A Diachronic Discussion of the Development of the Relationship Between Basileus and Patriarch in Byzantium

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A Diachronic Discussion of the Development of the Relationship
tween Basileus and Patriarch in Byzantium

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A Thesis in the Field of History for the Degree of
Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

Historians have long wondered whether the relationship between the Basileus (temporal) and Patriarch (ecclesiastical) was a truly harmonious relationship as defined by Patriarch Photios in the ninth century in his *Epanagoge* during the Byzantine Empire’s long reign. This harmonious relationship, if there was one, was mired in conflict between the secular and ecclesiastical rulers in Byzantium. What were these conflicts, how were they worked out between them, and how do these conflicts affect our understanding of the existence of a symphony of powers? Was the Emperor also a priest?

I hypothesize that the concept of a harmonious relationship between the Basileus and Patriarch was more honored in the breach than in the observance. When there was a conflict between the two, the Basileus almost invariably won out. This hypothesis does, however, recognize that there were limitations to this “winning out,” as conflicts with the Patriarch were often tempered by the will and support of the Byzantine clergy and laity. The Basileus often played an important role in controversial theological issues resulting in the growth and expansion of the Orthodox Christian Church in Byzantium. The Basileus, or Emperor, also was given liturgical privileges and special honors normally reserved for clergy in the services of the great Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom (Agia Sophia) Church in the Empire’s capital city of Constantinople.
The Byzantine, or New Roman, Empire was also described by historian Steven Runciman as an “earthly copy of the Kingdom of Heaven.” Just as God ruled in heaven, so an Emperor, made in His image, should rule on earth and carry out His commandments. This empire lasted over one thousand years--from the first Christian Emperor Constantine I (r. AD 313-337) until the Emperor Constantine XI Paleologus (r. AD 1449-1453). According to historian Peter Stearns, the New Roman Empire was renowned for its intellectual activity, culture, wealth, and economy. This was also the first empire structured, primarily from the 6th century and on, and, ideally in design, to be ruled temporally by an Emperor, and ecclesiastically, by a Patriarch. The Emperor Justinian’s (r. AD 527-565) contributions to the Byzantine Empire included codified Roman law, a preservation of ancient Greek culture, art, and architecture. This harmony of church and state could not have survived for more than a millennium without its share of conflict. I am hoping that my research will contribute to our understanding of how the Emperor and Patriarch worked out their differences when the symphony of power was not so harmonious, and will tell us more about what happened when the “symphony” broke down.
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Definition of Terms

*Basileus:* The Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. The Basileus was the head of the state government and commander of the military forces. The Basileus was also charged with the selection and appointment of the Patriarch, who was the head of the church.

*Ecumenical Council:* A series of seven ecumenical councils was held during the long reign of the Byzantine Empire. These councils, ecumenical in nature, as they required a majority vote by the bishops present, established and affirmed theological doctrine of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Byzantium:

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*Patriarch:* An Orthodox bishop who serves as the ecclesiastical head of one of the five apostolic sees of the Orthodox Church. The five sees were Constantinople, Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. The patriarchs of Constantinople (Byzantium) were appointed by the basileus (or emperor)
Background

The Byzantine Empire maintained high levels of political, economic, and cultural activity during much of the period from 500 to 1450. It controlled an important but fluctuating swath of territory in the Balkans, the northern Middle East, and the eastern Mediterranean. Its leaders saw themselves as Roman emperors, and their government was in many ways a direct continuation of the eastern portion of the late Roman Empire. Like any other great civilizations of the period, the Byzantine Empire spread its cultural and political influence to parts of the world that had not previously been controlled by any major civilization. The lasting power of the Byzantine Empire (over 1000 years) and the spread of Orthodox Christianity surpassed the global influence of Christian Western Europe. The Empire was known for its intellectual activity and its preservation and restoration of ancient Greek culture and art.

When Constantine I accepted Christianity, the grateful (and now legal) church gave him authority over itself without defining what that authority was. Constantine summoned the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325 to settle the Arian controversy, and presided or provided a representative to preside over its meetings. He could only lend the authority of the state to support what seemed on due consideration to be the correct party in the church, or, rather, the party that

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represented the majority in the hierarchy.\textsuperscript{2} This authority of the emperor led to many Church dogma and doctrinal conflicts; after the establishment of the office of the Patriarch almost a century and a half later, between the ecclesiastical and secular rulers of the new Byzantine Empire.

Constantine’s conversion shortly before his death in 337 and the Christianization of the Empire gradually modified the basis of the legitimization of power. In the beginning, emperors had been worshipped as gods. Obviously reduced to being God’s nominee, their titles suggested that they considered themselves and were indeed regarded and favored by Divinity and acting in its name. Obedience to their rule was thus still viewed as piety, and opposition virtually as treason or sacrilege. The aura of divinity that gradually surrounded the person of the emperor, the pomp and ceremony with which manifestations of state power were invested, all pointed to the importance that emperors attached to the consolidation and legitimization of power.\textsuperscript{3} This “aura of divinity” would also later become a part of the many challenges to the harmonious relationship between Basileus and Patriarch.

Gilbert Dagron wrote about the figure of the Byzantine Emperor, a ruler who was sometimes designated a priest, and who has long fascinated the Western imagination. I will refer to Dagron in regard to his study of the imperial union of “two powers” against a wide background of relations between church and state and secular authorities.

\textsuperscript{2} Steven Runciman, “Byzantium, Russia, and Caesaropapism,” \textit{Canadian Slavonic Papers} (1957): 2.

religious and political spheres. He argues that the Byzantine east preserved the structure of an empire whose ruler—the anointed successor of David—received directly from God his mission to lead his Christian subjects. In this sense, he continues, the emperor was a priest, or a quasi-bishop. Dagron affirms that historians have continued the debate on this subject since the time of the Reformation, declaring this “Caesaropapism” to be a malady of the East.⁴

Although the Basileus and Patriarch held different offices, they resided in the same place and, more often than not, worked closely together. Throughout the Byzantine period, a number of imperial legal enactments as well as pronouncements by leading canonists attest to the theory of close cooperation between emperor and patriarch for the well-being of the empire.⁵ Deno Geanakoplos states this was an ideal principle: in actual fact, conflict between emperor and patriarch was not infrequent. Indeed it would seem that in such cases the will of the emperor, with a few notable exceptions, prevailed. Geanakoplos concludes that, to the superficial observer of Byzantine events, the emperor had usurped not only the function of the Patriarch over Church administration, but the powers of the clergy as well.⁶

“I am emperor and priest.” Authentic, or invented, this little phrase caused a major stir and has ever since been debated by historians. Leo III (r. 717-741), known as the “heresiarch” emperor, is supposed to have issued this challenge to

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⁶ Geanakoplos, “Church and State,” 382.
the Roman pontiff. Leo III owed his position to the sword, but the power seized in
the turmoil of battles invested him with a mission and endowed him with
sacerdotal charismata. This little phrase is emperor against Church, or a
conception of the basilike dynasteia, presented as a recent perversion, but in reality
that of the Christian empire and the powers of the emperor since Constantine I –
against a supposed apostolic tradition.

A major area of conflict between Basileus and Patriarch was in
ecclesiastical affairs, more precisely in Orthodox church dogma. Deno
Geanakoplos wrote that in the early Byzantine period the most frequent issues
involved the clashes between Patriarch and Emperor were basically dogmatic
–Arianism, Monophysitism, Monothelitism, and Iconoclasm. And in these conflicts
the will of individual emperors seemed, temporarily, at least, to have prevailed.

Geanokoplos goes on to discuss the esoteric form of the church contained within
itself, what we may call the more profound truths of the faith, essentially
fundamental truths, which to the Orthodox were and still are considered necessary
for salvation, the true end of human life. These truths include both the Orthodox
Church’s teaching on dogma and the sacraments. The dogmatic beliefs were those
formulated in written form by ecumenical councils.

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7 Dagron, Emperor and Priest, 158.
8 Dagron, Emperor and Priest, 188.
9 Geanakoplos, “Church and State,” 385.
10 Deno J. Geanakoplos, Byzantine East and Latin West: Two Worlds of Christendom in
Joan Hussey writes that the precise authority of the Emperor in ecclesiastical affairs has been much disputed and certainly misunderstood through failure to ascertain the nature of the Byzantine polity and the close integration of imperial and ecclesiastical interests. She argues that it was the imperial duty to promote Orthodoxy, but not in the sense of determining faith, which fell to an episcopal general council. The imperial role was to summon the general (Ecumenical) council and to confirm and promulgate its decisions. On the other side, the emperor also legislated freely in disciplinary and administrative matters affecting the church, and on occasion against the will of the Patriarch. 11

In addressing the emperor’s interdiction in ecclesiastical affairs, Geanakoplos states that, according to the traditional Byzantine view, no council, even if summoned by the emperor, or by emperor and patriarch together, could be considered truly ecumenical unless all four Eastern patriarchs, were in attendance, or at least represented. These ecclesiastical conciliar decisions, if any revocation was attempted by the emperor, were to be surely met with the opposition of the Patriarch and the clergy. 12

As the pagan Roman Empire gave way to the new Christian Byzantine (New Roman) Empire, the administration of the state (and later church) underwent changes. The Roman system of magistrates gave place to the Byzantine bureaucracy. The emperor was no longer the first magistrate, but an absolute ruler, as his power was now derived, not from earthly authorities, but from the will of the


God. Despite this newly increased power and sovereignty of the emperor, the will of the people did not entirely disappear and the church, as the spiritual power in this Christian state, exercised an increasingly weighty influence as time went on. In the middle ages of the Byzantine Empire the church established itself as a force to be reckoned with, as further evidence will be detailed in this thesis.

Cyril Mango describes Byzantium as a theocracy; that is all Byzantines, including the emperor, consider their supreme ruler to be Christ, the King of Kings. Christ had famously said, “My kingdom is not of this world,” and he used a Roman coin, bearing the emperor’s portrait, to emphasize the very different rights of Caesar and God. Byzantine Christians recognized a clear distinction between their empire and Christ's kingdom. The church has its own space, Mango continues, its own hierarchy, its own rules, its own enormous wealth, its own elective procedures, and its integrity consisted of keeping these free from interference by the secular powers, and in correcting the moral excesses of rulers. The organizations of both church and state were designed as a “symphony of powers” in this new Christian empire, but it was often not a truly harmonious relationship. The examination of this relationship (and conflicts) will be analyzed and further discussed in this thesis.

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14 Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, 30.


16 Mango, The Oxford History of Byzantium, 207.
During the conflicts that inevitably developed between the Basileus and Patriarch, George Ostrogorsky gave evidence of a development of a dyarchy between imperial and ecclesiastical power after the early period of the Byzantine Empire. He bases this partly upon the dramatic protests of the seventh-and eighth-century Patriarchs and theologians over dogmatic issues, such as Iconoclasm and Monothelitism, which inspired Patriarchs to take a stronger opposition of imperial demands.\textsuperscript{17} There were also situations that could develop when the harmony between the head of the Church and the temporal ruler broke down completely as discussed by Donald Ostrowski. Then, the head of the church could declare the temporal ruler heretical and non-legitimate, which meant that the people had the duty not only to disobey but also to actively oppose that ruler. In this case the ruler is then declared a tyrant and tormentor.\textsuperscript{18}

Byzantium, like other medieval states, never possessed an official written constitution summarizing the basic organization of government with its distribution of authority. No official document lists all the specific constitutional powers of the emperor. Not until near the very end of the empire in fact was an official event even made by the imperial government to set down in writing the emperor’s powers, or at least part of them, over the church.\textsuperscript{19} The Emperor Justinian stated that empire and priesthood are both divinely instituted, but the emperor as shepherd and ruler of the Christian society has as its principal care the

\textsuperscript{17} Geanakoplos, “Church and State,” 386.

\textsuperscript{18} Donald Ostrowski, Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 205.

\textsuperscript{19} Geanakoplos, “Church and State,” 383.
purity of life and doctrine of the priesthood. The emperor, in theory, at least, undertook to do no more than declare the doctrine that he and all Orthodox Christians held. The emperors, however, by edict and action, declared and exercised their God-given power of supreme government. They did not claim powers of infallible definition of doctrine or supremacy over the priesthood, for such claims would have had no meaning in the Byzantine context of their day.\footnote{David Knowles, “Church and State in Christian History,” \textit{Journal of Contemporary History} 2, no. 4 (October 1967): 7-8.} A firm definition of the delineation of church and state powers, to this day, is a focal point of debate by historians and theologians.

In the definition of my research problem I hypothesized that the concept of a harmonious relationship between the Basileus and Patriarch was more honored in the breach than the observance. I will analyze the roles of both emperor and patriarch, especially in the areas of conflict in controversial theological issues. This analysis will consist of the following four cases: (1) The Emperor Justinian’s condemnation of the \textit{Edict of the Three Chapters} and his insistence of certain views on the Monophysite controversy from the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451, and its eventually leading to the Second Council of Constantinople in 553. My preliminary overview and analysis of this ideal harmonious relationship favors the Basileus over the Patriarch in this theological particular controversy.

(2) The case of conflict arising between the Emperor Leo III and Patriarch Germanos occurring, when, in the interest of the state, the emperor attempted to alter church dogma (the veneration of images/icons) when no pressing external danger existed, that is, on purely intellectual grounds or in accordance with
personal belief (of the emperor). My preliminary overview and analysis of this ideal harmonious relationship also favors the Basileus over the Patriarch in this case.

(3) The conflict between the Emperor Basil I and Patriarch Photios, especially in the areas of controversial theological issues. The deposition of Photios in AD 867 during his first patriarchate by Emperor Basil I is another case of conflict that will be discussed. My preliminary overview here identifies the Patriarch winning over the Basileus in this conflict, owing to the relative strength of character, self-confidence, and legitimacy which described Photios. This analysis will also include the compilation of the *Epanagoge* by the Patriarch Photios in the ninth century (AD 880) as a “check and balance” of powers between spiritual and temporal authorities in response to increasing power of the emperor; especially in the area of patriarchal appointments/depositions. This analysis will focus primarily on the first Patriarchate of Photios (AD 858-867) and Emperor Basil I’s rule as Emperor (AD 867-886) and their conflicts during these periods.

