second Council of Nicæa: the last of whom was Matthew of Westminster. (It seems, however, that Palmer was mistaken; there never was any such person as Matthew of Westminster, and the fourteenth century chronicle which bears his name is of no great value). Palmer says that as late as 1540 Longolius published at Cologne ‘the Nicene Synod which the Greeks call the seventh’; and in 1530 Merlinus published an edition of the Six Councils, omitting the Seventh.

The truth appears to be, that the Second Council of Nicæa was very little known in the West, and where it was known, it was only known in a misleading translation. As I have already said in Chapter 7, I think that Palmer with all his learning was not entirely accurate, and that he allowed himself to be overcome by prejudice.

Dr. John Mason Neale, in his *History of the Patriarchate of Alexandria*, vol. 2, p. 132, after relating the proceedings at the Second Council of Nicæa, has a long note giving reasons why the Council is not to be regarded as General. He does not, like Palmer, object to the teaching of the Council, but he asserts that it is undeniable that if this Council is General, ‘it would be difficult to clear our own Church from the charge of heresy.’ He gives no reasons for this notion: it was not the opinion of Field or Beveridge, as we have seen, and I cannot find that the English Church has ever formally rejected the Council; for nobody pretends that the Church is committed by the Homily on Peril of Idolatry.

Neale’s further arguments are rationalizations; that the Seventh Council was not confirmed by a later General Council (which would, if true, apply also to the Sixth, and the Fifth, and every other General Council); that the Latins were not fairly represented (but at the Second Council they were not represented at all); that the Council of Frankfort rejected it (but, as we have seen, that Council was misled by a false translation); that it was not everywhere recognized even among the Greeks (which is not true); that the arguments used at the Council were largely

¹³ Part 4, ch. 10, section 4, vol. 2, pp. 150-61.

based on historical mistakes. But he does not deny the truth of the Council's definition: he only refuses to accept it as a dogma.

Dr. Neale's book was published in 1847, two years after the secession of Newman, when the Church was in a depressed state. This perhaps accounts for his pessimistic attitude.

Dr. George Salmon (*Infallibility of the Church*, p. 314) accused the Second Council of Nicæa of teaching for the first time the insufficiency of the Scriptures and anathematizing those who would not accept dogmas on the authority of Fathers and Councils alone. But I cannot find that the Council did anything of the kind, or went any further in its adherence to tradition than Article 35 does. R. F. Littledale, *Plain Reasons against Joining the Church of Rome*, p. 47, rejects the Second Council of Nicæa, but prefers its teaching to that of S. Thomas Aquinas. On the other hand, Dr. H. R. Percival, who in 1900 published the translation of the Seven Œcumenical Councils for the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Library*, has no doubt at all that the Seventh Council was General, and argues against both Palmer and Neale. A writer in the *Church Quarterly Review* for July 1896 agrees with Percival, so also Cheetham, *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, s.v. Œcumenical, and Darwell Stone, *Outlines of Dogma*, note 40. Dr. Francis J. Hall, the American theologian whose *Dogmatic Theology* in ten volumes is the only Anglican Summa Theologica, so far as I know, recognizes Seven General Councils (vol. 2, p. 137). He says 'The second of Nicæa 787 A.D., defined the right use of images in worship, and the purely relative honour due to them in that connection.' His book was published in 1908.

In 1918 a group of Orthodox theologians, led by Meletios, afterwards Patriarch of Constantinople, held a conference with Anglican theologians in London about the Seventh General Council. Professor Hamilcar Alivisatos, who was there, wrote the following report (*Christian East*, vol. i, p. 127): 'It is true that this Synod is not now admitted as Œcumenical by the Anglican Church. Nevertheless the practice of this Church shows clearly that it makes use of icons in devotion on the lines of the Seventh Œcumenical Synod. They deviate in nothing from this line. They honour icons conformably to the spirit of S. John of Damascus. Besides, what was more important, it was openly declared in this conference that if the union of the two Churches were proclaimed by some new Œcumenical Synod, the Anglican Church would not have the slightest hesitation in officially accepting the Seventh Synod as Œcumenical (the lines of which it keeps exactly in practice) and acknowledging its decisions with those of the other Œcumenical Synods as infallible. The discussion proved that the Protestant charge against the Orthodox Church, that it orders the adoration of sacred pictures, has no foundation. For the Seventh Œcumenical Synod, and consequently the Orthodox Church, condemns those who dishonour the sacred pictures, and also those who misuse them—that is, who adore them.'

In 1930, the Lambeth Conference declared that 'There is nothing in the Declaration of Utrecht inconsistent with the teaching of the Church of England' (Resolution 350). Now the Declaration of Utrecht, the doctrinal formula of the Old Catholic Churches which came into full communion with the Church of England two years later, in its first article, professes the faith of the primitive Church—specified precisely by the unanimously accepted decisions of the Œcumenical Councils held in the undivided Church of the first thousand years.' It has never been doubted by any one that the Old Catholic Churches mean by these words the Seven General

Councils. The Lambeth Conference of all the Anglican bishops therefore formally declared that the Second Council of Nicæa defined nothing contrary to Anglican doctrine. This is much the most important Anglican statement on the subject.

