Emperors, Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Deacons and Monks: Individuals and Groups in the Byzantine Church (6th–11th Centuries)

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Abstract

This article traces the history of the Byzantine Church from the sixth to the early twelfth century. It seeks to show how the development of the institution was shaped through the interactions of groups and individuals. Particular attention is paid to the permanent synod, the deacons of St Sophia and the monks of the capital.

Keywords

Byzantine Church – permanent synod – patriarch of Constantinople – clergy of St Sophia – Byzantine monks

When we reflect on the relationship between church and state in Byzantium, we inevitably first think of the interactions between two individuals, the Byzantine emperor as the head of the state and the patriarch of Constantinople as the head of the church. There can be no doubt that the personalities of emperors and patriarchs shaped the relations between the two institutions. Yet it would be wrong to focus exclusively on them because other individuals and groups could also play an important role. This is true for the emperors who were surrounded by high state officials and later also aristocrats, and it is even more true for the patriarchs who not only ruled together with a synod of metropolitans but also had to deal with the clergy of their own cathedral, the deacons of St Sophia, and with the monks of Constantinople and its hinterland. If disgruntled, the second group could obstruct the policies of the

patriarchs whereas the first and third groups could revolt against them and declare themselves to be the representatives of the true church. In such situations the emperors could lend their support to the patriarchs but they could also enter into direct relations with the other groups in order to undermine their authority. The following discussion seeks to do justice to this complex web of interactions. It attempts to give all the different players their due and to show how their influence fluctuated over time. The argument is based on previous scholarship and on original research. When for particular periods syntheses exist, they have been used extensively. In the discussion of these periods no references are made to primary sources except in those cases where a different interpretation is proposed. Periods for which no syntheses exist have been studied on the basis of the surviving evidence. In those cases, references are regularly supplied.¹

1 The Fifth and Sixth Centuries

Unlike its sister institutions in Alexandria and Antioch the patriarchate of Constantinople was a late creation. Indeed, Constantinople, which did not have the apostolic credentials of the other two sees, had originally been a mere suffragan bishopric. In the fourth century the sees of Thrace, Western and Eastern Asia Minor had been loosely organised in the form of three dioceses under the leadership of the bishops of Heraclea, Ephesus and Caesarea. This system if it ever worked properly was eclipsed by the rise of Constantinople. In the fifth century the bishops of the new capital who had by then acquired the status of patriarch began to assert the right to ordain, censure and if need be, depose the metropolitans of the three dioceses; and frequent trips of bishops to the capital led to the formation of a new institution, the permanent synod, which consisted of the metropolitans that happened to be in Constantinople at any given time.²

What set the patriarchs of Constantinople apart from their colleagues was their spatial proximity to the emperors, which greatly facilitated communication and often led to close cooperation. During the reigns of Marcian and Leo I when the Council of Chalcedon became the touchstone of orthodoxy

1 The present study was undertaken within the framework of the project 'Moving Byzantium: Mobility, Microstructures and Personal Agency' (PI: Prof. Claudia Rapp; <https://rapp.univie.ac.at/>), funded by the FWF Austrian Science Fund (Project Z 288 Wittgenstein-Preis).

2 J. Hajjar, *Le Synode permanent (synodos endemousa) dans l'Église byzantine des origines au XI^e siècle* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 164), Rome, 1962, pp. 52–80.

the patriarchs were all defenders of the official line.³ And when Emperor Zeno decided to circumvent Chalcedon in order to restore ecclesiastical peace, he was helped by Patriarch Acacius who drew up the document in which this policy was enshrined and who then persuaded the Eastern patriarchs to accept it.⁴

However, such harmony could not be taken for granted. Already before Zeno's death the new patriarch Euphemius had withdrawn from communion with his colleagues. Tensions grew under Anastasius I when Euphemius and his successor Macedonius began to work towards a reinstatement of the creed of Chalcedon and a rapprochement with Rome, which had declared the Eastern churches to be schismatic. In this they were supported by monastic communities and by a substantial part of the population of Constantinople, which was staunchly pro-Chalcedonian and did not shrink from voicing its opinion.⁵ Anastasius eventually imposed his will on the church by choosing a more malleable candidate but the ascent to the throne of Justin I in 518 brought a complete reversal of imperial policy. Now the creed of Chalcedon again became the shibboleth of orthodoxy and the schism with the popes was ended. The price for the union with Rome was the removal from the diptychs of all Constantinopolitan patriarchs since Acacius even though most of them had harboured pro-Chalcedonian sympathies.⁶ From then on, the patriarchs of Constantinople were resolutely pro-Chalcedonian. The single exception was Anthimus of Trebizond whom Justin's nephew Justinian had selected in order to bring about a rapprochement with the Monophysites. However, Anthimus' tenure did not last long. He was quickly deposed after the concerted action of a group of monks and of the pope of the time who then ordained Anthimus' successor Menas.⁷

Significantly, this was the last time in the sixth century that opposition to a decision of an emperor was effective. In the later years of his reign Justinian succeeded in bringing the church of Constantinople completely under his control. In order to woo the Monophysites he saw to it that the formula 'one of the Trinity was crucified' was accepted as official doctrine and that the Three Chapters, writings of the Antiochene theologians Theodore of Mopsuestia,

3 P.T.R. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451–553)* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought, 20), Leiden, 1979, esp. pp. 21–25.

4 Gray, *Defense of Chalcedon*, pp. 25–34.

5 Gray, *Defense of Chalcedon*, pp. 34–40.

6 Gray, *Defense of Chalcedon*, pp. 44–53.

7 V.L. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford, 2008, pp. 196–198; A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, 11.2: *Die Kirche von Konstantinopel im 6. Jahrhundert*, Freiburg – Basel – Vienna, 1989, pp. 265–277.

Ibas of Edessa and Theodoret of Cyrus, were condemned as Nestorian.⁸ In order to achieve these aims he broke the resistance of the Sleepless monks who for a century had been the champions of a strictly Chalcedonian position in Constantinople, and brought to heel the church of Rome: Pope Vigilius was coerced into signing the document condemning the Three Chapters and forcing it on his own church.⁹ The Constantinopolitan populace also seems to have played no role in the debates. The patriarch of Constantinople, Eutychius, had in any case been chosen because he was a staunch supporter of the imperial position.¹⁰ Only at the end of Justinian's reign do we find signs of unease about the emperor's sway. When Justinian began to champion the cause of aphthartodocetism, Eutychius and his colleague Anastasius of Antioch resigned from their posts because they considered this teaching to be heretical.¹¹ However, these acts do not seem to have had much impact on the church. Indeed, Justinian had no difficulties in finding replacements for the two men. The reigns of Justinian's successors saw no further crises. Only rarely one does get a glimpse of tensions. Emperor Maurice, for example, was forced by his patriarch to persecute supposed paganisers.¹²

In order properly to evaluate the relations between state and church it is of crucial importance to understand the backgrounds of the representatives of the church. From the second quarter of the fifth century onwards patriarchs were increasingly recruited from among the Constantinopolitan clergy. This development reached its zenith in the reign of Anastasius who consistently chose local clerics instead of outsiders who might have been more prepared to do his bidding.¹³ The predominance of Constantinopolitan clerics continued into the sixth century. Patriarch Menas was a Constantinopolitan, and so were his successors John the Faster, Cyriacus and Thomas at the end of the century. Significantly, these men had held high offices even before they became patriarchs: Menas had been director of the hospice of Sampson, John had been patriarchal *synkellos*, Cyriacus had been *oikonomos* and Thomas *sakellarios* of St Sophia.¹⁴

8 Gray, *Defense of Chalcedon*, pp. 64–66.

9 Gray, *Defense of Chalcedon*, pp. 66–68; Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus*, II.2, pp. 357–358.

10 Gray, *Defense of Chalcedon*, p. 68.

11 Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus*, II.2, pp. 489–495.

12 Theophylact Simocatta, *History*, I.11.21, ed. C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae*, Leipzig, 1887, p. 60.1–3.

13 His choice for the see of Antioch was the staunch Monophysite Severus who had been born in Asia Minor and spent his adulthood in Palestine.

14 *Catalogues of Patriarchs*, ed. F. Fischer, *De patriarcharum Constantinopolitarum catalogis et de chronologia octo primorum patriarcharum*, Leipzig 1884, pp. 287.19–20, 288.9–15.

Only during the reign of Justinian was this pattern broken. Three of his patriarchs, Anthimus of Trebizond, Eutychius of Amasea and John of Seremis, came from elsewhere.¹⁵ In each case the appointment was related to a particular imperial policy, rapprochement with the anti-Chalcedonians, condemnation of the Three Chapters, and the promotion of apthartodocetism. However, even here one must be careful. Only John of Seremis who hailed from the region of Antioch was without doubt an outsider. As we will see a Constantinopolitan stage is attested in the career of Eutychius and cannot decisively be ruled out for Anthimus.

Given the relatively firm grasp of the Constantinopolitan clergy on the patriarchate one would like to know the background of metropolitans and bishops such as Hypatius of Ephesus and Innocent of Maronea who acted as advisers of Justinian.¹⁶ Unfortunately the scarcity of the sources precludes any systematic study. However, one cannot simply assume that they were provincials. This is evident from the case of Heraclianus of Chalcedon. Before he gained his see in 537 Heraclianus had been a member of the clergy of St Sophia and had served as *synkellos* of Patriarch Epiphanius. During these years he had repeatedly undertaken diplomatic missions on behalf of the emperor and as metropolitan he continued with these activities.¹⁷ The case of Heraclianus shows that clerics from the capital could be considered for posts in the episcopate. Unfortunately, we do not know how wide-spread this practice was although it is suggestive that already John Chrysostom had engineered the elevation of one of his deacons to the see of Ephesus.¹⁸ This raises questions about the nature and extent of local participation in the selection process in the regions of Anatolia and Thrace.¹⁹

In order to cast further light on this matter we need to turn to the *Life* of Patriarch Eutychius by the presbyter Eustratius. This text contains rich biographical material and thus for once allows us to trace the career of an individual cleric. At first sight the *Life* seems to attest to the continuing strength of the provincial element within the church of Constantinople because Eutychius had been overseer of monasteries in the Anatolian town of Amasea before

15 *Catalogues of Patriarchs*, ed. Fischer, pp. 287.16–17, 288.1–2, 5–6.

16 Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus*, II.2, pp. 242–245.

17 Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus*, II.2, pp. 262.

18 Hajjar, *Synode permanent*, p. 62.

19 Significantly, two apostates from Monophysitism, Zacharias and Probus, who came from Syria and Palestine, were rewarded with the sees of Mitylene and Chalcedon, cf. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus*, II.2, pp. 99–100.

Justinian selected him for the patriarchal see.²⁰ However, a closer look reveals an entirely different picture. Eutychius spent his childhood with his maternal grandfather who served as priest and sacristan at the cathedral of the small bishopric of Augustopolis in Phrygia Salutaris.²¹ He was then chosen as a potential candidate for the bishopric of Zalicha by the metropolitan of Amasea.²² At the bidding of the metropolitan he travelled to the capital where he became lector, deacon and later also priest at the church of Mary in Ta Ourbikiou in the Strategion in preparation for his ordination as bishop of Zalicha.²³ This ordination never materialised and Eutychius had to content himself with the oversight of the monasteries of Amasea as a consolation prize, at which point he also became a monk.²⁴

The fact that the metropolitan of Amasea did not enlist Eutychius in the clergy of his own cathedral but made him enter a Constantinopolitan church is highly significant. An episode in the *Life* of Theodore of Sykeon suggests that a Constantinopolitan stage in the career of a provincial bishop was a common phenomenon. Theodore's hagiographer informs us that due to the intercession of the saint a Lycaonian called Paul was placed as priest in the church of Mary in Sykai in Ta Galatiou and that this same Paul later became bishop of a city in Isauria.²⁵ In Eutychius' case the strange behaviour of the metropolitan of Amasea is most easily explained if we assume that he, too, had previously been a member of the church in Ta Ourbikiou. As we have seen before, metropolitans could indeed be chosen from among Constantinopolitan clerics. If this was a more wide-spread phenomenon the grip of the capital on the Anatolian sees would have been considerable already in the sixth century.