(4) My final case will analyze the conflict between the Emperor Michael Paleologus VIII and Patriarch Joseph I and other clergy, especially in the areas of conflict in controversial theological issues. This analysis will consist of the Emperor Michael Paleologus’ role in the Council of Lyons in AD 1274, which involved his bypassing the eastern Patriarchate leadership by entering a union with the Latin Church. This union (Lyons) served the apparent political and military strategic goals of the emperor while inversely creating immediate and vehement
opposition from the Patriarchate. My preliminary overview of this conflict between Basileus and Patriarch supports the Basileus as the winner.
Chapter I

Emperor Justinian and the *Edict of The Three Chapters*

Justinian was born in 483 in a small village in the area of Skopje between Illyricum and Macedonia. Justinian was brought to the Emperor’s court as a young man by his uncle Justin, who was the head of the Emperor’s Guard. In 518 Justin was elevated to the throne by the army and Justinian quickly obtained the highest positions. In 527, Justin I, apparently without an heir, elevated Justinian to the position of co-emperor. Justinian ascended to the throne at the age of forty-five and ruled the Roman Empire for 38 years (527-565). He imposed his personality on the future years of the Roman State through his magnanimity, his legislation, his constructive programs, and his external and internal policies.\(^\text{21}\)

Justinian had a diversity of interests and his plans were vast. Upon his enthronement as Emperor of the Roman Empire, he expressed his dynamic personality through various laws and edicts of great scope and dimension that were indicative of his ambitions and interests. The *Edict of the Three Chapters* exemplified this ambition. He dreamed of restoring the Empire to its ancient glory. Procopius, his contemporary historian, says that Justinian “was devoting his time for the most part to the doctrines of the Christians, seeking eagerly and with great

determination to make a satisfactory settlement of the questions disputed among them.\footnote{22}{Demetrios J. Constantelos, “Justinian and the Three Chapters Controversy,” \textit{Greek Orthodox Theological Review} 8, no. 8 (Summer 1962): 71.}

Political strength, artistic achievements, and religious fervor and learning characterized the reign of this powerful emperor. Justinian was very much absorbed in theological discussion and controversy.\footnote{23}{Constantelos, “Justinian and the Three Chapters Controversy,” 71.} As the successor of the Roman Caesars, Justinian considered it his duty to restore the Roman Empire, and at the same time, he wished to establish within the Empire one law and one faith. He was eager to see religious unity in the Empire. The fundamental aim of his church policy was the establishment of closer relations with Rome; hence, he had to appear as the defender of Chalcedon, the decisions of which were strongly opposed by the eastern provinces.\footnote{24}{A.A. Vasiliev, \textit{History of the Byzantine Empire: 324-145}, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), 148-149.} Although the predecessors of Justin and Justinian had followed the path of peaceful relations with the Eastern Monophysite churches, they favored the Roman church and renewed relations with it. This state of affairs was bound to alienate the Eastern provinces (Egypt, Syria, and Palestine), a fact that did not harmonize with the projects of Justinian, who was exceedingly anxious to establish a uniform faith throughout his vast Empire. The achievement of church unity between the East and the West, between Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome, was almost impossible.\footnote{25}{Vasiliev, \textit{History of the Byzantine Empire}, 149.}
It was Justinian's Christian zeal that led him to his proselytizing activities—the most prominent being his appeasement of the most powerful threat to the Orthodox Church—the Monophysites. Justinian’s issuance of the *Edict of the Three Chapters* in 543-544, which were anathemas against three theologians who were supporters of Nestorianism, was his way of uniting the Monophysites to the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon. This was fundamentally seen as a camouflaged attack against Nestorianism, the rival movement of Monophysitism.

Justinian’s need to meet his obligations to God by establishing order within the corpus of Roman law—as well as establishing order throughout his realm through the agency of Roman law—is paralleled precisely in his approach to doctrinal diversity. From the beginning of his reign he attempted to eliminate heresy and establish one Christian doctrine throughout his domain, namely the formulation of belief established by the Council of Chalcedon in 451, as he interpreted it. Justinian took his responsibilities as the head of the Church more seriously than any other Emperor had done, and asserted his authority in its internal affairs more constantly and systematically. Justinian was determined to close all the roads that lead to error and to place religion on the firm foundations of a single faith. He declared that he considered himself responsible for the welfare of his subjects and for the salvation of their soul. From this he deduced the necessity of intolerance towards heterodox opinions. Justinian surpassed all his predecessors.

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26 Constantelos, “Justinian and the Three Chapters Controversy,” 72, 74.

27 Constantelos, 76.

in the correct praxis or practice of the Orthodox faith along with his passion for uniformity.\textsuperscript{29}

Justinian, at the time of his ascension to the throne in 527, was about to become embroiled in the Monophysite christological controversy. In response to the challenge of Arianism in the fourth century (Councils of Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381), the Church formulated the doctrine of the complete Godhead of the Son and His consubstantiality with the Father.\textsuperscript{30} The issues at those councils concerned the association between the divine and human in natures in Christ, and how to best conceptualize the nature of the bond between them. Divergent views on this nature had developed within the theological traditions of Antioch and Alexandria.\textsuperscript{31}

The Antiochian school of theological thought taught there were two separate natures co-existent in Christ. It taught that Christ, the eternal Logos and Son of God, was twofold in persons—Christ the God and Christ the man. Christ was born as a man and not the Logos of God. Therefore, Mary, the mother of Christ the man, cannot be called Theotokos, for she did not give birth to God. She is only Christotokos, that is, she gave birth to the man known as Christ. This theological controversy became known as Nestorianism, which took its name from Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople (428-431). In opposition to this conception


\textsuperscript{31} A.D. Lee, \textit{From Rome to Byzantium AD 363 to 565} (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 137.
was the Alexandrian teaching of God, which supported the established teaching of the Orthodox Church that the God and Christ the man were not two independent persons, but one person with two natures united into a harmonious entity. The emphasis of the Orthodox was in the unity of the divine and human natures united in the one person of Christ. Therefore, Mary can rightly be called the Theotokos, for she gave birth to the God-man.  

Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria (428-431), in opposition to Nestorius, had spoken of the “one nature of the Word of God incarnate” (Mia Physis tou Theou Logou Sesarkomene). By this Cyril meant the one concrete individual subject of the Incarnated Word, whereas Nestorius heard him to mean the one physical component of the Word. What Cyril meant by this key phrase was to insist that the single individual reality of the Word of God, and no other, was the one who had been incarnated. For Cyril, the fully human Christ was not a human person, but a divine person who had chosen to live in the human condition, where Nestorius speaks of God assuming a man. Large parts of Egypt and Syria preferred to remain with Cyril's language of the Mia Physis. The Monophysite schism in the East after Chalcedon grew in significance and became one of the divisive factors of the Eastern Christian Church to this day.

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34 McGuckin, St. Cyril of Alexandria, 140.


While Justinian was co-emperor with his Uncle Justin, and still in the beginning of his reign, he also took a severe attitude towards the Monophysites. Following the Council of Chalcedon, the Monophysites exerted a great deal of influence and attracted an ever-increasing number of followers. He shifted his policy to approve rather than persecute the Monophysites.\(^{37}\)

He sought to find points of contact between Chalcedonian Orthodoxy and Monophysitism, having always his final aim the return of the adherents of the latter to the Orthodox Church. However, no agreement could be reached between the Monophysites and the Orthodox without elimination of all their differences concerning the Council of Chalcedon. Accomplishing such an agreement between these two disagreeing parties was a most difficult task. The Monophysites were against the decision of the Council, because they considered its decision pro-Nestorian. Their suspicions and arguments against the Council arose, on the one hand, from the dogmatic term of the Council “in two natures”, and, on the other, from the fact that the Council restored Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Ibas of Edessa. Justinian saw this situation as a failure of previous Emperors Zeno and Anastasios.\(^{38}\)

Justinian worried about the problem of Monophysitism throughout his whole life. In his attempts to find a solution, he tried to avoid the hasty efforts of his predecessors, and exercised his ecclesiastical policy mentioned earlier in his approach to doctrinal diversity, and by and large, within the limits of his authority


\(^{38}\) Gerostergios, *Justinian the Great*, 98.
and canonical tradition of the Church.\footnote{Gerostergios, \textit{Justinian the Great}, 98.} This authority in dealing with ecclesiastical matter, especially this burning issue with the Monophysites would force him to find a solution or compromise.

Justinian’s relations with the Monophysites, however, were of great political importance and involved the extremely significant problem of the eastern provinces, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. In the second place, the Monophysites were supported by Justinian's wife Theodora, who had a powerful influence over him. Over the period from 535 to 543, Justinian attempted to establish peaceful relations with the Monophysites. Things, however, changed when the Roman Pope Agapetus and a party of the \textit{Akoimetoi} (extreme orthodox) arrived in Constantinople and raised such an uproar over these reconciliatory overtures that Justinian was forced to change his religious policy as not to lose sight of one of his initial goals upon ascending the throne: establishing harmonious relations with the See of Rome.\footnote{Vasiliev, \textit{History of the Byzantine Empire}, 149-151.}

There was no theologian whose writings were more offensive to the Monophysites than Theodore of Mopsuestia, who was esteemed the spiritual father of Nestorianism. He had also written against Origen and was detested by the Origenists. To Theodore Ascidas, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, who was apparently a secret Monophysite as well as an Origenist, there could hardly be a greater triumph than to procure his condemnation by the Church. Ascidas, warmly seconded by Theodora, persuaded the Emperor that he might solve the
problem that had eluded him: to restore unity to the Church by anathematizing Theodore of Mopsuestia and his writings. This, he urged, would remove the chief stumbling block that the Monophysites found in the Council of Chalcedon. There were also some other documents that it would be necessary to condemn at the same time: certain writings of Theodoret against Cyril, and a letter of Ibis, bishop of Edessa, in which Cyril was censured. 41 Justinian was convinced that issuing an edict condemning the above writings would satisfy both his religious policy and political objectives.

The edict Justinian promulgated is known to history as The Edict of Three Chapters (tria kephalaia). This Edict was issued in late 543 or early 544. This is generally understood as three propositions drawn up in the form of anathemas. These were issued against (1) Theodore of Mopsuestia and his writings, (2) specified works of Theodoret of Cyrrhus against Cyril in defense of Nestorius, and (3) the letter of Ibas of Edessa to the Persian Maris. 42 The Edict read: “Whoever defends Theodore of Mopsuestia...let him be anathema”; “Whoever defends certain writings of Theodore...let him be anathema”; “Whoever defends the impious letter written by Ibas...let him be anathema.” Hefele states that to be exact, we should have to say: “Whoever obeys the imperial edict, subscribes to the tria kephalaia; whoever does not, rejects them.” 43 Justinian wished to make this edict obligatory on all churches and demanded that it be signed by all patriarchs and

41 Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, 383-384.
bishops. It would soon become evident this would not be easy to accomplish. This Edict would create much controversy between both the Basileus and Patriarchs in the East, and between Eastern and Western Churches within the Empire, and finally, would set the stage for the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553 in Constantinople.

Demetrios Constantelos argues that certain historians emphasize that Justinian’s own motives for issuing the Three Chapters edict were more politically than religiously motivated. Justinian, they argued, desired to retain the powerful Monophysites in the Empire. Above all, he was an Emperor, willing to do anything to preserve the unity of the Empire. As discussed earlier he was unwilling to let Syria and Egypt go because of a 150 year-old religious controversy. Therefore, with haste he promulgated this edict with the prospect of winning the Monophysite party over to his side. This argument is primarily based on the economic and financial welfare of the state. A. A. Vasiliev observes that the historians who emphasize the political side of Justinian’s activities claim that the chief motive in his Caesaropapism was a desire to secure his political power, to strengthen the government, and to find religious support for the throne that he had procured by chance. Vasiliev describes Justinian’s Caesaropapism as the “policy of temporal authority in religious and ecclesiastical affairs that penetrated even the deepest regions of inner religious convictions of individuals.”

44 Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, 152.

45 Constantelos, “Justinian and the Three Chapters Controversy,” 84.

46 Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, 148-149.

47 Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, 148
closed by stating that these historians failed to see that Justinian was a truly religious man, fond of participating in religious discussions and hyperbolically anxious to establish Orthodox Christianity throughout his Empire.  

Prior to writing any theological work or setting a legislative decree, Justinian, or any other emperor for that matter, would be advised by the local theologians (under the auspices of the Patriarchs). He did this because he did not desire to provoke a struggle with the bishops. The opinions of Constantinople played an important role in the development of all decisions on religious matters. In addition the principle of harmony, between church and state, which in principle Justinian supported in his writings and decrees, made it necessary to consult the church leaders. This principle of harmony was in later years described in greater detail in the titles of a legal manual called the Epanagoge compiled between 879 and 886 which was probably authored by the Patriarch Photios. The decisions of the bishops were eventually expressed in the Ecumenical Synods. In this case however Justinian chose not to follow the established procedure of convoking an Ecumenical Council. An Ecumenical Synod always presented many problems, one of which was economical. In order to avoid these difficulties, Justinian took the easier route. He hoped he would gain quick approval from the five Patriarchs. Justinian miscalculated as his expectations were not fulfilled.

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49 Gerostergios, Justinian the Great, 112-113.
50 Dagron, Emperor and Priest, 229.
51 Gerostergios, Justinian the Great, 113.
The Eastern Church strongly opposed the *Edict*. Justinian treated both patriarchs and popes as his subordinates and often would act arbitrarily without consulting either one. He followed this tactic, too at the issuance of *The Three Chapters*. Justinian’s condemnation of Theodore and his writings, as well as the censorship of the other two parties under discussion, meant a challenge and a repudiation of the Council of Chalcedon, which did not take any condemnatory action against the three parties. Menas, Patriarch of Constantinople, was unwilling to accept or sign the Edict as demanded by Justinian.\(^5\) (Menas was appointed Patriarch in 536 to replace the Monophysite Patriarch Anthimus). Menas refused to re-open any questions that would weaken the authority of the Chalcedonian Council. Furthermore it would strengthen the position of the Monophysites and imply that even the previous councils could be disputed. In addition, it was unprecedented in the history of the Church to condemn the dead (Theodore, Theodoret, and Iba) who could not speak and defend themselves. Thus, at first, Menas refused to cooperate.\(^3\)

Constantelos states it was the crafty policy of Justinian that eventually induced Menas to sign it. He was promised by the Emperor that all bishops and patriarchs would follow, including the bishop of Rome. Justinian seemed to favor the Church of Rome as earlier mentioned, and the Patriarch was careful not to give an opportunity for friction with the Pope that could put him in an unfavorable


\(^3\) Constantelos, “Justinian and the Three Chapters Controversy,” 87.
position. Gerostergios goes further in arguing that the matter of the Edict was actually discussed by Justinian with Menas prior to its publication, and came to an agreement with him. It seems that Menas actually encouraged and approved the decree, and assembled the bishops in order to discuss and approve it.

The Patriarchs Zoilus of Alexandria, Ephraim of Antioch, and Peter of Jerusalem were also strong Chalcedonians and certainly they did not want to take a course contrary to Chalcedon. They also initially refused to subscribe to the Edict but followed the example of Menas. Constantelos states that the evidence points to the fact that they succumbed under threat of deposition and the cunning ways of Justinian. He goes on to say that there is also evidence indicating that these Patriarchs accepted the edict and signed it because they were wholly dependent on the State. Ephraim, Patriarch of Antioch, would not also agree, but when he was threatened with deposition he went along with the edict. Similar weakness and inconsistency were shown by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Peter, who in spite of his refusal--he saw the decree as an attack on Chalcedon--agreed himself later on. Finally, Zoilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, wrote very soon and spontaneously to Pope Vigilius, that he had also subscribed under constraint. They were men of wealth and rich sees, and therefore, unwilling to sacrifice them under the threats of Justinian. However, Constantelos points out in conclusion, hesitation must be used in drawing any conclusions as to their motives because the data are given by

55 Gerostergios, Justinian the Great, 113.
57 Hefele, A History of the Councils, 244-245.
hostile sources, Facundus, the African bishop of Hermione. Following the example of the four leading eastern patriarch, many bishops in Syria, Egypt, Greece, Asia Minor, etc., fell into Justinian's trap.  