However, it did not pass without protest. A group of forty leading clerical and lay members of the Church of England criticized the Report of the Lambeth Conference; they said ‘We do not recognize the decisions of the Second Council of Nicæa, which approved the worship of images.’ (In modern English, worship always means the honour given to God alone.) Dr. A. C. Headlam, Bishop of Gloucester, the chairman of the sub-committee of the Lambeth Conference on reunion, replied as follows:¹⁴ ‘The exact authority of the Seventh General Council may be regarded as a doubtful matter, and I have argued that as there is doubt as to whether it was subsequently received by the whole Church, at any rate before the Council of Florence, its claim to be oecumenical may be doubtful. . . . But the point I think it is important to emphasize is that the Second Council of Nicæa *did not approve the worship of images, but condemned it*. The main points of the teaching of that Council were (i) to condemn iconoclasm, the opinion which would allow no pictures in the church, (2) to lay down that representations of the Second Person of the Trinity were allowable owing to the fact of the Incarnation, and (3) to condemn the offering of λατρεία, that is worship, to images, but allow προσκυνησις, that is reverence. It specifically states “that worship pertains to the Divine Nature alone.” The distinction between λατρεία and προσκυνησις is one of great importance, and often not understood. . . . A Russian bishop at his consecration uses the following words: “I will take care that the homage due to God be not transferred to holy images nor false miracles be attributed to them whereby the true worship is perverted and a handle given to adversaries to reproach the Orthodox; on the contrary, I will study that images be respected only in the sense of the Holy Orthodox Church as set forth in the Second Council of Nicæa.”’

I once myself heard Bishop Headlam say that there was no reason why we should not accept the Second Council of Nicæa. On the other hand, Sir Edwyn Bevan, in his Gifford Lectures delivered in 1933, took the side of S. Thomas Aquinas against the Second Council of Nicæa. This distinguished Anglican layman wrote rather as a philosopher than from the standpoint of the Church of England, and defended the offering of *latria* to an image of our Lord, as offered to our Lord through the image (which is the excuse given by all intelligent idolaters for their idolatry). But I am not sure that he distinguished the definition of the Council from the teaching of particular Greek theologians; nor did he distinguish Anglican from what he called ‘Protestant’ teaching.¹⁵

On the whole, we may say that Anglican theologians are not agreed as to whether the definition of the Seventh Council is binding on the Anglican Communion, but the majority are agreed that there is nothing in it with which Anglican principles are inconsistent.

¹⁴ The Anglicans, the Orthodox, and the Old Catholics, p. n.

¹⁵ *Holy Images*, p. 148ff.

CHAPTER VIII REUNION AND THE SEVENTH COUNCIL

THE First Council of Nicæa took the middle way between Arius and Sabellius. The Council of Chalcedon took the middle way between Nestorius and Eutyches. And the Second Council of Nicæa took the middle way between idolatry and iconoclasm, between too much respect for sacred pictures and too little. Ever since George Herbert in *The British Church* claimed for the Church of England the middle way between Rome and Geneva, 300 years ago, the middle way has been regarded as characteristic of the Anglican Communion. Neither idolatry nor iconoclasm, perhaps, is a danger threatening the Church to-day (though there is plenty of both in the service of Mammon). But what *is* an urgent problem is the Reunion of Christendom. Many of us have long thought that the Orthodox Eastern Churches hold the key to this problem. This is the thesis of Professor Hodges' *Anglicanism and Orthodoxy*. In Orthodoxy alone we find the totality which in the West has been broken up by the conflict between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. And the Anglican Communion is peculiarly fitted, as was already seen in the seventeenth century, to enter into that totality; for it is not irrevocably committed either to the decrees of Trent or to the principles of Luther or Calvin. It has no dogmas peculiar to itself, and no formularies which cannot be changed except those of the Universal Church.

But it is quite certain, beyond the possibility of doubt, that there can be no union with the Orthodox Eastern Churches, except on the basis of the Seven General Councils. In 1895 Pope Leo XIII issued an Encyclical inviting all non-Romanists to submit to the Papacy. In reply, the Patriarch of Constantinople invited the Pope, and all non-Orthodox Christians, to return to the faith of the Seven General Councils. For more than eleven centuries the Orthodox Churches have remained faithful to this standard, through difficulties and persecutions of which we in the West have no experience and no conception, for there is no part of Eastern Christendom which has not been forced to live under an explicitly anti-Christian Government, Moslem or Communist; in some cases for many centuries. No one who knows anything about the Orthodox Churches can have the least doubt that the Seven General Councils must be accepted by any one who is to enter into union with them: and the purpose of this book is to enquire whether the Anglican Communion can do so without abandoning its own principles.

It has been argued that the Anglican Communion is already bound by the definitions of the Second Council of Nicæa, and that no formal assent is necessary. I cannot accept this view for three reasons. First; it ignores the actual situation. If the Orthodox are to recognize us on the basis of the Seven Councils they will probably require of us formal assent to those Councils. The Anglican Communion will not give formal assent to the Seventh Council on the basis of authority alone. Whether it ought in theory to recognize the authority of the Council or not, in practice it does not. Secondly, what distinguishes a Council as General is that it has been accepted as a General Council by all parts of the Church at the time or later. In the later Middle Ages, the Roman Communion, of which the Church of England was then part, had no

opportunity of freely accepting the decrees of the Seventh Council. Its language was Greek; which the Latins did not know; and the definition was badly translated.