This does not mean that all of the hundreds of Anatolian bishoprics were staffed with candidates from Constantinople. The best evidence to the contrary is Theodore of Sykeon himself. Theodore was a local holy man whom the metropolitan of Ancyra appointed bishop of the suffragan see of Anastasiopolis at the request of the local notables.²⁶ Here one would like to know more about the background of Theodore's superior because it is at the level of the metropolitan sees that one would expect Constantinopolitan interference to be

20 Eustratius, *Life of Eutychius*, ed. C. Laga, *Eustratii Presbyteri Vita Eutychii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani* (CC, SG 25), Turnhout – Leuven, 1992, pp. 20.533–23.638.

21 Eustratius, *Life of Eutychius*, ed. Laga, p. 10.198–227.

22 Eustratius, *Life of Eutychius*, ed. Laga, pp. 13.322–14.339.

23 Eustratius, *Life of Eutychius*, ed. Laga, pp. 14.340–17.427.

24 Eustratius, *Life of Eutychius*, ed. Laga, pp. 17.492–19.513.

25 George Eleusius, *Life of Theodore*, 81, ed. and tr. A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon* (Subsidia hagiographica, 48), Brussels, 1970, pp. 68–69.

26 George Eleusius, *Life of Theodore*, 58, ed. Festugière, pp. 49–50.

strongest. The case of Theodore also raises the question: how many bishops were former monks? Unfortunately, it is impossible to gauge the size of the monastic element within the episcopate. The example of Nicholas of Sion suggests that monks frequently became suffragan bishops.²⁷ However, it seems unlikely that they also staffed the metropolitan sees.

The clerics of the great Constantinopolitan churches and especially of St Sophia would have been the main beneficiaries of this process of centralisation because it opened up to them entirely new career opportunities.²⁸ Therefore they may have been the primary motor behind this development. However, it is arguable that the emperors also had an interest in it because it facilitated control of the Anatolian churches. The spread of anti-Chalcedonianism on the Southern littoral of Anatolia and attempts to establish a rival hierarchy there showed the dangers of local recruitment for metropolitan and episcopal sees.²⁹ If the metropolitans were Constantinopolitans by birth or had at least received their socialisation in the capital the vetting process would have been greatly facilitated. Moreover, once installed in their cities they might promote Constantinopolitan rather than local interests. In this context it is worth noting that in stark contrast to the fourth century Anatolia did not develop a theological profile of its own.³⁰ The Christological discourse had its home in Syria and especially in Palestine. What might have contributed to this process was the decline of the cities, which in Anatolia began in the middle of the sixth century. Subdivision of palatial buildings shows that the local aristocracy was also affected.³¹ Thus one can ask whether this did not weaken their stance against interventions from the centre.

2 The Seventh and Eighth Centuries

The history of the Byzantine Church of the seventh, eighth and early ninth centuries was dominated by two controversies: whether or not one could

27 *Life of Nicholas*, 68, ed. and tr. I. Ševčenko and N. Patterson Ševčenko, *The Life of Saint Nicholas of Sion* (The Archbishop Iakovos Library of Ecclesiastical and Historical Sources, 10), Brookline, Mass., 1984, pp. 100–102.

28 Not all of them were Constantinopolitans by birth: John II came from Cappadocia but then became a member of the clergy of St Sophia, cf. *Catalogues of Patriarchs*, ed. Fischer, p. 287.12–13.

29 J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture*, revised edition, Cambridge, 1990, esp. p. 338.

30 Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus*, II.2, pp. 10–12.

31 Cf. J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, Oxford, 2003, pp. 30–54.

attribute a single will to the incarnated Word, and whether or not veneration should be offered to depictions of Christ and the saints. Reconstruction of the events is hampered by the dismal source base. The situation is slightly better for Iconoclasm but even there the surviving evidence is often of much later date and of a highly tendentious nature. This puts severe limitations on any attempt at interpretation. For example, it is usually impossible to assess whether the people of Constantinople participated in the debates.

The controversy about the will of Christ started during the reign of Emperor Heraclius. After his victory over the Persians, Heraclius conceived the grand plan to bring about a union between Chalcedonians and Monophysites. In this project he was vigorously supported by Patriarch Sergius. Taking as his starting point theological ideas from the late sixth and early seventh centuries Sergius developed, after some false starts, the doctrine of a single hypostatic will in Christ, which he thought would be amenable to the Monophysites, and made great efforts to win over his Chalcedonian colleagues. This position was given imperial sanction in 638 when Heraclius promulgated the *Ekthesis*.³²

Unfortunately, Heraclius' plans did not meet with success. No lasting union was achieved with the Monophysites, and not all Chalcedonians found the new doctrine of Monotheletism acceptable. During the reign of his grandson Constans II matters came to a head when the Palestinian monk Maximus and his associates took up the fight against the official line. Maximus was a speculative theologian of a high calibre and a shrewd tactician. From Palestine he went to Africa where he brought the local bishops round to his own position. Matters became so fraught that in 648 Emperor Constans II and his patriarch Paul felt constrained to produce another document, the *Typos*, which forbade discussion of the whole issue. However, this strategy, too, did not produce the outcome that the emperor wished for because in the meantime Maximus had gone to Rome where he induced Pope Martin to convoke a council, which declared that there were two wills in Christ. The political instability that dogged his reign made it difficult for Constans II to respond effectively but eventually he managed to have both Pope Martin and Maximus brought to Constantinople, tried as traitors, and condemned.³³ However, it seems that even these drastic measures were not sufficient to silence dissent. Moreover, it was no longer clear what benefits Monotheletism could bring since after the loss of the Eastern provinces only small communities of Monophysites remained within the empire. This explains why Constans' son Constantine IV decided radically to reverse the religious policy of his predecessors. In 681 he

32 Detailed account and analysis in Haldon, *Seventh Century*, pp. 300–302.

33 Haldon, *Seventh Century*, pp. 304–313.

convened the Sixth Ecumenical Council, which declared Dyothelitism the official doctrine of the empire and at the same time restored peace with Rome.³⁴ This was not quite the end of the story because in 711 the emperor Philippicus reverted to Monotheletism.³⁵ However, this initiative did not outlast his brief reign, and Dyothelitism was reinstated, never to be challenged again.

There can be no doubt that at its outset Monotheletism was a joint project of emperor and patriarch, with Sergius acting as theological adviser to Heraclius. However, in the subsequent years the initiative appears increasingly to have lain with the emperors. The *Typos* was a political document, which made a travesty of the literature hitherto produced in defence of Monotheletism, and the decision of Constantine IV to go over to Dyothelitism put the Constantinopolitan church in an even more awkward position since it required the removal from the diptychs of the patriarchs Sergius, Pyrrhus and Paul II. Moreover, one gets the impression that the representatives of the church had become utterly spineless. When Paul II agreed to promulgate the *Typos*, he might have been motivated by a genuine wish for peace. However, such an explanation is no longer possible for his successors.

When Constantine IV decided to turn his back on Monotheletism, he got rid of Theodore, the patriarch of the time, who had until then represented the official line. However, in 686, five years after the Sixth Ecumenical Council, Theodore managed to recover his lost see, now to act as the upholder of the new orthodoxy.³⁶ In 711 when Monotheletism was reinstated Patriarch Cyrus was sent packing but his successor John managed to hang on to his see when Philippicus was deposed two years later although this meant that he had to return to Dyothelitism.³⁷ The behaviour of the patriarchs is less surprising when we consider that the episcopate behaved in like fashion. As Maximus gleefully pointed out the bishops had unanimously accepted first the *Ekthesis* and then the *Typos*.³⁸ In 681 the majority of the bishops waited until they could see which way the wind was blowing and then went over to Dyothelitism.³⁹ This is in stark contrast to the stance of Patriarch Macarius from Antioch,

34 Haldon, *Seventh Century*, pp. 313–317.

35 Haldon, *Seventh Century*, pp. 320–322.

36 Haldon, *Seventh Century*, p. 315.

37 Haldon, *Seventh Century*, p. 322.

38 P. Allen and B. Neil, *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions. Documents from Exile* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford, 2003), p. 60.

39 W. Brandes, "Orthodoxy and heresy in the seventh century: prosopographical observations on monotheletism," in: *Fifty years of prosopography. The Later Roman Empire and beyond*, ed. A. Cameron (Proceedings of the British Academy, 118), Oxford, 2003), pp. 103–118, esp. pp. 109–112; Haldon, *Seventh Century*, p. 315.

by then under Muslim rule, who defended the Monothelete cause and was deposed and punished for his efforts. The pattern repeated itself in 711 and 713 when the bishops, among them Germanus of Cyzicus, the later patriarch, and Andrew of Crete, first accepted Monotheletism and then returned to Dyothelitism.⁴⁰

This extraordinary flexibility can only be properly understood when one considers the social context. The history of the seventh and eighth centuries is very poorly documented but we have one particular source, which has not yet been exploited: the catalogues of patriarchs of Constantinople. These texts contain information about the previous careers of individual patriarchs. When we look at the period from the reign of Heraclius to the reign of Leo III we can see a clear pattern. When emperors had to find a new patriarch they almost invariably picked a member of the patriarchal clergy.⁴¹ Only one ruler, the notoriously wayward Justinian II, deviated from this custom by choosing once a lay bureaucrat and once a monk.⁴² Lack of evidence precludes us from drawing similar conclusions about the metropolitan sees but it is surely significant that the only two prelates about whose background we have some information, Germanus of Cyzicus and Andrew of Crete, had also been clerics at St Sophia.⁴³

This was not a new development. As we have seen patriarchal clerics had gone on to become patriarchs and metropolitans already in the sixth century. However, it may well be that the changed political circumstances sped up this process. Because of the frequent Arab incursions in Asia Minor it was vital for the emperors that the local representatives of the church were loyal to them. What better way to achieve this aim than to choose candidates from a group that had a Constantinopolitan outlook? Such a hypothesis would go a long way towards explaining why within the heartlands of the empire there were no centres of local resistance first to the Monothelete and then to the Dyothelite cause.

Not all patriarchal clerics were Constantinopolitans by birth. Two patriarchs, Sergius and George I, are said to have been of Syrian descent, the poet George may have hailed from Antioch in Pisidia, and Andrew of Crete had come from Palestine.⁴⁴ However, there can be no doubt that their tenure at St Sophia had

40 Haldon, *Seventh Century*, p. 322.

41 Pyrrhus was an abbot but as overseer of the monasteries also held a patriarchal office, cf. *Catalogues of Patriarchs*, ed. Fischer, p. 288, 18–21.

42 *Catalogues of Patriarchs*, ed. Fischer, pp. 289.21; 290.3–4.

43 For Germanus cf. D. Stein, “Germanos I,” in: *Die Patriarchen der ikonoklastischen Zeit*, ed. R.J. Lilie (Berliner Byzantinische Studien, 5), Berlin, 1999, pp. 5–21, esp. p. 7; for Andrew see M.-F. Auzépy, “La carrière d’André de Crète,” *BZ*, 88 (1995), pp. 1–12.

44 A. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, London, 2005, esp. pp. 7–8.

a strong effect on them. They not only held high administrative offices at the great churches of the capital but also were often in charge of charitable institutions such as hospices and old people's homes.⁴⁵ The self-image of these men is more difficult to establish. John IV engaged in such strenuous ascetic practices that he was given the sobriquet "the Faster".⁴⁶ However, the *Life* of Andrew gives the impression that charity was of greater importance, which suggests that the management of charitable institutions not only had a practical but also an ideological component.⁴⁷ In addition, education may also have played an important role. Both Germanus and Andrew were consummate stylists at a time when good rhetorical instruction was harder and harder to come by. This may well have been part of the patriarchal clerics' bid for episcopal office because it disqualified both monks and provincials who had no access to higher education.

As a group the patriarchal clergy was clearly highly successful because it preserved its monopoly over ecclesiastical appointments through all doctrinal changes. When Constantine IV decided to abandon Monotheletism he replaced Patriarch Theodore I with another cleric of St Sophia, George I, who was prepared to do his bidding, and Philippicus did the same when he reverted to Monotheletism. Even more significant is the willingness of emperors to grant a second tenure to patriarchs that had been deposed by their predecessors. This not only happened in the case of Theodore I but also in the case of Pyrrhus who had been ousted for political reasons and had then for a time made common cause with the emperor's Dyothelite enemies.⁴⁸ This suggests that both men could count on a network of support within the small elite of the capital. However, one must also ask how the patriarchal clerics justified their unprincipled behaviour. It could be argued that due to their spatial and ideological proximity to the palace they had been socialised into submission and were thus in no position to withstand the lofty claims of emperors such as Constans II and Constantine IV that their office had a sacral character and

45 The evidence of the catalogues is late but the pattern is confirmed by the only known patriarchal cleric who did not enter the ranks of the episcopate, the poet George of Pisidia, who in the titles of his works is referred to as *chartophylax*, *rephendarios*, *skeuophylax* or *gerokomos*, cf. J. Darrouzès, *Recherches sur les ophphikia de l'Église Byzantine*, Paris, 1970, p. 23.