In contrast with the stand of the East regarding the decree, the position of the Western Church from the start was extremely negative. The west was slowly and steadily moving away from the east. Following the Acacian schism, relations between east and west were still cool and the Church of Rome was not so much under the direct influence of Justinian and the court. Thus the spirit of compliance was less. Vigilius, the newly elected Pope of Rome, refused to accept it on the grounds he was not consulted about it.  

The first action against the decree was the refusal of the papal representative in Constantinople, Stephanus, to accept it. At the time of the decree, Pope Vigilius was traveling to Constantinople at the request of the Emperor in order to get him to assent to his plans. In Vigilius’ absence, Stephanus broke off ecclesiastical communion with Patriarch Menas. The same action was taken by Western bishops present in Constantinople. Unexpectedly the greatest opposition came from North Africa. Gerostergios argues that if it were not for the opposition of the African Church, probably the conflict regarding the Three Chapters would not have spread throughout the Empire, nor reached such an importance in the history of the Church.

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60 Hefele, A History of the Councils, 246-247.
61 Gerostergios, Justinian the Great, 116.
Facundus of Hermione, one of the North African bishops who arrived in Constantinople to protest the decree, at the instigation of his colleagues, even before the arrival of Pope Vigilius, composed a memorial to the Emperor against the condemnation of Theodore, etc., we see from his *Praefatio* to his *Defensio trium capitolorium*.\(^{62}\) According to Facundus, the responsibility for the composition and declaration of the truth, as well as the rejection of error, was the sole responsibility of the body of bishops, whose opinion could only be expressed at synods or councils.\(^{63}\) This was the responsibility of the clergy not the Basileus.

Before Facundus had quite finished with that document, Pope Vigilius arrived in Constantinople; and when, afterwards, there was begun, under his presidency, an examination of the points of controversy, the Pope suddenly broke up the proceedings and required that each of the bishops present should give in his vote in writing.\(^{64}\)

Michael Maas states that although there was fierce resistance in the West, particularly in North Africa, where the Edict was seen as a direct attack on Chalcedon, Justinian obtained a series of secret assurances from Pope Vigilius that he would accept the *Three Chapters* and would work toward obtaining their condemnation in the West. With Vigilius’ arrival in Constantinople in 547, and Justinian’s easy access to him, that project must have seemed practicable to

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\(^{64}\) Hefele, *A History of the Councils*, 246.
Justinian. Hefele supports this easy access to the Pope as Vigilius was received with many honors by Justinian upon his arrival in Constantinople. Vigilius, apparently inflated by this friendly reception, punished Patriarch Menas by separating him from Church communication for four months. The Pope inflicted the same censure on all the other bishops who had subscribed to the imperial edict.

Hefele continues by stating that before long Vigilius altered his position in the most surprising manner. How this happened is not fully known. What is certain is that the Emperor had frequent personal intercourse with him, and also repeatedly sent officers of State and bishops to him, to induce him to agree with Menas and the rest. Bishop Facundus maintains that Vigilius was led astray by ambition and bribery. Vigilius then anathematized Ibas' Letter, Theodore's teachings where erroneous, and the person of Theodore. He confessed one subsistentia, i.e., one person, one operation. The document became public on Saturday, Easter Eve, 548, and, as expected, provoked expected strong Latin opposition, leading Vigilius to withdraw his signature as negative reactions were reported from western metropolitan.  

The upheaval of the west against the decree of the Three Chapters brought into an uncomfortable position not only the Pope and Emperor, but all others who signed the decree. The arguments of the opponents had an important ecclesiological basis. It became obvious that the process used up to that point had

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not brought about positive results in appeasing the opposition and especially to consider the arguments of the bishop Facundus. Another solution would have to be found or there would be new schisms. In order to find these solutions it was decided that Eastern and Western bishops would meet in Constantinople in 550. At this meeting, they decided that nothing was to be written for or against the Three Chapters until a Synod was convoked. This was accepted by Justinian even though it was against his unifying religious policy and theological credo.  

Justinian called the Fifth Ecumenical Council (Synod) in 533 in Constantinople. Invitations were extended to all bishops of all parts of the Empire. But none came from the western regions of Gaul, Spain, Illyricum, and Dalmatia. The eastern Patriarchates were represented by Eutychius of Constantinople (who had succeeded Menas upon his death in 552), Apollinarius of Alexandria, Domminus of Antioch, and Eustichios of Jerusalem. Pope Vigilius of Rome refused to attend the Synod although he gave his assent in writing to its assembly. The Pope was afraid of injuring irrevocably his authority in the eyes of the Western churches. It was clear that the Council would consist almost entirely of bishops of the Eastern provinces.

The Council opened on 5 May 553 with the Eastern Patriarchs and 145 other metropolitans and bishops. A letter was read from the Emperor, which stated “The effort of my predecessors, the Orthodox Emperors, ever aimed at the settling

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of controversies which had arisen respecting the faith by the calling of Synods.” Justinian went on to address the controversy of Nestorianism and his defense of the issuance of the *Edict of the Three Chapters*. The letter closed by stating the reasons for the Council now being convoked—mentioning some who still defended the *Chapters*—but with the aim of settling this once and for all.⁷¹

In the eighth and final session on 2 June 553, the Synod announced its dogmatic decision against the *Three Chapters*. The decision consisted of fourteen anathemas, and was confirmed and signed by all its members. Of the fourteen anathemas, the first ten briefly condemn the heretical teachings of the Three Chapters. The eleventh anathematizes various heretics, including Origen. The twelfth condemns the person and works of Theodore of Mopsuestia. The last two reject the works of Theodoret of Cyrrhus against Cyril of Alexandria and against the Third Ecumenical Synod, and the letter of Ibas of Edessa.⁷² The authority of the Synod was proclaimed through its last decision:

> If anyone tries to present, teach or write what is contrary to that which has been written with faith by us, whether he be bishop or other clergyman, he, because he deviates from the priesthood and the ecclesiastical order, must be deposed of his throne or of his clerical position. If he be a monk or layman, he must be anathematized.⁷³

The Fifth Ecumenical Council overwhelmingly condemned the *Three Chapters*. According to Bury, Justinian’s victory in what he saw was a success in summoning the Council to confirm a theological decision of his own, which was

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⁷² Gerostergios, *Justinian the Great*, 139.

⁷³ Gerostergios, *Justinian the Great*, 140.
instrumental indeed to the vital controversy of Monophysitism. His object was to repair the failure of Chalcedon and to smooth the way to reunion with the Monophysites, and it may be said that the Three Chapters were entirely in the spirit of the orthodox theological school of his time.\(^\text{74}\) The summoning of the Council was also indicative of his caesaropapic power and proved that he was the guide of the church.\(^\text{75}\) Bury concludes by stating that this episode of ecclesiastical history lies in the claim to the theological guidance of the Church, a claim that went far beyond the rights of control exercised by previous emperors.\(^\text{76}\) Gerostergios adds support in this imperial control of Justinian by dealing with the powerful Pope of the West, Vigilius, and reversing Vigilius' original negative position to the *Edict*. It appears the Pope was enlightened by the Emperor and his theologians and Vigilius changed his original position and accepted the decree.\(^\text{77}\)

Maas takes an opposing position to Bury and Gerostergios in stating that Justinian's efforts to reconcile Chalcedon and the Monophysites in his eastern provinces while maintaining the support of the western clergy and the pope completely backfired. Not only did Justinian fail in winning doctrinal unity in the east, but he alienated the western clergy through his efforts to interpret doctrine, something western clergymen felt was the prerogative of priests, not emperors.


\(^{75}\) Constantelos, “Justinian and the Three Chapters Controversy,” 91.

\(^{76}\) Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 392.

This effort by Justinian resulted in a fissure between Constantinople and Rome that would last for generations.  

Hefele also supports Maas by concluding that there was no opposition to the Synod in the East, but the hope was not fulfilled, which the Emperor had cherished, that now many Monophysites would unite with the Church. It was worse in the West: since here the Fifth Synod, instead of reuniting the separatists in the Church, divided the orthodox amongst themselves. Peter Bell states that emperors cannot distance themselves from ecclesiastical matters. Christian emperors are inescapably involved in ecclesiastical controversy and church issues. Justinian sought to reconcile all the great sees, including Rome, the most independent minded. Bell states that Emperors, in pursuing their strategy, prefer to search for compromise, achieved by diplomatic methods (sometimes supplemented by coercion of persuasion!). Bell allies himself with Maas and Hefele, by concluding that Justinian, in the saga with the Three Chapters, played a high-risk strategy. He condemned the writings of three dead theologians who had been “rehabilitated” by Chalcedon, but remained objectionable to the Monophysites. For this, his immediate reward was the hostility of the Western Church. Justinian did eventually secure the support of Pope Vigilius through pressuring and a lesser degree of coercion. To achieve his goal of East-West

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81 Bell, *Social Conflict in the Age of Justinian*, 194.
unity, however, Bell posits that Justinian failed. Bell, Social Conflict in the Age of Justinian, 206-207.

Constantelos argues that Justinian seems to be the loser all the way. In vain he initiated such an extensive religious struggle not realizing the Monophysites’ refusal to unite with the Church in the East sprung not from their hatred towards the three religious leaders but from other sources. The regions of Syria and Egypt were unhappy under the Byzantine banner. They were developing separatist tendencies and were waiting for their opportunity to express their natural hatred against the Empire. Religious dissensions offered them an excellent opportunity to revive their national traditions and free themselves from Constantinople. Justinian and the Church failed to understand the real psychology of the masses of Syria and Egypt.

The attitude of the natives of these lands toward the Greek and Roman world did not originate during the fifth and sixth century. The Greeks with their notion towards non-Greeks, considering them inferior, and the Romans with their favor shown to Hellenic culture, and the policy of differentiation between Greeks and Egyptians, strengthened the Egyptians’ nationalistic feelings, thus, turning them away from Constantinople. The situation in Syria bore similarity to that in Egypt. The dissatisfaction of Syria with the Roman Empire did not begin with the condemnation of Monophysitism. It began with the decisions of Ephesus and the condemnation of Nestorianism. Though Egypt and Syria stood apart theologically, their common hostility against Constantinople brought them together.

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82 Bell, Social Conflict in the Age of Justinian, 206-207.
84 Constantelos, “Justinian and the Three Chapters Controversy,” 92-93.
In looking at similarities and patterns from this examination of conflict between Basileus and Patriarch, my initial hypothesis states that the Basileus almost invariably won out. I followed that statement by adding that conflicts were often tempered through negotiation and concessions; usually by both parties and often through “back door deals”—tempered by the prevailing political situation Byzantium. In my preliminary research conducted on this thesis, I found that the symphony of powers between the Basileus and Patriarch leaned more toward the Basileus initially, but were later tempered by the Patriarch and the Church. In the case of Justinian, his Edict of the *Three Chapters* against the heresy of Monophysitism had the Emperor appear victorious—later solidified with the decisions of the Fifth Ecumenical Council of 553. Justinian was successful in advocating his religious agenda despite any opposition from the Patriarchs, Pope, and other clergy. Justinian’s issuance of the *Three Chapters* and his control of the subsequent Fifth Ecumenical Council; and the resulting backlash from the Monophysites in the eastern provinces, as well as securing the support of the Western Pope Vigiliius, assure the resulting legacy of Justinian as the protector of the Orthodox Church.

In this case of the conflict between the Basileus and Patriarch in regard to the *Three Chapters*, I am of the same opinion as Maas, Hefele, and Constantelos, who all concur that although Justinian got what he wanted in pushing his religious agenda against the Monophysites, it blew up in his face, as the ecclesiastical leadership thwarted his political and religious ends. Justinian failed to understand the deep-rooted division with the Eastern provinces, causing a further separation
within the Church. In my final analysis of the conflict between Justinian and the Patriarch (Clergy), it appears this conflict was not in Justinian's favor.
Chapter II

Emperor Leo III and The Edict against the Images

In the case of the Emperor Leo III, the period from the later seventh to the middle of the ninth century saw a series of major changes in both the internal structure as well as the external situation of the eastern Roman Empire. It also saw fundamental shifts in social relations and the economy of the state as the emperor and ruling circles struggled with the transformed economic situation and the constant threats posed by enemies from without. Values changed, modes of expression changed, ideas of how images were to be perceived and understood changed, along with the social and ideational structures that people inhabited and reproduced in the course of their daily lives. Most of these changes and shifts have been interpreted through the prism of iconoclasm. Iconoclasm represented one aspect of east Roman culture and society. It would become a prevailing assumption however, that the most important thing that happened in Byzantium in the eighth century was iconoclasm. This iconoclasm was symptomatic of the broader changes, and at the same time, as itself a stimulant to shifts in perception, developments in theology, and changes in social praxis.85

This conflict was exemplified by the Emperor Leo III’s issuance of his famous (or infamous) Edict against the Images in AD 730 as part of a major

theological controversy facing the church for over two centuries, that being iconoclasm.\textsuperscript{86} Leo was known as the “heresiarch emperor”\textsuperscript{87} for his role in the great Iconoclasm controversy, which lasted until 787 when the Council of Nicaea (Seventh Ecumenical) reversed Leo’s Edict and restored veneration of icons in the Orthodox Church. Leo’s battles with the Patriarch Germanus and other eastern clergy over the Edict were another case of the repeated attempts to redefine dogma in the church and, in the case of Leo, directly by imperial edict. Leo’s imperial interference in the sphere of dogma was not fully recognized by the will of the people, the true depository of the Orthodox faith.\textsuperscript{88}

Leo III was an army candidate who on 25 March 717 was crowned by the Patriarch Germanos in the Church of the Holy Wisdom. Within a few weeks Leo was forced to deal with the first major crisis of his reign, the approaching armies and fleet of the Arab general Maslama.\textsuperscript{89} A siege of Constantinople then ensued. Leo demonstrated his brilliant military ability, however, by preparing the capital for the siege in an excellent manner. The skillful use of their weapon of liquid or “Greek fire” caused severe damage to the Arabian fleet, while hunger and the severe winter of 717-718 completed the final defeat of the Muslim army. Historians attach very great significance to the Muslims’ failure as this victory of

\textsuperscript{86} Geanakoplos, “Church and State in the Byzantine Empire,” 393.

\textsuperscript{87} Dagron, \textit{Emperor and Priest}, 158.

\textsuperscript{88} Geanakoplos, “Church and State,” 397-398.