So far as our forefathers accepted it at all (and we have seen that it was rejected at Frankfort and was unknown to S. Thomas Aquinas nearly 500 years later), they did so on the authority of the Pope as the successor of S. Peter; which authority we have rejected on the ground that it has no historical basis.

Thirdly, we could not, even if we wished, ignore the Renaissance and the Reformation, which have made us what we are. The Anglican provinces are no longer Latin. We do not think as Latins do; we have developed in a different way. The Renaissance, and the critical movement of the last century, have made it impossible for us to interpret either Holy Scripture or the Fathers as the bishops did in the eighth century; for instance, we can no longer accept, as they did, spurious interpolations as genuine, or identify the pseudo-Dionysius, who was a mystical writer of the fifth or sixth century, with the convert of S. Paul, as every one did in the eighth century and for hundreds of years after. The Renaissance led us to examine critically the whole traditional system of the Church, in the spirit of Erasmus, and to reject many things which had been added to the faith and practice of the Fathers during the Middle Ages, and the Reformation enabled us to act on the results of that criticism. Since the Reformation, we have maintained the creeds and sacraments of the ancient Church, and the teaching of the first six Councils; but we have rejected many things which were associated with them (including some which we have since restored, such as the monastic life). Yet we have not made any explicit statement about the Second Council of Nicæa, and if we are to restore communion with the Eastern Churches we shall probably have to do so.

There are, however, two principles; both entirely Catholic and Orthodox, which we cannot abandon even for the sake of reunion.

The first is, that we cannot accept anything, especially as a necessary dogma, unless we are convinced by sufficient evidence that it is true. S. Paul tells us to prove all things and hold fast that which is good (i Thess. 5:21). Authority is one kind of evidence, but it is not the only kind; we require to be convinced by Hooker's threefold cord, Scripture, tradition, and reason,¹⁶ if we are to accept any particular statement proposed to us.

The second is, that whatever we accept as necessary to the faith must be found in, or proved by, Holy Scripture. Every Anglican priest is bound by his ordination vows to 'teach nothing as necessary to salvation but that which he shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved from Scripture.'

This, as our theologians have constantly pointed out, is the teaching of all the Fathers, both Greek and Latin. For instance, S. Irenæus says 'Read diligently the Gospel given to us by the apostles, and read diligently the prophets, and you will find every action, and the whole doctrine, and the whole passion of our Lord preached in them' (Against all Heresies, 4. 39). And S. Athanasius says 'The holy and Divinely inspired Scriptures are sufficient in themselves to the discovery of truth' (adv. Gent. i. i). Especially, S. John of Damascus, the great champion of

¹⁶ Eccles. 4¹²; *Ecclesiastical Polity*, iii. 8. 14.

Orthodoxy against Iconoclasm, says, at the very beginning of his book *On the Orthodox Faith*,

‘All things that have been delivered to us by the Law and the Prophets and the Apostles, and the Evangelists we receive and know and honour, seeking for nothing beyond these. . . . With these things let us be satisfied and abide by them, not removing everlasting boundaries, nor overpassing the Divine tradition.’

As to tradition, we are the most unlikely people to undervalue it, as our Article 34 shows. We believe, with all the Fathers, that Scripture is the inspired record of the apostolic tradition in its earliest and purest form; and that no doctrine is to be accepted which is not based on that tradition. For the ancient Church knew of no necessary doctrine which could not be proved by Scripture; and when the Fathers spoke of unwritten apostolic tradition, they meant either customs such as the observance of Easter, and the sign of the Cross, or else the interpretation of Scripture which the Church has agreed to authorize, such as the definition of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.¹⁷

We have therefore to enquire whether the definition of the Second Council of Nicæa is true, and whether it can be proved from Scripture. I need not prove that idolatry, which is forbidden by the Council, is also forbidden by Scripture. Idolatry is ‘latria,’ the adoration which is due to God alone, offered to idols, visible forms, or to any created thing or person.