46 *Catalogues of Patriarchs*, ed. Fischer, p. 288.10.

47 Nicetas, *Life of Andrew* 5, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta hierosolymitikes stachyologias*, v, Jerusalem, 1888, pp. 174–175. Andrew's Constantinopolitan outlook is obvious from his attempt to turn his see into a miniature Constantinople through foundation of a Blachernae church and a hospice, cf. *Life of Andrew* 7, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, p. 176.

48 Haldon, *Seventh Century*, pp. 306–308.

that they were in direct communion with Christ.⁴⁹ One may wonder, however, whether they did not also have other sources of legitimisation, above all their pastoral role. The Council in Trullo shows that here the patriarch and the episcopate collaborated with the emperor in an attempt to stamp out practices that were considered immoral or pagan.⁵⁰

Whereas Monotheletism had its roots in the Late Antique Christological discourse the Council in Trullo pointed towards the future. One of the matters the bishops dealt with was the question of what constituted proper religious art.⁵¹ This concern resurfaced in the reign of Emperor Leo III who came to the conclusion that the devotion offered to images of Christ and the saints was idolatrous. At the Council in Trullo emperor and patriarch had acted in unison. By contrast, Leo III did not manage to win over his patriarch, Germanus, to the new Iconoclast doctrine. In 730 when Leo decided to impose his views on the church Germanus refused to sign the document drawn up for this purpose and abdicated instead.⁵² However, this does not necessarily mean that the emperor had no support among the clergy. Some years earlier, Anatolian bishops such as Constantine of Nakoleia had started agitating against the veneration of icons, and despite a lack of sound evidence it seems likely that the emperor was in contact with these men.⁵³ Opposition was not entirely lacking: John of Damascus, another Palestinian monk, refuted the new doctrine in several treatises, and the pope not only refused to sign the imperial document but also convoked a synod against the new policy.⁵⁴ However, there was no joining of forces as had been the case with Maximus and Pope Martin, a fact that is undoubtedly largely due to the increased political fragmentation of the Mediterranean world.

When in 754 Leo's son Constantine V decided to convene the Council of Hieria in order to put the new doctrine on a sounder footing he could rely on the support of several metropolitans.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, he may have been less happy with the old settlement because he picked Constantine, a monk and former bishop of the Anatolian town of Syliaion, to become the next

49 D. Olster, "Ideological Transformation and the Evolution of Imperial Presentation in the Wake of Islam's Victory," in: D. Thomas, *The encounter of Eastern Christianity with early Islam*, ed. E. Grypeou, M. N. Swanson, (The history of Christian-Muslim Relations, 5), Leiden, 2006, pp. 45–71.

50 Haldon, *Seventh Century*, pp. 317–320.

51 L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, Cambridge, 2010, p. 63.

52 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 119–127.

53 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 94–98.

54 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 172–173.

55 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*. p. 197, note 181.

patriarch.⁵⁶ However, this experiment ended in disaster. The new patriarch became embroiled in a plot against the emperor, which led to his exile, public humiliation, and execution.⁵⁷ Constantine's next choice was again thoroughly traditional even though the appointment may not have been strictly canonical since the emperor failed to ask the synod to nominate three candidates. The new patriarch Nicetas "the Slav" had been head-priest of the Holy Apostles, *skeuophylax* of the Chalkoprateia, *ekdikos* of St Sophia and patriarchal overseer of monasteries.⁵⁸ Unfortunately evidence for the backgrounds of metropolitans is even scarcer than in the previous period. However, in the mid-eighth century the see of Ephesus was occupied by Theodosius, the son of Emperor Tiberius II Apsimar (698–705), which suggests that the old pattern continued.⁵⁹ In any case, it seems unlikely that Constantine V favoured the appointment of monks although his son Leo IV may have done so.⁶⁰

3 The Late Eighth and Early Ninth Centuries

The patriarchate of Nicetas the Slav marks the end of an era. Little is known about his successor, Paul of Cyprus, apart from the fact that he was not a monk.⁶¹ The real break came in 784 when Empress Irene, the widow of Leo IV,

56 *Catalogues of Patriarchs*, ed. Fischer, p. 290.10–12. However, the break with tradition may not have been as radical as it seems. It is entirely possible that Constantine had originally come from the capital, just as his successor in the first half of the ninth century, see Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 136.

57 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 238–239. D. Afinogenov, "Konstantinopolis episkopon echei: The rise of the patriarchal power in Byzantium from Nicaenum II to Epanagoga, I: From Nicaenum II to the second outbreak of Iconoclasm," *Erytheia*, 15 (1994), pp. 45–66, esp. pp. 45–46, argues that the humiliation of Patriarch Constantine was a deliberate move to discredit the church since his predecessor Anastasius had also been publicly humiliated. Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 160, dismiss this argument because they consider the story of Anastasius' humiliation to be a later fabrication. The two authors follow the lead of Paul Speck who claimed that the majority of sources for the Iconoclast period were unreliable, see P. Speck, *Artabasdos, der rechtgläubige Vorkämpfer der göttlichen Lehren* (Poikila Byzantina, 2), Bonn, 1981, pp. 38–39. Speck's method to identify modifications and interpolations in the text, however, is not necessarily sound since it is based on subjective criteria for what should appear in a text.

58 *Catalogues of Patriarchs*, ed. Fischer, p. 290.13–15. He can therefore not have been an outsider as Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 656, claim.

59 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 191.

60 There is in any case not much evidence for metropolitans with a monastic background, contrary to the opinion of A. Sterk, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Mass., 2004, pp. 219–221.

61 *Catalogues of Patriarchs*, ed. Fischer, p. 290.16–18.

chose Tarasius, the head of the imperial chancery (*protasekretis*), as the next patriarch. Since Tarasius was a layman, he had to be ordained in rapid succession as lector, deacon and priest in order to be eligible for the post.⁶² This procedure was a flagrant breach of canon law, which stipulated lengthy intervals between the various ordinations. Moreover, it was virtually unprecedented. In the past only the notoriously idiosyncratic Justinian II had once elevated a layman to the rank of patriarch. Nevertheless, Tarasius' appointment set a precedent. Irene's successors, Nicephorus I and Leo V, also entrusted the leadership of the church to their *protasekretis*, Nicephorus and Theodotus.⁶³ This does not mean that the church became secularised since Tarasius and Nicephorus at least took their roles very seriously. Indeed, one should not emphasise the difference between clerics and lay bureaucrats too much. Both groups belonged to the same tiny elite, had received the same education and were equally interested in religious issues.⁶⁴

Even so the effect of the new policy on the clerical establishment was considerable. That Irene sidelined the synod was nothing new. For centuries the metropolitans had been confronted with emperors who rode roughshod over their traditional right to propose three candidates. Only the *modus operandi* had changed. Whereas her father-in-law had simply appointed his patriarchs, relying on the sacredness of the imperial office, Irene had Tarasius chosen by popular acclaim, having recourse instead to the notion of a *plebs sacra*.⁶⁵ What was new, however, was Irene's refusal to continue the traditional policy of choosing patriarchs from among patriarchal clerics or bishops who had once served at St Sophia.⁶⁶ It meant that the top job was now out of reach of this group. What brought about the change was without doubt a combination of political and religious factors. Irene's rule met with considerable opposition and her plan to abolish Iconoclasm was a radical challenge to long-standing religious policy. Under these circumstances she had to be sure that the person who was to impose the new orthodoxy on the church was absolutely loyal to

62 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 263–265.

63 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 360, 372.

64 One of the most prolific authors of encomia of saints in this period was the *vestitor* Cosmas, cf. H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, xii.2.1), Munich, 1959, p. 502.

65 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 264. Afinogenov, "Konstantinoupolis episkopon echei, I," p. 47, does not see such a continuity. For him the popular acclamation was the first sign of a development that led to greater independence of the church. Interestingly, the direct appointment of a cleric by a layman was outlawed at Nicaenum II, see Afinogenov, "Konstantinoupolis episkopon echei, I," p. 50.

66 Cf. Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 656, about Constantine's uncanonical selection of Constantine of Syliaion and Nicetas the Slav.

her and shared her views.⁶⁷ From her choice of Tarasius it is clear that in her eyes no bishop or patriarchal cleric met these criteria.

The ecclesiastical establishment seems to have acquiesced in this coup. Only when empress and patriarch decided to convoke a council in order to sanction the veneration of sacred images did they begin to hold meetings. Tarasius met this challenge by stating that "Constantinople has a bishop" and claiming that any activity of the episcopate not authorised by him constituted a breach of canon law.⁶⁸ What we have here is clearly a clash between the patriarch and the synod, which showed an astonishingly high degree of cohesion. The bishops behaved as if the office of patriarch were vacant in which case canon law declared them to be the true representatives of the church. Their justification was undoubtedly that Tarasius' appointment had not conformed to canonical procedure and that he planned to introduce a heresy. This incident is highly significant because it is the first recorded case of a synod openly defying both patriarch and emperor.⁶⁹ The involvement of laymen and in particular of soldiers shows that it had a political dimension. The conspirators tried to force Irene to change her policies or even bring about a regime change. Unsurprisingly, it was political pressure, rather than debate, that ended the conflict. Faced with the possibility of losing their sees the bishops followed their old instincts and succumbed to imperial authority.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, there are clear signs that the relationship between state and church was starting to change. Whereas the emperors of the Heraclian dynasty and Constantine v had played prominent roles at church councils Irene let Tarasius dominate the proceedings of Nicaea II.⁷¹ This strategy was evidently meant to bolster Tarasius' credentials within the church. However, it also strengthened the view that defining doctrine was the prerogative of patriarchs and bishops.⁷² When Nicephorus learnt that Leo v intended to reintroduce Iconoclasm, he did not merely raise objections but won the support of metropolitans and abbots.⁷³ The very fact that he reacted in this manner is significant even though in the end most bishops gave in to imperial pressure.

67 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 264.

68 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 269, and Afinogenov, "Konstantinoupolis episkopon echei, I," p. 48, where the strength of the opposition is downplayed.

69 The closest parallel would be the sixth-century patriarch Anthimus of Trebizond who like Tarasius lapsed into heresy and met with the resistance of the ecclesiastical establishment. However, in Anthimus' case there was no imperial support that could have led the church of Constantinople into the Monophysite camp.

70 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 270.

71 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 271.

72 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 368.

73 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 369.

Compared with their predecessors who had risen through the ranks Tarasius, Nicephorus and Theodotus were at a distinct disadvantage. They may have known many clerics – after all, Constantinople was a small place – but they had no established network of allies on which they could draw. Thus, they had to develop new strategies in order to cement their position. Tarasius appointed to the important sees of Nicomedia and Synada two former subordinates in the imperial administration of whose loyalty he could be assured. Significantly, however, he only took this step after they had spent several years in a monastery that he had founded earlier.⁷⁴ Indeed, Tarasius generally seems to have shown a preference for monks.⁷⁵ Even before the Council of Nicaea Euthymius, a new arrival from Eastern Anatolia, was appointed metropolitan of Sardes, and Plato, the abbot of Sakkoudion, was offered the see of Nicomedia. This policy appears to have had the backing of Irene who was equally keen to create a counterbalance to the old ecclesiastical elite.⁷⁶

One of the results of this policy was a growing assertiveness of the monks. Euthymius of Sardes composed a treatise about the election of metropolitans in which he lets the patriarch announce to the synod that the new candidate should be chosen from among hermits, coenobitic monks, patriarchal clerics and laypeople.⁷⁷ This sequence is highly suggestive because the clerics who were traditionally given these positions are mentioned only in third place and appear little better than people who are not ordained at all. Theodore of Stoudios, the nephew of Plato, not only demanded from Emperor Nicephorus I that Tarasius' successor should not be a layman but also recommended the participation of hermits and abbots in the selection process and voiced a strong preference for a monastic candidate.⁷⁸ All these initiatives had one aim, the complete monasticisation of the church. In the new system the patriarchal clerics would not only have been sidelined but would have been replaced by monks as well.

74 S. Efthymiades, *The Life of Patriarch Tarasios by Ignatius the Deacon* (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs, 4), Aldershot, 1998, pp. 12–13.