\textsuperscript{89} Brubaker and Haldon, \textit{Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, 650-850}, 73.
Leo over the Muslims' not only saved the Roman Empire and the eastern Christian world, but also all of western European civilization.⁹⁰

Steven Gero writes that this victory also gives Leo an unqualified glorification of his Christian piety and humility in contrast to the insolence of the Muslims. There is also a parallel drawn between the miracle and crossing of the Red Sea. Leo has all of the virtues of the warrior saint: he resists the infidel with invincible resolution, relies with firm faith on the Divinity in the hour of need, gives all the glory to Him in victory, and is merciful to the defeated foe, as he magnanimously released Maslama after his capture during the siege.⁹¹

What was the Iconoclast controversy? Cyril Mango describes Iconoclasm, as the literal smashing of images, along with the movement that forbade the making or veneration of images, whether of God or saints. The opposite position we usually call Iconodules although that word is not attested in Greek. Byzantine Iconoclasm was initiated in 726 or 730 by Leo III, reversed in 787 by the Empress Irene, restored in 815 by Leo V, and suppressed for good in 843, by another Empress, Theodora.⁹²

The Iconoclast controversy was a debate on the position of the holy in Byzantine society. On the issue of what was holy and what was not the Iconoclasts were firm and unambiguous. Certain material objects were holy because they had been solemnly blessed by ordained priests. This blessing raised them from the

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material to the supernatural, such as the Eucharistic bread. Only objects so raised
were entitled to the reverence due to the holy; they could be objects of worship in
the full sense. For the Iconoclasts, there were only three such objects: (1) the
Eucharist, which was both given by Christ and consecrated by the clergy, (2) the
church building, which was consecrated by the bishop, and (3) the sign of the
Cross. For the Iconoclasts no other object could be holy. 93

The Iconodules, on the other hand, has inherited from Late Antiquity a
solution to their difficulties that was both impressive (as part of the imagined
unalterable position of the church) and clear. If pictures can move the beholder,
can record, can narrate, can bring faces and deeds to his memory, then they can
communicate the Christian message. Standing on the cool walls of the churches,
pictures, or icons, were more permanent reminders to the passersby than were the
liturgy and reading of the gospels of the story of Jesus and the passions of the
saints. The Iconodules regarded this view as completely natural. The Iconodules
were not deeply concerned to present icons as merely useful. They presented them
consistently as holy. The icon was a hole in the dyke separating the visible world
from the divine, and through this oozed precious driblets from the great sea of
God's mercy. 94

The veneration of sacred pictures, or icons, was a derivative question of
this controversy. A kiss was a normal greeting of deep respect, whether to an
emperor or a bishop. That was equally natural for a holy picture. One would also

93 Peter Brown, “A Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy,” English

expect to show one's respect for the person depicted by lighting a candle, or use incense as a symbol of ascending prayer—the saint's intercession being invoked. A candle and incense were media used by polytheistic idolaters to honor their domestic gods and heroes. The question then arose whether this form of showing honor was transformed into a Christian act by the holy person being honored, or whether the mental attitude was so close to pagan cult as to mean that Christ, or Mary, or the saints were being used for the ends of “natural religion”, i.e., to obtain not moral or spiritual strength, but success in the affairs of the material world.\(^\text{95}\)

The Church had earlier given official approval to images. In 692 the Quinisext Council had ordered that Christ should no longer be depicted symbolically as a lamb, but as a person, so to emphasize His human nature. Over the main entrance to the Sacred Place, symbolically the nerve center of the Roman Empire, a great image of Christ was placed there by Constantine the Great. Images and relics were to be found in every church building, some to illustrate the Bible story for the illiterate, others to receive the reverence due to the holy persons they represented.\(^\text{96}\)

A.A. Vasiliev writes that sometimes the image-worshipers sometimes took the adoration of pictures too literally, adoring not the person or the idea represented by the image, but the image itself or the material of which it was made. This fact, Vasiliev states, was a great temptation for many of the

\(^{95}\) Chadwick, *Making East and West*, 71.

\(^{96}\) Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, 66.
faithful, to whom this adoration of inanimate objects appealed because of its kinship with pagan practices.  

Leo III was a man of remarkable ability, energy, and intellect; he was determined to reform and reorganize the Empire over which he ruled. One of his main ambitions was to carry out ecclesiastical and theological reforms. He was in no doubt about his duties as Emperor. According to Runciman, Leo defined these duties as “the maintenance of all things laid own in the Scriptures and the enactments of the Holy Councils and the laws of Rome. The Patriarch is given the highest position next to the Emperor. They are the two chief parts in the body politic, whose welfare depends on their working in harmony. It is the Patriarch's business to see to the spiritual well-being of the Empire. But it is the Emperor alone who can give recommendations of the Patriarch the force of law. His is the ultimate decision on religious as well as civil affairs. He is the “Viceroy of God.”

Leo’s initial claim of “I am Emperor and Priest” plays an important role in his ecclesiastical decisions in iconoclasm.

What moved Leo III to forbid the veneration of icons? Two historians nearest to the event, Nikephoros and Theophanes, say that he took this measure in response to the eruption of the volcanic island of Thera in 726. Leo believed this was a direct correlation between unusual events and obedience or disobedience to God: catastrophes were His response to sin. After nearly a century of Muslim

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99 Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, 64.
successes and other disasters, He was now sending a final warning through the 
eruption of Thera. The Emperor, a military man, Arabic-speaking, born in eastern 
Turkey, certainly aware of the realities of the eastern frontier, knew he had to take 
appropriate action. 100 Leo saw that the worshipping of images, or cult of icons, 
practiced by many of his subjects, looked dangerously like “falling down and 
worshipping images” which was forbidden by God (Deuteronomy 5:9) as no one 
tried to deny. 101

According to J. Atkinson, Leo based his iconoclasm on the injunctions in 
Scripture against idolatry. He believed that veneration should not be accorded to 
man-made objects or to any realistic representation. Further he seems to have 
resolved to counter practices that were becoming embarrassingly exaggerated; for 
he was critical of the preservation of relics and hostile to the growing belief in the 
magical efficacy of icons and relics. Leo himself was prone to superstition, for his 
first action against icons was prompted by the belief that the Thera (Santorini) 
eruption in 726 was a manifestation of divine wrath. Leo’s campaign against icons 
was in one respect a clash between his secular authority and the authority of the 
church officials. He was a usurper and no doubt he had a desire to gain acceptance 
from the Church establishment, especially from the Church of Rome. 102

The eruption at Thera served as Leo’s cue to move any fresh talk about 
action against the iconoclasts forward, as was determined to check the abuse of

100 Mango, Oxford History of Byzantium, 155.
icons with the first “police” action being initiated in 726 or 727. Leo had the icon of Christ Antiphonetes removed from the Chalke Gate in Constantinople. The icon was particularly popular as many miracles had been performed at the site. This icon of Christ was removed by an officer on the express order of the Emperor. This first attempt at enforcing an iconoclastic program showed how fiercely the population in the capital resented the Emperor’s policy, for the infuriated crowd killed the officer on the spot. The street brawl set off an insurrection when the news of the Emperor’s hostility to icons reached Greece. The Greeks sent up a fleet to Constantinople, but were repelled by the Emperor’s forces, which included the use of “Greek fire” (liquid flammable chemicals). This revolt, however, sent a clear warning to Leo that could not be ignored.

Prior to his actions, Leo made his opposition to the icons known publicly and notified church leaders of his policy. The removal of the icon at the Chalke Gate not only provoked riots, but earned the condemnation of Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople, not to mention a hostile and sometimes violent reaction among the populace of the empire. Not relenting in his policy, and infuriated by the acts of rebellion, Leo proceeded in 730 to convene a council that reiterated the prohibition of sacred images. Leslie Brubaker states that Theophanes reports the Emperor convened a *silention* against the holy and honored icons on 7 January 730, which met in the *tribounalion* of the nineteen couches, during which the

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patriarch Germanos, refusing to sign a statement of belief condemning icons, gave up the symbols of his position and resigned the patriarchate, saying that “If I am Jonah, cast me into the sea. For without an ecumenical synod it is impossible for me to introduce an innovation in belief, O Emperor!” 106

Leo convoked the *siletion* consisting of a great number of people of the city and invited the Patriarch Germanos for he wanted to compel him to compose something against icons. When Germanos refused and withdrew to his property at Platanion, he was replaced by his formed sygkellos, who became the Patriarch Anastasios. 107 By Leo’s promulgation of the iconoclast edict, the doctrine condemning the use of icons became legally valid. The icons’ destruction and the persecution of the Iconodules was now underway. 108

According to Steven Gero, Germanos is faithful to his iconophile principles, but he is not a rebel, the only hint of civil disobedience comes when he declares that “God is the blessed and sole ruler.” But Germanos does not dare to proclaim the independence of the church, as does John of Damascus. Gero states that in gauging the veracity of his testimony, it must be remembered that though he did write in banishment, his exile was an honorable and comfortable one; it is very likely that the price of being allowed to finish his days in peace, on his estate, was a very real *oikonomia* in speaking and writing about the emperor. This circumspection that had to be observed did not as a matter of course extend to the

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persons of the two Asia Minor bishops; Thomas of Claudiopolis and Constantine of Nacolia—although lesser figures than Leo III, and who were not under imperial protection. 109 It should be stressed that Germanos’ main argument and disagreement was with Leo’s iconoclastic policy.

The first actual acts of iconoclasm are attested for the bishop Thomas of Claudiopolis. Thomas is the addressee of the longest of the letters and Gero states it was written before Leo’s own iconoclastic intentions became known to the patriarch. 110 When Germanos wrote to Thomas, the worship of icons was an issue on which he was quite prepared to compromise. What shocked Germanos, however, was that as a provincial bishop, Thomas was formulating the public mood in unusually stark terms. Thomas had been saying that the “Christian people had gone astray” 111 It was the presupposition that the Christian people could err so seriously as to lapse back into idolatry, and not the attack on icons themselves, that shocked the patriarch. 112 Germanos then introduced the question of images of the saints. These are no more than expressions of their virtues and a stimulus to worship God after their example. They serve to inspire emulation of the deeds of the saints, just like words, as Saint Basil states. Germanos justifies the creation of such images with the commandments of Moses. 113

109 Gero, Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III, 89-90.
110 Gero, Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III, 86.
112 Brown, “A Dark Age Crisis,” 24-25.
113 Brubaker, Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, 98.
He then goes on to deal with the image of Christ. The representation of Christ in his incarnate form serves to refute heretics, since the latter maintain that he only appears as a man, but was not actually such. It serves as an aid to those who cannot appreciate a spiritual understanding, but require a material demonstration to support what they have heard. This was relevant in the day, where only a small portion of the populace was literate. In this way God’s presence in the flesh among men impresses itself upon humankind, and honor is clearly shown to his goodness and glory and proskynesis is observed, not to painted wood, but to the invisible God. No one should object to the lighting of candles and burning of incense before icons—this is done as a symbol of the honor to those who sit with Christ.¹¹⁴

The concluding sections of the letter to Thomas express Germanos’ desire to explain his position in respect to the counter-arguments offered by those who disagreed with him, and to explain the spiritual contradictions that they have pointed out. He demanded that Thomas avoid arousing anger and confusion in the Christian community, for whole cities and the great mass of the populace now found themselves in great confusion on account of this matter. There follows a proof of the wonder-working potential of images by reference to the healing oil of an icon of the Theotokos at Sozopolis, for which there are many witnesses. It is through these means that God chooses to show His mercy. Although only through particular images, not all, thus, avoiding the belief that such wonders occur mechanically, but reinforcing rather the truth that they take place through God’s

¹¹⁴ Brubaker, Byzantium in the iconoclast Era, 98-99.
grace. The letter concludes with a wish that they be found worthy of God’s heavenly kingdom.\textsuperscript{115}

Germanos had also received reports that the Bishop Constantine of Nakoleia had been commenting critically on images and \textit{proskynesis}; he received an account of the bishop’s arguments, and also an account asking for guidance from the bishop responsible, John of Synnada; the bishop of Nakoleia then came to Constantinople in person to present his side of the story to Germanos.\textsuperscript{116} Constantine had affirmed that he was obeying scripture in respect to his injunction not to show honor (to perform \textit{proskynesis}) to images or objects made by human hand. Germanos concurred that, according to scripture God, alone should be honored this way; he differentiates, however, between the proskynesis shown to earthly rulers and that shown to the Holy Trinity. Christ’s humanity may be represented in pictures, but not his divinity, and this promotes correct belief, since he did not unite his nature with that of man, but became man. Christ is represented in his fleshly form, and this recalls his divinity.\textsuperscript{117}

This debate between Germanos and Constantine was sent out in a letter to John of Synnada, and instructs John to resolve the issue in a quiet and unobtrusive matter, rather than to convokve a synod. The letter concludes with stating that the bishop of Nakoleia accepted these arguments and swore to uphold the tradition, to say or do nothing that might cause confusion or unrest among the lay populace.

\textsuperscript{115} Brubaker, \textit{Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era}, 99-100.

\textsuperscript{116} Brubaker, \textit{Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era}, 122.

\textsuperscript{117} Brubaker, \textit{Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era}, 95.
The letter was then given to Constantine to deliver to John. This letter was never delivered to John by his subordinate bishop, Constantine. Germanos, later having heard this letter was never delivered to John, sent a second letter to Constantine, sternly reprimanding him, and demanding he accept church discipline. He was deposed from his position until he was prepared to obey his superiors.

Was there a connection between Bishop Constantine and Leo III? Gero states that Germanos mentions the connection between Constantine and Leo with this statement:

Maddened by pride, they do not cease to raise dissention among the people; encouraged by each other they willingly go astray from the understanding of the truth and without restraint, they dare to violate what is sacred. Therefore also amidst some people at the court itself and among all those who manage affairs on high, a senseless vexation is contrived against those who would act piously.

Another outspoken critic of Leo’s iconoclast policy, and a voice Leo could not silence, came from the heart of the Islamic empire. St. John of Damascus (675-749). A former civil servant of the caliphs, John spent the greater part of his adult life as a monk at St. Sabas near Jerusalem. There he eventually wrote the great tripartite work, *The Fountain of Knowledge*, whose last division, entitled “On the Orthodox Faith”, is a general and systematic presentation of Christian belief about God and the Trinity. John has been appealed to regularly by orthodox eastern theologians, and his contribution to the iconoclast controversy was made in the

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120 Gero, *Byzantium Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III*, 88-89.
years 726-730 in a series of discourses that answered the charge of idolatry on several grounds.  

In the first place, John insisted that a distinction must be made between the veneration (proskynesis) offered to images and the worship (latreia) which is properly offered to God alone. At the same time, he maintained that an icon does not pretend to be an equivalent, and therefore a substitute, for what it portrays, but is a likeness that raises the mind to its original. John identified the fundamental issue in the iconoclast controversy as christological. If Christ’s humanity, which can in principle be pictured, is real, concrete, and historical; and if, at the same time, it is truly one with the hypostasis of the divine Logos, then the veneration of an image of Christ is analogous to the veneration of the Gospels, which picture Christ in words. Both icon and Gospel are testimonies to the ingredience of the divine in the worlds of nature and history, and both are media of access to God.  

John of Damascus was equally vehement in his criticism of Leo’s iconoclastic policy in his Against the Calumniators of the Holy Icons. In it, John suggests to the emperor that he write a Gospel according to Leo, just as the Manicheans had written a Gospel according to Thomas, then declared:

We do not accept an emperor who tyrannically appropriates priesthood. Emperors do not have the power to bind and to loose. I remember Valens, who called himself a Christian emperor, but who persecuted the Orthodox faith; I remember Zeno, Anastasios, Heraklios, Constantine of Sicily and Bardaniskes-Philippikos. I do not trust imperial canons to regulate the Church, but the written precepts transmitted by the Fathers.  

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121 Walker, History of the Christian Church, 232.