The Council distinguishes between λατρεία, the worship or adoration given to God alone, and προσκυνησις, respect or veneration which may be given to God, to men, or to inanimate things representing or symbolizing either God, or angels, or men. This distinction, as I have already shown in Chapter IV, is Scriptural: λατρεία in the New Testament is always used of the worship of God, except in one or two cases, when it refers to heathen worship of false gods. But προσκυνησις is often used of a salute to men, though more commonly of the worship of God. For instance, Herod said he wished to salute the new-born King of the Jews (S. Matt. 2⁸); he did not know that the baby was God. The leper, who was a Jew, prostrated himself before our Lord, as a prophet (S. Matt. 8²): he did not know that He was God. So also did Jairus, S. Mark 5²², and the Syro-Phœnician woman, S. Mark 7²⁵, and the mother of Zebedee’s children, S. Matt. so20. The Unmerciful Servant in the parable prostrated himself before his master (S. Matt. 18²⁶). But there are two cases in which προσκυνησις is forbidden. S. Peter would not let Cornelius prostrate himself, but said, ‘Stand up: I also am a man’ (Acts 10²⁶). Prostration was an Eastern custom, unnatural for a Roman officer, for whom it would imply worshipping a god. A stronger case in Rev. 19²⁰, 22⁸: the seer is twice forbidden to prostrate himself before an angel, and is bidden to keep this salutation for God. But the Christians of Asia for whom the Apocalypse was written were in constant danger of idolatry, and in particular of worshipping angels (Col. 2¹⁸, the word here is θρησκεία, which everywhere else in the New Testament means the worship of God, and is translated ‘religion’). Besides, prostration before a superior, natural to Jews, was regarded by Greeks in classical times (though not in Byzantine times) as barbaric (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, i. 59). It seems clear that prostration before the angel was forbidden because it might so easily be confused with the adoration due to God alone. (But here we must be careful: the Latins,

¹⁷ H. E. W. Tamer, *Pattern of Christian Truth*, passim.

from the Council of Frankfort to the present day, translate η προσκυνησις by *adoratio*. In this book, at least, I use ‘adoration’ as the proper English translation of λατρεία or latria.)

It may, however, be argued that this distinction is too subtle for ordinary people. But to distinguish between the adoration which we give to God alone, and the respect or veneration which we give to man, seems to be within the reach of the simplest mind. We are not committing idolatry when we salute the flag or the national anthem; when we rise at the entrance of the judge into a court, or of the bishop into a church; when we uncover our heads in church, or bow to the altar. These things are for us what prostration was to the Byzantines. They received the Emperor, or his officers and his symbols, with lights, incense, and prostration; they could do no less for the pictures of the Apostles and martyrs, and still more those of our Lord. We Northerners are more restrained in our habits. We do not prostrate ourselves even before the Queen. But we show due respect to those to whom it is due, and to their symbols; and we do not confuse that respect with the adoration of God.

The difference was stated in an English way by that most English of writers; Charles Lamb, whom no one will accuse of theological subtlety. A group of his friends had been discussing who was the greatest man that ever lived. “I tell you what it is,” said Lamb. “If Shakespeare came into this room we should all stand up, but if Jesus Christ came into this room we should all kneel down.” Exactly; that is the difference between respect and adoration, προσκυνησις and λατρεία.

The Second Council of Nicæa distinguished between idols, which it forbade, and sacred pictures or icons, which it encouraged. Idols are representations of false gods, or of the true God. Christians have always been forbidden to make them, much more to offer respect to them. Any representation of God who is uncircumscribed must be a false representation of Him. Adoration or ‘latria’ may only be offered to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and that directly.

Icons are pictures of human beings or angels. An icon of our Lord Jesus Christ represents Him as Man, not as God. ‘As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ’ (*Quicumque Vult*), A picture of a man represents his body, not his soul, which is invisible; and a picture of our Saviour represents His Manhood, not His Godhead. This is lawful because His Manhood is not uncircumscribed: He would not be truly Man if it were. It is absurd to claim, as the Iconoclasts did, that to make a picture of our Lord as Man is Nestorian. It is His Manhood that we see represented, but it is the Manhood of God the Son. And it is even more absurd to argue that a picture is a falsehood because we do not know what the person whom it represents looked like: for instance, the statue of King Alfred, because we have no contemporary portrait of that King.

We cannot say that Scripture anywhere directs or even mentions the making of sacred pictures. But it does not forbid them. What it does forbid is the worship of such pictures as gods. The Second Commandment’s two clauses must be taken together, as Hebrew idiom requires; it does not forbid the making of images. The Cherubim on the Ark (Exodus 25¹⁸), the lions on the steps of Solomon’s throne (I Kings 10²⁰) were commanded, and they were not adored; the golden calves were forbidden because they were adored (‘Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt’—I Kings 12²⁸). The brazen serpent was destroyed because the people

offered adoration to it (2 Kings 1⁸⁴). The Hebrews were so liable to fall into idolatry (because their neighbours were all idol-worshippers, and there was a strong tradition of idol-worship even among themselves) that they were never encouraged to practise painting or sculpture. The early Christian Church had very few sacred pictures, and these entirely symbolic. It was only in the fourth century, when they were no longer liable to persecution for refusing to worship idols, that the use of sacred pictures began to spread (see Chapter 3). But we must claim, as Richard Hooker taught us, that we are free to use whatever is not contrary to Scripture, such as the sign of the cross in baptism, or the ring in marriage. The observance of Christmas Day began in the fourth century; so did the wearing of special clothes by the officiating clergy. The use of sacred pictures to remind us of our Saviour and His apostles and martyrs is no more unlawful than the keeping of Christmas. When I was in Dublin we had over the font in our church a copy of Thorvaldsen's 'Come unto Me,' the statue of our Lord in Copenhagen Cathedral. I was showing some children round the church, and when we reached this statue and I had explained who it was, one little boy said "Please lift me up to kiss His feet." Will any one say that by doing as the child asked I was teaching him to commit idolatry? A refusal would have rendered me liable to the condemnation of those who put a stumbling-block in the way of Christ's little ones.

