

ICONOCLAST AND ICONOPHILE DOCTRINES — A BRIEF COMPARISON

Prof. Jaroslav Skira
(Regis College)

	ICONOCLASTS / ICONOPHOBES	ICONOPHILES / ICONODULES
Tradition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - do not worship idols; OT prohibition in Decalogue (Ex 20.4); no one has seen God (Jn 1.18) - icons are an innovation, and are rejected by the fathers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there are examples of images in the OT (e.g. cherubim; serpent on staff); plus, the OT fulfilled in Christ and the NT. - icons are part of the Tradition; are accepted by the fathers; are used in liturgical practice; and no ecumenical council has condemned them (Trullo accepted images (e.g. cross, lamb-Christ)).
Icon / Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - since the "type" (icon/image) is of the same essence (<i>homoousios</i>) as the "prototype" (Christ), there can be no proper image (icon, statue) of Christ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the "type" (image/icon) is only a likeness of the "prototype" (Christ); it is not of the same essence (<i>homoousios</i>). - icons are anagogic or theophanic = spiritual/mystical representations of prototypes.
Worship & Veneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - worship (<i>latreía</i>) and venerate (<i>proskynéseis</i>) only God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - worship (<i>latreía</i>) due to God alone (=adoration). - venerate (<i>proskynéseis</i>) icons, as veneration leads through the icon to worship of God. Icon as sacramental-<i>mysterion</i>.
Christology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Christ is one person with two natures; the human and divine natures are united without confusion, change, division and separation. - disjunctive syllogism: you either circumscribe (paint) only the divine nature (which is impossible), or only the human nature (whereby you deny divinity). [The heresy is thus either denying or separating the natures]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - justification for icons not based on imaging either the divine or human natures of Christ, but on imaging the incarnate person Christ. There is a communion of natures (<i>communicatio idiomatum</i>) in the incarnate person of Christ, so the issue is not about denying/separating the natures. - Christ can be "circumscribed" (imaged) because he was circumscribed by matter in the incarnation.
Eucharist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - real eucharistic (sacramental-<i>mysterion</i>) presence in bread and wine. The question is whether the sacred mediation of divine grace through material objects (sacramental-<i>mysterion</i>) is applicable only to the Eucharist [=iconoclasts] or, can it be extended to other means of grace (icons, cross, relics, baptism) [=iconophiles]. - Eucharist is an icon of Christ (and the only one) because it is identical in its essential reality with Christ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eucharist is not an icon because an icon represents (but is not identical with) its prototype.
Holy Things (Cross, Relics, Scriptures, Mary/Saints, Angels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - veneration of cross is an unwritten apostolic tradition. - cross is exception; a due respect (veneration) to be permitted. - memory of saints to be respected, but not venerated/worshipped in images; reluctance to extend veneration to relics. - angels have no bodies since they are spiritual beings; no one has truly seen them, so images of them are prohibited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - venerate memory (<i>anamnêsis</i>) and relics of saints, icons of saints/Mary/angels, Scriptures and cross because veneration passes through them to worship of God. - cross/relics/icons as sacramental-<i>mysterion</i>; miracles attributed to them. - although invisible spiritual beings, angels of the Lord appeared in the OT/NT and were, therefore, visible; so icons of them permitted.
Didactic Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the "uninstructed and illiterate" will not be able to distinguish between the image and the divine, and will therefore fall into idol worship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the "uninstructed and illiterate" use icons as "theology (Scriptures) in colour" to lead them to the divine (although idolatry is a possible abuse). - Gospels were written by those who saw, touched, heard Christ (so, all senses appropriate for liturgical usage).