123 Dagron, Emperor and Priest, 184.
Causes of the movement against images were studied by scholars and some students of this period have seen in the policy of the iconoclastic emperors religious causes while others have believed that the causes were chiefly political. Vasiliev writes that Leo III determined to destroy images because he hoped this measure would remove one of the chief obstacles to a closer relationship of the Christians with the Jews and Muslims, who disapproved of icons. Leo is credited with believing that a closer kinship with these two denominations would facilitate their subjugation to the Empire. 124

Vasiliev also quotes the noted Greek historian Paparrigopoulos, who believed that there was a social and political reform parallel with the religious reform that condemned images, prohibited relics, reduced the number of monasteries, and yet left the basic dogmas of the Christian faith intact. He continues that it was the intention of Leo III and subsequent iconoclastic emperors to take public education out of the hands of the clergy. These rulers acted with a clear understanding on the needs of society and the demands of public opinion. They were supported by the most enlightened element of society, by the majority of the high clergy, and by the army. Paparrigopoulos, however, concludes that the final failure of the iconoclast reforms should be attributed to the fact that there were many people still devotedly attached to the old faith, and hence extremely

124 Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, 252.
antagonistic to the new reforms. These people included the common folk and monks. 125

Another political motive for Leo’s religious reforms against images is that he was faced with high military costs in resisting the Arabs who besieged Constantinople in 717-718. 126 Leo’s victory over Arab besiegers of the city was decisive for the survival of the empire; never again did the Saracen invader threaten to destroy the state entirely. It was to be expected therefore that iconodules, looking back on the victory, would desire to make light of the emperor’s part in the successful defense of the city by land and sea; iconoclasts, on the other hand, could revere him, with good reason as the savior of the state. 127

Leo demanded that the Italians pay more for their own defense against the Lombards and not expect him to provide everything needed. High tax on church lands angered Pope Gregory II (r. 715-731), who was supported by the Italian population in resisting both the new taxes and the emperor’s decision that churches in the empire should have no pictures of angels, saints, and martyrs, not even of Christ and his virgin Mother. A Roman synod in 731 (after Leo’s Edict was issued in 730), supported icons with a substantial declaration. This breach between Italy and an iconoclast Constantinople was only gradual and did not become serious until later years. 128

125 Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, 252
126 Chadwick, Making East and West, 72.
128 Chadwick, Making East and West, 72.
What may we conclude from our analysis? Leo III's claim of “I am Emperor and Priest” is executed with his embrace of iconoclasm after the eruption of Thera in 726, which he believed was a sign from God warning His people that they had gone astray in the embracing of idolatry (worship of images). Leo based his iconoclastic beliefs on this “worshipping” of images by the clergy and laity and that the empire would continue to incur the wrath of God. Leo was the champion of the Roman Empire prior to his being proclaimed emperor as he successfully championed the defense of Constantinople during its siege by Arab military and naval forces in 717-718. From this point on Leo, now as emperor, had the support of the army and most of the clergy in the east in implementing his iconoclastic policy throughout the Empire.

Leo’s political motives included his attempt to win over the Patriarch Germanos and Pope Gregory II to strengthen his position as he sought to wield unlimited power in both spiritual and temporal aspect over a newly united populace. Another motive involved Leo’s wanting to destroy images as he believed it would establish a closer relationship with the Muslims and Jews—who were against any type of images in worship; and thus facilitate their subjugation to the Roman Empire.

Deno Geanakoplos concludes it is clear from his analysis that to begin with, the emperor’s power over the church was many faceted. In the temporal realm, Leo was a complete autocrat, limited only theoretically by the Church in the application of Christian principles to civil law. Leo III was one of the most powerful emperors in the Roman Empire who attempted to exercise complete
autocratic control over church dogma in the case of the Iconoclast controversy, which bedeviled the Church for a significant part of the eighth century. In the external or administrative aspects of ecclesiastical affairs, the Byzantine ideal that the emperor as protector of the church work hand in hand with the ecclesiastical authorities.129

Leo III’s issuance of his Edict against the Images is a case where the personal beliefs of the emperor regarding Iconoclasm, and his interference in church dogma resulting in Leo’s Edict—was not recognized fully by the patriarchs and not supported by majority of the Byzantine people. Leo’s recognition and legacy of being “emperor and priest” and the “heresiarch” emperor, along with sacerdotal privileges he claimed from the clergy, is one still debated by historians.

My initial hypothesis states that the Basileus (Leo III), as a strong, intelligent, and remarkable emperor, favored him winning out over the Patriarch (Germanos and other clergy) in the Iconoclast controversy. My subsequent research and analysis of several prominent historians including Atkinson, Ostrogorsky, Dagron, Gero, and Brubaker, who in summation, argued that although Leo was a hero of the Siege of Constantinople in 717-718, the origin of this Iconoclasm falls squarely on his shoulders. Leo’s attempts to negotiate his iconoclastic policy with the ecclesiastical authorities, based on his “God-given” mandate to make his own views compulsory for his subjects, failed miserably. His iconoclastic policy also contributed to the widening of the gap between the Eastern and Western Churches, as Pope Gregory refused to implement any removal of

129 Geanakoplos, “Church and State,” 397.
images and icons in the western churches. The subsequent reversal of Iconoclasm from the Council of Nicaea in 787 and the “Triumph of Orthodoxy” in 843 shows that, in the longer run, Leo III is the loser between Basileus and Patriarch in the Iconoclast controversy.
Chapter III

Patriarch Photios and the *Epanagoge*

The conflict between Emperor Basil I and Patriarch Photios, especially in the areas of controversial theological issues is another example of conflict between Basileus and Patriarch. The deposition of Photios in AD867 during his first patriarchate by Emperor Basil I is the primary case of conflict that will be discussed. My preliminary overview and analysis initially identified the Patriarch winning over the Basileus in this conflict owing to the relative strength of character, self-confidence, and legitimacy which described Photios. This analysis will also include the compilation of the *Epanagoge* by the Patriarch Photios in the ninth century (AD 880) as a 'check and balance' of powers between spiritual and temporal authorities in response to increasing power of the emperor; especially in the area of patriarchal appointments/depositions. This thesis will focus primarily on the first Patriarchate of Photios (AD 858-867) and Emperor Basil I's rule as Emperor (AD 867-886) and their conflicts during these periods.

In this document, the *Epanagoge*, designed as an introduction to legal works, and was to set a blueprint and precedent for all future patriarchs. Other specifically patriarchal duties laid down in the *Epanagoge* were the promotion of Orthodoxy and the elimination of heresy. Photios wrote to several eastern patriarchs where he strongly condemned certain Latin usages and particularly the Frankish insertion of the filioque into the creed. Photios perhaps envisioned the
filioque would become a burning issue and source of much conflict between Rome and Constantinople. \textsuperscript{130} Photios’s insertion of the new clauses in the \textit{Epanagoge} outlining the powers of the emperor subject to a superior justice was most also likely designed to check a trend that gave quasi-sacerdotal privileges to the Basileus, which usurped the clerical function and privileges of the clergy.\textsuperscript{131}

Byzantium, like other medieval states, never possessed an official written constitution summarizing the basic organization of government with its distribution of authority. No official document lists all the specific constitutional powers of the emperor. Not until near the very end of the empire in fact were there any official documents or guidelines generated by the imperial government to set down in writing the emperor’s powers, or at least part of them, over the church.\textsuperscript{132} The Emperor Justinian stated that empire and priesthood are both divinely instituted, but the emperor as shepherd and ruler of the Christian society has as its principal care the purity of life and doctrine of the priesthood. The emperor, in theory, at least, undertook to do no more than declare the doctrine that he and all Orthodox Christians held. The emperors, however, by edict and action, declared and exercised their God-given power of supreme government. They did not claim powers of infallible definition of doctrine, or supremacy over the priesthood, for such claims would have had no meaning in the Byzantine context of their day.\textsuperscript{133} A

\textsuperscript{130} Hussey, \textit{The Orthodox Church}, 87.

\textsuperscript{131} Dagron, \textit{Emperor and Priest}, 16.

\textsuperscript{132} Geanakoplos, “Church and State,” 383.

\textsuperscript{133} Knowles, “Church and State in Christian History,” 7-8.
firm definition of the delineation of church and state powers, to this day, is a focal point of debate by historians and theologians.

Saint Photios was Patriarch of Constantinople from 858 to 867 and from 877 to 886. Photios was a strong upholder of Orthodoxy, the savior of Constantinople, the father of his flock, and the spiritual adviser of kings. In his writings and activities Photios embodied the intellectual pattern that represented the Byzantine spirit in subsequent centuries. Photios—twice patriarch of Constantinople, and twice deposed—was born at Constantinople about the year 820, and died in a monastery (and in exile) about 891. He became a scholar and a paragon on Byzantine polymathy, taking all learning to be his province. Photios had influential connections (his brother married a princess of the imperial house), and in his later years he became immersed in the high affairs of both church and state. He was not a notable theologian; but he was at once a genuine scholar and an ecclesiastical statesman who could do battle with one of the strongest of Roman popes. His chief claim to fame is his scholarship; he was one of the leaders of a Byzantine revival of study which was parallel with the Carolingian renaissance in the West. Even after Photios became patriarch, and while he was immersed in church affairs, he still collected books and still continued to study. He leaned toward Aristotle, as Greek scholars and the Greek Church generally did down to

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the days of Psellus and the eleventh century, when Plato began to come into his own.  

Photios came from the imperial bureaucracy which he had directed as protoasekretis (director of the imperial chancellery) after his appointment in 851; and after his appointment as patriarch by the emperor Michael III, this lay civil servant rose in five days through all the ranks of ordination (on the first day he became a monk, on the second a lector, on the third a sub deacon, on the fourth a deacon, and on the fifth, a priest), so that on the sixth, he could be ordained a bishop and give his blessing to the faithful in St. Sophia. Gilbert Dagron notes only the three principal phases of his turbulent patriarchate. In 858, he took over from a predecessor Ignatius, who refused to resign, and was condemned by Pope Nicholas I, whom he excommunicated in his turn (863); in 867, he was deposed by the new emperor Basil I, then treated as a criminal by a first council (869-70); but he returned to favor, was restored to his position in 877 and lauded as “supreme pastor” by a council of rehabilitation (879-80).  

Photios contributed, by the decrees of the synods he held, and by the decrees which he himself issued, to the development of the canon law of the Greek Church; and it has been conjectured that he wrote two of the titles (that on the powers of the emperor and the patriarch) in the Epanagoge, or introduction to law which was compiled in his time (880).  

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137 Barker, *Social and Political Thought*, 111.
Who was the opponent of the Patriarch Photios in this conflict between church and state? The question of the origin of the founder of the Macedonian dynasty (867-1025) has called forth many contradictory opinions, mainly because sources vary greatly on this point. Greek and Armenian sources speak of the Armenian or Macedonian extraction of Basil I, Arabic sources call him a Slav. The majority of scholars, according to A.A. Vasiliev, consider Basil (l.? d.886) an Armenian who had settled in Macedonia, and speak of his dynasty as the Armenian dynasty. In recent years, scholars have succeeded in determining that Basil was born in the Macedonian city of Chiaroupolis.  

Basil’s life previous to his election to the throne was very unusual. As an unknown youth he came to Constantinople to seek his fortune, and there attracted the attention of courtiers by his tall stature, his enormous strength, and his ability to break wild horses. Stories of young Basil reached Emperor Michael III. He took him to court and later became completely subject to his new favorite, who was soon proclaimed co-ruler and crowned with the imperial crown in the Church of St. Sophia. Basil repaid these favors very brutally; when he noticed that Michael was becoming suspicious of him, he ordered his men to slay his benefactor, and then proclaimed himself emperor in 867.  

The path by which Basil reached the imperial throne was very murky indeed. At his side was his wife, Eudocia Ingernia, the former mistress of the murdered Michael. Like every other Roman ruler, Basil concerned himself very

138 Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, 301.
139 Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, 301.
closely with the affairs of the Church, and at first he pursued a course contrary to the direction followed by the ecclesiastical policy of Bardas (served as Caesar under Michael III) and Michael III. Under Bardas and Michael the signs of the nascent great political advance of the Roman Empire were clearly visible during this period. The high-flying cultural aspirations which had already made their appearance during the regency now reached their fulfillment and the irradiating power and activity of Byzantine culture was revealed in all its greatness. Bardas had established the university at the Magnuara palace, which became an important center of Byzantine learning and education, and in it were cultivated all branches of secular learning known to that period. Photios, at once the greatest teacher and the greatest student of his century, also taught in the university.  

As protector of the church the emperor took a very active, even dominant role, especially in the area of its authority to appoint the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, the highest official of the church. Customarily the emperor would select from a list of three names of candidates submitted by the Holy Synod in the capital. If none pleased him he would select another with the sanction of the synod. No less however, was the emperor's authority, but only in practice and not in theory, to depose the patriarch. This was also to be carried out with the approval of the same synod. One of the cases of the most illustrious of all patriarchs;

140 Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, 233-234.

141 Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, 223-224.
Photios, who for political reasons, was deposed by Basil I in his first official act as emperor in 867. ¹⁴²

St. Photios, known as “the Great” in Orthodox tradition, was an important theologian who stood as a bridge between the ancient and medieval ages of the church. In the course of a council, held at Constantinople in 867 when he was patriarch, Photios’ arguments against papal supremacy and the untraditional nature of the Latin filioque theology, resulted in the synodical condemnation of the pope. The works of Photios marked the first time that the eastern and western churches officially and instinctively drew apart on profoundly significant theological issues, especially those related to the manner in which papal authority was felt by easterners to have changed the ancient pattern of the Christian Oecumene. ¹⁴³

Joan Hussey states that in Basil I’s day, there was certainly a dividing line between the monastic point of view and the liberal and humanist outlook of a man such as Photios, but it is misleading to speak of an “extremist' and a 'moderate” party. Much was determined by opportunist political aims and personal expediency, though not necessary to the exclusion of the needs of the Byzantine Church. Basil was a political opportunist who needed to strengthen his position and was well aware that he had participated in the council of 867 which had taken the extreme step of deposing the Roman Pope Nicholas I. (The council was held by Photios) He therefore hastened to rectify this by denouncing Photios and recalling Ignatius, who was reinstated on 23 November 867. Imperial letters were


then promptly dispatched to Rome in which Basil deplored the state of the Byzantine Church and explained this was due to the iniquities of Photios. He asked the Pope to set matters straight. Basil saw he had no option but to replace Photios if he wanted papal support.  

In the spring of 869 Basil sent his emissaries to Rome in response to the Pope Hadrian II’s request for a synod which was held on 5 October 869, but attendance was meager. Photios ended up being condemned by 102 bishops, and 27 canons were approved. This synod is numbered in the Western Church as the Eight Ecumenical Synod, but is not recognized by the Greek Orthodox Church because it did not make any dogmatic decisions. Patriarch Photios, following his sentence, was sent into exile and Ignatius was reinstated as patriarch. By this measure with the deposition of Photios, and the reinstatement of Ignatius, Basil felt by raising Ignatius, he was accomplishing the double purpose of maintaining peaceful relations with the Hadrian II and gaining the support of the Byzantine people, many of whom, as he knew very well, were partisans of the previously deposed Ignatius. In their letters to the pope, Basil and Ignatius acknowledge the pope's authority and influence in the affairs of the eastern church.