We are not Iconoclasts. No important school of thought in the Anglican Communion objects to the presence of pictures and statues in churches. It is said that a group of Russian bishops, visiting Oxford, wished to see an Evangelical Anglican Church. They were taken to see one; and they came back full of enthusiasm about the 'beautiful icons' which they had seen there. These turned out to be stained glass windows.

The writer of the Homily on Peril of Idolatry, writing about 1550, thought it impossible to have pictures and statues of our Lord and the saints in churches without idolatry. The Lutherans, by the experience of four hundred years, have shown that he was wrong. Not to mention the medieval sculpture that is so common in old Lutheran churches, no one who has seen the church of Lohja in Finland, with its walls and roof covered with seventeenth century frescoes of Old Testament history, or the great series of statues of the Apostles by Thorvaldsen, culminating in the famous 'Come unto Me' figure of our Lord over the altar, in Copenhagen Cathedral, or the crucifixes that hang over the altar in almost every Lutheran church, could accuse the Lutherans of iconoclasm; and no one, I suppose, will accuse them of idolatry. (We may well wish that the Church of England had always been as free from iconoclasm as the Lutherans, and as free from Erastianism as the Calvinists.)

If we have sacred pictures and statues, we must treat them with due respect. The Iconoclasts poked out their eyes, and the Puritans smashed them up. Such behaviour seems to us to-day highly profane. The Iconoclasts would have forbidden the paintings of Giotto, Raphael, and Murillo. The Second Council of Nicæa has been called the charter of Christian art.

We certainly have the authority of Scripture for reverence towards everything belonging to the sanctuary (Lev. 19³⁰—26²). The Ark, which had cherubim on it, was not even allowed to be touched (Num. 4¹⁵, i Sam. 6⁶). We treat with due respect the statues of national heroes, and the pictures of our own parents. We cannot do less for the statues and pictures of our Lord, the angels, and the saints. Of course we do not offer to them the adoration which we ought to give to

God alone; and no one is at all likely to do so. The idolatry to which we are tempted now is to give to money, or pleasure, or power, or popularity, or even speed, the place in our hearts which ought to belong to God only. The respect which we ought to give, and do give, to sacred pictures corresponds to the veneration or prostration required by the Second Council of Nicæa. We are not Greeks, and our habits, religious and secular, are more restrained than theirs, and than ours were some centuries ago. (When Horace Walpole met his friend and former schoolfellow Gray the poet, after an estrangement of some years, he kissed him on both cheeks. No Englishman, I suppose, would do that now, but it would be quite natural for a Russian.) Our Eastern brethren cannot fairly expect us to have the same religious habits as they have. All that we need do is to show that respect for what is sacred that we show now. Professor Alivisatos, whom I quoted in the last chapter, was content with our present practice. Some of us place candles before sacred pictures, and there is no reason why they should not; but it is not our usual tradition, and all that the Council requires of us is to follow our own tradition. It is not even necessary to have sacred pictures in all churches. The Cistercians had no ornaments whatever in their churches, but no one has ever accused S. Bernard of iconoclasm! And that was before the schism was completed, for, as Mr. Steven Runciman and others have shown, 1054 was not such an important date as we have been accustomed to think, and the schism was not really completed until the Latins sacked Constantinople in 1204 (in which we English, happily, had no share).

The Church of the East, commonly called Assyrian, seems to have been always aniconic (without pictures). The primitive tradition survived among a people whose language and culture were closely akin to those of the Hebrews, and who received better treatment from their Moslem rulers because of the absence of any excuse for calling them idolaters. As they accepted the Council of Chalcedon, which still forms part of their canon law, they cannot be justly accused of any Christological heresy. But their example is a warning to us that though sacred pictures are lawful, and must be treated with due respect, they are not necessary; that in Moslem countries the use of them may cause a stumbling-block; and that in idolatrous countries it may be expedient to use them, if at all, with great restraint, lest they should be confused with idols. 'If meat make my brother to stumble, I will eat no meat while the world lasteth, lest I cause my brother to stumble' (I Corinthians 8¹³).

Indeed we might well be more restrained than we are when we try to represent angels. The popular notion that an angel is a human being with wings is neither Scriptural nor reasonable. Many of us are very matter-of-fact, and the descriptions of angels in Holy Scripture are either highly symbolical, as in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel I, or represented in ordinary human form, as in S. Luke 1². One of the arguments used by the Communists against the possibility of angels is anatomical! Angels are spirits without bodies; the Greeks call them the Holy Bodiless Ones, *τους αγιους ασοματους*. To represent them in human form, especially, as too often happens, in female human form, or as children with wings, may be highly misleading. It cannot be entirely avoided, but it needs the most careful handling. One of the few things we know about the angels is that they are sexless (S. Mark 12²⁵) and it is almost impossible to represent a human being with no suggestion of male or female.