75 This does not mean that all monks were on Tarasius' side. There was a monastic faction that criticised him for being too lenient and demanded that Iconoclast and simoniac bishops be deposed. M.-F. Auzépy, "La place des moines à Nicée II (787)," *Byzantion*, 58 (1988), pp. 5–21, argues that these monks were invited to the Council of Nicaea in order to ensure their consent to the new status quo.

76 B. Moulet, *Évêques, pouvoir et société à Byzance (VIII^e–XI^e siècle)*, Paris, 2011, pp. 228–229.

77 Euthymius of Sardes, *Memorandum*, ed. J. Darrouzès, *Documents inédits d'ecclésiologie byzantine* (Archives de l'Orient Chrétien, 10), Paris, 1966, pp. 108–114, esp. 110.15–18. Cf. Afinogenov, "Konstantinoupolis episkopon echei, I," p. 64.

78 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 360.

Emperor Nicephorus I thwarted these plans with the appointment of his *protasekretis* Nicephorus. Unfortunately, we do not know much about Nicephorus' recruitment policy. We can be sure that he did not give sees to intransigent monks but whether he preferred more moderate monks, laymen or patriarchal deacons can no longer be decided. The composition of the last group may have changed considerably during the patriarchate of Tarasius. However, this did not lead to the disappearance of old patterns as the example of Ignatius the Deacon shows. Following the footsteps of his brother, Ignatius entered the patriarchal household under Tarasius, became a member of the clergy of St Sophia under Nicephorus, and received the see of Nicaea during the Second Iconoclasm. Ideologically flexible, highly cultured and a capable administrator, Ignatius stands in a direct line with the patriarchal deacons of the previous centuries.⁷⁹

Decisions about recruitment were not made in a vacuum. They must be seen against the background of controversies about the relationship between emperor and church. The three former *protasekretis* pledged their loyalty to every new emperor even when that emperor had come to power through a putsch. Moreover, they did not take the moral high ground. Tarasius condoned the adulterous marriage of Constantine VI in return for a token penance;⁸⁰ Nicephorus supported his master's policy to rehabilitate Constantine;⁸¹ and Theodotus crowned Michael II although he had just murdered his predecessor.⁸² In this they did not differ from their clerical predecessors. This continuity stems from the fact that both the secular and the ecclesiastical elites were focused on the emperor. Indeed, when the lay patriarchs acted as executors of the imperial will they could count on the bishops who had risen through the ranks. Seemingly without difficulties, Nicephorus could persuade a synod to declare that in matrimonial matters canon law had to give way to the wishes of emperors.⁸³

79 See G. Makris, *Ignatios Diakonos und die Vita des Hl. Gregorios Dekapolites* (Byzantinisches Archiv, 17), Stuttgart – Leipzig, 1997, pp. 3–22.

80 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 290. Afinogenov, "Konstantinopolis episkopon echei, I," pp. 52–53, rejects the notion that Tarasius was spineless in the face of imperial pressure.

81 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 360.

82 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 385.

83 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 360. Afinogenov, "Konstantinopolis episkopon echei, I," pp. 60–61, rejects this interpretation.

Such flexibility raised the ire of the abbot Theodore of Stoudios.⁸⁴ Theodore was a member of the elite but had freed himself from the traditional elite mentality. Insisting on proper punishment for Constantine VI and those involved in the scandal he twice broke communion with the patriarch and attacked the emperor, which led to his imprisonment and exile.⁸⁵ This did not mean that Theodore always kept a distance from the centre of power. He supported Irene's putsch against her own son, and took the side of Michael I after the death of Nicephorus I.⁸⁶ However, he was only prepared to ally with emperors who accepted his rigorist position. Theodore and his followers clearly regarded themselves as the true church, which they saw constituted by those who strictly adhered to the canons. Yet, despite their good connections their impact seems to have been limited. Their stance was considered excessive even in monastic circles and support in the synod was almost entirely lacking. The only known dissenter was Theodore's brother Joseph who had become metropolitan of Salonika.⁸⁷ Dealing with him posed no difficulty to the patriarch.

This outcome was in part due to the failure of hard-line monks to infiltrate the episcopate. However, Tarasius' recruitment of metropolitans with a monastic background did have an impact on church politics. At Nicaea II Tarasius had been able to win over all Iconoclast metropolitans. By contrast, Leo V was confronted with the resistance not only of the patriarch and some abbots but also of the ex-monks within the synod.⁸⁸ Under the more lenient rule of Michael II this group attempted to organise itself. However, internal frictions robbed it of much of its impact, and no steps were taken to create a full-blown schismatic church.⁸⁹ Moreover, they were probably a small minority. Indeed, Leo V does not seem to have had any difficulties in winning over enough metropolitans to constitute a synod, which then acted strictly according to canon law, three times summoning Patriarch Nicephorus and deposing him when he did not heed the call. All Nicephorus could do was anathematise them for having plotted against their superior.⁹⁰

84 The discussion necessarily focuses on the two Iconophile patriarchs because so little is known about their Iconoclast successors. However, one should not rule out *a priori* that Theodotus was criticised by other Iconoclasts for his accommodating stance.

85 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 290, 360.

86 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 291, 362.

87 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 360.

88 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 378; D. Afinogenov, "Konstantinoupolis episkopon echei, II: From the second outbreak of iconoclasm to the death of Methodius," *Erytheia*, 17 (1996), pp. 43–71, esp. p. 48.

89 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 379.

90 Afinogenov, "Konstantinoupolis episkopon echei, II," pp. 53–54.

4 The Late Ninth and Tenth Centuries

The next four patriarchs were former abbots although their profiles were very different. Anthony had served as a provincial bishop, John the Grammarian had been a famous teacher, Methodius had once been a member of the entourage of Patriarch Nicephorus, and Ignatius was the son of a former emperor.⁹¹ Due to the scarcity of the evidence we know almost nothing about the situation of the church under the Iconoclasts Anthony and John and are very badly informed about the patriarchates of their Iconophile successors. Methodius was entrusted by Empress Theodora, the widow of the last Iconoclast ruler Theophilus, with the task of re-establishing icon worship.⁹² He seems to have been accepted by the synod but soon turned against the ecclesiastical establishment.⁹³ Unlike Tarasius, he rejected the validity of the ordinations of his heretical predecessors. As a result, metropolitans who had come to office before 787 or between 815 and 843 were deposed and bishops, priests and deacons who owed their positions directly or indirectly to these metropolitans also lost their jobs.⁹⁴ The reason for the strict application of canon law was without doubt the fact that the metropolitans won over by Tarasius had in 815 again defected from the Iconophile cause. This was an unprecedented assault on the ecclesiastical establishment. The official church now consisted of little more than the patriarch himself. Methodius was only able to take these measures because he had the support of the secular power. The sources give the impression that there was no resistance but unfortunately do not inform us whether the acquiescence of the deposed prelates was due to material concessions or to fear of reprisals.

Methodius had to build up a church almost from scratch. Since the patriarchal clergy was compromised, he was hard put to it to find suitable candidates. His favourite recruits were monks with impeccable Iconophile credentials but their number was limited so that he was forced to ordain people without proper qualifications, very likely including laymen.⁹⁵ Surprisingly, these measures do not seem to have had any noticeable long-term effects on the church as an

91 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 369, 393, 397, 425.

92 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 448–449.

93 Afinogenov, “Konstantinoupolis episkopon echei, II,” p. 59, thinks that Methodius was not the candidate of Empress Theodora but simply chosen because he was the most distinguished cleric of the time.

94 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, p. 450. Afinogenov, “The Great Purge of 843: A Re-Examination,” in: *Leimon. Studies Presented to Lennart Rydén on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. J. Rosenqvist, Uppsala, 1996, pp. 79–91, even thinks that all clerics who had accepted Iconoclasm in 815 lost their jobs.

95 Brubaker and Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 450–451.

institution. Only a few years later we see patriarchal deacons again appointed to metropolitan sees. What is more, their profile resembles that of Ignatius the Deacon. Unfortunately, we have no information that would elucidate the processes, which led to this outcome.

Methodius's successor, Ignatius, was also appointed by Theodora and showed great loyalty to her. When Theodora was elbowed out by her brother Bardas, Ignatius accused Bardas of sexual misconduct and refused to let him into St Sophia.⁹⁶ Such behaviour was without precedent in Byzantium and is in stark contrast with the accommodating stance of earlier patriarchs. Bardas forced Ignatius to resign and chose a layman, the *protasekretis* Photius, as his successor.⁹⁷ This was a repetition of Irene's actions, and it set in train a strikingly similar sequence of events. After some dithering a substantial part of the synod took action. They gathered in a church and acted as if the patriarchal see were vacant. Following strict canonical procedure, they proposed to the rulers three candidates of their own.⁹⁸ Here we thus have another case of a synod declaring itself to be the true church and defying the emperor and his lay patriarch. Thanks to more plentiful source material we know in this case that the resistance was of orchestrated by a small group of Ignatius' confidants, chief among them Stylianos of Neocaesarea and Metrophanes of Smyrna, who persuaded their less dedicated colleagues to follow their lead.⁹⁹ Here, too, solidarity frayed quickly once the rulers intervened. The majority of the metropolitans went over to Photius whereas the hard-liners were exiled.¹⁰⁰

In the following years Photius took steps to secure his position. By appointing people he could trust to the sees that the exiles had vacated, he built up a following within the synod.¹⁰¹ Moreover, in a bid to gain legitimacy he shifted the emphasis from ecclesiology to doctrine, making the most of the fact that he was related to Tarasius and that together with his parents, he had suffered persecution when he was a boy. Indeed, he even planned to hold a second council about the images, which would have made it clear to everybody that he was a Tarasius redivivus.¹⁰²

96 F. Dvornik, *The Photian Schism. History and Legend*, Cambridge, 1948, esp. pp. 36–38.

97 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 39–69. In the following I am relying on the evidence that Dvornik presents, without accepting his simplistic juxtaposition of two groups of “moderates” and “rigorists”. For a critique of Dvornik's interpretative framework see Afinogenov, “The Great Purge of 843,” p. 79.

98 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, p. 44.

99 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, p. 45.

100 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 57–60.

101 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, p. 63.

102 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, p. 74. Ignatius did not have such credentials.

Despite all this, the mainstay of Photius' power remained the support of the rulers. Once he lost this support he was forced to step down. The story of his fall can only be properly understood when we add a further dimension, the papacy. The papacy had long considered itself the final arbiter of all things ecclesiastic. However, after the time of Maximus the popes had not been major players in Byzantine politics. Indeed, during Iconoclasm they were considered heretics by state and church. After 847, the situation changed quite dramatically. When Ignatius deposed several metropolitans, they appealed to Rome on the strength of a canon that gave every cleric this right. Astonishingly Ignatius seems to have accepted that the pope could sit in judgement over him although he did his best to obstruct the legal process.¹⁰³ When Photius became patriarch it was the supporters of Ignatius that turned to Rome. Photius, however, managed to outwit Pope Nicholas. He permitted the papal legates to judge the case but made sure that the verdict they passed was in his favour.¹⁰⁴ The pope fumed but could not do much because Photius had the support of Bardas. Locked in a fierce struggle about the Christianisation of Bulgaria he became openly critical of Nicholas' conduct.¹⁰⁵ The situation changed only when Basil I who had murdered his predecessor decided that papal support would give his reign some legitimacy. A ruling of the pope led to the deposition of Photius and the reinstatement of Ignatius.¹⁰⁶

However, this was not the end of the story. The pope demanded that canonical law be followed to the letter, just as his predecessor had done in the sixth century when the Acacian schism was brought to a close. Since Photius had not been a legitimate patriarch all ordinations that could be traced back to him were declared null and void. Ignatius staffed patriarchate and synod with his followers but as their numbers were not sufficient, he had to recruit laymen as well.¹⁰⁷ This was clearly a re-run of the events that had taken place during Methodius' patriarchate but with the difference that the policy was now forced on the patriarch who did his best to mitigate its effects. Ignatius' biggest problem was the great number of deposed metropolitans who continued to be loyal to Photius. Since they did not desist from officiating a rival church had come into existence.¹⁰⁸ Basil I was clearly unhappy with this outcome but tolerated the situation since Photius assured him of his loyalty.¹⁰⁹ After Ignatius' death Basil then reinstated Photius, a highly unusual scenario in Byzantium, where

103 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 29–32.

104 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 88–90.

105 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 91–131.

106 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 136–142.

107 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 144–147.