During Photios’ confinement, in which he was subject to great privations, he continued to enjoy the admiration of his followers, who remained true to him throughout Ignatius' patriarchate. Basil himself soon recognized that his attitude

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144 Hussey, *The Orthodox Church*, 79.


toward Photios had been wrong, and he tried to correct it. He began by recalling
Photios from confinement and bringing him to the Byzantine court, where he was
entrusted with the education of the emperor’s children. A gradual blind eye was
turned on the conciliar condemnation, thus resulting in being recalled to serve as
tutor to Basil’s sons. His condemnation by Hadrian II and the 869-70 council was
ignored, and in any case Ignatius himself was hardly on very good terms with
Rome. Photios’ reconciliation with Ignatius followed some time after 872,
possibly in 876. There is various account of this, describing Photios’ visits to
Ignatius who was now old and ill. As it happened, Ignatius died on 23 October 877
and on 26 October Photios reascended the patriarchal throne.

In 879 a council was convoked in Constantinople. In the number of
participating hierarchs and in the general magnificence of the setting it surpassed
even some of the ecumenical councils. The legates of Pope John VIII also came to
the council, and not only were they forced to consent to the absolution of Photios
and the restoration of his communion with the Roman church, but they also had to
listen without any contradiction to the reading of the Nicene Creed, which did not
include the *filioque* so widely used in the west. At the last session of the council
the legates exclaimed “If any man refuses to recognize Photios as the Holy
Patriarch and decline to be in communion with him, his lot shall be with Judas, and
he shall not be included among the Christians” This council also argued that the

148 Hussey, *The Orthodox Church*, 82-83.
pope was a patriarch like all other patriarchs, that he possessed no authority over the entire church, and hence it was not necessary for the patriarch of Constantinople to receive the confirmation of the Roman pontiff. Despite the objections of Pope John VIII, Basil I and Photios held fast to the decisions of the council. 150 This council, with its restoration of Photios to the patriarchal throne, put an end to what is commonly referred to as “the Photian Schism”. It was a council of reconciliation as it rehabilitated Photios and restored unity between Rome and Constantinople. 151

With the division of the empire into two halves and the gradual elimination of secular imperial authority in the west, the Church of Rome, organized along the lines of the secular empire, could easily take over the imperial role, resulting in a decrease in the traditional opposition between church and state. The eastern empire developed differently according to Steven Runciman. In the east, the emperor, living in the capital which Constantine had founded to be a new Christian Rome, embodied the idea of unity. Unity to the eastern Christian meant unity under the Christian emperor. Until the seventh century there was no one supreme hierarch within the eastern empire. 152

During this seventh century the empire was reduced in size to be practically co-terminous with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This inevitably

150 Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, 331-332.


increased the power and prestige of the patriarch, who alone, without rivals, now represented the Church within the empire. When in the Iconoclastic period the emperors forced their doctrine of Iconoclasm (Leo III is one primary example), they did so through subservient patriarchs. Iconoclasm failed because it was unpopular with the majority of clerics, and its failure further enhanced the patriarch's position.  

Patriarch Photios, after his reinstatement to the patriarchate in 877, decided to try something new. As mentioned previously, the power of emperors had shifted after the seventh century to a type of co-existence with the patriarchs. There was however, no lack of disagreement and conflict between the two on mostly theological issues, such as Monophysitism and Iconoclasm. In the over one thousand period of Byzantine history, there are very few instances of Byzantine authors or jurists who set out to describe their legal system and give it a basis to the exercise of power, most especially between the emperor and patriarch. In the first third of the sixth century, a treatise of political science (Peri politikes epistemes) proposed that one law should regulate the appointment of emperors, another should define the role of the senate and senators, a third should standardize the enthronement of bishops, and others should control the allocation of offices and dignities.  

Between 879 and 886, coinciding with his second patriarchate, a legal handbook previously promulgated by Basil I (the Prochirion) was reissued in a

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153 Runciman, Byzantium, Russia, and Caesaropapism,” 3.

154 Dagron, Emperor and Priest, 15.
new version (*the Epanagoge*). This gave the Patriarch Photios the opportunity to preface it with “titles” on justice, the emperor and the patriarch, that is, to transform it into a sort of institutional schema with the emphasis on law, and in which the emperor was subject not only to a superior justice but to the Roman legal tradition (that is, to the laws of the codification) and was faced with a rival in the person of the patriarch. Photios most likely saw this as an attempt to check a trend which gave quasi-sacerdotal privileges to the Basileus, which caused Leo VI (886-912) to say some years later, to mark a break with the Roman past, that 'the solicitude of the emperor will in the future extend to all things and that his “foresight”, [pronoia, a word which can equally mean divine “providence” ] controls and governs everything”.  

Photios, described by Andreas Buss, as the probable author of the *Epanagoge*, an introduction to a planned publication of a revised Byzantine law collection, probably the above mentioned *Peri poliyikes epistemes*, or the *Prochiron* by Basil I, or possibly a hybrid of both. The *Epanagoge* is remarkable not only because it attributes jurisdictional primacy in the Church to the patriarchal seat of Constantinople, but also because its statements on the relationship between the Emperor and the Patriarch, the Empire and the Church. On the basis of Aristotle’s teaching, Photios maintained that the substances are composed of form and living matter, living substances of soul and body, and that the Church directs the *politeia* as the soul directs the body, as its formal and final cause, giving it

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155 Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 16.
156 Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 16.
unity and purpose. Similar to an icon, the *politeia* and the Church are combined in a higher unity in which, however, they remain perfectly distinct (perhaps a reference to the distinctiveness of the divine and human in the person of Christ, as established by the Council of Chalcedon), and this higher unity is again called a politeia by Photios. 157

The new stature of the patriarchate in Constantinople in relation to Rome, other patriarchates, and the emperor is described in greater detail in the preamble and first three titles in the *Eisagoge* (also known as the *Epanagoge* in Greek) compiled between 879 and 886. Dagron also states that Patriarch Photios has quite plausibly been suggested as the author of these introductory pages, which discuss the organization of the two powers before the strictly legal chapters, and which date, at all events, from a period when the patriarch was in a position to make his ideas prevail. 158 Photios may have been responsible for the definition of the position and powers of the emperor and patriarch.

Ostrowski wrote that theoretically, both the Basileus and Patriarch were the viceroy of God and were supposed to act in harmony. For example, Title 2, Article 8 of the *Epanagoge* states:

The polity (*politeas*), like man, consists of many parts and members, (among these) the most important and the necessary parts are the Emperor and Patriarch. Wherefore the peace and happiness of subjects, in body and soul, consist in the full agreement and concord of the kingship and the priesthood. 159


The *Epanagoge*, in particular, specifies that the “emperor’s” duty is to enforce and maintain, first and foremost, all that is set out in the Holy Scriptures, thereafter the doctrines established by the Seven Ecumenical Councils, and finally the laws established by the Romans. Furthermore, “if anything is proposed contrary to the canons (of the church) it is not to be followed.”

In the *Epanagoge*, the emperor is supreme, although his power is limited in the ecclesiastical realm. He is bound in duty to protect and defend the church, and is the administrator of both the secular and the canon laws. The emperor decrees laws and interprets them, but they must not be contrary to the canons. The interpretation of canon law and the Scriptures is the prerogative of the patriarch, not the emperor. The doctrinal position of the emperor is strictly defined. Title 1, Article 4, of the *Epanagoge*, is an example of one of these duties of the emperor where it states the emperor must first uphold the Holy Scripture, then the edicts of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, and finally the Roman civil laws:

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The patriarch is as necessary to the proper functioning of the state-church organism as the emperor. As the emperor exercises authority over the body of the state, the patriarch wields sway over the soul. The patriarch, it is asserted in Title 2, Article 1, of the *Epanagoge*, “is the living and ensouled image of Christ, by his deeds and words expressing the truth.”  

Anthony Kaldellis writes that in the opening lines of the *Epanagoge*, where it states that “the politeia is constituted of members and limbs, in a like manner to human beings, and the greatest and most necessary parts are the emperor and the patriarch.” None of these classificatory systems were either exhaustive or exclusive, Kaldellis posits, as each was designed to promote only the element of the polity that was of immediate concern to the patriarchate. They reveal that the polity was a collectivity in terms of whose good every type of professional or person was defined, including the emperor. In fact, treating the emperor as part of

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162 Spinka, “Patriarch Nikon and the Subjection of the Russian Church to the State,” 352.

the polity was hardly controversial, though the *Epanagoge*’s attempt to postulate equality between him and the patriarch and to distinguish their jurisdiction was.\(^{164}\)

According to the *Epanagoge*, the Emperor is not only the head of this new *politeia*, but also the first representative of the Church which is conceived as a mere department of the Christian *politeia*. One of the emperor’s functions is the creation and preservation of morality among men by the proclamation of laws. The patriarch, on the other hand, has no claim to superiority, although morally he stands beside the emperor. He interprets the dogma and the Tradition, but should be “crucified to the world” (*Epanagoge* III, 3). Any interest in socio-political matters is denied to him; he is an other worldly individual.\(^{165}\)

What may we conclude from our analysis? Who are the winners and losers in the conflicts between Patriarch Photios and Basil I? Geanakoplos states that the emperor’s power over the church was many faceted. In the temporal realm he was a complete autocrat, limited theoretically by the Church in the application of Christian principles to civil law. In the external or administrative aspect of ecclesiastical affairs, it was the Byzantine ideal that the emperor as protector of the church work hand in hand with the ecclesiastical authorities. And this was normally the case. But when differences did arise, the imperial will seems almost invariably to have prevailed. Geanakoplos therefore concludes that in the sphere of ecclesiastical polity the emperor (Basil I) was able to exercise complete authority over the church (Patriarch Photios), subject only to the relative strength of


character of each incumbent emperor or patriarch. In the case of the deposition of Photios by Basil, Basil is the winner, despite the strong character Geanakoplos alludes to, not to mention the immense popularity and support Photios enjoyed amongst mainstream Byzantine clergy and the laity of Constantinople.

According to Vasiliev and Ostrogorsky, it was Basil I who, previously labeled a political opportunist, failed in his attempt to strengthen his position as emperor by strengthening his ties with the papacy and gaining the support of the Byzantine clergy and people. Basil, in his reinstating Photios to the patriarchate, was forced to recognize that in his reversal of Church policy after his accession he had been “beating the air”. His attempt to settle the clerical conflict in Byzantium by removing Photios was frustrated, since the adherents of Photios were not so easily subdued and the party strife continued. Ostrogorsky continues this argument by positing that a conflict with Rome and the papacy was inevitable, and that the emperor realized that any increase in his political opportunist plans were tempered by the reinstatement of Photios. Photios also stayed a strong and vociferous opponent of Rome and the papacy in his opposition to the Latin *filioque*. In the case of the deposition of Photios; he is the winner and Basil is the loser.

In the conflict concerning the *Epanagoge*, Dagron sees the significance of the *Epanagoge* as an “introductory” treatise to an ongoing legal reform, which was probably officially promulgated but soon set aside, and which it would be mistaken to see as the keystone to a political ideology or an original conception of

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the balance of the “two powers.” The first three titles, the only ones in which the direct influence of Photios can be detected deprive the imperial office, an office suspect since iconoclasm, for some of its sacred nature. It indicated that the emperor might well be put under the tutelage of a self-confident patriarch. Photios fit the mold of such a patriarch. Theodore of Stoudios, Dagron continues, for whom Rome had been recourse in his perpetual stasis against the authorities, was the first to imagine a patriarch who, without substituting himself for the pope, would have a legitimacy almost equal that to the emperor and so constitute himself a power. The Epanagoge simply expressed the same idea by giving the patriarch pontifical stature. Photios at this point appears to be the winner over Basil as befitting the above description.

Dagron, however, later concludes that the epilogue to Photios's Epanagoge revealed the fragility of his conception. A few months after the publication of the Epanagoge, the Emperor Basil I died; his son Leo VI wasted no time in forcing Photios to resign, on 29 September 886, and replacing him with his own brother Stephen, whom he enthroned on 18 December the same year. In his funeral eulogy for his father, Leo explained that Basil had found no other way of restoring peace to the Church and ending the rivalry between competing patriarchs than to “sacrifice” one of his children to God, as Abraham had done. The problem of a power with two heads was solved in this case with the tie of blood. Leo later declared when he mounted the pulpit, ruled on problems of canon law and

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168 Dagron, Emperor and Priest, 234

169 Dagron, Emperor and Priest, 234.
declared, in Novels which erased the last juridical vestiges of Roman “republicanism” that in future imperial “providence”, with God’s help, would “control and govern everything.”\(^{170}\) Photios is clearly the loser to Basil I’s heir Leo VI.

Ostrogorsky also concludes that the *Epanagoge* assumes an ideal relation between the lay and ecclesiastical power in accord with the ideas prevalent in Orthodox Church circles. Photios knew only too well, Ostrogorsky continues, and was shortly to have this knowledge reinforced by personal experience, that practice was sharply at variance with this theory. For the next change of ruler, as previously discussed, brought about his fall. After the early death of Constantine (879) the right of succession was vested in Leo VI, despite the antipathy and deep mistrust which his father felt toward him. Basil was never able to reconcile himself to the premature death of his favorite and passed the years of his life in a state of deep mental depression. On 29 August 886 he met with a fatal accident while hunting. After his accession, Leo VI deposed Photios and entrusted the office of Patriarch to his youthful brother Stephen. Photios now finally disappeared from the historical scene; he died in exile in Armenia in 895.\(^{171}\) Despite the significance of the *Epanagoge's* clear delineation of powers between Basileus and Patriarch, Photios is the loser in this case as the power of the emperor was victorious in his final removal from the patriarchate.


Chapter IV
Emperor Michael Paleologus VIII and the Council of Lyons

In the final case analyzed in this thesis, that in the conflict between the Emperor Michael Paleologus VIII and Patriarch Joseph I, Deno Geanakoplos writes that one of the great tragedies of the medieval period, some of the effects of which are still with us, was the increasingly sharp division of Christendom into two separate and ultimately hostile worlds; the Byzantine, or Roman East and the Latin West. But already in the first centuries of this era, even before the foundation of Constantinople as the “new Rome” in 330, certain differences—cultural, linguistic, and to a lesser degree religious—can be discerned between the Greek and Latin halves of Christendom. The gradual development and foundation of the Germanic kingdoms in the West added the element of political disunity. And when in 800, the pope crowned the German Charlemagne Roman Emperor in denial of Byzantine claims, a veritable political schism between East and West was created. 172

The presence of Romanity began to wear thin only in the age of the Crusades when the eastern and western empires were increasingly forced into a loveless embrace. From a western perspective Cyril Mango states, the kingdom of Constantinople looked decidedly Greek in addition to being schismatic. For their part, some Greek intellectuals reacted by claiming for themselves the glories of

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172 Geanakoplos, Byzantine East and Latin West, 1.
ancient Hellas. The big issue however, on which oceans were spilt, was that of religion—of obedience to the pope, the procession of the Holy Spirit, purgatory, clerical celibacy, leavened or unleavened bread in the Eucharist. Those were the questions that separated the Greeks from the Latins. If only they could be resolved, Christendom would be reunited in a new Romanity under the Pope. \(^{173}\)

In 1054, at the Great Church of St. Sophia in Constantinople, occurred the mutual excommunications of papal legates and Patriarch Cerularius, a celebrated episode which has traditionally been taken to mark the definitive breach between the Greek and Latin branches of the Christian church. But even this ecclesiastical schism (of which most people in the east and west were hardly aware) and the mutual distrust subsequently engendered by the first crusades, did not, it would seem, irreparably damage Greco-Latin relations. \(^{174}\) Joan Hussey has argued that the more significant antagonisms which inflamed Greek and Latin passions in the twelfth century arose out of political and economic pressures, perhaps more provoked by the West than Byzantium. \(^{175}\) However, these changing relations between Franks and Greeks, between papacy, and the Orthodox Church, were apparent before the Fourth Crusade (1203-4). From the mid-eleventh century and onwards the pattern had been set which was to prevail until the final dissolution of the eastern Roman Empire from the capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. \(^{176}\)


\(^{175}\) Hussey, *The Orthodox Church*, 183.