What I propose is that our Convocations, and the other Anglican Synods, should pass a

resolution formally declaring their assent to the definition of the Seventh General Council, which condemns both idolatry and iconoclasm, and declares that it is lawful to have pictures of our Lord and of the angels and saints in our churches. I do not suggest that such a resolution would bring about full communion with the Eastern Churches at once, but I am sure that it would be a long step towards it, and a necessary step, which we shall have to take sooner or later, if there is ever to be a united Christendom. No change in our present belief or practice would be required. The Old Catholics, who are in full communion with us, have always accepted the Seven Councils, and after more than forty years' acquaintance with their worship I see no difference between their treatment of pictures and ours.

There may still be some who fear that assent to the Second Council of Nicæa might lead us into 'superstition.' I am sure that this fear is baseless. Superstition is defined in the O.E.D. as an irrational religious belief or practice, a tenet founded on fear or ignorance. There is nothing irrational about having pictures or figures of our Lord and the saints in churches, and treating them with proper respect; nor is there any fear or ignorance in it. Superstition is abundant in the irreligious, and takes the form of mascots, astrology, palmistry, etc. True religion and rational education are the proper remedies for it; and true religion is increased and not lessened by the pictures which remind us of our Saviour and what He has done for us, and of the heroes of the Church who have lived and died by His power. The fear of superstition in the use of sacred pictures is in our age and country an anachronism. On the contrary, I think that the absence of religious pictures in the homes of many of our people is one cause of the weakness of family religion among us. What we see makes a deeper impression than what we hear.

CHAPTER IX THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES

AT this point I might stop. But there is still so much ignorance about the Orthodox Eastern Communion among us that some of my readers may ask why we should seek for reunion with it by assenting to the Second Council of Nicæa.

The Orthodox Eastern Communion, as I have already said, is the original stock from which all other Christians have separated at one time or another. Until the Moslem conquests of the seventh century, the Greek part of the Church was by far the largest. The Church of Rome itself was Greek before it was Latin and Orthodox before it was Papal. One great difference between Eastern and Western Christendom is that every part of Eastern Christendom has been long subject to an antichristian government,¹⁸ and most of it is so still; but Western Christendom (except Spain) has been able to develop freely under Christian governments from early times. In England we have had no experience of an antichristian government since the death of Penda, King of Mercia, just 1300 years ago. But every part of Eastern Christendom, except Montenegro, has had to live for centuries under Moslem rule, and the greater part of it is now under Communist rule. Free development, such as we have always taken for granted, is not possible in such conditions. The Church must devote all its power to surviving; internal controversy is dangerous, missions are almost impossible. And so Orthodoxy has become a fixed traditional system in doctrine and practice, uniform in all but small details in all its many nations. That does not mean that there is no freedom of thought: no one who has heard Russians arguing on theology would suppose that. Nor does it mean that, as is often said, the Eastern Churches are 'static'; they have developed in a different way from that to which we are accustomed, and having escaped the disputes between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, are for that very reason better fitted than we are to break the deadlock which those disputes have caused. But it does mean that there is no clear distinction between what is necessary and what is not; and that the rules laid down by tradition cannot in practice be changed. Tradition has never been broken; and therefore is enormously more powerful than it is in the West.

If any one is inclined to accuse the Orthodox of excessive traditionalism, or of suspicion of other Christians, let him remember that the Orthodox churches have lived for centuries, and some of them are still living, under conditions that we can hardly imagine. The astonishing thing is not that they have faults, but that they exist at all. And these conditions were partly the fault of Western Christians who, so far from helping their fellow-Christians, were their worst enemies. None of us can read without shame the true story of the Crusades, as Mr. Runciman tells it; especially the sack of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204, the most disastrous event in the history of the Church, which the Greeks have never forgotten; or again, the capture of

¹⁸ Even the Russian Church was subject to the Mongols for 200 years.

Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, which the nations of Western Europe, though appealed to for help again and again, did hardly anything to avert.

The experience of the Orthodox Churches, even in modern times, has too often been that Western Christians, both Roman and Reformed, have tried to proselytize and to weaken rather than to help and support them. We cannot be surprised if the great mass of Orthodox people, who have had no direct contact with us, and even some of those who have, fail to understand us, and suspect us of sinister motives. It is extremely difficult for them to believe that people, whose religious customs and ways of thought are so different from their own, can possibly have the same religion as theirs. Some of us, with much more diverse experience, find it hard to realize this about the Orthodox; and it is much harder for them than for us. The Eastern Churches had no part in the Renaissance or the Reformation. What the Reformation did for us was to give us freedom from papal control, papal dogmas, and papal politics; freedom from fear of the fires of purgatory, and from the constant demand for money to get ourselves and our friends out of it (this is the meaning of the much misunderstood passage in Article 31 about the ‘sacrifices of masses’); freedom to have the Bible and the Prayer Book in our mother tongue; freedom from clerical control of the private lives of the laity through the canon law, which was enforced by fines and imprisonment; freedom for the clergy to be married,¹⁹ and for the laity to receive communion in both kinds.²⁰ All these things the Orthodox have always had. Like Lysias the chief captain (Acts 22²⁸) we obtained this freedom with a great sum, and not in money only; but the Orthodox, like S. Paul, were free-born. It is the Renaissance, and its successor the critical movement of the last century, that makes the chief psychological difference. Because the Eastern churches had no share in the Renaissance or the Reformation they think as our forefathers thought 600 years ago. There is no real theological difference between us; the difference is not theological, but psychological. Many of the Orthodox think deductively; whereas we have been taught to think inductively. But in Christ there is ‘neither Greek nor Jew’ (Col. 3¹¹); no East or West, nor (what in Europe is much more significant) North or South. It is doubtful whether there is a greater psychological barrier dividing us from Greeks or Orthodox Slavs than from Frenchmen or Germans. And if there is, it ought not to divide the Church. We have in the Anglican Communion Indians, Japanese, Africans, and other non-Europeans, whom we may expect to play an ever increasing part in our Church life, and whose psychology must be more different from ours than that of East Europeans. But it is much harder for the Eastern Orthodox people to accept as fellow-churchmen those who stand outside their own tradition than it is for us; just because their tradition is so ancient, so rich, and so unbroken.