108 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 161–162.

109 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 162–167.

patriarchs normally only returned to power after a regime change. Ignatius' appointments had to hand over their sees to their Photian predecessors but a very generous deal made sure that the majority of them did not go into opposition.¹¹⁰

This was a heavy blow to the popes. Not only had a schismatic returned to his office but they were also deprived of a foothold in the Byzantine church. In the following half century popes only made a showing when emperors asked them for support against recalcitrant patriarchs or synods. After that date they disappeared entirely from the scene.

The conflicts of the ninth century involved not only patriarchs, synods, popes and emperors. Monks continued to play an important role. We have seen that Theodore of Stoudios had broken off communion with Tarasius and Nicephorus because of their leniency towards the emperors. This conflict resurfaced in 843 when Theodore's successors fell out with Methodius because they would not accept Tarasius and Nicephorus as legitimate patriarchs.¹¹¹ Under Ignatius a reconciliation was achieved but when Photius became patriarch the abbot of Stoudios resigned in protest.¹¹² The Stoudite elite welcomed the reinstatement of Ignatius, and at least some of them continued to resist Photius even during his second patriarchate. Only at the end of the century does a definite reconciliation seem to have been achieved.¹¹³ The monks of Stoudios clearly possessed a collective identity as champions of a strict application of canon law, which was passed down from one generation to the next. For a long time, however, they appear to have been an isolated group. This situation changed only after Ignatius' forced resignation when other abbots in the capital and in the provinces refused to enter into communion with Photius.¹¹⁴ These men provided support for Ignatius' followers among the metropolitans, and probably made it possible for the opposition movement to survive after Photius had purged the synod. Only during Photius' second patriarchate did the solidarity crumble.

The monks were motivated by concerns about the autonomy of the church but it may well also be the case that they considered the former abbot Ignatius to be one of their own. Unfortunately, we know nothing about Ignatius' recruitment policy. Therefore, it is impossible to say whether he tried to monasticise the church. Of course, it should not be thought that the monastic milieu

110 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, p. 192.

111 Afinogenov, "Konstantinoupolis episkopon echei, II," pp. 62–70.

112 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, p. 64.

113 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 238, 260.

114 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 65–66.

was uniform. Photius' correspondence shows that he counted monks among his friends.¹¹⁵

In some respects, the end of the ninth century constituted a watershed. Patriarch Anthony Kauleas not only brought the Ignatian schism to a conclusion but was also the last patriarch who emphasised his Iconophile credentials.¹¹⁶ His successor Nicholas, another lay bureaucrat and a relative of Photius, was confronted with an entirely new problem.¹¹⁷ Emperor Leo VI's attempts to father a son and thus perpetuate the dynasty were dogged by ill-fortune. After marriages with three women had not brought the desired result, he took a lover who finally bore him a son. Nicholas bent over backwards to accommodate the emperor's needs but finally made a stand when Leo married his lover and crowned her empress. This led to a tangled web of intrigues and counter-intrigues that involved both the secular and the ecclesiastical establishment. Eventually the emperor was able to get rid of Nicholas and instate in his stead the monk Euthymius.¹¹⁸ What cost Nicholas his post was his inability to secure the loyalty of the synod. Due to the inconsistency of his policy, he lost the support of the hardliners and could not prevent the defection of the opportunists. When Leo died, his brother Alexander recalled Nicholas, and when Alexander died in turn Nicholas played a major role in the regency council for Leo's young son Constantine.¹¹⁹ Nicholas' last achievement was a formal reconciliation with the supporters of Euthymius although not everybody signed up to the deal.¹²⁰

One outcome of the conflict was a loss of credibility of the ecclesiastical establishment. In a letter to a metropolitan, Romanus I tells the addressee that he had compromised on the matter of the Tetragamy instead of doing the honourable thing and breaking off communion with the official church and that he was therefore in no position to refuse his demand to bend the rules once

115 Cf. e.g. Photius, *Letter 20*, ed. B. Laourdas and L. G. Westerink, *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, I, Leipzig, 1983, p. 71.

116 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, p. 260, cf. M.-F. Auzépy, *L'hagiographie et l'iconoclasme byzantin. Le cas de la Vie d'Étienne le Jeune* (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs, 5), Aldershot, 1999, pp. 192–193.

117 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 248–249.

118 P. Karlin-Hayter, « Le synode à Constantinople de 886 à 912 et le rôle de Nicholas le Mystique dans l'affaire de la tétragamie, » *JÖB*, 19 (1970), pp. 59–101.

119 S. Wahlgren, «The return of Nicholas I Mystikos to the patriarchate: the evidence of the 'Chronicle of the Logothete' once more,» *Classica et mediaevalia*, 52 (2001), pp. 217–222.

120 N. Oikonomides, «Leo VI and the Narthex Mosaic of Saint Sophia,» *DOP*, 30 (1976), pp. 151–172.

again.¹²¹ The role of the monks in all this is not clear. The maverick Nicetas David, an intellectual who had turned hermit, managed to fall out with all parties but it is difficult to establish how much support he had.¹²²

The discussion so far has shown that after the end of the First Iconoclasm a distinct pattern had come into existence. Emperors chose as patriarchs either lay bureaucrats or monks. However, in the second half of the ninth and in the early tenth century a third option makes its appearance. Now sons of emperors become patriarchs. This option was most likely the brainchild of Photius who quite exceptionally wished to have a say in the choice of his successor. In his second patriarchate Photius developed an ecclesiological position that stressed the equivalence of emperor and patriarch.¹²³ Thus it was not surprising that he did not wish the emperor to appoint another layman. Nor would he have wanted a monk after his experience with the Ignatian faction. Thus, he fell back on the traditional alternative, the choice of a patriarchal cleric. However, he was well aware that the emperor did not want a patriarch who might have too cosy relations with the ecclesiastical establishment. Therefore, he proposed to groom Basil's younger son Stephen for the job. Stephen became a regular patriarchal cleric and was to succeed Photius after his death. These well-laid plans, however, came to nothing since Basil's son Leo VI deposed Photius and made Stephen prematurely patriarch.¹²⁴ Moreover, Stephen seems to have been a rather undistinguished incumbent. The next patriarchs were again a monk and a layman.

Nevertheless, the strategy was employed one more time, by Romanus I Lekapenos who as an interloper sought to secure the position of his family. Romanus decided that his son Theophylact should enter the church and in due course become patriarch. This decision had unexpected results. Initially Theophylact was too young to fulfil his duties and even after he had grown

121 Theodore Daphnopates, *Letter 2*, to Anastasius of Heraclea, ed. J. Darrouzès and L.G. Westerink, *Théodore Daphnopatès. Correspondance*, Paris, 1978, p. 43.14–18.

122 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, p. 276. In a fragmentary *Life* of Nicetas David Leo VI is made to say that his subjects can only be saved through his intercession, cf. B. Flusin, "Un fragment inédit de la *vie d'Euthyme le patriarche*?" *Travaux et Mémoires*, 9 (1985), pp. 111–131, esp. pp. 125–126.43–51. If there is any truth to this, it would be an isolated case. More typical was Romanus' attitude who did not even seek to justify his meddling in the affairs of the church, cf. the previous footnote.

123 J. Scharf, "Photios and die Epanagoge," *BZ*, 49 (1956), pp. 385–400.

124 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 245–248. The speech in which the emperor recommended his brother to the synod gives the impression that the metropolitans were not enthused about the emperor's choice. Cf. Grosdidier de Matons, "Trois études sur Léon VI," *TM*, 5 (1973), pp. 181–242, esp. Pp. 201–207.

up he showed very little interest in the running of the church.¹²⁵ As a consequence the metropolitan Anastasius of Heraclea and his side-kick Theodore, a high patriarchal official and future metropolitan of Cyzicus, took over the task of making appointments and browbeat the other members of the synod into submission.¹²⁶ Not content with using Theophylact as a figurehead they tried to rewrite the rulebook of the church. In a document, the so-called *citatorium*, they sought to prove that according to canon law the appointment of metropolitans was the prerogative not of patriarchs but of the synod.¹²⁷ The background for this unprecedented development was the rise in power of the patriarchal deacons. The letter collections of metropolitans that are such a typical feature of the period reveal that the most important sees were in their hands.¹²⁸ The new regime is likely to have reinforced this trend because the men in charge will have chosen old friends for the available jobs in preference to monks and laymen. What is difficult to establish is the role of the emperor in all this. If Romanus I had intended to rule the church through his son his plans had clearly come to nothing. However, there is no sign that he tried to prevent the takeover of the metropolitans. Indeed, he even made Anastasius *oikonomos* of St Sophia.¹²⁹ This suggests that he had come to some sort of agreement with them that effectively sidelined Theophylact.¹³⁰

That this alternative model of church government did not become entrenched is the achievement of the next patriarch, Polyeuctus, a monk with close connections to the family of Photius, who was appointed by Constantine VII. Polyeuctus was fiercely determined not to become a creature either of the emperor or of the synod. In order to achieve independence, he challenged the legality of the *citatorium* and at the same time criticised the imperial clan for immoral behaviour.¹³¹ This was a high-risk strategy because it made the

125 S. Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and His Reign: A Study in Tenth-Century Byzantium*, Cambridge, 1929, pp. 67–77.

126 Cf. M. Tziatzi-Papagianni, *Theodori Metropolitae Cyzici epistulae, Accedunt epistulae mutuae Constantini Porphyrogeniti*, Berlin, 2012, p. 15*, about the unpopularity of Anastasius and Theodore in the synod.

127 Nicetas of Amasea, *Memorandum*, ed. Darrouzès, *Documents inédits*, pp. 161–162, 174.

128 Tziatzi-Papagianni, *Theodori epistulae*, pp. 11*–12*. Cf. also Moulet, *Évêques, Pouvoir*, p. 227.

129 Moulet, *Évêques, pouvoir*, p. 303.

130 They did not have it all their way after Theophylact had grown up. Simoniac ordinations are mentioned in John Skylitzes, *History*, Constantine VII iterum, 10, ed. I. Thurn, *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum* (CFHB, 5), Berlin – New York, 1973, pp. 242–243.

131 R.-J. Lilie, “Caesaropapismus in Byzanz? Patriarch Polyeuktos und Kaiser Ioannes I. Tzimiskes,” in: *Byzantina Mediterranea. Festschrift für Johannes Koder zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. K. Belke, E. Kislinger, A. Külzer, M.A. Stassinopoulou, Cologne – Weimar, 2007, p. 388.

emperor and the leading metropolitans gang up against him. Only the death of Constantine VII saved him from being deposed.¹³² After this stroke of luck Polyeuctus remained in office until his death in 970. When Romanus II died, he took a leading part in arranging the succession, eventually negotiating a deal between Nicephorus Phokas and the senate: Nicephorus was to become emperor but the rights of Romanus' children were to be guaranteed.¹³³

Moreover, Polyeuctus also sought to recover the authority of his office that his predecessors had squandered. In order to achieve this aim, he employed the same strategy that had been used by Ignatius and Nicholas, excluding the emperor from the liturgy. The reason given for this measure was moral misconduct: Nicephorus was a widower himself and had married the widow of his predecessor and he was also the godfather of the princes.¹³⁴ That Polyeuctus chose to make this an issue is highly significant since with the exception of Ignatius his predecessors would have condoned such behaviour without much resistance. In the end Polyeuctus had to give in, in particular since the emperor enlisted the support of the synod and the senate. However, he was not deposed and could even lay down conditions. What secured Polyeuctus' survival were his political skills and his connections with powerful laypeople.¹³⁵ Yet his personality must also have played a crucial role. Leo the Deacons praises his superhuman outspokenness, which was based on impeccable ascetic credentials, an image that was actively fostered by the patriarch.¹³⁶

However, there was one group that failed to be impressed by Polyeuctus' personal qualities. A strong faction in the synod did not consider him saintly but rather haughty and tyrannical.¹³⁷ This attitude reflected the metropolitans' own value system, which emphasised erudition and urbanity.¹³⁸ The main bone of contention remained the appointment of metropolitans. Those who had taken over this task during the patriarchate of Theophylact were loath to hand it over to Polyeuctus. In this controversy it was not saintliness but expertise in canon law that counted. Both sides produced lengthy treatises,

132 Theodore of Nicaea, *Letters to Metropolitans*, 31–34, ed. J. Darrouzès, *Épistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle* (Archives de l'Orient Chrétien, 6), Paris, 1960, pp. 262–316.