\(^{176}\) Hussey, *The Orthodox Church*, 167.
The Fourth Crusade, undertaken in 1203, was a combination of lofty religious emotion, hope of reward in the life to come, craving for spiritual action, and devotion to the obligations which had been undertaken in behalf of the crusade. These were mingled with the desire for adventure and gain, inclination for traveling, and the feudal custom of spending life in war. The domination of material interests and worldly feelings over spiritual and religious emotions, which had already been felt in the first three crusades, was particularly evident in the Fourth Crusade; this was demonstrated in the taking of Constantinople by the crusaders in 1204 and the foundation of the Latin Empire. 177

In 1198 Innocent III was elected Pope who then turned his attention to restoring full papal authority and to put himself as the head of the Christian movement against Islam. While carrying on negotiations with Constantinople, Innocent III was exerting extraordinary activity in organizing a general crusade in which eastern and western Christianities should be fused together in order to reach the common aim—the liberation of the Holy Land from the hands of the infidel. However, none of the principal western European sovereigns answered the call of Innocent III. 178 Innocent found an ally in the aged Doge Enrico Dandolo of Venice, whose aim it was to direct the forces of the West against Byzantium. Dandolo, an ardent enemy of Constantinople, realized that the permanent security of Venetian presence in the East could only be obtained by destroying the Byzantine Empire. What started out as a crusade to the Holy Land against the

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Islamists, quickly turned to an instrument of conquest to be used against the Christian East once Venice threw its commercial, political, and might naval forces into the balance.\textsuperscript{179} The shattering climax came in 1204 with the notorious Fourth Crusade, when the western armies and fleet, led by the Venetians, diverted their crusade from Jerusalem to Constantinople and actually captured the Byzantine capital. After three days of a barbaric sack, a Latin Empire was established on the ruins of the Byzantine state.\textsuperscript{180}

Michael VIII Paleologus was a soldier and diplomat of no mean talent. During his reign (1258-1282), the Roman Empire became a major player in the field of international relations for the last time, since the resources and possibilities of his successors were much reduced.\textsuperscript{181} Michael Dukas Angelos Comnenos Paleologus was born in 1224 or 1225, very probably in some city of the Nicene Empire. By birth he seemed destined for the throne as his lineage, which can be traced to the eleventh century, reveals descent from all three imperial houses which rule Byzantium before the Latin conquest of 1204. During his boyhood Michael attracted the attention of the great Emperor John III Vatatzes, who called him to the palace and brought him up like a son. There is no evidence that Michael was educated with Vatatzes’ own son of the same age, Theodore Lascaris, who was to become one of the most learned of the Byzantine emperors.\textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{179} Ostrogorsky, \textit{History of the Byzantine State}, 413-415.

\textsuperscript{180} Geanakoplos, \textit{Byzantine East and Latin West}, 17-18.

\textsuperscript{181} Jeffreys, Haldon, and Cormack, \textit{The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies}, 286.

Michael was ambitious, but his charm and versatility made him popular among his own class, and his respectable piety assured him the influential friendship and support of the Church. He later showed himself to be a brilliant soldier and courageous leader on the field of battle. In 1246 Michael, at 21 years of age, was appointed as a commander in Macedonia under the generalship of his father Andronikos. After being cleared of suspicion of plotting against Emperor Vatatzes in 1253, he continued to serve in the Emperor’s court. In 1254 John Vatatzes died and his son Theodore II Lascaris succeeded him as Emperor.

Theodore only ruled for four years and was not a very effective leader due to his illnesses and limitations as a soldier and statesman. He died in 1258. He left his empire to his eight-year old son John Lascaris, under the regency of Patriarch Arsenios, which later passed to the young and vigorous member of their own class. Michael Paleologus now had the title of Grand Duke. In December 1258 Michael was proclaimed as co-Emperor with young John Lascaris.

As Emperor, Michael faced a severe test to his leadership as the powerful triple alliance of the separatist state of Western Greece, the entire Latin strength of Greece, and the Sicilian king had joined forces in a war of annihilation against the Empire of Nicaea. This triple alliance also found an ally in Serbia. Michael emerged victorious from this challenge to Nicaea. Michael’s brother, John Paleologus, led a powerful army, together with Cuman and Seljuk levies, against the forces of the coalition. In the autumn of 1259 the armies of the coalition

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suffered a crushing defeat in the valley of Pelagonia. There was now no longer any continental power capable of resisting the recovery of Byzantium. Venice was the only power likely to intervene, but Michael warded off this danger in 1261 by entering into negotiations with the Genoese, the rivals of Venice. This great event, carefully and skillfully planned by Michael, now set the stage for the end of the moribund Latin Empire and the restoration of Constantinople. 185

In the winter of 1260 Michael VIII applied all his very considerable diplomatic and military talents to the recovery of Constantinople. Every frontier must be secured, every possible enemy pacified, and every contingency foreseen. His treaty with Genoa was his greatest triumph, as they would be instrumental in helping him break the Venetian naval forces defending Constantinople. This alliance between Nicaea and Genoa would have mutually beneficial advantages; both militarily for the Nicaeans, and for the Genoese an opportunity for revenge (against their arch nemesis Venice), along with new trade and profitable markets. 186

The beginning of the assault for Constantinople began in April 1261. Michael had earlier dispatched his army forces to Thrace to keep watch over the Bulgarian frontier. The imperial commander Alexius Strategopulos was reconnoitering in the neighborhood of Constantinople when to his surprise he found the capital virtually unprotected. The Venetian fleet had also left with the Frankish troops in order to lay siege to Daphnusium, which lies off an island in the

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185 Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, 448-449.
186 Nicol, The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 33-34.
Black Sea. Strategopoulos immediately attacked the virtually defenseless city, and captured it on 25 July 1261. The Latin Emperor Baldwin II and his followers took flight, and thus ended the Latin domination over Constantinople. On 15 August 1261 the Emperor Michael VIII celebrated his entry into the city of Constantine the Great. The Byzantine populace rejoiced heartily as fifty seven years of Latin domination came to an end. At the Church of Aghia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) Michael was crowned a second time by the Patriarch as Emperor. This symbolic act at Aghia Sophia signaled the rebirth of the Byzantine Empire in the imperial city of Constantinople. 187

What was the situation now facing Michael VIII? The re-conquest of the former capital was indeed the result of military and political successes of the previous decades and the prize fell into the hands of the Byzantines like ripe fruit. Byzantium once again became one of the decisive factors in European diplomacy and formed one of the centers round which the politics of the Mediterranean powers revolved. None the less, its newly won position was fraught with danger. In order to maintain its position, the empire needed greater wealth and resources than it actually possessed. Expenses mounted and a larger army and fleet were required. Michael, through his heroic efforts, the position, which had already once proved untenable, was restored under his leadership. 188

The territory of Michael’s Empire was also greatly reduced from the territory of Byzantium after the First Crusade. At the time of the re-conquest of

188 Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, 451.
Constantinople the Empire comprised the northwestern corner of Asia Minor, the major part of Thrace and Macedonia, Thessalonica, and several islands in the Aegean Sea. The Bosphorus and Hellespont, both strategic and commercial waterways, has also been restored to the Empire. But the rest of the formerly great empire was menaced on all sides by peoples politically or economically strong: the Turks threatened from Asia Minor, the Serbs and Bulgars from the north; the Venetians occupied some of the islands of the Archipelago, the Genoese, certain points on the Black Sea, and the Latin knights, the Peloponnese, and a portion of Middle Greece. Michael was not able to even unite all the Greek centers. The Empire rested on the survivability and strength of Constantinople. 189

Michael realized the greatest threat to the Empire, however, still came from the Latins, who hoped to reestablish their empire. The papal aim to subordinate the Greek church to Rome, and to launch a new crusade to the Holy Land, the politics and ambitions of Manfred, Baldwin, Louis IX, and the rulers of Castle, Aragon, Pisa, and Montferrat were of concern. Most consequential was the consuming ambition to conquer Byzantium of Michaels’ arch-foe Charles of Anjou, who at last succeeded in organizing a huge coalition of not only the Latin West, but practically all of the Slavic and eastern states encircling Constantinople. 190

The restoration of a schismatic emperor (Michael) to the throne in Constantinople seemed particularly galling to the Papacy, which had once some high hopes of the good that would come out of the evil of the Fourth Crusade.

189 Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, 580-581.
190 Geanakoplos, Emperor Michael and the West, 3-4.
Pope Urban IV, who was elected only a month after the event, was naturally sympathetic to the dispossessed Emperor Baldwin, and in August 1261, the new Pope was preaching for a crusade for the re-conquest of the city and the reinstatement of Baldwin.  

Michael astutely realized that his newly restored New Roman Empire had to face all the powers eventually interested in the survival of the Latin Empire. An attack therefore could be expected at any moment. An alliance between the Western and Balkan powers hostile to Byzantium might well have been fatal to the restored Empire. Such a danger could only be averted by skilful maneuvering, and fortunately diplomatic finesse was Michael VIII’s strong point.

With the new threats to the restored Empire Michael decided to try something bold and new. His fundamental objectives were first, and foremost, preservation of his throne and newly conquered capital, and restoration of his Byzantine boundaries as they had existed before 1204. From these goals his diplomacy never deviated. However form his basic aims, the execution of policy implementing them had to be highly flexible, conditioned by the capabilities of these new numerous opponents and a constantly shifting political scene. Michael was keenly sensitive to the realities in each situation, especially with new pressure from the Latin side. He would do something to maintain a favorable balance of power against a diversity of enemies.

193 Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael and the West*, 138-139.
From the outset Michael had been in touch with the papacy. After the capture of Constantinople, he approached Pope Urban IV (r. 1261-1264) in 1262 broaching the questions of hostilities between Greeks and Latins, expressing the desire to restore the unity of the Church and asking for legates to be sent who should be peace-loving followers of Christ and who would carry out the work of unity. In 1263, after meeting with lukewarm results from Urban, Michael put out an offer of union in general terms favorable to the papacy. Urban was already considering holding a general council designed to settle outstanding problems. Urban died in 1264, and it was not until Gregory X was elected Pope in 1271 that this council was not to be realized in 1274 at Lyons. Like his great predecessor John Vatatzes, Michael by taking this bold step, hoped he could forestall his political enemies in the west by appealing to the highest level of the papacy, and strengthen the peace and unity of the Church.

Gregory X adopted a policy of the principal aim of which was the recovery of Jerusalem. To this end his ecclesiastical negotiations with Byzantium, culminating with the celebrated union of Lyons were of central importance, not only because he saw a religious entente as genuinely beneficial to all Christendom but because he believed that only with Greek support could the Holy land be taken and successfully maintained. But Gregory X was, however, no longer satisfied with the vague promises of union with which Michael had already beguiled Rome.

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194 Hussey, The Orthodox Church, 223.


196 Geanakoplos, Emperor Michael and the West, 238.
for more than a decade. He gave the Emperor an ultimatum—either the Greek Church was to submit, in which case he guaranteed the full support of the Catholic powers, otherwise he declared that he could no longer restrain the persisted demands of Charles of Anjou and his increased threat of hostilities against Byzantium. Charles increased his alliances with Venice, Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Thessaly. All the enemies of the Empire, Latins and Greeks, Slavs and Albanians, were now united under his leadership. Charles now coveted the Byzantine crown. 197

Under these circumstances the threats of Gregory X exercised virtual compulsion and the Emperor had no choice but to submit to the papal will. Despite the obstinate opposition of the Byzantine clergy, Michael VIII came to terms with the papal legate in Constantinople and ultimately was able to persuade a section of the clergy to accept the union. 198 Gregory was able to secure from the reluctant Charles of Anjou, a notable political concession. By repeatedly stressing to Charles the spiritual importance of the upcoming council, Gregory was finally able to induce him to postpone the execution of their pact for one year after the council (May 1275). 199

Pope Gregory announced in March 1272 that a general council would meet in May 1274 at Lyons. In the autumn of 1272 he sent an invitation to the Patriarch of Constantinople, Joseph I, and informed the emperor Michael Paleologus of his

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199 Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael and the West*, 244.
intentions. The Roman conditions for unity were those stated by Pope Clement IV (r.1265-1268). Clement prescribed assent to a formula of faith: the Greeks had to accept, the Filioque, purgatory, seven sacraments, papal primacy with Rome's appellate jurisdiction; all powers of eastern patriarchs were derived from Rome. Clement also added in a subsequent letter that the emperor had great power over the Greek clergy and should simply coerce his subjects into union. Neither pope nor emperor needed to provide reasoned argument. 200 These conditions overwhelmingly favored the Latins and made the East almost totally subservient to the West.

The Latin legates were privately told to present them so as to make them appear flexible. The actual formula of submission to Rome was not rigid. Gregory's principal hope was to win support for a crusade, a plan welcomed by Michael with the proviso that he would need to clam adverse forces at home. Michael believed that in practice papal claims to appellate jurisdiction and commemoration in the diptychs would cost next to nothing, and that it was a trivial price to pay for Roman restraint on Charles of Anjou’s ambitions to recapture Constantinople. 201

The Byzantines reached Lyons on 24 June 1274. They were escorted with honors to the palace where the Pope was staying and with splendid ceremonial they received the kiss of peace from Gregory X. They clearly stated they had come to express their obedience to the Holy See, and they brought documents

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200 Chadwick, Making East and West, 246-248.

201 Chadwick, Making East and West, 248.
confirming this, a chrysobull from Michael VIII agreeing to the papal conditions and a similar profession of obedience from Michael’s son, the co-Emperor Andronicus, as well as the letter from the Greek clergy, though these did not commit themselves so specifically as the Emperor did. 202

The Cathedral of St. John in Lyons was the setting for this treaty of union. Gregory X himself celebrated mass before the convocation of some 1500 persons. Services were chanted and sermons were read both in Greek and Latin. Three times the *filioque* was repeated, after which the Greek envoys chanted praises to Gregory in Greek and the Pope completed the celebration of mass. 203 It was not until the fourth session of the council, on July 6, that the formal act of union was performed. Gregory opened by expressing joy at the return of the Greeks to the obedience of the Roman church. Michael’s letter declaring his acceptance of the Roman faith and primacy was read. The attending Greek bishops then declared their adherence to union, and informed the Pope that, if the present council were successful, the incumbent Patriarch Joseph would resign his office. 204 The closing act of the council took place when the Emperor Michael's plenipotentiary, George Acropolites, stood up in the assembly, and swore adherence to the complete profession of faith which had just been read from Michael. Once Acropolites had made his statement the union was considered to have been achieved. 205

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202 Hussey, *The Orthodox Church*, 231.