There is only one Church: belief in this an Article of the Creed, based on the clear teaching of the New Testament, which knows nothing of ‘denominations.’ The ideal Church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Ephesians 5²⁷), is the same Church as the visible society here on earth, with all its sins and divisions (I Corinthians 12²⁷). To think otherwise is to make the same error in the doctrine of the Church that Eutyches made in the doctrine of the Incarnation: it is Monophysitism in ecclesiology. The Church is the Bride of Christ (Ephesians

¹⁹ Orthodox priests and deacons must not marry after ordination but may do so before it.

²⁰ This sentence refers only to the religious aspect of the Reformation. It had many other aspects as well.

5²³, Rev. 21⁹). He cannot have more than one Bride. The one Church, so far as it is militant here on earth, is visible; that is, we know who is a member and who is not (I Corinthians 5¹¹), because it is the organized fellowship of the baptized (Romans 6³). If it were the invisible company of the elect it could neither be divided nor reunited.

The Orthodox Communion claims to be that Church: its claim can hardly be denied by any one who does not believe in the papal claims. There is no breach, either in doctrine, or worship, or organization between the Church of the Apostles and the Church of S. Athanasius and S. John Chrysostom, or between the Church of these Fathers and the Orthodox Eastern Churches of to-day. The English Church has always recognized this, and we do not ask our Eastern brethren to be anything but what they are now.²¹ But we claim that the Anglican Churches too are Orthodox. We accept all the dogmas and make use of all the sacraments of the Orthodox Eastern Churches. The Anglican Communion has no dogmas peculiar to itself; with our Old Catholic friends who are now united with us we are perhaps the only body of Christians in the West of which this can be said. An Anglican who became Orthodox would not have anything to renounce.

If we were willing formally to accept the Seven Councils, and omit the Filioque clause from the Nicene Creed (as I have said elsewhere, we have no tenable answer to the claim that a creed proclaimed by a General Council can only be altered or enlarged by another General Council), there would be no dogmatic difference between us and the Eastern Orthodox Churches. We never deliberately separated ourselves from the Eastern Patriarchs. We never excommunicated the Eastern Churches. We had no share in the so-called Fourth Crusade. Since we gained control of our own affairs we have always recognized the Eastern Churches from the Reformation to the present day. In the words of the Russian lay theologian, Alexis Khomiakov: 'The Anglican Church has not a single reason to give, and has never given one, for not being Orthodox. It is in the Church by all its principles . . . it is outside the Church by its historical provincialism, which gives it a false appearance of Protestantism.'²² Khomiakov wrote this eighty-five years ago: he would have much more reason to say it now.

The Anglican Communion is not a sect or denomination. It is simply the Church, Catholic and Orthodox, in England and certain other countries, with its missions to non-Christians, and chaplaincies for its own people wherever they are needed. The Christian religion, like some chemical elements, never exists in a pure state: it always takes the tincture of the people that professes it and of the language in which it is expressed. The Church of England is the Catholic Church in its English form: modified by the English character, English historical experience, and the English Reformation (as the Church in other countries is modified by the particular conditions of those countries). It has to be comprehensive just because it is Catholic,²³ and has to try to be the spiritual home of all Christians in the country, and to demand nothing of them but what is and can be proved by Scripture, and defined by the Universal Church. We have not been forced to develop a fixed tradition in defence against hostile governments, like Eastern

²¹ In 1927 I said this to a public meeting at Belgrade, which received it with long and loud applause.

²² *L'Eglise Latine et le Protestantisme*, 1872.

²³ The 'Episcopal' Church in America is as comprehensive as the Church of England.

Christians, nor are we controlled from the centre, like the Latins; but we have been profoundly influenced, for good or evil, by the Continental Reformation; and this has produced tensions which are, if not unknown elsewhere, at least much less formidable. An Orthodox friend once said to me that the Orthodox Church is not like a field with a wall round it, but like a fire which warms, to a greater or lesser degree, all who come within reach of its heat; every one who is baptized, or even believes in God, belongs, to that extent, to the Church. That is what we too believe about the Church; every baptized person in England (apart from resident members of foreign churches) is by baptism a member of the Church of England, even if he does not recognize its claims, or qualify himself for full membership, by being confirmed and acknowledging the bishops, and the same is true of Wales and every other country where the Catholic Church is in communion with the See of Canterbury.