133 Lilie, "Caesaropapismus in Byzanz," p. 389.

134 Lilie, "Caesaropapismus in Byzanz," pp. 390–392.

135 A. Každan, "Iz istorii vizantijskoj chronografii x v., 2. Istochniki L'va Diakona i Skilicy dlja istorii tret'ej chetverti x stoletija," *Vizantijskij Vremennik*, 20 (1961), pp. 106–128.

136 Leo the Deacon, *History*, ed. K.B. Hase, *Leonis diaconi Caloensis historiae libri decem* (Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae), Bonn, 1828, p. 32.20–25.

137 Theodore of Nicaea, *Letter 29*, ed. Darrouzès, *Épistoliers byzantins*, pp. 297–298.

138 The mentality of the metropolitans is reflected in the letters of Leo of Synnada, cf. M.P. Vinson, *The correspondence of Leo metropolitan of Synada and Syncellus: a critical text with introduction, translation and commentary*, Buffalo, N.Y., 1980.

which contained sophisticated interpretations of a wide range of proof texts. Polyeuctus' spokesman was one of the metropolitans who had been sidelined during the previous regime.¹³⁹ This shows that the patriarch was shrewdly exploiting tensions within the synod. However, even so he was not able to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion. The result was a solution that neither side had wished for. Nicephorus Phokas declared that the church was so badly managed that imperial intervention was required. He forced the synod to promulgate a *tomus*, which gave the emperor the last word in ecclesiastical matters, including the right to select metropolitans.¹⁴⁰

The emperor's total disregard for canonical procedure suggests that the conflict had eroded the legal basis for the autonomy of the church. What this meant for the church is unclear. Nicephorus may have favoured the appointment of imperial clerics of whose loyalty he could be assured but the evidence is not strong.¹⁴¹ In any case, the new status quo did not last long. The next emperor, John Tzimiskes, who had just murdered his predecessor was in desperate need of legitimisation. This Polyeuctus was prepared to give him if he accepted a penance and permitted the synod to declare the *tomus* null and void.¹⁴² From then on, the patriarchs' right to appoint metropolitans was never again challenged. Of course, this does not mean that Polyeuctus was entirely free. Indeed, the surviving evidence suggests that he continued to recruit among the patriarchal deacons.

5 The Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries

Polyeuctus' high-profile actions had no lasting impact on the relations between state and church. Quite the contrary. His successor was deposed, and the four patriarchs that served during the reign of Basil II appear to have had little influence over their lord.¹⁴³ Only after Basil's death did the church gain

139 Nicetas of Amasea, *Treatise*, ed. Darrouzès, *Documents inédits*, pp. 160–175.

140 Lilie, "Caesaropapismus in Byzanz," p. 393.

141 An example would be Nicephorus of Miletus, cf. S. Papaioannou. "Sicily, Constantinople, Miletus: The Life of a Eunuch and the History of Byzantine Humanism," in: *Myriobiblos. Essays on Byzantine Literature and Culture*, ed. Th. Antonopoulou, Boston – Berlin – Munich, 2015, pp. 261–284. Cf. also L. Petit, 'Office inédit en honneur de Nicephore Phocas', *BZ*, 13 (1904), 398–420.

142 Lilie, "Caesaropapismus in Byzanz," p. 394–395, who regards Polyeuktos as a cautious politician.

143 John Skylitzes, *History*, Basil II and Constantine VIII. 32, ed. Thurn, p. 347, about the ineffectual attempts of Patriarch Sergius and the synod to have the *allelengyon* tax abolished. Basil II does not seem to have shown a preference for a particular group.

ground again. Here, too, personalities undoubtedly played a role. Yet other factors also need to be considered. The years between 1025 and 1081 saw no fewer than thirteen reigns and three usurpations. This provided opportunities for interference by the patriarchs whose tenure usually lasted longer and also by other representatives of the church. Equally significant is a sea-change in the ideological sphere. From the early eleventh century onwards, we find an increasing obsession with religious homogeneity. One reason for this new development was without doubt the conquests of the tenth century, which had led to greater diversity within the empire.¹⁴⁴ However, the targets were not only heretical groups in the frontier areas such as the Armenians but also sects in the Byzantine heartland.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, the focus was less on doctrine than on religious practices such as fasting or the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, individuals or groups of impeccable orthodoxy could also come under attack. This discourse was initially conducted by patriarchal deacons and by monks. Yet in the course of the eleventh century the balance tipped in favour of the former. Insisting on the role of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as the sole mediator between the faithful and God, and claiming that the ritual of St Sophia was the yardstick for proper practice, the patriarchal deacons began to clamp down on charismatic monks and attack powerful monastic communities such as the Stoudites, which had their own liturgical traditions.¹⁴⁶ Even the emperors themselves were affected: as laymen they were no longer considered fit to install abbots.¹⁴⁷ These changes suggest that the ideological offensive was accompanied by a strengthening of the patriarchate as an institution.¹⁴⁸

The new discourse had an impact on the relations between church and state, indirectly because monks no longer played a role in controversies, and

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His appointments were a monk, a patriarchal deacon, a layman and an imperial cleric. *Catalogues of Patriarchs*, ed. Fischer, p. 293.18–21. It is, however, worth noting that the see was vacant twice for a considerable length of time.

- 144 G. Dagron, "Minorités ethniques et religieuses dans l'Orient byzantin à la fin du X^e siècle: l'immigration syrienne," *TM*, 6 (1976), pp. 177–215.
- 145 On the sect of the Phoundagiagiti in Asia Minor, cf. M. Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium Under the Comneni (1081–1261)*, Cambridge, 1995, esp. pp. 475–477.
- 146 D. Krausmüller, "Establishing Authority in the Constantinopolitan Religious Discourse of the Eleventh Century: Inspiration and Learning in the Writings of the Monk Niketas Stethatos," in: *Networks of Learning: Perspectives on Scholars in Byzantine East and Latin West, c.1000–1200*, ed. S. Steckel, N. Gaul, and M. Grünbart, Berlin – Münster, 2014, pp. 107–24.
- 147 D. Krausmüller, "Decoding Monastic Ritual: Auto-Installation and the Struggle for the Spiritual Autonomy of Byzantine Monasteries in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *JÖB*, 58 (2008), pp. 75–86, esp. p. 83.
- 148 A clear indicator of this development is the patriarchs' growing control over monasteries, cf. Krausmüller, "Monastic Ritual," pp. 80–84.

directly because it could influence imperial policy. The discussion must begin with Romanus III, the husband of Basil's niece Zoe, since it was Romanus who overturned two key policies of his predecessor: he repealed the *allelengyon* tax, which was levied on great landowners; and he put an end to the toleration of the heretical Jacobites in Mesopotamia, having their leaders tried before the synod in Constantinople.¹⁴⁹ Both measures were as detrimental to the stability of the state as they were advantageous to the church. However, it is not at all clear who was the driving force behind the changes. In the case of the *allelengyon* tax one will first think of the patriarch, Alexius, since Alexius' predecessors had already under Basil II lobbied for its abolition.¹⁵⁰ Yet the sources make no mention of Alexius in this context. Instead, they point out that Romanus had once served as *oikonomos* of St Sophia and therefore knew the financial needs of its clergy.¹⁵¹ The causes for the measures against the Jacobites are equally unclear. There is no evidence that the initiative lay with Alexius. On the other hand, we know that Romanus had attended the same schools as the patriarchal deacons and that he took a lively interest in theological debate.¹⁵² This raises the possibility that the emperor pursued a conscious policy, presenting himself as a guardian of orthodoxy. However, even this interpretation may be too simplistic since it does not take into account another important player, Demetrius, the metropolitan of Cyzicus. As *oikonomos* Demetrius controlled the finances of St Sophia, and he had already advised Romanus' father-in-law on the issue of the Jacobites when it was first raised by the metropolitan of Melitene, John.¹⁵³

Demetrius, in all likelihood a former patriarchal deacon, represents a recurrent type in Byzantine church history: the powerful metropolitan who cultivates close personal relations with the rulers and makes the most of his expertise in the religious discourse in order to challenge or subvert his patriarch's authority.¹⁵⁴ A hundred years earlier his predecessor Theodore of Cyzicus had pursued the same strategy. Demetrius not only held the office

149 Angold, *Church and Society*, pp. 19–20.

150 See above note 135.

151 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, Romanus III. 1 ed. Thurn, p. 375.

152 Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, XIII.6, ed. J.-B. Chabot, *Le chronique de Michel le Syrien*, vol. 3, Paris, 1905, p. 140.

153 On John's role cf. Dagron, "Minorités ethniques," pp. 203–204; for Demetrius' treatise against the Jacobites, cf. G. Ficker, *Erlasse des Patriarchen von Konstantinopel Alexios Studites* (Festschrift der Universität Kiel zur Feier des Geburtstages Seiner Majestät des Kaisers und Königs Wilhelm II.), Kiel, 1911, pp. 22–23; and PG 127, 878–885.

154 Demetrius was the author of a history in which he undoubtedly justified his own role, cf. W. Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, New York, 2013, p. 259.

of *oikonomos*, which was in the emperor's gift, but also received from his old friend Romanus the imperial dignity of *synkellos*.¹⁵⁵ This gave him precedence over all other metropolitans, even those who had a higher rank in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, not only at court but also in the synod.¹⁵⁶ His ambiguous role is most evident in the trial of the Jacobite bishops where he represented the emperor's interests as the head of a delegation of state officials.¹⁵⁷

Demetrius' influence was without doubt considerable. However, emperor and patriarch had their own agendas. In the early years of his tenure Alexius made sure that the prestigious see of Ephesus was given to his own brother. This flagrant act of nepotism was undoubtedly caused by the need for a loyal follower: as a former abbot of Stoudios Alexius was an outsider in a synod that was dominated by former patriarchal deacons. Romanus' actions are less straightforward. At the same time as he made Demetrius *synkellos* he bestowed this dignity also on the patriarch's brother and on another metropolitan who was a relative of his.¹⁵⁸ The reason for this step is most likely that Romanus was deviating from long-standing practice. Previous emperors had only appointed one *synkellos* at a time whereas Romanus wanted two, Demetrius and his relative.¹⁵⁹ The appointment of the patriarch's brother to the same dignity would then have been a necessary concession. The losers in this arrangement were the other metropolitans who in meetings of the synod were relegated to the second rank. Unsurprisingly they objected fiercely to this demotion.¹⁶⁰

Demetrius and the patriarch's brother retained their status under Romanus' successor Michael IV. However, the third *synkellos* was now a relative of the new emperor whom Alexius had been induced to appoint as metropolitan.¹⁶¹ The status quo was not even upset by an unsuccessful attempt of Demetrius and the emperor's relative to replace Alexius with the emperor's brother, the powerful chief minister John the Orphanotrophos.¹⁶²

155 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, Romanus III.1 ed. Thurn, 375.

156 Ficker, *Erlasse*, III, p. 18.28–29.

157 Ficker, *Erlasse*, III, p. 11.27–35.

158 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, Romanus III.1, ed. Thurn, p. 375.

159 In the seventh century Emperor Heraclius had decreed that there could be two *synkelloi* but there is no evidence that this rule still held in the early eleventh century. See J. Konidaris, "Die Novellen des Kaisers Herakleios," in: *Fontes Minores*, v, ed. D. Simon, Frankfurt, 1982, pp. 62–72, esp. P. 66.72–73. The first metropolitan-*synkellos* is attested in the middle of the tenth century, see Darrouzès, *Épistoliers byzantins*, p. 73.

160 Angold, *Church and Society*, p. 36.

161 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, Michael IV.10, ed. Thurn, p. 400.

162 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, Michael IV.12, ed. Thurn, p. 401. The only difference is that Demetrius now signed official documents after the patriarch's brother, cf. Ficker, *Erlasse*, p. 42.8–9.