205 Hussey, *The Orthodox Church*, 232-233.
The aftermath of the Union of Lyons was a mixed and short-lived blessing for Michael. While it temporarily stalled Charles of Anjou's aggression, it ultimately destroyed Michael's credibility with his own people—the vast majority who now regarded him as an odious traitor who had surrendered to the Latins on the most sensitive of issues, the truths of the Orthodox faith. Deno Geanakoplos writes that only the high clergy as a whole were convinced that the political situation demanded union with Rome. The remainder of the prelates, most of the lower clergy, the monks, and the great majority of the people remained firm in their opposition, believing that union would bring not only imposition of the hated filioque but adoption of Latin usages as well.

Like every other peoples in history, the medieval Greeks had a mystical attitude toward their Empire. They believed their city (Constantinople) was under the protection of the Virgin Mary. The loss of their city in 1204 to the Latins, many believed, was due to the loss of God's grace as a result of the Greeks’ sinfulness. The re-conquest of the city in 1261 by Michael VIII was due to the recovery of God’s grace. The Greek people must have reasoned, therefore, that the Empire would certainly crumble if the purity of the faith were altered through union and adoption of the Latin confession. The union was also seen as a betrayal of the Greek sense of national pride as well. The Greeks also considered the Latins heretical, supercilious, and intellectually inferior.

206 Mango, The Oxford History of Byzantium, 258.
Besides the *filioque*, the other significant aspect of the unionist decree was its emphasis on the crucial problem of papal supremacy, acceptance of which would, in effect mean the surrender of the independence of the Greek church. In the document the authority of the pope as universal head of the churches of both east and west was clearly affirmed, although it was stated in the passage immediately following that “all rights and privileges of the patriarchs of the East are excepted”.  

Who were the main opponents of Michael VIII in this controversy? The opposition was loud and strong. Its spokesman was at first John Beccus, the *chartophylax* (archivist) of the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Constantinople, a priest of great intelligence and integrity. Beccus was no rabble-rouser, but he voiced his opinion that union with the Latin Christians was undesirable because their faith was suspect; and thought it might be impolite to say so, they were technically in heresy. The Patriarch Joseph (r.1266-1275) thought that this expressed the case very well. But the Emperor, seeing his plans going awry, was furious. He had Beccus arrested and thrown into prison. As an ardent opponent of the union, Patriarch Joseph made a public statement denouncing the Church of Rome for its “innovations” in the Creed, and he composed an encyclical to the faithful to strengthen their powers of resistance to imperial pressure.  

The Patriarch Joseph, Michael’s sister Eulogia, some monastic extremists, and some prominent military figures, joined forces in the anti-unionist cause:

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210 Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium*, 54.
nothing was more likely to incur divine displeasure than a compromise of the authoritative Orthodox tradition popularly identified with Byzantine patriotism. What Michael was submitting to implied a loss of Orthodox identity: were they to lose themselves to gain the Pope? Patriarch Joseph put it more correctly: he was wholly in favor of union if Rome corrected its errors. No serious Christian could then be against union. 211

Joseph also was opposed to a statement that Michael had issued to demonstrate the Orthodoxy of the Latins, the text of which is known as the *Tomas*. The *Tomas* proved ineffective as Michael found the strong and active opposition of Joseph and his newly formed forces in the anti-unionist cause daunting. 212 In his position as Patriarch, Joseph felt it his duty to remind the Emperor that only an ecumenical council was empowered to make decisions affecting the whole church. The Patriarch of Constantinople alone could not act in so weighty a matter without consulting the opinion of his colleagues in the other patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. 213

Michael realized that after the delegates arrived home from Lyons he would have to have the support of Patriarch Joseph, other clergy, and popular support in order to add legitimacy to the union in Rome’s eyes. Michael was smoothed over by the fact that Joseph had threatened to resign if the reconciliation went through at Lyons. In early January 1275 Joseph retired to Lavra, a monastery

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212 Hussey, *The Orthodox Church*, 227.

213 Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium*, 54.
near the Black Sea entrance to the Bosphorus (near enough to Constantinople to be within easy reach of his partisans). On January 9 of the same year the synod declared Joseph deposed.  

Michael suddenly found a highly intelligent supporter and convert to his cause in John Beccus, whose prison studies of Cyril of Alexandria showed him to have good authority in a Greek father of high standing using the language of the *filioque*. His florilegium defending the *filioque* had 123 citations from Cyril. The *filioque* was the only dogma in which the Council of Lyons gave a ruling. Beccus and his emperor had a strong case for contending that this issue was secondary or even marginal: was the Spirit proceeding from the Father *and* the Son or *through* the Son? But Beccus was no Latinizing theologian; his ecclesiology was fully Byzantine. He regretted putting the *filioque* into the liturgical creed, but thought it legitimate theology.  

On May 26, 1275, John Beccus was elected by the ecumenical synod to the vacant office. Beccus faced a stormy term as Patriarch with the clergy and people as he came to accept the major Roman claims but he always maintained that Greek and Latin views on the *filioque* could be reconciled. For this he was called a *Latinophron*, or “pro-Latin” by the people in Constantinople.  

Beccus was generally reviled in Constantinople. It seems the gulf between the Latins and Greeks became wider and relations more acrimonious.

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214 Hussey, *The Orthodox Church*, 235-236.


216 Hussey, *The Orthodox Church*, 236.
My initial hypothesis in the definition of my research problem stated the concept of a harmonious relationship between the Basileus and Patriarch in the New Roman Empire were more honored in the breach than the observance, especially in the areas of conflict in controversial theological issues. The research and analysis in this thesis involving Michael Paleologus VIII and the Union of Lyons certainly supports my hypothesis.

Deno Geanakoplos concludes that Michael’s aim of saving the Empire through union is clear; the tactics he employed seem at first glance inconsistent. He actually pursued two conscious lines of action: one in his relations with the papacy and another with his prelates. One the one hand, he emphasized the importance of religious union, attempting faithfully to carry out every demand of the papal legates. On the other, he sought to minimize to his clergy the significance of union, mollifying their attitude as much as possible by insisting that union would entail no change in the symbol but only minor concessions of an insignificant nature. 217

Geanakoplos goes on to affirm that for Michael the proclamation of union at Lyons was a veritable diplomatic triumph. It saved his capital from the danger of an imminent Latin invasion and gained him the support not only of the Pope but of a general council as well. Henceforth, an expedition by Charles of Anjou, theoretically at least, would be regarded by Western Christendom not only as a crusade but a fratricidal war between two Catholic princes. Union, in effect, had

made Byzantium a kind of papal protectorate. Geanakoplos concludes by stating it is more probable that the policy of Michael Paleologus was a calculated risk, whose difficulties, both with respect to the papacy and to his own clergy and people, he thought he could surmount with skillful diplomacy. Despite having made concessions to the papacy, Michael is clearly the winner between the temporal and spiritual entities.

George Ostrogorsky posits that Michael was given an ultimatum by Pope Gregory X that required the Greek Church to either submit, in which case he guaranteed the full support of the Catholic powers, and otherwise he declared that he could no longer restrain the persistent demands of invasion of Constantinople by Charles of Anjou. Under these circumstances the threats of Gregory X exercised virtual compulsion and the Emperor had no choice but to submit to the papal will. Despite the obstinate opposition of the Byzantine clergy, (Joseph I among them), Michael came to terms with the papal legate in Constantinople and ultimately was even able to persuade a section of the clergy (John Beccus among them), to accept the union. Ostrogorsky concludes that the union of the Churches, for more than two centuries one of the principal aims of Rome’s policy, and the object of endless and consistent fruitless negotiations, had at last been realized. The avalanche which for many years had threatened to overwhelm the restored Byzantine Empire had thus been arrested by the diplomatic genius of Michael

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218 Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Paleologus and the West*, 277.
Paleologus. 221 Michael is clearly the winner in this conflict between Patriarch and Basileus.

Cyril Mango’s is in agreement with both Geanakoplos and Ostrogorsky in that Michael's role in undermining Charles of Anjou and saving Constantinople from a Latin invasion is rightly regarded as one of his greatest diplomatic triumphs—and this in a career replete with such exploits. Tellingly, Mango continues, it was barely appreciated by his subjects, who all but rejoiced in his death in 1282, and registered no concern that he was denied a decent Christian burial. From the Byzantine's perspective, Michael’s policies had alienated the imperial regime from society at large by his union with the Latins. 222

In the epilogue to the conflict between of Michael Paleologus and the Patriarchate and the Union of Lyons, Joan Hussey writes that Michael VIII had striven to uphold the union, and his rejection by Rome and his treatment after his death (December 1282) were both undeserved. After his death the full anti-unionist reaction had set in and Michael’s son Andronicus (r. 1282-1328) became ruler with none of his father’s qualities. Hussey speculates that Michael did err in retaking Constantinople. But even if he had renounced New Rome, Greece, and the islands it is doubtful whether he could have kept secure the Asia Minor kingdom in the face of western economic and dynastic ambitions and eastern pressures from the Turks. 223

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221 Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, 465.
222 Mango, The Oxford History of Byzantium, 258.
223 Hussey, The Orthodox Church, 242.
Michael Paleologus triumphantly marched into Constantinople in 1261 to a joyous and celebratory populous after an easy military victory over the Latins. He did, however, inherit a much weaker New Roman Empire which was surrounded by imminent threats from the Latins, Turks, and others. My sources in this thesis, which included Geanakoplos, Ostrogorsky, Mango, Hussey, and other noted historians of that period, all agree that Michael Paleologus VIII was diplomatically triumphant in securing a proclamation of union with the papacy in Rome. This union was successful in staving off the ever-present threat of invasion mainly by Charles of Anjou and the Turks, which the capital (Constantinople) faced for many years.

On the other side of this equation, Michael faced an internal and severe backlash from his Patriarch Joseph I, many of the clergy, monastics, and most of the laity, who accused him of basically selling out to the Latin papacy their Greek Orthodox Church. Michael was reviled by these factions; they did not understand and appreciate the measures Michael was basically forced into to save the capital and the Empire from ever-present external threats to its very survival. It is, however, understandable that the Patriarch and clergy sought to preserve the theological dogma of the Nicene Creed as set forth by the earlier ecumenical councils; and the Greek clergy opposition to the Latin filioque and papal supremacy. The primary role of the Patriarch was to uphold and defend the Holy Orthodox faith. Any changes to theological issues can only be discussed and implemented through an ecumenical synod. Michael failed in this respect, doctrinally and ecclesiastically, as he did not consult with any of the higher clergy;
including the Patriarchs, in the matter of union with the Latins. Notwithstanding this oversight by Michael, and, based on my research and analysis in this thesis, I conclude that the Basileus was clearly the winner over the Patriarch in this case of conflict involving the (Council) Union of Lyons.
Summary and Conclusions

What may we conclude from my original hypothesis, which stated the concept of a harmonious relationship between Basileus and Patriarch was honored more in the breach than in the observance? My position taken at the outset of this thesis was that the Basileus usually emerged victorious in most cases of conflict in controversial theological issues in the New Roman (Byzantine) Empire. In supporting this hypothesis, evidence from primary and secondary sources detailing four specific cases of this conflict between Emperor (Basileus) and Priest (Patriarch) revealed the following results in support of my initially stated argument in facilitating the understanding of the existence of a symphony of powers between both entities:

In the case of the Emperor Justinian’s condemnation of the *Edict of the Three Chapters* and the Monophysite controversy against the Patriarch Menas (and other clergy), I initially favored the Emperor as victorious. My research, however, supported the clergy as winners, despite Justinian’s pushing his religious agenda against the Monophysites and his control of the Fifth Ecumenical Council. In the final analysis, the ecclesiastical leadership (Patriarch) thwarted his political and religious ends based on this and the deep-rooted division with the Eastern provinces.

The case of conflict arising between the Emperor Leo III and Patriarch Germanos occurring, when, in the interest of the state, the emperor attempted to
alter church dogma when no pressing external danger existed, that is, on purely intellectual grounds or in accordance with personal belief (of the emperor). My preliminary overview and analysis of this ideal harmonious relationship also favors the Basileus over the Patriarch in this case. As in the aforementioned case of the Emperor Justinian, I selected Leo III (Basileus) winning out over Germanos (Patriarch). Subsequent research and evidence presented Leo’s attempts to negotiate his iconoclastic policy with the clergy, based on his ‘God-given’ mandate to make his own views compulsory on his subjects failed miserably. The Patriarch is victorious in the long run over the Basileus based on this evidence and subsequent reversals of Iconoclasm (Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787).

My examination of the disagreements between the Emperor Basil I and Patriarch Photios in the areas of controversial theological issues identified the Patriarch winning out over the Basileus in this conflict. This was in partly supported by the relative strength of character, self-confidence, and legitimacy, which described Photios. Further analysis and evidence revealed that Basileus and Patriarch were both winners and losers in this case of conflict. Basil may have successfully invoked the imperial will in the sphere of ecclesiastical policy over the church, which finally resulted in the permanent removal of Photios from the Patriarchate. Photios was equally effective due to his strength, character, self-confidence, and legitimacy, which was apparent in the Patriarchal office.

My final case analysis concerning the conflict between the Emperor Michael Paleologus VIII and Patriarch Joseph I and other clergy, more specifically the Emperor Michael Paleologus’ role in the Council of Lyons in AD 1274, which
involved his bypassing the eastern Patriarchate leadership by entering a union with the Latin Church. This union (Lyons) served the apparent political and military strategic goals of the emperor while inversely creating immediate and vehement opposition from the Patriarchate. My preliminary overview of this conflict between Basileus and Patriarch supported the Basileus (Michael VIII) as the winner. Evidence provided in this case posited that Michael failed in attempting changes in established Orthodox theological doctrine by his union with the Latins at Lyons in 1274, which resulted in a severe and internal backlash from Patriarch Joseph and his many of the clergy. Michael was successful, however, through his diplomatic efforts, in holding off the ever-present threat of invasion by the Latins and Turks, thus saving Constantinople and the Empire. In this case I support Michael Paleologus VIII as the winner in this conflict between Basileus and Patriarch.

Throughout my research I discovered that the relationship between Basileus and Patriarch was more discordant than harmonious in nature, and was frequently mired in conflict between temporal and ecclesiastical affairs during the lengthy reign of the New Roman Empire. Despite this phenomenon, the endurance of this Empire; renown for its intellectual activity, religion, culture, wealth, and economy, was a truly impressive accomplishment over its thousand plus year period of influence. I am hoping that my research of this relationship between the Emperor and Patriarch from the selected case studies in this thesis, has contributed to the readers' understanding and appreciation of this dyarchy with its unique and often controversial relationships between its secular and ecclesiastical rulers.
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