I do not underestimate the difficulty of reunion with the Eastern Churches; which indeed are at present hindered by political conditions from holding a free Pan-Orthodox Synod by which alone they could act. It is still true that ‘Councils cannot be gathered together without the commandment and will of princes’ (Article 21), in this case non-Christian Governments. But those who think that the reunion of Christendom begins ‘at home’ belong to the same class as those who think that we should send no overseas missions till all the British people are converted. There is no ‘home’ or ‘foreign country’ for the Christian—‘every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland a foreign country’ (Epistle to Diognetus, ch. 5, about A.D. 200). In any case, we no longer have to cross the Adriatic Sea or the Gulf of Bothnia (though I have done both) to see the Orthodox Eastern Churches at work. England is full of Orthodox communities, to whom about forty priests of various nations minister, and in the Dominions and the United States their numbers are much larger.

Reunion with the Orthodox Eastern Churches would mean, what reunion with the Old Catholics means now, that they would recognize us, as we already recognize them, as fellow-members in the full sense, of the one Church of Christ. Each Communion would ‘recognize the catholicity and independence of the other’: each Communion would admit members of the other to participate in the sacraments. This would require identity of dogma; that is why we must accept the definitions of the Seven Councils which the Orthodox Churches hold to be necessary dogmas.

We must also say clearly that the Orthodox sacraments are our sacraments too. The definition that there are seven sacraments is not laid down by any General Council, and is no older than Peter Lombard in the twelfth century. The formal teaching of the Anglican ‘Church Catechism’ is not that there are only two sacraments, but that there are only two sacraments ordained by Christ Himself, and generally (that is, universally) necessary to salvation. This is also the teaching of Article 25. That confirmation (or chrism), ordination, marriage, absolution, and the anointing of the sick are mysteries conveying the power of the Holy Spirit is both our teaching and our practice.²⁴ Since no one can prove the number of sacraments from Scripture because the word is not mentioned (‘mystery’ has there a different meaning), it is high time that

²⁴ See Appendix.

the futile argument about the number of sacraments (which is only a dispute about words) ceased to divide Christians from one another.

‘Intercommunion does not require from either communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian Faith.’ We must distinguish sharply, as the Bonn Agreement does, between necessary dogmas, which must be capable of Scripture proof, and theological opinions or liturgical practices, which may differ in different countries, as our Article 34 says.

The Eastern Churches will not find it easy to unite with the Anglican Communion. But there is no part of Western Christendom with which it would be any easier. Nor is there any body of Christians with which the Anglican Communion would find reunion easier than with the Eastern Churches or fewer obstacles to reunion in the way. However disagreeable it may be to us Englishmen, it is difference of fundamental doctrine that is the greatest obstacle to reunion: there is not between us and the Eastern Churches any doctrinal difference which can be compared with the difference between us and those who believe either in the papal claims or the doctrine that the Church on earth is the invisible company of the elect. But dogmatic agreement is not enough, there must also be repentance. We are right to thank God for all that He has done through the Anglican Churches, and I never return from abroad without intense thankfulness for the Church of England. But the achievements of the Church are the effect of Divine grace; the failures of the Church are the effect of human sin, and we cannot read the history of the Church in any century, and compare it with what it was meant to be, without sorrow and shame. We ought not to approach the reunion of Christendom in any spirit but that of penitence for our sins, corporate as well as personal, which have brought about the schisms. All forms of pride, whether professional, ecclesiastical, or national, are here out of place. It is only in penitence, humility, and mutual love that we can come to that meeting-place to which it is our Lord’s will that we should at last attain.

APPENDIX
THE FIVE COMMONLY CALLED SACRAMENTS IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCHES

How many sacraments did Christ ordain in His Church? Two only, as generally necessary to salvation.

(Church Catechism.)

That is, the Church of England teaches, not that there are only two sacraments, but that there are only two ordained by Christ and generally (that is, for all men) necessary to salvation.

Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony and Extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed (that is, approved) in Scripture, but yet have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God. (Article 25.)

Confirmation and 'extreme' unction, and perhaps penance, were corruptly administered in England in the sixteenth century. Orders and marriage are states of life sanctioned by Scripture.

Confirmation. 'Strengthen them, we beseech thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter; and daily increase in them thy manifold gifts of grace.'

(Order of Confirmation, from the Sarum Rite.)

Absolution. 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences: and by his authority committed to me I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' *(Order for the Visitation of the Sick.)*

Orders. 'Receive the holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest, . . . now committed to thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful minister of the Word of God and of His holy Sacraments, in the Name, etc.'

(The Bishop, in form of Ordering of Priests.)

Matrimony. 'I pronounce that they be man and wife together, in the Name, etc. Those whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. O God who hast consecrated the state of Matrimony to such an excellent mystery, that in it is signified and represented the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and His Church.'

(Solemnization of Matrimony.)

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Unction. 'I anoint thee with oil, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

'Grant we beseech thee, to this person whom we anoint in thy name, refreshment of spirit, and, if it be thy holy will, perfect restoration to health.'

(Visitation of the Sick, Scottish Prayer Book.)