It is not easy to get a sense of Alexius as a patriarch. He seems to have been a capable administrator.¹⁶³ Yet he was certainly no Polyeuctus. He did not censure Michael IV after his murder of Romanus III but let himself be bought off with a generous donation.¹⁶⁴ Only when his own position was threatened did he interfere in politics. When Michael V tried to get rid of him and of empress Zoe, he took part in the resistance.¹⁶⁵

By contrast, there can be no doubt that Alexius' successor, Michael Keroularios, was a powerful figure. Keroularios owed his position to his friendship with the emperor Constantine IX. He was an aristocrat who had been forced to become monk after having taken part in a failed conspiracy against Michael IV.¹⁶⁶ During his tenure took place the first controversy with the Latin church whose orthodoxy had traditionally been beyond doubt. Keroularios found it unacceptable that the customs of the Latin Christians differed from those of his own church and demanded that they be stamped out. This stance in itself was not surprising at the time since it was the logical consequence of the trend towards homogenisation: in the previous decades the equally orthodox patriarchate of Antioch already had been thoroughly Byzantinised.¹⁶⁷ The principal agents of this change had been the patriarchal deacons, and it was one of them, a former *chartophylax* of St Sophia, who also formulated the Eastern position against the Latins.¹⁶⁸ Keroularios, himself no theologian, had very little to add. His contribution lay in the political sphere. Previously the church had only become active when it had the support of the emperor. This was not the case with Keroularios and Constantine IX. Confronted with the Norman invasion of Southern Italy the emperor worked together with local men who followed the Latin rite, and then tried to forge an alliance with the pope. Instead of offering support Keroularios doggedly pursued his own agenda. Matters came to a head when the members of a papal delegation in Constantinople responded to the attacks and anathematised Keroularios.

163 Angold, *Church and Society*, pp. 20–21.

164 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, Romanus III.17, ed. Thurn, p. 391.

165 For an interpretation that sees Alexius as a more active figure, cf. V.M. Stanković, "The Alexius Stoudites' patriarchate (1025–1043): A developmental stage in patriarchal power," *ZRVI*, 39 (2001), p. 69–87.

166 Angold, *State and Church*, p. 25.

167 The angry reactions of the local populations are reflected in the second *Life* of Timothy of Kakhusha, ed. J.C. Lamoreaux and C. Cairala, *The Life of Timothy of Kakhusha. Two Arabic texts* (Patrologia Orientalis, 48.4), Turnhout, 2000.

168 Leo of Ochrid, cf. E. Büttner, *Erzbischof Leon von Ohrid (1037–1056). Leben und Werk (mit den Texten seiner bisher unedierten asketischen Schrift und seiner drei Briefe an den Papst)*, Bamberg, 2007, esp. pp. 26–27.

When the patriarch mobilised the people of Constantinople the emperor was forced to abandon his plans.¹⁶⁹

A decade later Keroularios interfered in politics for a second time. When the general Isaac Komnenos rebelled against Michael VI, he permitted the supporters of Isaac to gather in St Sophia, absolved them of their oath of allegiance to the emperor and had the usurper acclaimed.¹⁷⁰ At the time Keroularios tried to give the impression that he was forced to participate in the events but later on he spoke of himself as the one who had secured Isaac his throne.¹⁷¹ In return for his support he received an important concession. Isaac agreed that most of the high officials of St Sophia should from now on be chosen by the patriarch and not by the emperor.¹⁷² This strengthened the position of the patriarch not only towards the emperor but most likely also towards his own clergy.

Thanks to Keroularios the church had for the first time played a role in the selection of new emperors and become an important source of legitimacy. However, this does not mean that the initiative always lay with the patriarch. Constantine's successors Theodora and Michael VI sought confrontation with Keroularios – Theodora even meddled in the appointment of bishops -, and so did Isaac once his rule was secure.¹⁷³ The conflict centred on a group of monks from Chios who were accused of propagating heretical views. Heresy trials of monks were becoming more frequent in the eleventh century. Only a few years earlier Alexius had taken steps against another such group.¹⁷⁴ However, now the real target was the patriarch himself. The monks from Chios had foretold the ascension of Constantine IX and had later found favour with Keroularios himself.¹⁷⁵ Empress Theodora convened a law-court, which condemned the monks. This law-court was composed of secular and ecclesiastical dignitaries and presided over by her chief minister Leo Paraspondylos.¹⁷⁶ This was an

169 On the schism of 1054 and its prehistory, cf. A. Bayer, *Spaltung der Christenheit. Das sogenannte Morgenländische Schisma von 1054* (Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, 53), Cologne – Weimar – Vienna, 2002; and P. Gemeinhart, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse zwischen Ost- und Westkirche im Frühmittelalter* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 82), Berlin – New York, 2002.

170 H.-G. Beck, "Kirche und Klerus im staatlichen Leben von Byzanz," *REB*, 24 (1966), pp. 1–24, esp. p. 13–14.

171 Angold, *Church and Society*, p. 25.

172 Angold, *Church and Society*, p. 24.

173 Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, VI, Theodora 16, ed. É. Renauld, *Michel Psellos. Chronographie ou histoire d'un siècle de Byzance (976–1077)*, vol. 2, Paris, 1928, pp. 79–80.

174 J. Gouillard, "Quatre procès de mystiques à Byzance," *REB*, 36 (1978), pp. 5–81, esp. pp. 8–19.

175 Michael Psellos, *Orationes forenses et acta*, ed. G.T. Dennis, Stuttgart – Leipzig, 1994, pp. 7.150–9.223.

176 Psellos, *Orationes*, ed. Dennis, p. 18.457–458.

unprecedented measure since heresy trials were traditionally the prerogative of the church. When the Jacobite leaders had been brought to Constantinople two decades earlier the trial had been conducted by the patriarch and his synod in the presence of an imperial delegation. It is evident that Theodora and her advisers tried to create a scenario that resembled such practice as much as possible. Not only was a group of metropolitans present but the president Leo was a cleric and bore the title of *protosynkellos*, which gave him a higher rank than all metropolitans with the title of *synkellos*, at least at the imperial court.¹⁷⁷ Keroularios, however, was not cowed. He refused to attend the proceedings and rejected the validity of the judgement because it had not been ratified by the synod.¹⁷⁸ It is likely that Keroularios could act in this way because he had the support of most metropolitans. However, one can assume that the empress and her advisers played a longer game. Their ultimate aim must have been to drive a wedge between Keroularios and the synod and quite possibly to replace him with Leo Paraspondylos since traditionally *synkelloi* had been patriarchs-designate.

The death of the empress put an end to these plans. However, they were reactivated once Isaac Komnenos had fallen out with Keroularios. The patriarch was apprehended and given a choice: either to abdicate or to be tried before the synod.¹⁷⁹ Significantly, Isaac selected his own chief minister, the layman Constantine Leichoudes, as the next patriarch. Isaac could act in this manner because he had succeeded in winning over the secular and ecclesiastical elites. However, Keroularios was not without supporters. He had long cultivated relations with the people of Constantinople on whom he could call in times of trouble. It was for this reason that his imprisonment took place while he was staying outside the capital.¹⁸⁰

Leichoudes had the good fortune that Keroularios died before he could be tried. Even so he had to contend with opposition, in particular after Isaac's abdication. Under the new emperor, Constantine x Doukas, he found it politic to come to some arrangement with the supporters of Keroularios.¹⁸¹ Little is known about his activities as a patriarch. By contrast, his successor John Xiphilinos had a higher profile. He, too, had once been an imperial official but had then become a dedicated monk. Xiphilinos was actively involved in the

177 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, Michael VI.5, ed. Thurn, p. 486.

178 Psellos, *Orationes*, ed. Dennis, pp.18–19.438–486.

179 Angold, *Church and Society*, p. 24.

180 Angold, *Church and Society*, pp. 26–27.

181 K.N. Sathas, "Michael Psellou Epitaphioi logoi eis tous patriarchas Michael Keroullarion, Konstantinon Leichouden kai Ioannen Xiphilinin," *Mesaionike Bibliothēke*, 4 (Paris, 1874), p. 381.

ascension of Romanus Diogenes, declaring null and void the arrangements that Constantine X had made about his succession.¹⁸² He presided over a synod that was riven by strife. Since Romanus III emperors had bestowed the title of *synkellos* on more and more metropolitans. The dignity became so devalued that new titles, *protosynkellos* and president of the *protosynkelloi*, came into existence in order to reward those metropolitans that had the closest relations with the rulers. As a consequence, the traditional ecclesiastical hierarchy was completely subverted. Eventually those who had lost out in this race banded together and appealed to the emperor who ruled that the titles only conferred precedence at court but not in the synod.¹⁸³ This development suggests that the boundaries between church and state became ever more blurred. Under Emperor Michael VII a metropolitan, John of Side, even briefly became first minister.¹⁸⁴

The influence of the church reached its zenith in the reign of Nicephorus III Botaneiates. Already during Botaneiates' revolt against Michael VII, it had agitated on his behalf and prepared his entry into the capital. Such activity had a precedent: as we have seen Isaac Komnenos had gained the throne under similar circumstances. Yet this time it was not the patriarch but the metropolitans that took the lead.¹⁸⁵ One reason for this shift was without doubt a change in the emperors' recruitment policy. Whereas his predecessors had chosen members of the Constantinopolitan establishment Michael VII appointed as patriarch a rank outsider, Cosmas, a pious monk from Jerusalem, who had no administrative skills. However, the synod had also changed its character. Metropolitans spent more and more time in the capital where they could regularly attend the patriarchal synod and participate more actively in the running of the church. Already in the tenth century some of them had argued that they could fulfil their duties – holding provincial synods and consecrating suffragans – just as well in the capital as in their dioceses. In the eleventh century this practice seems to have become widespread since Keroularios explicitly ordered the members of his synod to return to their sees.¹⁸⁶ From

182 Cf. N. Oikonomidès, "Le serment de l'impératrice Eudocie: un épisode de l'histoire dynastique de Byzance," *REB*, 21 (1963), pp. 73–97.

183 Angold, *Church and Society*, p. 57.

184 Beck, "Kirche und Klerus," pp. 6–10, argues that John's appointment is no innovation because emperors had earlier employed priests and monks. However, John seems to have been the first metropolitan to be chosen for this post.

185 Beck, "Kirche und Klerus," p. 14, and especially V. Tiftixoglu, "Gruppenbildungen innerhalb des konstantinopolitanischen Klerus während der Komnenenzeit," *BZ*, 62 (1969), pp. 25–72, a convincing interpretation of the behaviour of metropolitans throughout Alexius' reign.

186 Tiftixoglu, "Gruppenbildungen," p. 31.

the 1060s onwards another factor, the Turkish invasion of Asia Minor, began to play a role. Now even those metropolitans that were still resident in their sees decamped for Constantinople. Moreover, the invasion of the Turks had a further important consequence. The metropolitans had a common interest that served to hold factionalism at bay, namely to recover their lost revenues in their dioceses. They evidently no longer believed that Michael VII would be able to push back the Turks and therefore put their hopes in the general Botaneiates who was known for his military skills.¹⁸⁷

After Michael VII had relinquished his throne to Botaneiates he became metropolitan of Ephesus whereas Botaneiates himself appointed for a second time John of Side as chief minister. Even more significant is the fact that patriarch and synod now signed imperial decrees, even when they had no bearing on the church. The reason for this unprecedented development was without doubt Nicephorus' heightened need for legitimacy at a time when the empire was coming apart at the seams.¹⁸⁸

This alliance was shattered when Alexius Komnenos became emperor. Alexius owed his ascent to power not to the church but to the support of his relatives. Moreover, his relations with the church got off to a rocky start. Patriarch Cosmas imposed a penance on him and his followers for the indiscriminate looting of the capital. Eventually Cosmas abdicated and was replaced by Eustratius Garidas, a clairvoyant monk with close ties to the emperor's mother.¹⁸⁹ However, there was also an element of continuity that should not be overlooked. Like Cosmas, Eustratius was not a member of the ecclesiastical establishment and equally like Cosmas, he was not able to impose his will on the church. For emperors such a situation offered opportunities for interference but also raised the danger that the church might become dysfunctional.

How complex was the interplay between emperors, aristocrats, patriarchs and other members of the clergy can be seen from the fate of the philosopher John Italos. During the reign of Michael VII John was accused of promoting paganism. His case came before the synod, which anathematised some of his alleged teachings but without mentioning his name.¹⁹⁰ A personal condemnation was only pronounced after Alexius had become emperor. Significantly, it was Alexius himself who secured this condemnation. It can be argued that Alexius was motivated by political concerns. John had been a protégé of

187 Tiftixoglu, "Gruppenbildungen," pp. 26–28.

188 Tiftixoglu, "Gruppenbildungen," pp. 29–33.

189 Angold, *Church and Society*, 48; P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel Komnenos (1143–1180)*, Cambridge, 1993, esp. p. 268.

190 J. Gouillard, "Le procès officiel de Jean l'Italien: les actes et leurs sous-entendus," *TM*, 9 (1985), pp. 133–69, esp. p. 143.112–122.

Emperor Michael VII. By turning against him Alexius may therefore have tried to weaken the Doukas family with whom he had formed an uneasy alliance.¹⁹¹ Yet this explanation cannot be considered sufficient. After the initial condemnation of his alleged teachings Italos had repeatedly tried to have his name cleared through submission of a confession of faith. These efforts began under Nicephorus Botaneiates and continued into the reign of Alexius.¹⁹² However, under Cosmas the synod had refused to listen, and even under the new patriarch Eustratius it had been reluctant to act, so much so that Alexius was forced to intervene. He engineered a protest by the Constantinopolitan populace and then took the investigation into his own hands, appointing a commission of ecclesiastics and state officials.¹⁹³ This raises the question: why was the church so loath to deal with Italos' case? The most likely explanation is that there was dissent between a conservative and a progressive group but that the majority did not wish to let this conflict escalate. Alexius would then have sided with the conservatives and would have forced the conflict into the open. This hypothesis can be supported through two observations. Firstly, at least one of the churchmen that formed the commission was an old enemy of Italos;¹⁹⁴ and secondly, several members of the ecclesiastical establishment were accused of being close to the philosopher.¹⁹⁵ Significantly, this second group was exonerated, which suggests that the emperor did not give in completely to the demands of the conservatives.¹⁹⁶ The skilful exploitation of tensions allowed Alexius to gain influence over the church. Both hardliners and progressives had reason to be grateful to him: the former because he had supported their cause and the latter because they had been spared.

The case of John Italos had given Alexius the opportunity to present himself as a guardian of orthodoxy. Such a stance is not without precedent. Already Romanus III had taken it on himself to combat heresy. Moreover, Theodora had employed a similar strategy – bypassing patriarch and synod through appointment of an imperial commission that included ecclesiastical dignitaries – although at that time the real target had been the patriarch himself. It is quite possible that Alexius took a more active role than his predecessors. We hear that, with the support of his brother, he initiated a number of

191 Angold, *Church and Society*, p. 50.

192 Gouillard, "Procès officiel," p. 143.122–142.

193 Gouillard, "Procès officiel," p. 143.142–148.

194 John the Maistor, cf. Gouillard, "Procès officiel," p. 145.155–156. John was the author of a treatise directed against Italos' views on the afterlife, cf. J. Gouillard, "Léthargie des âmes et culte des saints: un plaidoyer inédit de Jean diacre et maïstor," *TM*, 8 (1981), pp. 171–186.

195 Gouillard, "Procès officiel," p. 159.431–446.

196 Gouillard, "Procès officiel," p. 160.458–463.

other heresy trials against charismatic monks and the sect of the Bogomils.¹⁹⁷ Yet one needs to be aware that the source for these activities, the historical work of the emperor's daughter Anna, has to be treated with caution. Intent on praising her father, Anna consistently plays down the role of patriarch and synod.

Indeed, it is not the case that Alexius always set the agenda. Early on in his reign he was so strapped for cash that he decided to have church treasures confiscated and melted down. Since this measure was controversial, he took care to secure the consent of Patriarch Eustratius.¹⁹⁸ However, this precaution was not sufficient to quell all opposition. The metropolitan Leo of Chalcedon became the leader of the resistance. Leo was an influential figure with close links to the secular elite.¹⁹⁹ He had been a member of the imperial commission that tried John Italos, which suggests that he was one of the conservatives with whom Alexius had made common cause.²⁰⁰ Now he took an equally uncompromising stance towards imperial policy. He focused his attack on the patriarch, claiming that Eustratius was a heretical interloper and that Cosmas was still the rightful incumbent since his abdication was invalid.²⁰¹

This was a strategy that had last been used in the ninth century, and there can be no doubt that Leo was acutely aware of historical precedent. Since metal objects bearing the images of Christ and the saints had been destroyed, he regarded the emperor's policy as a revival of Iconoclasm.²⁰² However, he was also a man of his time. Exploiting contemporary tensions between lay clerics and charismatic monks, he accused Eustratius of being a Messalian.²⁰³

Leo's criticism was so potent that Alexius was forced to open an official investigation into the patriarch's conduct. Eustratius was cleared of all charges but nevertheless chose to abdicate. The new patriarch, the abbot Nicholas Grammatikos, was beyond reproach but Leo refused to celebrate mass with him because Eustratius' name had not been expunged from the diptychs.²⁰⁴ Alexius tried to persuade Leo to desist from such behaviour but eventually saw no other solution than to get rid of him. Even after this point the matter

197 Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, p. 268.

198 Angold, *Church and State*, pp. 46–47.

199 Leo corresponded with members of the Doukas family, cf. A. Lauriotès, "Historikon zetema," *Ekklesiastike Aletheia*, 24 (1900), pp. 403–407, 411–416, 445–447, esp. 404–405.

200 Gouillard, "Procès officiel," p. 145–153.

201 I. Sakellion, "Documents inédits tirés de la bibliothèque de Patmos. I. Décret d'Alexis Comnène portant déposition de Léon, métropolitain de Chalcédoine," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, 2 (1878), pp. 102–128, esp. p. 115.

202 Lavriotes, "Historikon zetema," p. 445–448.

203 Sakellion, "Documents inédits," p. 116.

204 Sakellion, "Documents inédits," p. 118.

was not closed because Alexius felt the need to achieve a reconciliation. This reconciliation took place a few years later at a solemn meeting of the entire secular and ecclesiastic elite in the Blachernae church.²⁰⁵

The text of Alexius' condemnation of Leo casts an interesting light on the relation between church and state. This condemnation is based on two arguments: firstly, that Leo challenged the imperial document that exonerated Eustratius, and secondly that he appealed to the emperor over the head of the synod.²⁰⁶ The first argument extols the imperial office by emphasising the sacral status of the emperor's decrees. By contrast, the second, much more detailed argument is a reflection of the views of the synod as a body, which did not wish its members to turn to an outsider: already in the tenth century the metropolitan Theodore of Nicaea had been deposed because he had threatened to appeal to his friend Constantine VII.²⁰⁷ Significantly, the emperor did not dismiss this argument but merely qualified it: he averred that appeals to the emperor were licit in principle and only forbidden when the synod had not first been informed.²⁰⁸

The surviving sources give the impression that during Alexius' reign the synod became more assertive and that it began to challenge long-standing practices that it considered to be infringements of its rights. The weapon that the metropolitans wielded was canon law, which had been written by bishops and thus favoured their cause. One major bone of contention was the status of episcopal sees. Emperors had traditionally exercised the right to confer on suffragan bishops the rank of metropolitan. They did so for the same reason that they appointed *synkelloi*, namely to reward individuals that were close to them. However, such acts had an unintended consequence. When the incumbents died the question arose whether their successors should keep the new rank or again be reduced to the status of suffragans. In the latter case they would then be appointed by their metropolitans whereas in the former case they would be consecrated by the patriarch. What decision emperors took was normally dependent on who lobbied most successfully.²⁰⁹

It was the patriarchal deacons who argued that such elevations were permanent because it increased their chances of getting good jobs. While deacons were not infrequently appointed as suffragan bishops such posts had two disadvantages: the decision lay in the hands of the metropolitans and the

205 P. Gautier, "Le synode des Blachernes (fin 1094). Études prosopographiques," *REB*, 29 (1971), pp. 213–284.

206 Sakellion, "Documents inédits," pp. 123–125.

207 Theodore of Nicaea, *Letter* 40, ed. Darrouzès, *Épistoliers byzantins*, p. 308.10–12.

208 Sakellion, "Documents inédits," p. 126.

209 Angold, *Church and Society*, p. 55.

incumbent had no right to attend the patriarchal synod.²¹⁰ The new metropolitan sees, the so-called autocephalous archbishoprics, which had no suffragans, were an altogether different affair since their incumbents could influence church policy and seem to have been chosen by the clergy of St Sophia.²¹¹

In the reign of Alexius, the most prominent case was that of the bishopric of Basileion because the metropolitan of Ancyra, Nicetas, in whose diocese Basileion lay defended his rights with tooth and claw. He had managed to get Constantine x and Michael vii to accept his position but was less successful under Alexius. One of the reasons for this failure was without doubt the weakness of the patriarch, Eustratius, who left the matter in the hands of his *chartophylax*.²¹² However, this was not the end of the affair because at a later date Alexius let himself be persuaded to have the case reopened. The matter was again referred to the patriarch. Yet this time the outcome was entirely different. Eustratius' successor, Nicholas, not only sided with the metropolitan of Ancyra but took the opportunity to bundle a host of similar cases and launch a fundamental attack on the right of emperors to meddle with the institutional structure of the church. Confronted with an alliance between patriarch and metropolitans the patriarchal deacons decided to take unusual measures. They disrupted three times the deliberations of the synod and demanded that the case be brought before the emperor.²¹³ In the end Nicholas gave in though not without composing a long document in which he presented the views of the synod.²¹⁴ Alexius then settled the issue. He ruled that emperors could create new metropolitan sees but agreed that they should ask for the opinion of the patriarch.²¹⁵ This was much less than the synod has hoped for. Even more galling, however, was the fact that the patriarchal deacons were permitted to staff all sees that in the last decades had been raised to the rank of metropolis.²¹⁶

Another conflict that pitted emperor and patriarchal deacons against patriarch and synod was the status of the *chartophylax*. This official who was appointed by the emperor had traditionally acted as the deputy of the patriarch and had in this function presided over meetings of the synod. Under Alexius the metropolitans challenged this custom. They argued that canon law did not

210 Theophylact of Ochrid appointed several patriarchal clerics as suffragan bishops, cf. P. Gautier, *Théophylacte d'Achrida, II. Lettres* (CFHB, 16/2), Salonika, 1986, pp. 191.20–193.25.

211 Angold, *Church and State*, p. 57.

212 Tiftixoglu, "Gruppenbildungen," pp. 44–45.

213 PG 119, 865AB.

214 PG 119, 864–884.

215 Alexius, *Novella*, xxix, ed. C. E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *Jus Graeco-Romanum*, III, *Novellae Constitutiones*, Leipzig, 1857, pp. 368–370.

216 Tiftixoglu, "Gruppenbildungen," p. 46.

permit mere deacons to take precedence over bishops.²¹⁷ When Nicholas took their side the *chartophylax* appealed to the emperor who confirmed the customary practice.²¹⁸

The evidence suggests that the novel element in these conflicts was the principled stance of patriarch and synod whereas the patriarchal deacons only tried to defend the status quo. However, their actions may well reflect a new group spirit that defined itself in opposition to the metropolitans. Such antagonism is rather surprising because patriarchal deacons were the main pool of recruitment for metropolitans and more than one deacon had an uncle who was a metropolitan. One reason for the antagonism was no doubt that the two groups had quite different interests. Moreover, one gets the sense that an elite group among the deacons tried to restructure the church. In the late twelfth century the canonist Balsamon argued that regular meetings of the synod should only be attended by autocephalous archbishops and presided over by the *chartophylax*, thus completely sidelining the metropolitans and the patriarch.²¹⁹

Alexius took the side of this elite group when the synod began to favour lower-ranking deacons in appointments to metropolitan sees.²²⁰ However, this does not mean that his support was unqualified. Since most sees in Asia Minor were on enemy territory it proved increasingly difficult to staff them. In order to find sufficient candidates, the emperor accepted that abbots and other clerics could retain their posts in the capital. By contrast, he did not permit patriarchal deacons to keep their offices.²²¹ This suggests that he did not wish to contribute to a merger of patriarchal clergy and synod.

The struggle over the control of the church as an institution dominated the agenda during most of Alexius' reign. However, this does not mean that other conflicts had entirely disappeared. Quite the contrary, conservatives and progressives continued to be pitted against each other. In the early twelfth century the metropolitan of Nicaea, Eustratius, became the target of a conservative witch-hunt. The attackers in the synod were so powerful that they could secure Eustratius' condemnation against the wishes of both emperor and patriarch.²²²

217 Alexius, *Novella* XLII, ed. Zachariae von Lingenthal, III, p. 426.

218 J. Nicole, "Une ordonnance inédite de l'empereur Alexis Comnène I sur les privilèges du chartophylax," *BZ*, 3 (1894), pp. 17–20, esp. pp. 18–19.

219 Angold, *Church and Society*, p. 57.

220 Alexius, *Novella* XXXIII, ed. K.-S. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *Jus Graeco-Romanum*, III, Leipzig, 1857, p. 385.

221 Tiftixoglu, "Gruppenbildungen," p. 51.

222 Angold, *Church and Society*, p. 73.